
22nd January 2013

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) – Councillor O'Boyle

Scrutiny Board Chair Approving Submission of the report:

Councillor Lakha

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Report back from Scrutiny Task & Finish Group on Looked after Children and Apprenticeships

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

As part of elected Members Corporate Parenting Role, Members were concerned that Looked after Children and Care Leavers are missing out on opportunities to undertake apprenticeships at the City Council due to a number of barriers. The Voices of Care Council raised a number of the challenges they face accessing apprenticeships with Elected Members. The Jobs, Skills and Growth Scrutiny Board set up a task and finish group to look at what the City Council can do to help LAC and Care Leavers successfully obtain, and maintain, an apprenticeship.

Recommendations:

- 1.1 That the Council widens the target pool of Care Leavers from those currently Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to include those in learning and on track to successfully complete Level 2 and Level 3 courses in FE colleges and schools.
- 1.2 That the Council continues to work with those LAC/Care Leavers who are NEET to develop their skills and personal resilience through provisions such as European Social Fund, the Young Persons' Employment Placement Scheme, work experience in the City Council, whilst recognising that for many of these young people the transition from NEET to accessing and sustaining an apprenticeship will not be achieved quickly or easily.
- 1.3 Provide a financial incentive to those Care Leavers on apprenticeship programmes, for example, through a bonus at the end of the first 3 months of an apprenticeship to be paid through the After Care Service. The financial incentive would be £1200 per year per LAC, the same as a care leaver remaining in education receives through the 16-19 Bursary.
- 1.4 Continue to provide ongoing support to Care Leavers to help them find appropriate work at the end of their apprenticeship programme.
- 1.5 That Care Leavers who start an apprenticeship with the City Council, are supported not only by the Council's Entry to Employment Team, but also by a nurturing/peer support mentor within the employing service in addition to links with the relevant Personal Advisor or Social Worker.

- 1.6 That City Council departments who take on a Care Leaver as an apprentice, use the support available to them from the Entry to Employment Team, After-Care Service and the Participation Team to maximise opportunities for the apprenticeship to succeed.
- 1.7 That the Care Leaver and Personal Advisor work with the appointing manager to decide whether preparation may be beneficial for the team who will be working with and supporting the young person.
- 1.8 That the Council actively negotiate with Partners to encourage them to offer apprenticeships, employment and work experience to Care Leavers.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes

Jobs, Skills and Growth Scrutiny Board (3) – 14 November 2012

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

1. Context (or background)

1.1 In view of the low number of Care Leavers who complete an apprenticeship with Coventry City Council (CCC) and progress to positive destination, which was raised with Elected Members, and the Voices of Care Council, Members decided to see if they could do anything to improve the uptake and successful completion of apprenticeships by Care Leavers.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 *Option 1 – Do nothing*

2.1.1 Members felt it was important that, as Corporate Parents, we offer as much support to Care Leavers as we can. The present system has resulted in minimal success by Care Leavers at gaining and maintaining an apprenticeship and therefore do nothing was not an option.

2.2 *Option 2 – The recommendations put forward to Cabinet Member by the Scrutiny Board*

2.2.1 Recommendation 1 - *That the Council widens the target pool of Care Leavers from those currently Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to include those in learning and on track to successfully complete Level 2 and Level 3 courses in FE colleges and schools.*

This recommendation has been made to publicise apprenticeship opportunities to as many care leavers as possible as in the past the focus has been on NEETs, for whom an apprenticeship may not have been the most appropriate place.

2.2.2 Recommendation 2 - *That the Council continues to work with those LAC/Care Leavers who are NEET to develop their skills and personal resilience through provisions such as European Social Fund, the Young Persons' Employment Placement Scheme, work experience in the City Council, whilst recognising that for many of these young people the transition from NEET to accessing and sustaining an apprenticeship will not be achieved quickly or easily.*

This recommendation expands on the first and highlights that there are other opportunities for those who are NEET which may be more appropriate than a Council apprenticeship.

2.2.3 Recommendation 3- *Provide a financial incentive to those Care Leavers on apprenticeship programmes, for example, through a bonus at the end of the first 3 months of an apprenticeship to be paid through the After Care Service. The financial incentive would be £1200 per year per LAC, the same as a care leaver remaining in education receives through the 16-19 Bursary.*

The group felt it was important that young people were not worse off financially for choosing to undertake an apprenticeship rather than stay in education. Those care leavers who stay in education are given £30 per week from their school or college from the 16-19 bursary, which amounts to £1200 a year.

The young people on apprenticeships are in employment and therefore, their earnings impact on the level of benefit they receive. Initial pay for an apprentice for the first six months is £100 a week, which after deductions as they're earning leaves a single young person over the age of 18 only £6 a week or so better off than they would be

on benefits. Most apprentices are not living on independently and supporting themselves so are in a different position from the Care Leavers. To offer them this money would be the Authority demonstrating its corporate parenting duty in the same way that a parent would support a child to undertake such an opportunity.

Objectives would need to be agreed jointly by the young person, employer and their after care work to ensure they have met a certain standard (around attendance/ performance) before the money is given to them. The money needs to be in the form of bonus payments through aftercare, as if it was added to the salary, it would impact on the level of benefits the young person would receive.

For budgetary purposes, an apprenticeship lasts between 12 months and 4 years for a technical placement. Care leavers who have completed placements over the past two years have all done so in around 12 months. This year there are currently 3 care leavers undertaking apprenticeships, and last year there were 6.

Customer and Workforce Services have an under spend of PPR money to support apprenticeship so are able to provide funding this year, however, if there is a wish to continue this scheme, ongoing funding will need to be found.

- 2.2.4 Recommendation 4 - *Continue to provide on-going support to Care Leavers to support them to find appropriate work at the end of their apprenticeship programme.*
- 2.2.5 Recommendation 5 - *That Care Leavers who start an apprenticeship with the City Council, are supported not only by the Council's Entry to Employment Team, but also by a nurturing/peer support mentor within the employing service in addition to links with the relevant Personal Advisor or Social Worker.*
Voices of Care supported the idea of an additional mentor within the employing service who a young person could turn to for advice and assistance if needed.
- 2.2.6 Recommendation 6- *That City Council departments who take on a Care Leaver as an apprentice, use the support available to them from the Entry to Employment Team, After-Care Service and the Participation Team to maximise opportunities for the apprenticeship to succeed.*
Members want to ensure that the Council departments who take on a care leaver as an apprentice use the support and resources available to them to maximise the opportunity for a successful placement.
- 2.2.7 Recommendation 7 -*That the Care Leaver and Personal Advisor work with the appointed manager to decide whether preparation may be beneficial for the team who will be working with and supporting the young person.*
- 2.2.8 Recommendation 8 - *That the Council actively negotiate with Partners to encourage them to offer apprenticeships, employment and work experience to Care Leavers.*

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Voices of Care Council have been consulted. They have provided information on the barriers LAC face to undertaking an apprenticeship and have also been consulted on the recommendations presented in this report.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 The decision will be implemented from January to support the three LAC young people currently undertaking apprenticeship programmes.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

5.1 Financial implications

In the current financial year there are 6 LAC/Care leavers on an apprenticeship with the city council, which equates to a full year cost of £7,200. Customer and Workforce Services have an under spend of PPR money to support apprenticeship so are able to provide one off funding until August 2013 to support the 6 apprenticeships currently in place, however, funding is not available from here in future years.

If the outcome of the pilot is to continue with this scheme then funding for future years will need to be secured. The 11-19 Partnership will be feeding into the European Social Fund: NEET Prevention bid put together by CSWP for funding from January 2014. The 11 – 19 Partnership will consider whether it would be appropriate to include this within the bid. In the interim the costs of this will need to be met from the current care leavers budget.

5.2 Legal implications

The public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 came into force on 5th April 2011. Decision makers must have ongoing due regard to avoid discrimination and advance opportunity for anyone with the relevant protected characteristics which are disabilities, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. "Due regard" requires more than just an awareness of the equality duty. It requires rigorous analysis by the public authority, beyond broad options.

6. Other implications

Any other specific implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

These recommendations contribute to the objective of ensuring that children and young people are safe, achieve and make a positive contribution.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Not Applicable

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

These recommendations help to support the council's corporate parenting responsibilities.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

Looked After Children (LAC) are a priority within the Council Plan, as is supporting young people onto apprenticeships.

The life chances of LAC are significantly lower than other groups of young people in the city. In 2011 there was a 42.2% gap between the average for the city achieving 5 good GCSE including English and Maths and LAC achieving that level.

The break down for LAC who are entitled to support from the aftercare service, as of November 2012, is:

Female 164
Male 204
Total 368

Ethnicity
White British 260
Non-White British 108 (A more detailed breakdown is available on request)

80 Children had one or more disability.

The number of apprenticeships within the Council is: 62
The number of LAC on apprenticeships within the Council is: 3
This number is too small to break down by protected characteristics.

The Council is working to support disadvantaged groups of young people such as disabled young people into work through the Jobs Strategy. There are currently 15 disabled young people engaged in apprenticeships with the Council.

By challenging some of the barriers experienced by LAC in accessing apprenticeships and also by supporting them to complete their placements, the Council will be working towards addressing some of the inequalities experienced by this particular group of young people whilst undertaking their corporate parenting role.

Whilst LAC accessing this provision become financially advantaged as opposed to other persons of the same age the promotion of LAC into accessing apprenticeships in this way is a proportionate means for improving their life chances.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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Appendices