

The offer of work experience opportunities for young people within Central Bedfordshire Council

PURPOSE

1. The report provides an update on progress following the request from the Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament that the local authority should 'lead by example' and offer work experience placements in all of its departments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That board members acknowledge the update, provide feedback on work delivered to date and planned next steps.
3. That the board requests that the update is shared with the Secondary/Upper Heads Forum with a request for nominations to be involved in the Central Bedfordshire work experience pilot during 2016/17 academic year.
4. That a further update on progress is made available to the Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament and the Children's Trust Board.

PUBLIC/EXEMPT: Public

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BACKGROUND

5. National policy and the local picture

There are a number of pieces of national policy that underpin the offer of high quality work experience for young people, including:

- The statutory duty placed on schools to deliver high quality, impartial careers education and guidance for young people – including help for students to develop their aspirations and consider a broad range of careers
- The provision of centrally funded 16-19 study programmes that offer work experience as part of their guided learning hours
- The supporting Ofsted inspection framework for 16-19 study programmes
- Local Authorities should promote, encourage and assist participation in education and training of 16 and 17 year olds in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training. This includes the provision of additional support to assist the most vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging with education or work

However, since 2012, there has been no statutory requirement for schools to offer work experience for those who are of statutory school age.

Better Work Experience – Campaign from Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament

In 2014, 5,976 or 23.76% of the Youth Population (13 – 19 years old) in Central Bedfordshire were supported to participate in the national 'Make your Mark' campaign. This enabled young people to vote on their priorities for their local communities and identify specific campaigns that would form the focus of the youth parliament. One of the 3 key priorities identified by young people in Central Bedfordshire was the provision of high quality work experience.

As part of the 'Better Work Experience' campaign, members of the Central Bedfordshire youth parliament undertook some research with their peers around the issue of work experience. The members surveyed 270 Young People to establish their understanding and experience of work experience. They found:

- Of the participants, only 61% have been able to participate in work experience
- Of those who have participated, 59% found their work experience to be useful
- 68% of participants believed work experience should be 'mandatory'

A number of key recommendations were also raised by young people in the report, including:

- The need for work experience to be more tailored to career aspirations
- The benefits of work experience being planned and built into the wider curriculum with Young People
- The timing of work experience and it not being offered in the run up to exams

The Young People also suggested that as the largest employer in Central Bedfordshire, the local authority should lead the way in providing high quality work experience opportunities across its departments and services. This would then enable the council to more effectively influence the schemes offered by other employers and by our schools.

Following the campaign from youth parliament, the council are now committed to delivering a new All Age Skills Strategy (2016-2020) for residents of Central Bedfordshire. This includes specific objectives on developing work experience opportunities, in particular those offered by the local authority.

6. Current approach to work experience in Central Bedfordshire Council

As part of the commitment made in the All Age Skills Strategy, the Youth Support Service has been working collaboratively with the Human Resources (HR) service in the local authority in order to establish the current approach to work experience in the council. A recent review of the current approach by the HR service established the following:

- That capacity to offer a structured and supported placement by service areas is the biggest obstacle for CBC services
- That work experience opportunities are offered by service areas in the council but there is no clear evidence of the quality and impact of their experiences
- The council guidance for work experience offers a basic framework for service areas however is often limited to particular administrative functions
- The expectations regarding the role and responsibilities that the host service area is responsible for in the planning, delivery and evaluation of work experience placements requires clarification
- It may not be appropriate for a number of service areas to offer work experience due to the sensitive nature of the work and there was a need to risk assess a number of different types of work to ensure it was appropriate for a young person to undertake specific duties whilst on placement.

The conclusion was therefore reached that the current approach to work experience was in need of refreshing and refocussing and requires the engagement of service areas if the council wants to consistently offer and promote high quality opportunities to young people that would help develop their skills to be work ready.

7. Development of the Central Bedfordshire Council work experience offer

As part of the review process, the HR team and Youth Support Service (YSS) have been working towards the development a new work experience offer for council. The new offer has the following aims:

- To provide high quality development and learning opportunities to young people
- To promote future careers in local government, in particular shaping the Central Bedfordshire apprenticeship offer
- To create a greater understanding between the council and its residents

- To enable the council to 'take the lead' in championing work experience with employers and schools through the experiences gained of operating a high quality scheme

The new work experience offer has also been informed by and will continue to be shaped by the following:

- Research on best practice in work experience from other employers and organisations
- Consideration of the local authority working towards a quality mark for work experience
- Feedback and views of young people – including development of a new council handbook and application process. This work begun in August
- The emerging requirements and resource implications of apprenticeship levy that place new obligations on large employers to invest and support young people

The work experience offer includes the following key elements:

Planning and recruitment

- Council services and teams that are able to offer work experience opportunities need to be clear with young people what they will gain from their work experience placement. Each service will therefore be required to develop a short service prospectus that outlines the responsibilities of the service, the type of work that would be on offer and the length of the placement (e.g. two weeks).
- It would be expected that the young person either applies for or is matched to the work experience placement. This process would ensure the aspirations of the young person can be met and they are able to gain the maximum benefit from the work. We are currently exploring the best way to advertise these opportunities. A draft application form can be found in **Appendix A**

The work experience placement

- A handbook will be given to the young person that will provide the information they need to support a high quality work experience placement. This will include what they should do to prepare for the placement, expectations whilst working at the council and some of the tasks they will be expected to complete. This should be shared with the school to ensure any supporting information required from the young person is provided (e.g. emergency contact details). A draft handbook can be found in **Appendix B**

- Whilst with the service or team, the young person will be assigned a manager who will mentor the young person throughout their placement
- The manager will also be given a handbook to support the placement. This would mirror the handbook for the young person and also include templates for a calendar of events for the placement and risk assessment tools

Evaluation and review

- The work experience placement will be reviewed by both the young person and the service area. This evidence and information will be held centrally in the council and routinely analysed to ensure our scheme continues to offer the best possible opportunities for young people. It will also be shared back with schools to support their future planning and support for young people.

It is anticipated the revised council work experience offer will be finalised by the end of November.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

8. The offer of high quality work experience is a priority for young people in Central Bedfordshire. However, the quantity and quality of experiences remains variable.
9. The local authority has a role in providing high quality experiences and opportunities for young people. The current local authority offer has been assessed and needs a number of revisions to help strengthen the current approach.
10. A new council work experience offer is now being developed across services and with young people. It is anticipated this will be finalised by the end of November.
11. We plan to offer the first work experience opportunities in the Spring Term 2017 to a group number of schools. It is proposed that the full scheme be in place from September 2017
12. Through the development and implementation of a high quality work experience scheme, the council will be much better placed to influence better work experience with other employers and with schools.

Appendix A – Draft work experience application form

Appendix B – Draft work experience handbook for young people