

Item No. 12	Classification: Open	Date: April 2 2009	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Children Looked After and the Council's Apprenticeship Programme	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Corporate Parenting Committee notes updated progress report to support care leavers and looked-after children to access the Council's Apprenticeship Programme.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Executive, at their meeting on 13 December 2005, agreed the adoption of a revised Employment Strategy and Action Plan, that included the following recommendation:

"That the Executive welcomes the steps that have been taken in developing apprenticeships for young people in the Borough and asks officers to work up proposals that will fast-track opportunities for looked-after children to participate in this scheme; specifically considering how we can support this group of young people to ensure they can access these schemes. The proposal should also include details on how the Council can offer useful work experience and internships to assist this group of young people in gaining skills in the workplace."

3. The Council's Apprenticeship Programme is in its fourth year and calls upon all Council Departments and partners to provide apprenticeship places. Since 2005, there have been 96 participants in the Council's scheme. 24 new apprentices commences in February 2009. There is an agreed recruitment and selection process, which seeks to match applicants with appropriate apprenticeships to ensure success on behalf of the participant and also the relevant department's ongoing commitment.
4. The Programme runs for 12 to 18 months, depending on the qualification period, and the apprentice receives a wage on the basis of an unqualified new starter or NVQ Level 2 paid at Hay 2 and NVQ Level 3 paid at Hay 3. This equates to £15,072pa to £16,254pa for a 36 hour working week.
5. During the placement, the apprentice receives the following support:
 - a) Induction;
 - b) Individual Personal Development Plan;
 - c) Employability programme support;
 - d) Basic skills development (literacy, numeracy and IT skills); and Mentoring and coaching, as appropriate.

6. Towards the end of their programme, the apprentices receive individual coaching to obtain employment with the council and advice on career planning.
7. In 2007] 16 'children looked after' (or care leavers) applied to join the programme, 7 successfully obtained placements (see Appendix one).
8. In 2008/09 15 'children looked after' applied to the programme and successfully obtained placements (see Appendix 2).
9. Young People in care and care leavers find the testing and interview process somewhat daunting but it is a necessary council standard to ensure the placements are successful (and encourage departments to offer further placements). This was of significant concern to both the Adolescent & Aftercare Service and the Organisational Development Unit: these teams undertook a joint review to identify how young people could be more appropriately prepared.
10. CLA services have introduced an Employability Programme; designed to develop the skills of children looked after in completing job applications, undertaking interviews and improving their numeracy and literacy. This programme runs for six weeks each year in the run up to the recruitment phase. Young people from the Adolescent and Aftercare Services were identified who would best be able to use the programme.
11. Up to 16 young people participate in the programme, some of whom may be young mothers. The programme includes two weeks work experience, two half-day training sessions on confidence building and two half-day sessions on life coaching, delivered by external trainers.
12. This programme is designed to identify and address any identified barriers to employment success and, as such, supports the Council's priorities in respect of tackling poverty and promoting equalities. The programme partners include Peckham Job Centre Plus, Work Directions, and City Brokerage, Connexions, Red Kite and independent life coaches.
13. As a result of this year's [2008/09] programme 15 young people applied for a variety of Apprenticeship posts. 11 of those were shortlisted, of which 10 [one did not attend] passed the assessment tests; 6 were successful at the interview stage.
14. In partnership with the Organisational Development Unit, CLA Services are keen to ensure that children looked after are regarded as good potential applicants for the Programme and that they perform on a similar level when compared to other applicants. Without the intense preparation programme, this would not be possible.
15. The success of the Council's Apprenticeship Scheme continues to grow and the programme now offers vocational pathways into Health and Social Care, IT, Business Administration, Accountancy, Customer Service as well as Trade apprenticeships; Plumbers, Carpenters and Electricians.

CURRENT POSITION

16. The target for 2008/09 was that at least four 'children looked after' should progress to be awarded an apprenticeship. The success of the programme 2008/09 resulted in a total of 24 appointments. 6 of those appointments were by young people from the 'children looked after' service, which equates to 25% of the successful candidates and 40% of all 'children looked after' that applied. This represents the most successful recruitment drive for this target group to date and indications are that further improvements can be made.
17. 2008/09 has seen the third successive increase in the numbers of apprenticeship offered for CLA / care leavers. It is anticipated that a further recruitment drive may be possible in September 2009 which is likely to show an even higher success rate for CLA / care leavers during this intake year.
18. To improve the ongoing management and delivery of apprenticeship opportunities for 'children looked after' the following specific actions are in place for this group:
 - Continual delivery of the preparation programme to ensure the maximum number of 'children looked after' are successful through the recruitment and selection process;
 - Identify and increase numbers of relevant apprenticeship opportunities; (vocational options).
 - Embed this programme across the Council as a corporate responsibility to identify relevant apprenticeships for young people – especially those in or leaving care.
 - Adolescent and Aftercare services identify those young people who might benefit from the scheme at an earlier stage.
19. There is an expectation that year on year there will be a steadily increasing trend of 'children looked after' accessing and being successful in this programme.
20. A summary of the outcomes of the 'children looked after' that applied for 2007 and 2008/09 intakes are detailed in appendix 1 and 2 of this report.
21. CLA services have established two apprenticeship placements for 09/10.

FUTURE PROPOSALS

22. The Organisational Development Unit have a number of initiatives planned to enhance the scheme, some of which we have already implemented:
 - To recruit more local employers to become "partners" working with Southwark in the provision of apprenticeship opportunities and develop apprenticeship places for local people via formal provision in the procurement process for construction and other contracts awarded by the local authority.
 - Regular bespoke development workshops for the apprentices, embedding career counselling, becoming leaders and self motivation skills. The first took place during national Apprenticeship Week 23 – 27 February 2009. This included David Hemery, OBE, providing motivational workshops as well as two local successful people, including Kenneth Drysdale and Tevin Tobun, who

the apprentices found inspirational as they could relate to the speakers in many ways.

- A four-way performance management system whereby the apprentice will meet with their line manager, the college's Work Based Learning Manager and the Apprenticeships Manager every three months.
- An information and promotional stall at the Southwark Youth Council's Job Fair.
- A "milk-round" style day for graduating apprentices in order that they can talk to managers with vacancies and look at the next steps available to them, part of the responsibility to provide Information, Advice, and guidance [IAG].
- The expansion of the apprenticeship scheme in terms of disciplines covered.
- A rotation scheme that will facilitate 6 month placements in different roles for those apprentices who want to experience working in different areas and greater understanding of the Council's services [subject to placement availability].

Community Impact Statement

23. The Council's Apprenticeship Programme offers a good source of training and work experience for young people in the borough. The additional support provided to children looked after who are interested in the Programme helps to ensure they are in a good position to obtain places on the Programme.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Executive report "Adoption of a Revised Employment Strategy and Action Plan", considered at meeting on 13/12/05	Constitutional Team, Town Hall, Peckham Road, London, SE5 8UB	Richard Blakeley

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Assistant Director: Children's Specialist Services and Safeguarding	
Report Author	Chris Saunders, Head of Services for Children in Care and John Howard, Organisational Development Unit	
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CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal and Democratic Services	No	No
Director of Finance	No	No
Executive Member	Yes	Yes
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