

Item No 10	Classification: Open	Date: July 25 2007	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. To note the Children's Services Department's work to support care leavers and looked-after children to access the Council Apprenticeship Programme.
2. That this Committee receives a further report, at their meeting in September 2007, on the outcome of the Summer intake and matching process and the scope to include other partners in the provision of apprenticeship placements, particularly through the Council's regeneration programmes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. 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."

4. The Council's Apprenticeship Programme is in its third year and calls upon all Council Departments to provide apprenticeship places. Currently, there are 64 adults and children on the scheme with 20 additional placements proposed for the 2007 intake. 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.
5. The Programme runs for between 12 to 24 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 Grade 2 and NVQ Level 3 paid at Grade 3. This equates to £275 to £294 per week for a 36 hour working week.
6. 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
 - e) Mentoring and coaching, as appropriate.
7. At the end of the Programme the apprentice receives a reference, advice about future employment options and information on available or forthcoming vacancies. The first year's intake will complete their training later this year and will be positively supported to progress into full-time employment. This will be monitored by officers.
 8. In 2005, two children looked after successfully applied to the Programme and were placed in Health and Social Care. One young person obtained an "Outstanding Achiever" award at the Apprenticeship Awards and the both have applied to college to continue their studies next year.

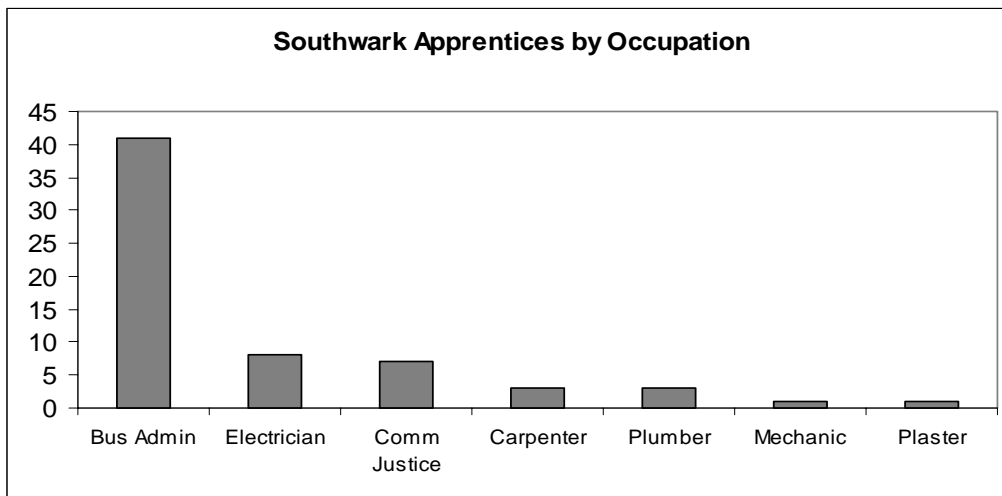
KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Development of the Employability Programme

9. In 2006 no looked-after children applied to the Programme despite some early promotional work, which included 21 young people attending the briefing sessions. Feedback suggested they found the testing and interview process somewhat daunting and dropped out. 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. The result of this review was the introduction of 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 ran for six weeks from 26 February 2007. Young people from the 16+ Service were identified who would best be able to use the programme.
11. Sixteen young people participated in the programme, five of whom are young mothers. The programme included 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. One young person is completing a Pitman secretarial course, which will assist her to apply for a Business Apprenticeship Level 3. The cost of this is £1,800, which is funded by NRF. Other young persons have been enrolled on Open University short courses to support their learning skills.
13. 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, City Brokerage, Connexions, Red Kite and independent life coaches.
14. As a result of this programme fifteen young people applied for a variety of Apprenticeship posts. Seven of those have been shortlisted and passed the assessment tests; to date one has successfully gained a post within Health and Social Care. A further four were shortlisted: two were unsuccessful at testing and

two did not attend the tests, although they were supported by the Employment Adviser, who had arranged mock tests. The final four had not obtained the necessary qualifications for any of the apprenticeship posts. One has since gained employment elsewhere.

15. In partnership with the Organisational Development Unit, CLA Services are anxious 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. It is appreciated, however, that to ensure they succeed, a concerted preparation programme needs to be in place.
16. The success of the Council's Apprenticeship Scheme continues to grow and the programme now offers vocational pathways into Health, Social Care, IT and Customer Services. Within the last 12 months, partner providers including SERCO, Liberata, Kings College NHS Trust and Southwark PCT have also joined the programme. It is recognised, however, that there are insufficient vocational places, for example work with children and in leisure and IT services. The Organisational Development Unit will therefore seek to expand opportunities in this field, which can then be offered to children looked after as part of the scheme. The Council's regeneration programmes and other activities, such as the "Invest to Save - Cultural Quarter" initiative, may provide additional, vocational apprenticeship opportunities.



Future Development

17. The target for 2007 is that at least four children looked after should progress to be awarded an apprenticeship (20% of this year's intake). This is a benchmark target and it should be noted that there is no upper limit as to the number of apprenticeships to be awarded this year. It is hoped that by identifying more vocational and child care places that even more will be able to be matched in 2008.
18. This programme will now be jointly managed by the respective heads of service to develop the following key components:
 - Evaluation of the preparation programme to ensure the maximum number of selected children looked after are successful through the recruitment and selection process;

- Identify and increase numbers of relevant apprenticeship opportunities;
 - Children looked after who successfully meet the criteria will be prioritised in allocation of available placements (matching); and
 - Embed this programme across the Council as a corporate responsibility to identify relevant apprenticeships for young people – especially those in or leaving care.
19. There will be an expectation that year on year there will be a steadily increasing trend of children looked after being successful and accessing the programme.

Community Impact Statement

20. 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.

Resource implications

21. The Employability Programme is an innovative piece of work, supported by NRF funding, as is the post of the Specialist Employment Advisor. This funding is due to cease in September 2007. Consideration is being given to the ensuring the sustainability of this programme.

REASONS FOR URGENCY

22. The Committee needs to consider this report and provide their views on the proposed development of the Apprenticeship Programme to ensure it can provide appropriate opportunities for children looked after. The Committee is due to receive a further report at their meeting in September and work needs to be undertaken in preparation for that meeting.

REASONS FOR LATENESS

23. This report was not available within five clear working days of the meeting as officers needed to obtain updated information on the progress of young people taking part in and applying for the Apprenticeship 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: Specialist Children’s Services and Safeguarding
Report Author	Chris Saunders, Head of CLA Team and Janice Millman, Organisational Development Unit

Version	Final	
Dated	20/07/07	
Key Decision?	No	
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
Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team	July 20 2007	