

Item No: 11.	Classification: Open	Date: January 31 2008	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 the Children's Services Department's work to support care leavers and looked-after children to access the Council's Apprenticeship Programme.
2. Corporate Parenting Committee supports the initiatives currently proposed to attract more applications from 'Children Looked After'.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. At their meeting on 13 December 2005, the Executive 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. Since 2005, there have been 93 participants in the Council's scheme. 38 appointments were made in 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 15 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 £282 to £304 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. Towards the end of their programme, the apprentices receive individual coaching to obtain employment with the Council and advice on career planning.
8. In 2005, two children looked after successfully joined the Programme and were placed in Community Justice. One young person obtained an "Outstanding Achiever" award at the Apprenticeship Awards and both have applied to college to continue their studies next year.
9. In 2006 no 'children looked after' 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 and 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 Adolescent and Aftercare Services 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 people 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 sixteen young people applied for a variety of Apprenticeship posts. Eight of those were shortlisted and passed the assessment tests; seven were interviewed successfully, and an eighth failed to attend interview on two occasions. A further four were shortlisted: two were unsuccessful at testing and two did not attend the tests, although the Employment Adviser, who had arranged mock tests, supported them. The final four had not obtained the necessary qualifications for any of the apprenticeship posts. One has since gained employment elsewhere (see appendix 1).
15. 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. 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, King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Southwark PCT have also joined the programme.

CURRENT POSITION

17. The target for 2007 was that at least four 'children looked after' should progress to be awarded an apprenticeship. The success of the programme this year resulted in a total of 38 appointments. Seven of those appointments were by young people from the 'children looked after' service, which exceeded the original target in terms of numbers and equates to 18.5% of the total intake. This represents the most successful recruitment drive for this target group to date and indications are that further improvements can be made.
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:
 - Evaluation 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;
 - 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 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 for the 'children looked after' who applied for the 2007 intake is detailed in appendix 1 of this report.

FUTURE PROPOSALS

21. 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;
 - Regular bespoke development workshops for the apprentices, embedding career counselling, becoming leaders and self-motivation skills. The first took place in early December with David Hemery, OBE. The next event will be held in January 2008, and will feature a talk from Richard Taylor;
 - 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;
 - The introduction of part-time apprenticeships to attract a wider market of applicants;
 - The expansion of the apprenticeship scheme in terms of both disciplines covered and levels of study;
 - 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.
22. The Organisational Development Unit and CLA Services are undertaking an assessment of potential applicants from ‘children looked after’ for the 2008 intake to ensure that a focused promotional and preparation programme is in place and to explore assess the potential of trade apprenticeships, which have not to date been taken up by this group.

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.

Resource implications

24. The Employability Programme is an innovative and successful piece of work, currently supported by NRF funding, as is the post of the Specialist Employment Advisor. After the end of March, the project will be mainstreamed into the Children Looked After Business Unit.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

25. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Finance Director

26. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Apprenticeship CLA Outcomes

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	Romi Bowen, Strategic Director for Children's Services	
Report Author	John Howard, Organisational Development Unit	
Version	Final	
Dated	January 22 2008	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Yes	Yes
Director of Finance	Yes	Yes
Executive Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team	January 22 2008	