



EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE - 11 JULY 2013

APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's support for the development of an apprenticeship scheme for children in care at Leicestershire County Council.

Background

2. Leicestershire County Council's Pledge To Children In Care And Young People Leaving Care is that:

"As Corporate Parents we will provide a variety of working opportunities or apprenticeships within the 'family business' of Leicestershire County Council."

3. This was endorsed by Elected Members in December 2009. As corporate parents to children in care in the County, Leicestershire County Council have made this pledge as a means of discharging this enormous responsibility. It is part of a series of pledges committed to ensuring that children in care leave care prepared and sufficiently independent for adulthood.

Apprenticeships

4. Leicestershire's Child Poverty Needs Assessment and its accompanying Family Poverty Strategy highlighted why this is such an important pledge to make. For young people in care leaving care at 16 or 17 with no job and with a lack of qualifications were major concerns. Frontline staff who work with children in care spoke about children in care growing up to be parents of children who are also taken into care.
5. To enhance the life chances of the children in care, the Family Poverty Strategy recommended that "public service providersexplore how work experience opportunities or apprenticeships for young people can developed and designed which specifically target young carers, children in care and disabled children." This proposal is the product of this exploration.
6. Currently, the Council pledge to offer opportunities for work experience from the age of 14. The Council wishes to significantly extend this offer to include two year apprenticeship opportunities for children in or leaving care aged between 16 and 21.

Proposal

7. The Council proposes initially that a pilot scheme will be run in order to evaluate the success. The scheme will include additional support for the Council as the employer and the Apprentice. Apprenticeship opportunities for children in care will need to be ring fenced so they are not competing in an open market but are learning the skills to enable them to develop alongside their peers.
8. The pilot would work with 16-21 year olds who work with Flying Fish, a project supporting young people in care into work experience and further employment.
9. The proposed length of the Apprenticeship Scheme is two years, although it is acknowledged that individuals may require varying amounts of time to complete an apprenticeship depending on need.
10. The pilot will offer five apprenticeships across the Council, including Public Health, ESPO and the Sports Partnerships.
11. Costs to support the pilot have been agreed by the People Strategy Board and the Council's Corporate Management Team.

Outcomes

12. The overall aim of the project is to secure permanent employment for the young people on the programme. Any individuals that do not secure employment within their host team will be offered support as an 'at risk' employee under the Council's Redeployment Policy.

Recommendation

That the development of a pilot Apprenticeship Scheme for Young People in Care and leaving care be supported, with a view to developing a sustainable approach in line with the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities and Pledge.

Background Papers

None.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedures

None.

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Equal Opportunities Implications

All equal opportunities have been addressed through the development of the proposal.