

To: Cabinet

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Communities
Amanda Honey, Managing Director Communities

Date: 13th September 2010

Subject: Supporting vulnerable learners into Apprenticeships

1. Introduction

In February the County Council made a commitment to back the development of a scheme to support marginalised young people accessing Apprenticeships. This paper outlines the target groups, outcomes and the proposed model and asks for confirmation of funding.

2. Background

KCC has a major role to play in tackling worklessness and is already managing the Future Jobs Fund enabling young people in long term unemployment to access work. Through the current apprenticeship programme we are providing new opportunities for young people to gain the right skills to enter full time employment. However, there is more that can be done. This scheme is specifically concerned with how KCC, as an employer, service provider and exemplar, can increase the employment potential of vulnerable young people by supporting them into Apprenticeships.

The following four groups have been chosen for this scheme due to the high possibility that they will become, or already are, NEET (not in education, employment or training). They are potentially disengaged from learning and skills and are currently finding it difficult to access Apprenticeship opportunities.

The target groups are;

- Teenage Parents
- Young Offenders
- Care Leavers
- Young people with learning or physical disabilities or mental health problems

We will work with 20 young people from each target group. Those taking part in the scheme will have a range of needs, for example young offenders may have committed low level offences others may be leaving Cookham Wood Young Offender Institution . The development of this Apprenticeship Scheme will link to KCC's Employment Strategy for Socially Excluded Adults.

The scheme will be closely evaluated from the start to ensure that we are able to evidence the value of employing these young people into Apprenticeships and to identify the barriers for them in participating in this type of training.

3. Outcomes

Although the young people from the four target groups have diverse needs, there are common outcomes that we hope will be achieved through this scheme. These include;

- Provide a transition into the world of work
- Increased self esteem and confidence
- Motivation
- Raised aspiration

This scheme will support young offenders to stop offending and move into sustainable employment, teenage parents to gain valuable experience that will help them choose a career pathway and significantly increase the employability of care leavers. For those young people with learning or physical disabilities or mental health problems there will be equality of opportunity in appropriate areas that will lead to permanent roles. Each young person will receive a personalised assessment of their skills and abilities to ensure that the Apprenticeship framework and placement they access are appropriate.

Specific outcomes will be developed with the lead officers from each target group and a robust model of evaluation developed.

4. Funding

The training element of the Apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds is fully funded by the Government and training providers may be able to draw down further funding for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Additional Social Needs (ASN). Support for the young people is currently available from KCC departments and partner agencies, such as the Attendance & Behaviour Service, Youth Offending Service, Connexions and Catch 22. However funding will be required for additional support mainly for employers and in particular cases, young people.

It is proposed that as part of this scheme, salary costs of the Apprentices are covered centrally by KCC. The minimum wage for Apprentices is £95 per week, however the proposal is that Apprentices within this scheme are paid £105 per week in line with KCC's own apprenticeship programme, Kent Success.

4.1 Funding implications for KCC

80 young people x annual salary cost of £5460	£436,800
Evaluation of the scheme	£25,000
Co-ordination of Scheme (to include support for employers and young people)	£35,000
Total	£496,800

4.2 Potential Savings

By investing in the vulnerable young people who will take part in this scheme at an early stage, there are potential savings for the public purse. For example, a NEET who has had regular contact with the Connexions Service, undertaken a variety of short term training courses but has still not entered further training or employment can cost up to £8000 per year. A young offender who is sentenced to a custodial sentence in a Young Offenders Institute can cost the public purse up to £60,000 per year. The cost of paying an Apprentice wage for a year is £5460 and this enables the young person to gain qualifications and

confidence to move forward into full time employment thus reducing their reliance on public services.

5. Model

We will utilise the mainstream model of Apprenticeships currently used and look at what extra support and reasonable adjustments will need to be made to enable accessibility. The model will be flexible in design but also sustainable and be replicated. It is important that the prior learning and skills of those young people involved are recognised.

Below is an outline of the model for the proposed scheme:

- 18 months
- 80 young people in total (20 from each group)
- Range of young people with a range of issues
- Range of employers (those who are sympathetic & those who need to be challenged)
- Place young people in skill areas that may lead to jobs
- Tailor programmes to meet the needs of individuals from the different groups
- Pre Apprenticeship work where necessary carried out by Units supporting groups
- Support for employers
- Robust evaluation from the start

20 young people will be placed on Apprenticeships within KCC itself as part of the development of the Kent Success Apprenticeship Pool.

There will be certain Apprenticeship frameworks that will be more appropriate for young people from these target groups to undertake although this needs to link to areas of employment growth to ensure that there are jobs available for those involved. Part time Apprenticeships and the length of time taken to do the qualification will also be explored to ensure that the young people have the best opportunity to succeed in their Apprenticeship.

There are models of increasing the employability of vulnerable people, particularly those with disabilities, such as Project Search that have enabled organisations to understand the value added by such groups and that have also saved organisations money in recruitment costs. Kent is a demonstration site for Project Search and this scheme will link in with the work done in East Kent and ensure that best practice is shared. The scheme will be developed to align with the sector skills strategies and social enterprise models will also be explored.

6. Sustainability

This scheme will be used to test the hypothesis that by supporting vulnerable young people and employers there is a financial dividend for the public purse including working age welfare benefits.

The evaluation will identify the system barriers that the target groups face when looking to take up an Apprenticeship and also the barriers that employers face when looking to take on a vulnerable learner as an Apprentice. These can be challenged both locally and nationally to ensure that young people from these groups in the future do not face the same difficulties. It will also evaluate the effectiveness of a bespoke scheme for vulnerable learners.

The learning from this scheme will be used to identify the best ways to support each of the target groups into employment. Kent County Council will be well placed to use the learning from this scheme when the Department of Work and Pensions restructure their Welfare to Work provision. KCC could potentially become a specialist provider, or an advisor to

providers, for those who tend to be disadvantaged within the employment market and those who need particular encouragement to engage with learning and training.

7. Recommendations

The Cabinet is asked:

- To approve the model for supporting vulnerable young people into employment
- To approve funding for the proposed scheme

Contact Officer: Des Crilley

Title: Director Community Cultural Services

Phone Number: 01622 696630

Email: des.crilley@kent.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Lucy Ann Bett

Title: Project Manager - Supporting Independence Programme

Phone Number: 01622 646939

Email: lucyann.bett@kent.gov.uk