

Transforming the Lives of Young People -Youth Employment Programme

SUMMARY

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council; leading the way, has developed an innovative Youth Employment Programme to help **TRANSFORM THE LIVES** of some of the most vulnerable young people in our communities, providing career-pathways through **work-experience, employment and apprenticeships**. Delivered across all Directorates to achieve the key priority of **'A Brighter Future for our Children.'**

The Programme is being replicated through Foundation for Jobs, a Partnership between the Council, businesses, education and wider partners, who have pledged:

'To ensure that all young people access appropriate opportunities in education, training and employment to enable them to reach their full potential.'

1. CONTEXT

THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME IS A KEY PRIORITY with concerns over growing numbers of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) or in receipt of Job-Seekers Allowance, including the most vulnerable young people; those with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and young people in our care/previously in our care.

Time spent NEET can have a detrimental effect on confidence and physical/mental health and wellbeing and increase the likelihood of unemployment, low wages, or low quality work in later life. The cost of being NEET between 16 to 18 years is estimated to be around £56,000 in public finance costs and £104,000 in resource costs (lost labour-market potential) over working lifetime.

A strong partnership approach was needed to achieve lasting social-change, so in 2017, the Council embarked on an ambitious Youth Employment Programme that would become a TRAILBLAZER in targeting opportunities towards vulnerable/disadvantaged young people and provide a blueprint for other employers to replicate.

The Strategy and Vision for the programme is integral to Redcar and Cleveland's Corporate Plan and achieving the high priority of 'A Brighter Future for our Children.' A key-action to deliver this priority is to support young people to reach their full potential and get good-quality jobs by:

- Being the **FIRST** local authority in the country to provide paid work-experience opportunities for young people 15 to 18 years
- Building on our existing apprenticeship programme to **DOUBLE** the number of apprentices in 12-months; specifically targeting NEET young people and those in our care/leaving our care, with a starting hourly-rate of £5.00 (believed to be the first local authority to do this)
- Providing supported employment for young people with learning disabilities; moving them closer to/into mainstream employment

All Council Directorates are accountable for delivering the Corporate Plan and achieving the key priorities, with performance monitored and reported quarterly to the Chief Executive and Executive Management Team.

Programme Management sits with the Assistant Director of Resources: Pauline Kavanagh, who manages the Council's Transformation/Workforce Development functions. A dedicated team reporting to Pauline manage the Youth Employment Programme.

The vision and commitment to the programme is **communicated** throughout the Council and to partners by the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and Directors. Management briefings are undertaken in each of the Directorates with managers/their teams to ensure young people get appropriate support during their employment.

An annual Communication Plan is implemented which promotes vacancies, case studies and success stories.

2. SUCCESS FACTORS

In the longer-term, are to contribute to preventing/reducing the number of NEET young people and those claiming Job-Seekers Allowance and numbers are starting to decrease; during the lifetime of the programme there has been a 2 percentage-point drop in 18-24-year-old unemployment (reduction of 205) and a 1.8 percentage-point drop in NEET/Not Known young people.

Wider social and economic outcomes include,

For participants, success is measured by being afforded opportunities:

- to develop new skills/knowledge through work-experience/training;
- for career progression;
- to increase chances of gaining permanent employment/improve future earning power.

For the Council, success is measured by:

- attracting new and diverse talent;
- filling skills gaps;
- employing young people reflective of the Council's customers;
- developing the management/wider skills of existing employees.

Young Person's Paid Work-experience

Evidence from the Careers and Enterprise Company shows that young people who experiences 4 or more careers-related engagement activities with employers during their education are 86% less likely to be unemployed in the future. The Council was keen to provide paid work-experience placements for young people 15-18 years; providing work-patterns to complement full-time studies.

Success

- 25 young people were employed for a 12-month period
- Developing skills/knowledge to better prepare them for future employment
- 80% retained employment for 1-year
- 1 young person has already progressed to a Council apprenticeship
- All leave with a reference and completion certificate



Case study - Daniel Bunting

Daniel was employed by the Coastal Streetscene Team. He was at college, but wasn't sure where he wanted to progress his career and therefore advocates the programme to explore career options, "I started the Council's paid work-experience programme to see if it was something I would enjoy doing later in life."

He really enjoyed his placement so decided to apply for an apprenticeship and was successful; commencing in January 2019.

Daniel's initiative was recognised by his Manager when he spent his first ever wage on a push-bike, allowing him to get to work without relying on family members.

Apprenticeships

The initial aim was to increase the number of apprentices employed within the Council from 35 in March 2017 to 74 by March 2018 and to utilise the levy to achieve wider social-value. We exceeded this target by:

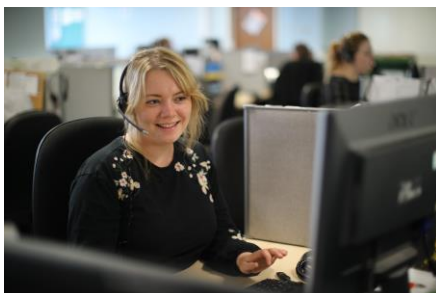
Success

- Employing 93 apprentices (78 new staff)
- 90% are 25 and under
- 27% were previously NEET
- Pledged 10% of apprenticeships for young people in our care/previously in our care
- 68% are still employed by the Council
- 16% of those leaving have progressed to further education/training or alternative employment

All apprenticeship vacancies are advertised with no upper age limit and span level 2 to Master's Degree. The Council provide support with maths/English as a springboard to apprenticeship training. To remove financial barriers the starting hourly-rate is £5, exceeding the apprenticeship minimum hourly-rate £3.70.

Once in post, apprentices are provided with tailored support. All, are attached to a 'Buddy' and the Apprenticeship Team work with managers to ensure that the apprentices' progress is carefully monitored. Our Careers Team provide all apprentices with advice and guidance about next steps/progression.

Case study – Jade Jennison



Jade (who left home at 16) came on the apprenticeship programme and has since advanced to a higher-level apprenticeship. Jade says "I thoroughly enjoyed my apprenticeship with the Council. I was supported by my colleagues and working within Social Services helped me understand the needs of vulnerable people living in the area."

This experience secured Jade a permanent role, "Without being too cheesy - this literally changed my life. I was promoted to Supervisor and I also stepped up into a Team Leader role. I went from sleeping on a sofa, and on people's floors to buying my own house. I genuinely believe that without the support from management and my colleagues, I wouldn't be in the fortunate position that I am in now."

Supported Employment

As a 'Disability Confident Employer,' the Council wanted to adopt a strategic approach to develop employment opportunities for young people/adults with learning disabilities. At the start of the programme, the employment rate for *individuals known to the Council with a long-term Care Plan was 4.4%.

The Council has:

- Developed a model of supported employment that adopts job-carving, job-coaching and in-work support;
- Created opportunities to move individuals from work-experience to part-time supported employment and then to mainstream employment;
- Revised the recruitment process to assess if roles can be job-carved positions before they go to advert.

Success

- Within the first 6-months, employment figures relating to *young people/adults with learning disabilities increased to 6.1% and to date 8% (increase of 20)
- Currently 40 individuals are in supported employment
- 10 of whom are employed by the Council and 30 with other employers

Case Study - Karl Josef Eriksson



Karl started as a Youth Worker with the Council. His confidence grew and he asked to try an alternative career. Karl was successful in gaining a placement with Tesco, where he excelled and applied successfully for a 7.5-hour post. He has since increased his hours and signed off benefits.

Karl says "being in this job has developed my confidence, I am now more confident talking to customers. I have more control over my life and I am more independent."

3. SUSTAINABILITY

The programme is designed to provide sustainable outcomes and to ensure it can be replicated by wider employers.

It is a key-part of the Council's recruitment and workforce development strategy, providing CAREER PATHWAYS for young people, with an intake of apprentices twice each year, a new cohort of young people commencing paid work-experience in February 2019 and supported employment extended to provide a further 10-employment opportunities. The Council's many

case studies demonstrate how the programme has helped young people achieve sustained employment outcomes/career progression to support independence.

The programme provides a blueprint for other employers to replicate and this has started through Foundation for Jobs, a partnership between the Council, businesses, education and wider partners, who have PLEDGED to better prepare young people for the world-of-work and create more job opportunities. This work is being led by the Council's Head of Employability; by producing marketing materials, case studies/endorsements from young people to:

- Highlight the programme as best practice
- Promote the support/grants available to help increase apprenticeships/employment opportunities
- Create a campaign to raise awareness of social-value and its role for vulnerable/disadvantaged young people to encourage others to take positive action

The Supported Employment programme has already been replicated by several employers, including Tesco, Morrisons and local SMEs who have adopted job-carving/supported employment approaches to provide 30 opportunities for learning disabled individuals.

4. PARTNER INVOLVEMENT

This has been integral to the design/delivery of the programme:

- **Foundation for Jobs Partnership** was specifically formed to create opportunities for young people and encourage other employers to offer experiences of work, employment and apprenticeships.
- **Specialist partners**, both within the Council, e.g. the Leaving Our Care Team and external partners, e.g. those working with SEND young people helped design the programme, and identify/promote opportunities to young people who will benefit most.
- **Education partners** work with the Council to identify, respond to and provide sustained progression for young people.
- **Employer, further/higher education partners** provide progression routes from Council programmes to higher-level learning/permanent employment.
- **Internal partners** - the programme is delivered across all Directorates, facilitated through robust internal relationships.

5. PROGRAMME INNOVATION

Social Value is embedded in the programme with the aim of TRANSFORMING THE LIVES of vulnerable/disadvantaged young people; increasing confidence, employability, career-progression and supporting independence and SOCIAL MOBILITY.

The Council needed to think differently about the way we promote opportunities, recruit and support young people.

Promotion - starts early through our education-business links activity, with young people learning about council opportunities through career-profiles, council staff attending careers days and work-experience.

Employment opportunities are promoted through key partners/specialist organisations working with young people and through targeted radio and social-media campaigns.

Recruitment/selection - processes have been designed so that young people are not intimidated by the process; with less formal stages built in to bring out talent and with no interview requirement for positions pledged (10%) to young people in our care.

Support and progression planning:

- Manager are given guidance on how to provide appropriate support
- All young people have a Buddy
- An Apprenticeship Forum has been implemented to facilitate peer support
- Regular progress reviews are undertaken
- Careers advice and guidance is provided to plan next steps/progression
- Young people can apply for Council vacancies up to 3-months after leaving

6. FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Has been essential to developing/shaping the future of the programme, including:

- Setting up an Apprenticeship Forum who meet once every quarter to feed into the design/continuous improvement
- Regular feedback captured through formal progress-reviews with young people/managers, including exit interviews
- Focus-groups to capture feedback on specific topics, e.g. careers/employability support
- Partner forums: to share best practice through Employer Groups, Careers Guidance Leads and Youth Employment Initiatives
- Feedback from schools, academies and local colleges

This has informed changes to our recruitment process, including withdrawing assessment centres, the introduction of interview application guidance and removal of education entry requirements; providing maths/English qualifications as a springboard to an apprenticeship.

Amanda Skelton, Chief Executive of the Council says,

“We are fully committed to providing a brighter future for children in our Borough and the scheme provides a personalised approach to young people by giving them all the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to successfully secure paid-employment.

The scheme prioritises the most vulnerable in society to ensure there is opportunity for all. The results so far have been hugely encouraging and we have had terrific feedback from the young people themselves.

We will continue to develop the programme to ensure it remains relevant and particularly for those young people who find it difficult to secure employment.”