

10 November 2015		ITEM: 7
Children's Service's Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Pathways For Youth Employment And Work Experience		
Report of: Councillor J Halden, Chairman of the Children's Service's Committee		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Accountable Head of Service: Michelle Lucas, Head of Department		
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Service's		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: To review the offer of work experience in the Borough, its effectiveness on preparing young people for job opportunities, and areas of reform.		

Executive Summary

Thurrock's economic growth and ease of access to the city means that job opportunities here for young people are almost unrivalled. This makes it even more vital to ensure that young people are ready for the world of work with the correct skills to make sure that their opportunities are fully realised.

Work experience can be very patchy across the country– with provision ranging from comprehensive and full work place preparation, to limited or no provision at all, or some examples of having non-traditional work experience being skilfully incorporated into the curriculum.

The purpose of this group, set up as a Task and Finish Group under the Children's Service's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, is to try and disseminate best practice across Thurrock and create the right environment to ensure that quality work experience is actively contributing to the future prospects of our students.

The Task and Finish Group was primarily concerned with the 11-16 age bracket which is prior to 6th form / college education and the common age of taking on part time work. The group took evidence from local businesses, educational providers, and included the Thurrock Youth Cabinet in all meetings of the group. The group was comprised of Cllr James Halden (Conservative, Homesteads) as Chair, Cllr Graham Snell (UKIP, Stifford Clays), and Cllr Steve Liddiard (Labour, Tilbury St Chads).

Pathways into Employment report, forward by Councillor James Halden LL.M,
Chairman of the Children's Services Committee

Pathways into Employment are vital – this initiative can break issues such as generational poverty and help to drive forward the future economy that we all rely on.

Growing up in Thurrock is a great privilege when you consider not just our regeneration opportunity verses relative affordable property prices of being a home county, but our proximity to our capital that boasts a world of employment as one of the world's leading cities. Thurrock students live in an area of great opportunity, it is our role as civic leaders to ensure that this opportunity is unlocked and therefore this working group was formed. Thurrock students deserve far more than a work experience placement that entails “making the tea, for the guy who makes the coffee”.

Work experience provides not just a vital insight into employment, but can also provide valuable perspective for students as they select the options and courses that will affect their education and life. In addition, work experience at a young age can provide important grounding into good professional habits. It is clear that if these ideas are put across for students at a younger age, they will better help individuals shape decisions and encourage positive outcomes. It is not the case that work experience should be consigned to post 16 education.

The aim of this report is to refocus on work experience. Due to the fact that it is not mandatory and that it is not given a final academic grade, it has been seen as less essential. By holding up examples of best practise and praising great offers in the Education awards, we can share ideas. By helping students shape their own experience and by offering great work experience packages as an award for contributions to Thurrock, we can encourage a borough wide conversation about its relevance - if it is done well! By making sure we talk to parents about unique offers in schools so they can hold them to account, we can ensure that no provider overlooks this key work

This report, I hope, will launch a renewed appreciation for good work experience and how we must stick to its improvement in order to make that vital link between Thurrock students and Thurrock's potential.

1. Recommendation(S):

- 1.1 That work experience offers became a part of the published admissions information given to parents and students when deciding upon a school.**
- 1.2 Work experience quality to become a part of the education awards and the business awards.**
- 1.3 Thurrock Council offers a small amount of premium provision work experience places as a part of a Borough wide award for young people's community service.**
- 1.4 Youth Cabinet and Thurrock Youth Services to support schools and young people who wish to shape their own work experience offer.**
- 1.5 Thurrock Council continues to work with Ensign Buses and C2C regarding the associated travel costs of work experience.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 In late 2014, Cllr Halden and Cllr Morris Cook brought the issue of Work Experience to the Children's Service's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, after it was initially discussed in the previous municipal year with the late Cllr Hale. However with each school having the flexibility to set their own programme, it was decided that the subject was far too vast for a single committee debate. Given the value of work experience, it was suggested and accepted that it should be the subject to a full T&F.
- 2.2 During the first meeting in February 2015, it was decided that the Chair should write to certain schools and businesses that offered the most diverse view of the local education/employment market to gather evidence regarding local provision. The partners written to were – The Port of Tilbury, High House Production Park, DP World, Lakeside, Palmers College, Gable Hall, the Gateway Academy, Grays Convent, and the Ockendon Academy.
- 2.3 It was also decided that the Youth Cabinet should be heavily involved to get their skills and enthusiasm involved with tangible governing experience.
- 2.4 Schools responded positively; from Palmers sending their Deputy Head in person, Grays Convent writing in, and Gable Hall Head Dr Asong talking on the phone with the Chair. The business feedback was very disappointing with no one responding formally. It was suggested that not only to write back to these businesses, but to also approach them in person where possible.
- 2.5 Schools have flexibility in regards to the provision of initiatives that support the teaching of employment skills and so on.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Committee stated that quality work experience was clearly very valuable in terms of giving insight into working life and an introduction into qualities like punctuality and professionalism. However it was also agreed that work placements where you “make the tea for the guy who makes the coffee” offers little benefit. Sadly such an image can devalue the general impression of work experience and therefore the perception of its usefulness.
- 3.2 Committee agreed that Thurrock students have a tremendous advantage given the growth agenda and opportunities in London. A concern was raised that some young people, certainly those from poorer backgrounds, can at times have lower expectations for what the local economy has to offer, maybe due to historical employment patterns locally. Good insights to working via work experience can help raise ambition and therefore outcomes.
- 3.3 Committee also disagreed with the Wolfe Report which stated that pre16 work experience offered little benefit. Quality work experience compliments education certainly at an early age where it can provide insight into life beyond that education. It was mentioned that working environment skills can help shape a young person’s outlook and expectations at a time where good habits are easiest to learn and this insight can inform their GCSE and A-level “options” sections. The more links that can be made between education and employment must surely be a positive thing for the future.
- 3.4 The Youth Cabinet representatives were invaluable. They offered key anecdotal evidence, from one young person who’s work experience was not fulfilling because it was confined only to retail, one whom wanted a work experience offer but it was not available, and one where the young person was supported by their school and Thurrock Council officers to activity go out and find their own placement. It is clear that having a lack of certainly of a quality and valuable experience is a real issue, and one that you would not tolerate if it was something such as not knowing a schools sport or extra circular provision.
- 3.5 The issue of work experience ranked top of a young person’s ballot as an important issue effecting them 2 years in a row. The desire for quality work experience amongst young people is clear.
- 3.6 It was discussed that positive work has been done with Ensign Buses to make transport more affordable for young people in Thurrock, but the cost can still be prohibitive, certainly if we want more ambitious placements. In addition, it did also seem hat some providers may have been confused over the issue that Thurrock Council could cover the cost of all health and safety checks and insurance costs.

4. Delivery Plan

- 4.1 In order to address the issue of provision being patchy across different institutions, committee feels that the offer of work experience should be a part of the information that parents and students are given at the admissions stage, so it can form a part of the total offer that schools use to compete with each other for students and are judged on like sporting facilities, exam results and so on, which ultimately drives up quality.
- 4.2 To disseminate best practice across the Borough, quality work experience placements should form a part of the education awards and business awards. Council can use a judge based matrix similar to other awards to quantify what value for money and quality work experience looks like. Council can also compile a booklet on best practise from across Thurrock for dissemination.
- 4.3 To help promote the values of work experience and community service amongst young people, the council should offer a few placements with extremely high quality providers who also offer further pastoral support post placement as a reward based on community service carried out by young people. This would have a limited cost per placement but would kick off a great Borough wide competition which would raise both the profile of the good young people do in the community, but also underscore what a value work experience can be.
- 4.4 As a part of making sure the Youth Cabinet's experience and insight aids their peers, the Thurrock youth team will assist the Youth Cabinet efforts to work with schools for those young people who want to shape their own work experience. This can include offer experience with setting up a placement based on interests or potential carers routs, to making sure health and safety checks and other issues and options are addressed speedily. It is vital that this work experience is valuable i.e. not working for a family business in name, but in reality not doing any work.
- 4.5 The Chair undertook to write to C2C and Ensign and ask if they could offer the free transport for a limited 2 week slot for students in need during work experience as a part of their corporate responsibility.

5. Reasons For Recommendation:

- 5.1 To fulfil the ambition of making work experience that can help lead to meaning full employment a known and clear quality, and to foster an environment where great work experience is held up as an example that all providers need to aspire to for their students.

6. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 6.1 The Youth Cabinet have been involved in each meeting, and this report will be presented to the Youth Cabinet, prior to going to committee for debate and a vote.

6.2 The committee was entirely cross party having been comprised of one Conservative Councillor, one UKIP Councillor and one Labour Councillor.

7. Impact On Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance And Community Impact

7.1 this is in line with our commitment of making sure that Thurrock is a place of opportunity for all, and helping to get young people into a position where they can make the best use of local employment opportunities.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager

There are no direct financial implications. Work is underway to negotiate with local bus companies affordable arrangements for students to travel to work placements.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding

There are no direct legal implications to this report. Work experience is not a legal requirement for schools and colleges but is covered by good practice guidance on the on 16-19 study programmes: work experience last updated on 17 March 2015 and published on the www.gov.uk website.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
Community Development Officer

The quality of work experience opportunities for school-age children across Thurrock is variable. Opportunities to improve the offer are outlined in this report with specific support to the Youth Cabinet to enable young people to shape their own work experience in the future.

8.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

9. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

10. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Supporting Pathways to Work – Task & Finish Report

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