

Contents

Chair's Introduction	5
Introduction	7
Membership of the Review Panel	8
Terms of Reference	8-10
Activity Timeline	11
Background Information	12
Results of the Task and Finish Group	19
Suggested Recommendations	20-21

Appendices

Appendix 1: Minutes from the February 2015 meeting of the Review Panel	23-26
Appendix 2: Documentation from Grays Convent High School	27-30
Appendix 3: Documentation from Palmers College	31-32
Appendix 4: Minutes from the August 2015 meeting of the Review Panel.	33-38

Chair's Introduction

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.



Councillor James Halden
Chair of Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People

This page has been left intentionally blank

Introduction

The topic of Supporting Pathways into Work for young people was brought to the fore by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which wanted to explore and investigate the support given to young people seeking Work Experience by both Thurrock Council and its partners.

The Aim of the Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People Task & Finish Group:

“To examine how Thurrock Council and its partners currently support young people into the workplace, particularly through teaching employability skills in education and the work experience offer in Thurrock. The group will make recommendations on how value can be added to the current offer.”

What is Work Experience?

The term 'work experience' generally refers to a specified period of time that a person spends with your business, during which they have an opportunity to learn directly about working life and the working environment.

Some work experience positions offer people the chance to try their hand at particular tasks, others simply provide an opportunity to watch and learn. The nature, length and arrangements for work experience vary.

Membership of the Review Panel

Councillor James Halden (Chair) – Conservative
Councillor Steve Liddard – Labour
Councillor Graham Snell – UKIP

Terms of Reference

We agreed that our key aims were:

- 1.** To build a clearer picture of the realities of work placements in Thurrock and evaluate how young people are being equipped with the necessary skills to enter the workplace.
- 2.** To examine how Thurrock could increase the employability skills of young people of secondary school age in Thurrock so that they are ready for work.
- 3.** To review the quality of work experience placements in Thurrock and identify opportunities for improvement.
- 4.** To consider how Thurrock could increase the number of young people who are undertaking work experience placements of some form at Key Stage 4/5.
- 5.** To liaise with key stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of current work placement and employability skills education in schools at preparing young people for the local workplace.
- 6.** To engage with local employers and industry leaders to determine how Thurrock can better support young people into the workplace.
- 7.** To produce a report of findings in respect of current strategies and make recommendations on how value can be added to the current offer, feeding in the outcomes of the review to existing action plans and the work of the Thurrock Education Alliance

Issues in- Scope

There will be 2 specific areas examined as part of this review:

- 1) Employability Skills in Schools
- 2) Work Experience

These areas have been identified as where a review could add most value and avoid duplicating other work already underway.

Employment skills

The types of employability skills that will be considered are:

- Confidence building
- Reading, writing and numeracy skills
- Financial understanding
- Personal development
- Self-responsibility/attitude/work ethic

Key issues

- Is there a shared understanding of what is meant by employability skills?
- What is the baseline for current levels of employability skills?
- What is the ambition/goal for levels of employability skills?
- How do we measure employability skills?
- What type of community work can help provide employability skills?
- What is the role of schemes such as – Duke of Edinburgh in helping young people to be ready for work?
- What is best practice nationally?

Work Experience

This review could explore how to encourage schools, parents businesses and young people to undertake work experience of some form. This may explore the different types of work experience beyond the traditional 2 week block placement at KS4.

Key issues:

- What is the evidence of the benefits of work experience placements?
- How can schools, parents and young people be convinced of the importance of offering their students the opportunity of work experience?
- Are there alternative forms of work experience placements that are more flexible that can be provided?
- How can the Council & partners assist with this?
- What are trends nationally?

This review could feed into the action plan for delivery of the 'Ambition, Achievement and Aspiration' Strategy developed as part of the Thurrock Education Alliance work, arising from the Education Commission report, published in 2013.

Key stakeholders

- Secondary Schools/Academies
- Palmers College & South Essex College
- Job Centre Plus
- Thurrock Careers
- Learning & Skills Team
- Voluntary and Community Sector
- LEP – Employability and Skills Sub-Group (led by Essex County Council)
- 11-19 Strategy Group
- Children and Young People's Partnership
- Youth Cabinet

Activity Timeline

(subject to change as review progresses)

The group undertook the following activities to reach their recommendations:

<p>End of November 2014/ Early December 2015</p>	<p>Group Leaders to nominate Members to the Task & Finish Group.</p>
<p>January 2015</p>	<p>Officers to conduct research and prepare information pack for Members.</p>
<p>February 2015</p>	<p>Receive and scrutinise information pack. Agree Terms of Reference</p>
<p>March/May</p>	<p>Evidence gathering with key stakeholders. Organise Stakeholder event include Portfolio holder witness session.</p>
<p>August 2015</p>	<p>Gather and review evidence and make recommendations. Final meeting of review panel to prepare final report for Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>
<p>November 2015</p>	<p>Report back to Children’s Overview and Scrutiny</p>

The activities undertaken were prepared and presented to the group at their meetings to enable all parties to participate in discussions and agreed to a way forward.

Background Information

Work Experience

Work experience has undergone significant change over the last four years. With a change of central government the statutory duty to provide work experience was removed and schools were given the opportunity to decide whether to continue with work experience or remove it from the timetable for young people aged 14-19.

The decision to remove the duty to provide work experience was based to a certain extent on an independent review carried out by Professor Alison Wolf (2011). The review identified that there was little evidence of work experience (for 14-16 year olds) having a positive impact in supporting the progression of young people into employment. However, the report did conclude that “genuine work experience” for 16-19 year olds had significant benefits in preparing young people for the challenges of work and enabled employers to identify young people with talent for their organisations.

Thurrock, like many other Local Authorities, saw a very mixed picture emerge, with some schools continuing to offer work experience and others offering alternative work related activities – some of which included placing a charge on parents who requested a work experience placement to pay for the mandatory health and safety checks for any work experience placement a young person undertakes.

In September 2013, the provider of work experience opportunities in Thurrock went into receivership. The Learning and Skills team in the Council were approached by the Principal of The Ockendon Academy to offer work experience opportunities as part of an emerging traded offer to schools which includes impartial information advice and guidance and support to recruit apprenticeships and other work related activities.

In response to this request, Thurrock Council has provided Health and Safety assurance for students to participate in work experience placements for the past year. This activity provides a source of income to Thurrock Council and enhances the school curriculum to prepare local young people for employment. Eleven institutions commissioned the work experience service in its first year (13/14). It is anticipated that 14 institutions will be utilising the service from September 2014.

The latest guidance released around work related activities states

“Work experience is vital for young people and employers. It bridges the gap between school, college and work, helps young people make decisions about their future and develop new skills, and gives employers the chance to spot good new recruits”.

**Skills Minister, Matthew Hancock October
2013**

This support for work experience has been welcomed and echoed by local employers who have stated that they identify potential apprentices from the young people who undertake work experience within their companies.

What does Thurrock do?

The Learning and Skills team provides a service to local Young People as follows:

- 1.** Works with partners to design/deliver short programmes to enable lower skills Young People to prepare for apprenticeships. The short programmes range from 2-12 weeks and comprise sector specific training, employability skills training and work placement that should lead to employment. The programmes delivered over the past six months+, have focused on Thurrock's key priority sectors. NEET Young People feedback that they are unable to afford to engage on the programmes on account of transport and food costs. We secured payment of transport and food on some of the programmes which slightly increased participation and outcomes.
- 2.** Provides 1-1 support to Young People with the delivery of employability skills training. We work on their CV, job applications, practice interview skills and provide support until they secure employment with training, this can include volunteering.
- 3.** Works with schools and employers to create meaningful work experience placements for Young People. A suite of documents is provided to each school/academy to enable robust documentation for Ofsted to measure quality of the experience.
- 4.** Provides 1-1 support for care leavers (16-24 years) to move into full time education or apprenticeships. This includes the delivery of literacy, numeracy, employability and life skills training before work experience placements/volunteering and ultimately secure employment. An effective cross directorate partnership reviews progress/services being accessed, every two weeks. Since Apr 14, 5 care leavers have secured employment (they continue to receive support so this is sustainable).
- 5.** We work closely with partners to create internships for local LDD residents (16-24 years) that are keen to be employed.

6. Thurrock Careers deliver information, advice and guidance to Young People to secure employment.
7. Youth Activities deliver informal sessions to engage the disengaged. During these sessions, they are helped to understand their motivations, how to make positive changes, develop aspirations to succeed++
8. In addition, we work with employers to create apprenticeship placements. We remove as many barriers as possible for employers to recruit local people by writing role desc/person specs, adverts, advise on apprenticeship frameworks, training providers, success rates, delivery models, provide CV's, sifting service or support on interview panels, advice on wage subsidies etc.
9. We have secured a Partnership Agreement with JobCentre Plus to reduce NEET in Thurrock.

Institutions choosing Thurrock for Work Experience

There are currently 508 students placed or waiting to be placed via Thurrock Council's Support Programme. These placements are shown within the table below and broken down via each organisation.

Institutions	No. of students placed (or to be placed)
Ormiston Park Academy	22
The Ockendon Academy	180
Ockendon Studio School	38
William Edwards School	9
St Clere's School	190
Princes Trust	42
Pupil Support Service	7
Gable Hall School	6
Stanford and Corringham 6 th Form	14

Achievements to date

- Promotion of the service at partnership meetings has resulted in more take up of the service.
- A set of documents to enable education institutions to provide (and evidence to Ofsted) outcomes.

- Utilising a work experience student at Thurrock Council to enhance the content of the student forms.
- Efficient and effective communication between the Work Experience Co-ordinator and partner contact
- Approximately 280 local employers regularly provide work experience placements, across all sectors.
- Thurrock Council leading the way in providing work experience placements in a range of different directorates.

Challenges for Thurrock

- Thurrock Council being reliant on one person to provide assurance for work experience placements
- Clashing work experience dates between institutions
- Continual need to promote and secure a range of placements as demand grows
- Sector specific engagement e.g. more opportunities in logistics sector to take advantage of the regeneration opportunities locally.

This page has been left intentionally blank

The Results from the Task and Finish Group

Participants included representatives from Educators, the Youth Cabinet, senior officers and Members. It was discussed at the first meeting the support offered by that the Council and its Partners and these were presented to Members within the information pack.

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

Throughout both meetings of the Review Panel, open conversations took place on the types of Work Experience and Work Placements on offer to young people within borough in relation to Work Experience. The Panel extended invitations to educators and local businesses

Following meetings of the Review Panel the following key points were identified:

- 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;
- Following discussions with the Youth Cabinet it was felt the issue of work experience ranked top as an important issue effecting young people 2 years in a row. The desire for quality work experience amongst young people was clear;
- The Review Panel felt that the offer of Work Experience should be included as part of the information that parents and students are given at the admissions stage;

Suggested Recommendations

The aim of this review was to look at ways young people within the borough were supported in the workplace.

The Review Panel considered the following recommendations:

Recommendation One

It was identified that by including the types work experience was offered by schools at the admission stage may assist parents and students when deciding amongst which schools to visit and apply for.

Recommendation 1:
That work experience offers became a part of the published admissions information given to parents and students when deciding upon a school.

Recommendation Two & Three

Recommendation 2:
Work experience quality to become a part of the education awards and the business awards.

Members felt that schools and colleges who offered quality work experience to students should be acknowledged, supported and awarded for their work.

Recommendation 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

Recommendation Four

Recommendation 4:
Youth Cabinet and Thurrock Youth Services to support schools and young people who wish to shape their own work experience offer.

The Review Panel agreed that having spoken with Members of the Youth Cabinet and hearing of their experiences; that they would be the best people to support their peers when it came to deciding what type of work experience to undertake.

Recommendation Five

It was anonymously agreed by the Review Panel that Thurrock Council work with its partners at Ensign Buses and C2C in relation travel costs of work experience.

Recommendation 5:
Thurrock Council continues to work with Ensign Buses and C2C regarding the associated travel costs of work experience.

This page has been left intentionally blank

Appendix 1

Notes of the meeting of the Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People Review held on 24 February 2015 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors James Halden and Graham Snell.

Apologies: Councillors Simon Wootton and Steve Liddiard

In attendance: James Henderson – Youth Cabinet Representative
Sue Davis – Assistant Principal, Palmers College
Kenna-Victoria Martin – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

1. Election of Chair

Councillor Halden accepted the role of Chair of the Pathways into Work for Young People Review panel

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest; however Councillor Halden informed those present that his sister was a member of the William Palmer Trust.

4. Terms of Reference

Members noted the terms of reference.

RESOLVED:

That Members of the Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People Review agree the terms of reference as set out within the agenda.

5. Consideration of Information Pack

The Chair of the Review Panel lead the discussion, informing those present that the idea to carry out an in-depth piece of work was thought of by the late Councillor Hale. It was explained that the Task and Finish Group was agreed at the November meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it was felt that it was important to have Members of the Youth Cabinet involved as they could provide firsthand accounts as to the work placements they had experienced.

Members carried on with discussions and panel considered Logistical issues, for example it was mentioned that Ensign Bus produced a student travel card and communication skills, it was discussed how unfortunately it seemed that young people lacked written communication skills which ended up with bad grammar. The Panel thanked officers for the work put into producing the information pack, however asked that financial information be included within any further reports as it mentioned within the pack that some work placements may occur a charge.

During discussions the Review Panel was informed of the work that Palmers Sixth Form College do to support their students, once students left the college, staff at Palmers contact students to find out what they are doing since leaving college, whether it was confirming the university they had been accepted into or the job they have secured.

It was agreed by all, that work placements needed to be meaningful, so that students actually learned as to whether they felt the career choice was for them and were not just required to carry out filling jobs. The Panel further discussed challenges that they may face and it was highlighted that it was important to manage the skills that students and young people learnt to enable them to transfer their skills into the work place.

The Assistant Principal of Palmers Sixth Form College informed the Panel that the College held career fairs, where they invite local business as well as law firms based in London. Members were advised that students were

encouraged to stop, talk and engage with people from the different firms to gain a better understanding of what they could expect from working within the different industries.

RESOLVED:

That Members noted the Information Pack.

6. Witness Day

The Review Panel discussed the possibility of holding two witness sessions, one for employers to see the skills that they require from young people joining the work place and the second with educators to find out what skills are being taught to young people.

Members highlighted the businesses and educators they wished to contact, to explain as to what it was they were investigating and to seek feedback as to what they do. The organisations were:

- Port of Tilbury
- High House Production Park
- DP World
- Lakeside
- Palmers Sixth Form College
- Gable Hall
- The Gateway Academy
- Grays Convent Secondary School
- Ockendon Academy

RESOLVED:

That the Chair of the Review Panel writes to local businesses and schools to seek feedback as to work placements.

The meeting finished at 7.50.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact

Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

This page has been left intentionally blank

Appendix 2

Grays Convent High School - Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People.

Transferable skills and employability skills taught at Grays Convent School (we have students aged 11-16)

We follow the National Curriculum and therefore cover the following transferable skills particularly within PSHEC and Careers sessions. Students use the National Careers Service website.

- Communication
- Leadership
- Organisation
- Problem-solving
- Teamwork
- Using initiative
- Taking risks
- Adapting to change
- Handling uncertainty
- Financial capability
- Confidence
- IT skills
- Creativity
- Public speaking
- Negotiation

Employability skills

- Application of ICT
- Self-management
- Business awareness
- Problem-solving
- Communication
- Literacy
- Teamwork

These are embedded into most subjects i.e. in English, students prepare and deliver presentations taking into account the needs of the audience and in Mathematics students tackle real life financial problems.

In addition, as a faith school we carry out a considerable amount of charity work whereby students plan an activity, promote it and raise the money. They also plan and deliver Masses and Assemblies.

In terms of Careers Information and Guidance, we have an external Careers Adviser for 2 days per week. Students have experience of the following:

Year 8

Initial thoughts about your future and possible careers.

Year 9

Use of diagnostic careers software and advice regarding options. Personal careers interviews take place. Involvement in Thurrock's Next Top Boss.

Years 10 & 11

Personal interview by the external careers adviser, introduction to the National Careers Service, mock interview day and preparation of CVs (external local businessmen and business women interview our students), recognition of transferability of skills. All our Y10 students attend the Opportunity Thurrock event.

Work Experience

We do not currently have students participating in work experience due to the rise in the age that students can take up paid employment and the pressure to ensure all students achieve the best GCSE grades possible.

Duke of Edinburgh Award

We have a large number of participants who greatly benefit in term of their development of problem-solving and teambuilding skills. Many achieve Bronze Award and some go on to Silver.

Appendix 3

Palmer's College – Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People.

Through the use of employability skills framework students are provided with the opportunity to develop their attitudes, skills, knowledge and experience in preparation for entering the workplace.

Attitudes

Self-perception - Motivation, confidence, positive attitude, self-belief, pride, positive body language, self-expression and willingness to learn. Opportunities to develop these skills are provided through activities such as: weekly tutorials, group events/activities, 1:1 meetings with tutors, preparation for employment workshops and briefing for students/parents, work experience, volunteering, mentoring programmes, and following the college behavioural policy – Respect, Effort, and Pride.

Attitude towards progression- demonstrating an understanding of career options, progression routes, and job roles that are connected to or relevant to vocational and academic subjects, showing aspiration, motivation to progress, setting career goals, enhanced awareness of job market, willingness to seek advice and guidance. Opportunities to develop these attitudes arise through careers events (internal and external) careers tutorial sessions, preparation for employment workshops and briefing for students/parents, work experience, volunteering, guest speaker programmes, industry visits. 1:1 meetings with careers staff and through the college Work Experience/Volunteering/Employer Engagement Team.

Skills

Self-Management - skills including the ability to manage time effectively, dress and behave appropriately, accept responsibility, monitor and evaluate progress, set goals, be punctual and reliable, overcome challenges, take constructive feedback, demonstrate flexibility. Opportunities to progress these skills are provided through activities such as the college daily schedule, practical activities, preparation for employment workshops and briefing for students/parents, lessons, trips and visits, work experience, volunteering, 1:1 tutor mentoring, Student Support Services, Trips and visits, guest speakers, Your Life Fair.

Problem Solving Skills- use of creative thinking to develop solutions, generate ideas, analyse facts and situations, identify problems, find creative solutions, prioritise, plan, reflect and use initiative. Opportunities for development arise through team building activities, lesson activities, trips and visits, work experience,

volunteering, meeting coursework deadlines, self-study, seeking help where appropriate.

Team Working – demonstrating awareness and respect of others including the ability to listen, contribute and provide feedback, leadership, co-operation, negotiation, diplomacy, working towards a common goal, peer feedback and constructive feedback. Opportunities to develop these skills arise through lessons, workshops, practical team building activities, work experience, volunteering, Voluntary Service programme, clubs and activities, team games.

Knowledge

Practical use of Maths – able to represent, analyse and interpret a situation using maths including use of calculating, estimating quantities, relating numbers in a business context and applying formulae. Opportunities for development provided through workshops and competitions, tutorials and lessons highlighting the practical use of maths in the working world.

Practical use of ICT – Use of a range of ICT systems to find, select, develop and present and communicate information including use of word processing, spread sheet packages, the internet, file management, telephones and mobile devices. Opportunities for development include workshops, tutorials, use of ICT suite, production of coursework, tutorials and lessons highlighting the practical use of ICT in the working world.

Communication and Literacy - communication skills including oral presentation, verbal understanding, following instructions, writing accurately, comprehension, writing clearly, presenting facts orderly and questioning. Opportunities for development include workshops, tutorials, team working activities, guest speaker and network meetings, preparation for employment workshops and briefing for students/parents, clubs and activities, team games, enterprise events, careers fairs (internal and external), CV workshops and 1:1 sessions, interview skills workshops and mock interviews, work shadowing, work experience, insight days, volunteering, Voluntary Service Programme, Your Life Fair, production of coursework, tutorials and lessons highlighting the practical use of literacy in the working world.

Business Awareness – understanding the key drivers for business success such as profit, recognising needs of customer, customer service. Opportunities provided through guest speaker events, workshops, careers events lessons, enterprise activities, preparation for employment workshops and briefing for students/parents.

Experience – Students have the opportunity to improve their attitudes, skills and knowledge through experience gained by participating in:

- Competitions
- Enterprise events
- Guest Speaker Programmes
- Lessons highlighting numeracy/literacy and employability skills
- Trips and visits
- Independent Volunteering opportunities (regular on-site presence of local volunteering agency)
- College Voluntary Service Programme
- Course related work experience programmes including 2 week placements/ one day per week placements/ ½ day placements/ holiday work experience programmes/ paid work during summer holiday period.
- Part-time jobs
- Internal and external Careers events
- Independent work experience opportunities
- Employability skills workshops
- Guided tutorials
- Team working events
- Preparation for employment workshops and briefing for students/parents
- Work shadowing and insight days
- Mentoring programmes
- Employer recruitment presentations and workshops

This page has been left intentionally blank

Appendix 4

Minutes of the Meeting of the Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People Review Panel held on 27 August 2015 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors James Halden, Steve Liddiard and Graham Snell

In attendance: Sonny Tipping, Representative of the Youth Cabinet
Sophie Bourne, Representative of the Youth Cabinet
Georgina Contreras, Representative of the Youth Cabinet
Patrick Kielty, Participation Officer
Michele Lucas, Learning & Skills Manager
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People Review, held on 24 February 2015, were approved as a correct record; subject to the correction of a typographical error.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business

Councillor Halden informed the Panel that although they had received feedback from the Schools they had send correspondence too; the Panel had not received feedback from the businesses within the borough. He continued by asking the Panel if they felt it would be necessary to have comments from the business.

It was commented by Councillor Snell that he felt it was important to hear back from businesses and for them to contribute to the Panel as young people undertaking work experience were the future employees of local businesses.

The Panel agreed to contact the four businesses again to seek their feedback as to what skills they look for when taking on students for work placements. Members of the panel also agreed to contact different business personally to enquire how they support work placements and what they look for when employing students for work experience.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Feedback from Educators

The Chair of the Review Panel opened the item for debate and comments from those present, by asking for clarification on what was meant by “We do not currently have students participating in work experience due to the rise in the age that students can take up paid employment and the pressure to ensure all students achieve the best GCSE grades possible” from the feedback received from Grays Convent.

The Learning & Skills Manager explained that the government had commissioned Professor Alison Wolfe to look in to work placements. A report was realised which stated that work experience was better suited for post 16year olds and did not truly benefit young people prior to 16 years old. However there were a range of schools within the borough who encouraged their students to embark on work experience.

RESOLVED:

That the feedback from both Grays Convent and Palmers Sixth Form College be included within the report from the Review Panel.

5. Discussion with Youth Cabinet

The Review Panel began discussions by enquiring as to whether it was felt that work experience or placements being offered were relevant for what young people wanted to do.

A representative of the Youth Cabinet started by informing the panel that she had not been offered to complete work experience as yet and she had recently finish year 10. She stated that having GCSEs even if they were all A* were not necessarily going to assist young people when looking for employment as they were asked what if any, experience they had.

It was discussed that young people completing work experience were given the opportunity not only to put their skills they had learnt at school into practice but

also to learn life skills such as professionalism, time keeping skills and working with adults; by learning these skills would assist with boosting confidence within young people.

The Learning & Skills Manager informed the panel that Thurrock Council worked hard with different employers and as an employer to get the most out of work experience for young people.

Councillor Halden suggested that it may be an idea to include the types of work experience schools offered as part of their admission criteria. This would give parents the option to take work experience into account when looking at secondary school places.

Representatives of the Youth Cabinet highlighted to those present that work experience also taught young people independence; as they didn't have their peers with them. It was explained that at school it was easy seek advice from friends and to ask them for the answers, were as during a work placement you would have to use your own incisive when working on a project.

Councillor Liddiard enquired as to whether young people were inspired to work in the city, as London was only a half an hour train journey away from the borough. He continued by stating that the type of work experience on offer would be different from what was offered locally. Representatives of the Youth Cabinet notified Members that within schools young people were being asked why they would want to work away from Thurrock when there was so much going on to promote the borough.

The panel were advised that it would be helpful for students to be informed of other areas around the borough for example Southend-On-Sea; as this could them to make an informed decision and assist when making the decision of where to complete any work placements.

The Chair of the review panel, sought as to whether it would be possible to include awards for those who completed work placements to an exceptional standard with the Educational Award or if Thurrock Council could hold awards for young people as well as local businesses should they secure apprenticeships or work from completing their work placement.

During discussions it was debated as to if schools set students a project at the beginning of year 10 to find their own work experience with steps to follow; whether it would encourage young people to take responsibly for their work placements. The Learning & Skills Manager contributed to the discussion by informing those present that some schools already encourage their young people to seek their own work placements; this was usually through parents or family friends.

The Youth Cabinet Representatives indicated that setting a project for students to find their own work experience had the potential to work as students were used to working to deadlines for coursework. It was further highlighted that it would be useful for young people if they had someone to talk to who could inspire them as they would have already completed work experience themselves.

The Review Panel were notified that the Learning & Skills, School Improvement team travelled all over the borough and London completing Health and Safety checks of all work experience placements and a lot of the schools were also involved in Thurrock next top boss.

Representatives of the Youth Cabinet agreed that however a package of work placements were organised, all schools should provide the same opportunities to young people; instead of their being a mix of school that do or do not carry out work placements.

RESOLVED:

That the suggestions following the Review Panels discussion be included within the report which is taken back to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6. Next Steps

Councillor Halden suggested that following the Review Panels discussions the points highlighted should be considered as recommendations for the main report:

- That Schools work experience programmes be included as criteria at an Admission stage;
- That awards be given at the Education Awards for Schools and businesses who offer work experience and for supporting students throughout the process;
- That Thurrock Council seek to organise a scholarship to support young people undertaking work placements.

It was agreed by Members that the report of the Review Panel be scrutinised by the Youth Cabinet prior to it being presented at the October meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Review Panel be considered at by the Youth Cabinet at their meeting on Wednesday 7 October prior to it being presented to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting finished at 8.13 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact

Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk