

Personnel Panel – 26 January 2010**BACKING YOUNG BRITAIN IN THE SOUTH HAMS****Report of the Personnel Manager**

Statutory Powers: Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and Local Government Act 2000

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Purpose

To inform Personnel Panel of the proposal to launch a Backing Young Britain in the South Hams scheme that is designed to offer young people not engaged in education, employment or training (NEETs) the opportunity to gain work experience with Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Personnel Panel notes and supports the initiative to launch the backing Young Britain in the South Hams scheme.

Background

The Department for Children, Schools and families has identified as part of its Every Child Matters initiative that reducing the proportion of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training is a priority. According to the government, being a NEET is a major predictor of later unemployment, low income, teenage motherhood, depression and poor physical health.

The key to tackling the problems associated with NEETs involves a joined-up approach by the relevant government agencies and local employers. It is acknowledged that employers in the public sector and emergency services can play a key role in facilitating opportunities for NEETS.

Figures released by the Local Government Association show that in the first quarter of 2009, nearly 1 million young people were classified as NEETs. This was the highest figure recorded since records began.

Within the South Hams, the Member Champion for Children and Young People, Cllr Baverstock is seeking to establish a programme of work experience for NEETs within the public sector and emergency services.

The Proposal

It is proposed to establish a partnership with JobCentrePlus and Connexions to identify NEETs between the ages of 18 and 24 who wish to volunteer for work experience.

The period of work experience will usually be between 3 and 4 months, during which time the usual state benefits will continue to be paid to the volunteer.

A mutual effort will be made to provide transport to and from work and the employer will provide any specialist clothing and equipment.

In the first instance, it is proposed that up to 10 volunteers are found a suitable placement within the Council and that other local organisations in the public sector and emergency services are actively encouraged to participate in the scheme and provide further placement opportunities.

The work experience

It is envisaged that the work experience will be of two principle types:

To join a workplace environment and work with regular staff, under the supervision of the Manager, or

To join a team of volunteers and to undertake a specific project, i.e. scrubland clearance or door-to-door survey work.

At the conclusion of the period of work experience, the volunteer will be provided with a reference by the relevant Manager. Volunteers may also be notified of future vacancies in the relevant field and may be guaranteed an interview.

Implementation

The initiative has been discussed with relevant officers of the Council from the Economic Development and Personnel teams and has been met with enthusiasm. There are no particular obstacles to implementing the scheme, other than ensuring that Managers are prepared to invest time and commitment to providing supervision, support and training to the volunteers. It is anticipated that a number of Managers will act as champions of the scheme and will undertake to take the first group of volunteers.

Discussions have taken place with JobCentrePlus and Connexions and a procedure for identifying and placing volunteers into suitable opportunities is being devised.

Initial discussions have been held with local trade union representatives who support the initiative on the understanding that appropriate placements are found for the volunteers and they do undertake work that could lead to redundancies or the decision to delete a vacant post from the establishment. The scheme will be discussed at a forthcoming Management and Trade Union Forum and be reported to a forthcoming Staff Forum.

Risk Assessment

The following are the significant risks and opportunities identified:

Risk	Mitigation
That Managers will fail to see the advantages of the scheme for both the volunteer and the Council	That managers are encouraged by political and senior management leadership to embrace the scheme
That volunteers are given inappropriate placements or are not given adequate and appropriate support and supervision.	That the scheme is championed by managers committed to the initiative and that volunteers are carefully matched to suitable opportunities
That the local trade unions may object to the initiative on the grounds that it puts jobs at risk	That the trade unions are reassured by the appropriate placement of volunteers in opportunities that do not put jobs at risk

Conclusion

That the Backing Young Britain in the South Hams scheme is implemented to help tackle the problems associated with young people not engaged in education, employment and training.

Andy Wilson
Personnel Manager

Personnel Panel
26 January 2010

Jan Montague
Head of Human Resources

Background documents:

None