



Sharing Best Practice

Real Start Apprenticeship Programme

1.0 Background

The innovative 'Real Start Apprenticeship Scheme' which started at North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) provides the best possible preparation to achieving trained young people with the desire to succeed within local government. An increasing number of partners are now signing up to the scheme.

Established in September 2006, and having since provided over 200 apprenticeships in very different types of jobs including outdoor education, childcare, catering, electrical engineering, administration and care, the Real Start Apprenticeship Programme has begun to address the widely noted concerns from across the County regarding the employment and training opportunities for young people combined with the Council's need to address it's ageing workforce.

Since its launch the programme has used proactive measures to increase the employability and productivity of young people aged 16 – 25. The commitment to supporting and empowering young people has contributed to the development of a programme where young people have opportunities to further their skills and progress their career aspirations in a way that motivates and stretches them, a programme where, through their own hard work and that of their managers, trainers and support mechanisms, young people are able to qualify themselves for success in life.

NYCC and partners have acknowledged that the Real Start Apprenticeship Programme is important during the current economic downturn as young people have been hit particularly hard in terms of employment opportunities. NYCC has produced a 'Developing Apprenticeships' guide for circulation amongst private sector organizations seeking additional support during the economic downturn.

2.0 The programme

The Real Start Apprenticeship Programme aims to ensure that young people who take the work-based route receive high quality training and transferable skills.

The programme lasts for a minimum of 12 months and provides the apprentice with a wide range of learning and development opportunities including undertaking and completing a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).

Apprentices are paid £82.25 per week during the first 3 months of employment (this will increase to £95 per week from 1st August 2009). Provided that the expected standards are achieved they receive an increase in pay at 3, 6, 9 and 12 months into the scheme. The scheme lasts for 12 months and on completion of the programme, as long as there is a suitable post available, apprentices move on to the rate for the job. In practice the majority of apprentices move on to the rate of the job prior to the completion of the programme. Apprentices also enjoy exactly the same holiday entitlement and sickness benefits as other Council employees and full employment status.

If at any point during the 12 months of the apprenticeship programme the apprentice is deemed competent in the role and considered to be undertaking the majority of duties of the post the apprentice can make the transition to the substantive salary normally associated with the post.

To ensure there is sufficient opportunities for apprentices any vacancy in bands 1- 4 must be filled with an apprentice unless there is a good reason why not.

3.0 Targeted recruitment

The programme has aimed to recruit young people to address the issues related to an aging workforce. It is also intended to target disadvantaged young people, who might struggle to find employment in the normal job market. The program is open to everyone in North Yorkshire between the ages of 16 and 24, but there are particular efforts to recruit vulnerable young people, such as those leaving care, young offenders, those from Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) and travellers communities. It also contributes to reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

Apprenticeship opportunities are marketed to potential learners, careers services, schools and diverse communities. Real Start Roadshows continue to be delivered across schools in the County. An analysis of data has identified schools in the County with a high proportion of school leavers making the transition to not in education, employment or training status allowing targeted delivery of the roadshows to engage with young people 'at risk' of ending up not in education, employment or training.

An assessment of current worklessness / young people not in education, employment or training issues has highlighted the need to focus apprenticeship growth in Scarborough.

Young people who qualify for apprenticeships are placed on a waiting list during which time they receive employability training and are then appointed as vacancies arise.

4.0 Work placements

As many young people leave school without a clear idea of what they want to do, a work placement scheme has been developed. This allows young people to gain experience in a variety of council settings and acts both as a bridge into the apprenticeship programme and a means of preventing placements from failing because young people have made unsuitable career choices.

5.0 Achievements

NYCC's age profile has been lowered as the proportion of employees under the age of 25 increased from less than 4% to 5.6%.

Within the current Apprenticeship programme cohort there are people of BME and people with learning difficulties and difficulties (LDD).

The turnover rate for the apprenticeship programme remains lower than the corporate turnover rate at less than 4%.

6 Care Leavers have been appointed to apprenticeship opportunities at NYCC (54% of the proportion of care leavers not in education, employment or training).

76% of apprentices move on to the rate of the job prior to completion of the programme.

6.0 National recognition

The scheme has been acknowledged as Best Practice by UNISON. This highlights that the strength of the North Yorkshire Real Start scheme comes the scheme being integrated into the council's wider strategies on youth employment, skills development and social cohesion, elements often missing from other apprenticeship schemes:

The scheme is recognized as a national example of good practice by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and will feature as a 'high-achieving' authority. NYCC is the only authority to be given access to feature vacancies on the Vacancy Matching Service, which is a task ordinarily assumed by training providers as opposed to employers.

7.0 Working with partners across North Yorkshire

The successful NYCC scheme is now being developed across the County, with increasing partnership involvement as follows;

- Scarborough Borough Council (SBC) has adopted NYCC's Apprenticeship Programme with NYCC providing recruitment, training and monitoring whilst SBC will be responsible for the employment, management and accountability of 6 apprentices.
- Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) has agreed to participate by starting an apprenticeship programme in September 2009, with a provisional target of 5 apprenticeships;
- North Yorkshire Police (NYP) has agreed to offer a range of apprenticeship opportunities to be integrated in to the NYCC Scheme. NYP are in the process of determining suitable job roles for at least 4 apprenticeships starting in September 2009.
- Adult Community Services (ACS) has appointed a Senior Support Officer (Performance & Change) to focus on the uptake of apprenticeships within the Directorate.
- Local Government Yorkshire & Humberside (LGYH) has established the Young People's Network which includes representatives from the public sector involved in apprenticeships. This group will help engagement with all district authorities in North Yorkshire. Significant interest from districts has already been received from representatives from Ryedale, Selby and Richmondshire.

8.0 Wider partnerships

Information sharing is taking place between NYCC and Leeds City Council (LCC) with NYCC providing information on the development of apprenticeships in school settings and the mandatory recruitment process at bands 1-4 and LCC sharing information on providing apprenticeships through procurement processes.

9.0 Further developments – real steps

'Real Steps' funded by a successful Future Jobs Fund bid will be a precursor to the Apprenticeship Programme. It will be developed in conjunction with partners including district authorities and the third sector to secure employment opportunities that benefit the local community. It is proposed that employees on the programme will have the opportunity to rotate around employment hosts.

Real-Steps will be developed to offer young people between the ages of 18-24 an opportunity to secure 6-months employment encompassing experience and skill development, accredited training and employability guidance. It will deliver a BTEC Certificate in Workskills (Level 2), accredited by Edexcel.

The Real-Steps Programme will be rolled out initially in Scarborough to reduce the highest number of young people in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance. Working with partners in the Scarborough area a range of jobs will

be created for a minimum period of 6 months. Host employers will be supported to create sustainable employment through the creation of apprenticeships as part of the Real Start Programme. It is proposed that approximately 30 jobs are created for the first roll out of the programme, 70 more jobs will be created over the course of 18 months.

10.0 Contacts

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