

# Looked After Children's Traineeship

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End of year report 2015-2016

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### Context

Integral to the City of Cardiff Council's Corporate Plan 2016-18 is that Cardiff's Looked After Children achieve their potential.

As corporate parents, Local Authorities have a duty to maximise the education, training and employment outcomes for children and young people leaving care. The Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression framework identifies 3 key areas;

- Strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment
- Identifying young people most at risk of disengagement
- Ensuring provision meets the needs of young people

The Looked After Children's Traineeship Scheme was set up in 2014. Its aim is to improve employment outcomes for young care leavers and those young people Looked After by the Local Authority by providing them with work experience and training within Cardiff Council.

Further guidance for the scheme is provided by The Corporate Parenting Strategy September 2016-2019. The Strategy aims to;

- "Improve the education and attainment and achievement for all looked after children" as well as;
- "Provide young people leaving care with appropriate preparation for adult life taking account of all their needs including their wellbeing"

### Looked After Children's Traineeship Coordinator

From April 2015 a dedicated Traineeship Coordinator was recruited. This is full time post and has been filled by Nicola Wood. The role consists of:

- Handling referrals for young people
- Building positive relationships with them
- Brokering placements within Council teams
- Liaising closely with partners
- Supporting successful Trainees onto Apprenticeship placements
- Administration and monitoring of the scheme

### Referrals

- From April 2015-April 2016 there was a monthly average of **68** young people aged 16-21 identified as Looked After Children or Care Leavers in Cardiff who were classed as Not in Education, Employment or Training
- This figure includes young people unable to work as well as those actively seeking employment so could be lower due to classification restrictions within CareFirst
- Referrals are received from the Looked After Children's 14+ Team, the Personal Advisor Service as well as from Careers Wales, Youth Offending and the Looked After Children's Education Team
- Within this period **73** referrals were received to the scheme
- An average of 6 referrals a month were dealt with
- Of those referrals **31** young people went on to engage with the scheme
- **29** started in work placements within Cardiff Council departments
- On average 2 young people started work per month
- 6 young people from this cohort have been offered Corporate Apprenticeships to date

No monitoring of equalities information was taken through the referrals but it can be reported that very few referrals were taken for ethnic minority groups and no referrals were taken for children with physical disabilities.

### **Tutoring**

A large proportion of care leavers have had breaks in education or have not achieved their full potential due to circumstances beyond their control. In order to add value to the Traineeship the need to provide opportunities to "learn" as well as "earn" was identified. The first piece of work undertaken by the Coordinator was to broker this support.

In order to **strengthen employability skills and opportunities for employment** Cardiff and the Vale College agreed to make funding available to focus on the specific needs of Looked After Young People whilst on the Traineeship.

Information that was shared was covered by the existing Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information agreement between The City of Cardiff Council and the Vale College and Cardiff Council. The support translated into **8 hours of one to one tutoring** by a therapeutic Tutor trained in Restorative Approaches.

Modules focusing on personal development and employability skills were taken up by the young people. They were encouraged to think about what would benefit them most within their immediate workplace and for the future. Goal setting and CV writing are core elements of the tuition. The modules are accredited by Agored Cymru and students are enrolled in the college by the tutor. (A list of the modules can be found in **Appendix A**).

It was hoped that the personal development modules would encourage the young people to develop career aspirations, positive attitudes toward work and build resilience and self-esteem.

### **Results**

After facilitated introductions were made by the Coordinator in September 2015, tutoring began in October 2015.

#### **Between October 2015 and January 2016**

- 4 young people enrolled with Cardiff and Vale College
- 2 of those young people gained extended awards
- 2 completed single qualifications

#### **Between January 2016 and March 2016**

- 7 young people enrolled with the College
- 2 young people re-joined the scheme and carried on their studies
- 2 young people completed their extended award
- 7 are still working towards their extended award

### **Participation**

Learner voice is an important element of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and young person participation has been integral to the development of the Traineeship scheme.

Feedback has been sought from young people through a variety of methods;

- Traineeship placements are discussed with a young person and they decide on their placement as well as choosing from a choice of modules to undertake to compliment this
- They also decide their working days and hours in conjunction with the Coordinator and the Manager
- Monthly reviews with the Manager and the young people means that feedback is received about how well they feel they are doing, as well as how well supported by the Looked After Children's Traineeship Coordinator they feel
- Feedback questionnaires are also sent out to Managers and Trainees once a placement has finished
- Views have also been sought from Social Work Staff about their experience of the scheme (some of these can be seen in **Appendix B**).
- In March 2016 the Coordinator facilitated two focus groups. One with 4 young people and the CAVC tutor as well as one with staff representing Social Workers, Admin Staff, Personal Advisor Staff and Supported Lodgings Staff. ( Information gathered during these focus groups can be found in **Appendix C**)

### **Mentoring**

The benefit of mentoring is well documented and taking this into consideration the Coordinator aimed to ensure that all Trainees had a qualified mentor in the work place.

It was decided to access training for staff from Full Circle Education who have provided 2 training days within 2015-16. A further training day is planned for May 2016.

- The training is bespoke to the scheme and focuses on mentor techniques as well as raising awareness of the issues facing Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- 21 Cardiff Council staff have completed this training and are now trained mentors
- This was funded through Human Resources

### **Corporate Apprenticeships**

The Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme is coordinated by Human Resources and has a strong focus on Business Administration, ICT and Customer Services.

Posts are funded usually for a 12 to 15 month period through Welsh Government.

Human Resources offered to ring-fence 2 corporate apprenticeships for year 2015-2016 for our Trainees.

- One Trainee secured an Apprenticeship in ICT
- One Apprenticeship was created within Children's Services

The Youth Mentor Apprenticeship was created in a joint venture between Children's Services and Education to create a bespoke opportunity for a young person who was already working on interview panels, participating in events and was working in a Youth Food Project in Lamby Way.

The post was created in January 2016 and the young person started working with the Youth Mentor Team based at the Pavillion in Butetown. The placement came to an end in March 2016 in agreement with the young person who was dealing with some difficult personal circumstances at the time.

A young woman joined Central Hub In-To-Work Services and has completed a 6 month placement as well as achieving an extended award. She joined the scheme whilst pregnant and has an offer of a corporate apprenticeship to return to in September 2016 after her maternity leave.

### **Vocational Apprenticeships within City Operations**

In February 2016 an 8 weeks trial within the Parks Team was coordinated. This was a bespoke 8 week programme with the first week structured to include employability sessions in the morning with Careers Wales and the Traineeship Coordinator with introductions to the different parks team in the afternoon. The Cardiff and the Vale College tutor attended in that first week to introduce the tutoring options.

- All 5 completed the first 4 weeks
- 3 went on to complete the 8 weeks
- In April 2016 funding was secured through Education to fund 3 x 2 year Apprenticeships in Level 2 Horticulture for these 3 individuals aged 18,19 and 21

The young people are now looking forward to working in the Parks Team for the next two years. Agreement was reached with Education to fund their tutor provision throughout the summer until their college course starts in September. This will help to prepare them for their studies as they have no formal qualifications or GCSEs.

### **Stand out Sectors**

A number of teams have been consistent in their support of the scheme and these include:

- Central Hub In-To-Work Team
- Connect 2 Cardiff Contact Centre
- Parks Team
- Facilities Management
- Maindy Leisure Centre

### **Additional Support**

2 young people **identified at risk of disengagement** but not currently on the Traineeship were helped to maintain their employment by the Coordinator and the Tutor. This is outside the remit of the Traineeship however fits into the wider NEET Agenda and the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

### **Case Studies**

A number of case studies were captured for the learners in the Autumn and Spring term and based on their journeys Cardiff and the Vale College agreed to fund an increase of tutor hours from 8 to 12 per week. This translates in assisting 8-10 young people with a few hours for working with the Coordinator on the development of the scheme. The case studies are attached as **Appendix D** and are confidential by virtue of paragraph 12 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Restrictions and Limitations**

#### **• CAVC Provision**

As the scheme grows and develops not all young people have been able to access the support from the tutor as the average number of young people on the scheme at any one time is 12.

Some young people are unable to read or write or have undiagnosed special education needs that have not been addressed. The limited support available cannot tackle this within a short space of time.

Having an hour of time to reflect on their lives and behaviour can bring up painful thoughts and feelings for young people. Many weeks can be spent working through trauma. This builds trust with the tutor and enables them to retain their placements, but can impact on their ability to gain qualifications within the timeframe.

One young person ended her very successful placement due to mental health issues. The placement had looked likely to be converted into an Apprenticeship and she had achieved an extended award. However, anxiety and depression caused by childhood trauma meant that this, combined with being on a waiting list for therapy, left her unable to focus on her placement and she ended it before she could progress onto a corporate apprenticeship.

- **Traineeship Provision**

Opportunities within the Local Authority are scarce due to a number of service areas facing restructure and alternative models of delivery.

A planned trial with Waste Management did not take place after Union concerns prohibited it from going ahead. This resulted in the first and only official complaint regarding the Traineeship scheme lodged by a young man who had been waiting to start a Traineeship opportunity with them.

Due to limited capacity of only one person coordinating the scheme with no support, a waiting list exists and time to build positive relationships with staff and young people is restricted. Administration and monitoring capacity has also been limited.

### Next Steps

- **Time Credits**

In order to provide young people leaving care with **appropriate preparation for adult life taking account of all their needs including their wellbeing** we have worked with Cardiff and the Vale College and the Third Sector Organisation "Spice" so that Trainees will soon be able to earn Time Credits for work they do for the community such as mentoring or participation activities. They can use these credits in a variety of venues including cinema, theatre, leisure and sporting events. It is hoped that this embeds them into their local communities and provides cultural experiences in order to promote wellbeing.

- **LAC Support Worker**

A support worker post has been created and advertised. Shortlisting has been completed and interviews will take place in June 2016.

- **Summer CAVC Summer Provision**

In order to **ensure provision meets the needs of young people**, funding has been agreed through Education for 6 hours of tutoring per week throughout the summer in order to retain the relationship built with the tutor and not lose the momentum gained throughout term time.

### Evaluation

- The educational component of the scheme is essential to the success of individuals within the scheme
- Cardiff Bus IFF cards do not work as a means of regular transport
- Practical skills are needed for successful managing of time and money and therefore being successful on the scheme
- There is the need for an online presence for the traineeship scheme as this is how young people get information most readily
- Risk Assessments encourage stigma and don't give Managers the right information about young people

- The fact that the Traineeship is not recognised by Welsh Government impacts negatively on young people by making them claim JSA when they are working. This leads to a lack of motivation
- Mentors need ongoing support and more guidance
- Better links need to be made between the Looked After Children's Traineeship Scheme and the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme
- Placement opportunities are sometimes limited within the Council
- Young people that make great personal progress are not having this recorded
- Better links to Education and the Cardiff Commitment are needed to align with corporate priorities
- There is a lack of referrals for ethnic minorities or disabled children but this information is not currently being monitored
- The positive relationships build through the Traineeship need to be extended into Apprenticeships as this transition can prove difficult for some
- We now have a better idea of what works and will have increased resources in order to deliver a more targeted service

### **Recommendations**

- Expansion into partners such as Health, Police and Third Sector would provide greater opportunities for vocational placements. The Traineeship Coordinator should present at the Vulnerable Children and Families Programme Board to assess the support for this idea
- A steering group should be set up to report in regularly to the senior CS Management
- Trainees should be involved in decisions that affect them and should have representatives on the Steering group
- Develop relationships with other learning providers other than Cardiff and the Vale College
- Improve the experience of staff and managers by providing clarity and more support around their roles as mentors
- Create a website for young people
- Work with the Children's commissioner to ensure the website is linked in to the My Planner App
- Work with the Welsh Government to get the Traineeship Scheme recognised
- Create a distance travelled tool in partnership with Cardiff and the Vale College to measure distance travelled to record soft outcomes similar to an outcomes STAR
- Utilize the Youth Mentor team within Education for further training of Mentors throughout the authority to ensure sustainability of training
- Record and monitor equalities information
- Increase work with minority groups
- Work to classify the Traineeship on Carefirst for accurate recording and monitoring
- Consider rebranding the Traineeship as the word "LAC" has negative connotations
- Young people and staff have suggested having a name changing competition and young people in the focus group like the term "learn and earn". This could tie in with the website launch

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**Appendices:**

Appendix A: Cardiff and the Vale College modules to support Trainee placements

Appendix B: Feedback from staff and young people

Appendix C: LAC Traineeship Focus Group feedback from Young People and Staff March 2016

Appendix D: Case Studies

**This appendix is confidential by virtue of paragraph 12 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of  
Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972**