

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Staffing Portfolio Holder

16th September 2008

AUTHOR/S: HR Manager

SCHOOLS WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

Purpose

1. To provide information to the Portfolio holder in respect of the Council's involvement in the Cambridgeshire schools work experience programme.
2. This is not a key decision, the report is for information only.

Executive Summary

3. South Cambridgeshire District Council has, for several years, provided local schools with work experience placements. The placements are co-ordinated through Cambridgeshire Connexions service and are aimed at year 10 students (15 – 16 years).

Background

4. Providing school age, young people with opportunities to try work based experience has been an important part of preparing them for the transition from school to work. The aim of work experience is to:
 - Provide a link to make education and work more related
 - Develop appropriate skills and attitudes required for work
 - Enhance employability
 - Develop links between schools, colleges and local employers
5. Young people under 16 are less likely to have any experience of the world of work beyond a paper-round; babysitting; or a visit to a parent's work place. The work experience programme helps to provide young people with a real insight into working conditions, job opportunities and career options. Across Cambridgeshire approximately 8000 work experience placements take place per year.
6. South Cambridgeshire District Council has, in the past, offered a selection of opportunities to local schools. The placements are normally for a two-week period and provide a worthwhile experience that will help young people prepare for working life. The Council has been able to offer a range of opportunities including Sport Development, ICT, Graphics, Revenues and Benefits, Housing and Environmental Health.
7. The Council works with Cambridgeshire Connexions Service to ensure that placements are appropriate for young people. This includes checks on the Councils health & safety policy, liability insurance and safe guarding children procedures. The placements can only be made as part of a students education as defined by the Local Education Authority and must be in accordance with the School Standards & Framework Act 1998.

2008 Work Experience placements

8. In January 2008 the HR Manager met with the Connexions Work Experience co-ordinator to discuss the forthcoming Summer programme for local schools. The Council confirmed that it had the required level of liability insurance and appropriate safeguarding policies in place. It was agreed that placements would be offered to Bassingbourn, Comberton and Melbourn Schools. In addition, the Council will consider private applications from other schools and direct approaches from parents.
9. A work experience guidance booklet, aimed at young people, was produced, this covers frequently asked questions and general information about the Council and its services. The booklet is given to students prior to them starting their two weeks experience. Appendix A
10. Students who have applied to the Council normally attend a brief 'interview' before commencing the placement. This is to provide the student with an initial contact opportunity and to give them an insight into the organisation so that they can ask questions before the actual work experience starts. A teacher from the student's school or college visits the Council during the placement to speak to both the student and workplace supervisor. The Council has hosted seven student placements during the summer 2008 school term.
11. The feedback from schools and students has been very positive. Students have enjoyed the experience, in particular the variety of working areas and activities that they have been able to work in. The Council aims to give students not only experience of the workplace but also an insight into the range of services that the Council delivers to communities. These young people will be voters in the near future and the work experience also helps them to understand the democratic processes behind the decisions the Council makes.
12. Work placements during 2008 have included, Revenues and Benefits, Sports Development, Reception, Housing and ICT. Students have been able to experience, first hand, the customers and the range of enquiries that the Council receives. Some students have accompanied our officers on site visits and have subsequently commented on how interesting this has been. We have received a number of 'Thank You' letters and cards from students, an example is at Appendix B.
13. The Council has recently been approach by Long Road Sixth Form College to explore work experience placements for Year 13 students. This would be a different programme to the Connexions scheme and would provide an essential part of the National Diploma in Sports programme. Through a number of coursework tasks students will be required to demonstrate an understanding of workplace organisation, it's purpose, roles, Health and Safety procedures and agreed standards. They will be required to carry out a project that may benefit your organisation demonstrating appropriate work-based skills. Discussions are underway to see if the Council could provide a suitable placement.

Considerations

14. **Benefits to the organisation**
The work experience programme offers the Council a useful access route to schools and young people. It provides an opportunity to promote the work of the Council and to increase awareness of the democratic process with young people.

15. In terms of recruitment and the future workforce needs of the Council it promotes job opportunities and the broad range of career opportunities that local government can offer. It promotes the Council as a local employer and highlights the importance that the Council places on training and development.
16. **Benefits to students**
Work placement provides young people with an opportunity to experience the work environment; to work alongside professional officers and managers; to try a range of tasks and to be part of a team. Students gain a valuable insight into customer service, team working and health and safety.
17. Students can identify and understand the importance of developing key skills such as communication, for letter writing and talking to customers; Information Technology, for using systems and producing documents; and numeracy skills, for analysis of data. The work experience helps to embed the classroom learning into real life skills.

Implications

Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Risk Management	None
Equal Opportunities	None – the scheme is open to all students

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

17.	Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future
	Working in partnership with Connexions service and local schools to offer opportunities to the young people of South Cambridgeshire
	Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community
	Promotion of the Council as a good employer to potential job candidate of the future
	Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work
	None

Conclusions/ summary

18. The work experience programme offered by the Council is a positive experience for young people. Feedback from schools and students has been very good and the Council has received 'Thank You' letters from a number of students. Comments have indicated that the Council is regarded as a model of good practice in the way that it organises the programme for young people in that it offers a such a broad range of learning opportunities.

Recommendations

The Portfolio Holder is recommended to;

- a) note the content of the report, and
- b) support the Council's continued participation in the Cambridgeshire work experience programme.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None

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