

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 12 September 2024 at 5.00 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, Portsmouth Guildhall.

Present

Councillor Hannah Brent (in the Chair)
Councillors Yinka Adeniran
Mary Vallely
Lee Tindall
Reeder

44. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Brian Madgwick and Councillor Leonie Oliver. Apologies also were also received from Rob Sanders, diocese representative, Sarah Daly, Keeley Mitchell and Councillor Horton who was invited as Cabinet Member.

45. Declarations of members' interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

46. Minutes of previous meeting (AI 3)

Councillor Vallely said that she had phoned and given apologies for the meeting on 7 March 2024.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 March 2024 be approved subject to adding Councillor Vallely's apologies.

47. A review into work experience opportunities for young people/young adults within PCC (AI 4)

Mike Stoneman summarised the scoping document and the purpose for the review. The panel agreed the scoping document.

The Chair invited Amanda Percy, Post 16 Skills and Campaign Manager, to give some background in the work her and her team does. Amanda explained that she leads the Employability Academy with her colleague Lauren Bumstead, which supports vulnerable young people into employment. There is some very good support developing with internships and apprenticeships, but many of the young people they work with have never had experience of a workplace at all. The Employability Academy looks to give young people the chance to meet people in a working environment, understand the opportunities they have, receive informal mentoring and raise aspirations. It is not always about the traditional two-week work placement; often they are looking for opportunities for a young person to spend some

time in a workplace to build on their confidence, start to develop a knowledge of the workplace and gain skills that might make them employable. A high proportion of the young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) have never had an introduction to employment and these are the ones that we need to support the most.

In response to a question, Ms Percy said that there are approximately 400 vulnerable young adults that they are working with at any one time. For many of the young people, PCC are the ones who have to help them find placements as they don't have the links to find placements. The young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET should be the ones to prioritise. Many of the young people are not in a college placement and school work experience programmes vary.

There is an upcoming placement with the Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services team and they will be offering the supported interns a placement from October to January. These are young people with special educational needs (SEN) or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and is more of a bespoke programme as it is part of a college course. There are also ongoing conversations about other placement opportunities. Mr Stoneman added that the panel would hear from the Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services directorate at the next meeting so would receive more information then.

Lauren Bumstead, Team Leader, Careers and Progression said it depends on how the young person has been referred to the team and what their current situation is. Care experienced young people are offered help via the Employability Academy which is a new programme and one small cohort has gone through this so far and it is about to be launched again for a second time. This will be a 10 week programme in which they will attend a weekly workshop covering sessions such as CV writing, mock interviews and identifying their skills. Throughout the course they will have pathway discussions to discuss their aspirations, and they will try to match them to a workplace opportunity and support them in the workforce. If they are not successful in that time they will continue to work with one of the advisors who will support them until they are successful in obtaining a placement.

Lauren explained that they are working closely with PCC departments and also Shaping Portsmouth to tie into those companies working with them to see what opportunities are available. These could be a couple of hours a day to start with as some of the young people will not be ready for a full day or week placement. They will then hopefully gain the confidence to work up to more days.

The young people who are NEET they will have an allocated careers advisor who will mentor them through their journey, this might be to return to education. They also work with the HIVE for workplace and volunteering opportunities and work closely with the Prince's Trust who have short programmes to boost young people's employability skills. In response to a question about what is missing from her point of view, Ms Bumstead said it is the opportunities that are missing and the support in the workplace. Some of these young people have had a difficult background so may need extra

support and mentoring in the workplace so employers need to be empathetic and patient with them. Ms Percy said another thing that benefits the young people they work is being paired with a younger member of staff who may have been through similar background and this can have a positive effect on the young people.

In response to a question, Ms Percy said that PCC track every young person who is leaving Year 11 and those who have not made a college placement or a training placement are prioritised and offered support. PCC has a big 'risk of NEET' programme where the risk of NEET indicators is reviewed from year 10. The indicators have just been revised to include some other factors. Her team then talk to the schools to offer support and in year 11 they have a risk of NEET programme which is partly funded by PCC, partly by schools and partly by colleges where they identify those most at risk of becoming NEET and an advisor will work with them from the Spring term in the school and in the Summer term take them to enrolment. Those referred to the team will often need work experience during that time. There is a drop-in service based on the ground floor of the Civic Offices where families and young people can drop in when its right for them and this is making a big difference. Mr Stoneman added that although PCC is very good at tracking these young people, the challenge is that the numbers who are NEET is increasing which is a concern. More placements for the young people would make a big difference but it was also important to be creative with these.

Lisa Morgan, Service Leader, Youth Offending Team, advised that she works with the most vulnerable and often present with challenging behaviour. They often struggle more in the workplace so need the extra support. She agreed that they are not looking for a two-week placement but it is more about showing a young person what a work place looks like and how it feels. This may start off as going in for an hour and then if that works out going in for half a day and building on that. There are more boys than girls in her service and they tend to be more interested in practical trades and sports and leisure. Many also just want a job to earn money but they have never had a job and do not realise what it entails. Sometimes they do complete the Prince's Trust courses as a stepping stone to employment. Ms Bumstead added that sometimes the young people have a fixed idea of what they want to do however if they sat and had a chat with someone doing the role they may decide its not for them and then they can look at other alternatives.

Ms Percy said they are trying to move away from the term 'work experience' to 'experiences of the workplace'. They gave an example of John who now works at PCC in security who had many years of support and training from the team and is doing well and is still being supported.

Sam Bushby, Deputy Director Children and Families added that young people with a variety of needs that need something very different in terms of opportunity. Some other young people are driven into the workplace due to family pressures and they feel they need to be bringing in income.

The Chair said she felt that discussions were needed with employers so that they recognise that with care experienced young adults there can be a lot of trauma so these young people will need extra support.

Ian Maguire, Assistant Director Economy, Transport and Planning

Mr Maguire said that the directorate was very varied and one of the more professional parts of the Council with chartered planners, surveyors and engineers and there are also roles in parking and administration and customer service. There are therefore lots of opportunities, however the ones he felt they had seen the best success of taster days was with their contracted partners such as Colas and coastal partners. He felt that this was intrinsic and there was more work to do around that. This is an element of social value which is now part of their procurement. This year Colas have done three placements with Havant and Southdowns College and the Transport team had some T level students in for work experience. Coastal partners have had a week long activity delivering that with local schools so there are lots of opportunities to embed this in their contracting with partners.

In terms of barriers Mr Maguire felt there were two main barriers:

Capacity; a senior member of staff has to be taken off their usual work to support and host a days work experience along with a junior member of staff so the work experience student has someone to interact, with is a lot of FTE production lost. He added that wholistically this is absolutely worth doing however this work will need to still be covered. If they wanted to do more placements, more management capacity would be needed.

Safeguarding and GDPR; bringing someone in for a short placement creates the same amount of work as a new member of staff. If they need access to servers to carry out any work, those servers will give them access to information that they may not be allowed to access and there are complicated procedures around that. These issues are resolvable however it is all officer time and cost to the Council and is one of the hidden costs that appear in service budgets. He added that they had seen some really good results bringing young people into the organisation. A lot of high-level apprenticeships in the directorate are level 6/7 which are delivered by universities and there are some delivered by college such as business administration.

In response to a question about whether a two hour site visit would be possible, Mr Maguire said it would be although there would still be a safeguarding challenge and require co-ordination.

Donna Hoyle, Adult Social Care

Ms Hoyle said that currently they are providing work experience to college students and she has been trying to co-ordinate this more with Portsmouth College. These are usually a two-week placement or longer but they could certainly offer a one day or shorter opportunities as discussed earlier.

In terms of barriers, she felt that these were DBS checks, risk assessments, GDPR and confidentiality generally and mandatory training, however if it was a short taster to look around and shadow someone, these would not be required. Ms Hoyle said she would be keen to explore that further. The usual types of roles they provide work experience in are ancillary roles such as administration or catering although do occasionally offer roles in care work with supervision. Other options for work experience would be to shadow the activities co-ordinators, entertainers and fitness instructors who visit the care homes.

In response to a question, Ms Hoyle said that DBS checks take months to complete. Ms Bumstead added that they have a young person about to go onto a pre apprenticeship with the DASS service and she has not got the required documents to obtain the DBS so they are in the process of applying for these so that she can they obtain the DBS before she can start the apprenticeship. Due to the wait the young person can start to lose enthusiasm as they want to get started. Enhanced DBS checks take longer, there is a significant backlog which is affecting multiple areas around recruitment. Ms Bumstead added that it can be a further issue with those who are care experienced and have moved multiple times to obtain five years of address history with a letter each time and felt that the onboarding process needs to be more flexible for young people.

Ms Percy said they are looking to put together a package offering support to departments and preparation work such as the young person coming to a session in the Civic where they receive support before coming to do some visits, and asked Mr Maguire and Ms Hoyle if this was something they could facilitate. Ms Hoyle said yes and this is what she does with Portsmouth College, she will visit the college and take some staff along to prepare the young people before they start their placement. Mr Maguire said if there is a co-ordinated process and barriers are removed this would help get staff on board and volunteer their time to help a young person interested in doing work experience with them.

Councillor Vallely said if any of the young people were interested in politics she would be willing for to talk to them and they could shadow her. Ms Percy said they would take her up on the offer. In response to a question officers said that young people were not often interested in working with the police, the same with teaching. They were more interested in hands on or virtual careers rather than the traditional careers unfortunately. Members commented that it was all about exposure, young people need to see what careers are out there and that's why site visits are vital. The team are in close contact with the base and other local businesses about opportunities available.

Ms Bumstead added that some young people were part of the creative arts programme at Bransbury Park and the young people enjoyed being part of it and had a sense of achievement. Ms Percy said that the bespoke programmes work very well as they can be with a group of young people and the arts programme is something that they would like to replicate.

Members noted that they would hear from the remaining directorates at their meeting on 26 September. It was agreed that the meeting after that would be held on 17 October where they would hopefully hear from the Youth Cabinet and young people.

The meeting concluded at 6.00 pm.

Councillor Hannah Brent
Chair