

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 28 November 2024 at 5.00 pm in the Executive Meeting Room, Guildhall.

Present

Councillor Hannah Brent (in the Chair)
Councillors Yinka Adeniran
Brian Madgwick
Mary Vallely
Lee Tindall
Gerald Vernon-Jackson CBE

55. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies had been received from Rob Sanders and Helen Reeder (education representatives) also Councillor Horton and Sarah Daly, Director of Children, Families and Education.

56. Declaration of members' interests (AI 2)

Councillor Vernon-Jackson declared a personal interest in that he is the Deputy Chair of the LGA Children and Young Person Board. Councillor Brent declared a personal interest as she works at the City of Portsmouth College.

57. Minutes of previous meeting (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 October 2024 be approved as a correct record.

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

Jessi Wilson, Unloc/Shaping Portsmouth

Jessi explained that Unloc is a social enterprise based in the Guildhall. They have four pillars, one of which is 'Youth Voice' and part of this is facilitating the Portsmouth Youth Cabinet. She has since started as the facilitator and programme lead for the Youth Employment Programme. The Youth Cabinet currently have 21 young people aged between 13-18 years old and several have signed up to the Youth Employment Programme. Unfortunately, the positions for work experience are not available for them currently and many have struggled to find placements on their own. Unloc have noticed a gap in skills of young people being able to create a CV, with interview preparation and formal email/telephone communication and they are able to help facilitate with this through some of their programmes.

In response to questions, Jessi said that:

- They were targeting the 13–16 year-olds with helping with CVs as this age group had not had the skills to do this previously.
- One of the other pillars of Unloc is looking at careers specifically so some of Jessi's colleagues have done careers based skills, but it is usually determined by the schools and colleges, who may not realise there is a gap there. Amanda Percy, Post 16 Skills and Campaign Manager, added that there is good uptake from schools. Schools have other offers where they can look at CVs, but they do like the offer from Unloc. It was key to match the right offer to the right schools.

The Solent Careers Hub is new to Portsmouth which consists of Portsmouth, Southampton and IoW local authorities, with Portsmouth as the lead. Within PCC there is the careers service which goes into schools as a traded service and is a free service to any young person who is NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. All schools opt into the service for young people at risk of NEET. Schools also have a careers lead who work on the careers education programmes and link with the Solent Careers Hub, but do not deliver careers guidance.

In terms of how the panel could help, Jessi said helping to support the young people with those skills such as CV writing, but she felt the businesses being on board and understanding the prospect of employing young people was what was missing. It would be great to get a few pilot businesses on board to help with case studies to showcase how simple and effective it can be to promote these young people.

Sam Bushby, Deputy Director of Children and Families, said in terms of the companies that the Council contract with, more could be done to ensure it is in their contract that they must take on apprenticeships and this is something officers were keen to do. Amanda Percy added that Mountjoy and Commserve are very supportive of the work and have taken on supported interns and apprenticeships. A question was asked about whether the Port could offer apprenticeships, and it was noted that part of the issue is the level of physical danger with the jobs there. Amanda Percy added that through the Solent Careers Hub the Port offers fantastic immersive days which work well.

Steff Jones, Shaping Portsmouth

Steff explained that Shaping Portsmouth is a Community Interest Company, formed and funded by local businesses. There are 70 plus partners, and they have surveyed them as to what they feel are the barriers to employing young people, focussing on the 14-17 year old age groups. Many said that they find the legislation around employing young people confusing and also worry about their capacity and time to train a young person. With regard to CV writing, Shaping Portsmouth have gone out to the businesses again. Biscoes have helped by providing some template CVs on what employers would like to see and these are available as an online resource on their website. Steff agreed that Mountjoy and Commserve are hugely supportive as are Biscoes and Carrington West. They have all supported the apprenticeship bus programme where apprentices are put on the bus which visits schools and they talk to pupils about to leave school. This is a partnership between ??? They are still looking for certain sectors to be involved with this, such as

animal care and the creative industries where students want to find a placement.

In response to questions, Steff said:

- In terms of barriers, he felt this was access to information and how easy it is to understand, also safeguarding and resources. Amanda Percy added that the Safeguarding department at PCC do offer a lot of help with work experience. Supporting safeguarding of employment is more complex.
- The bus visits 10 schools between PO1 and PO6 but they are working on including more. The UTC is not included in this as they have relevant programmes of their own.
- Shaping Portsmouth have no partners in the care sector however they try and sell themselves to every industry in the city.
- The number of partners has remained constant over the past two years. More business means more funding and therefore more social value, therefore the more businesses who join the better.

Sarra Gravestock, Biscoes

She explained that she is a solicitor and the head of the Care and Adoption team. She works closely with care leavers and was asked by Shaping Portsmouth to lead on the care leavers employability programme. This has dovetailed in with Portsmouth Employability Academy, with the idea being that children's services get the young people ready for employment and the academy work with the businesses to make sure they are care leaver ready. Biscoes are ringfencing a role for a care leaver and encouraging other businesses to do that. This role will likely either be front of house or an operations assistant role. They are also looking to hold aspirational visits at Biscoes; there are various roles within the company including HR, finance and marketing that are not legal, which young people may not be aware of.

In response to questions, Sarra explained:

- The Employability Academy have worked with PMC Construction and also with the HAHA Hair Salon and training.
- Barriers include businesses not knowing what to expect from young care leavers; they can present with very different problems so employers need to have more understanding and flexibility whilst maintaining the business needs.
- They have been looking at work experience and ways to make this more meaningful for the young person, as well as for the business.
- Biscoes have just recruited several trainees and two came from the University of Portsmouth.

Councillor Vernon-Jackson said that he was aware that Whites Motors on St Pauls Road were wanting apprentices and Amanda Percy said she would be grateful for their details.

Kev Sadler, Solent Careers Hub Lead

He explained that his main role was to act as a conduit to bring schools, colleges and employers together to make sure that careers education is high quality and consistent across the region. Schools and colleges have a

responsibility to produce good careers guidance and have benchmarks that assist with that. Two of these are Gatsby Benchmark 5, 'Encounters with Employers and Employees' and Gatsby Benchmark 6 'Experiences of the Workplace'. Kev advised that his team speak to lots of employers to get them to engage with the schools and colleges, this could be attending a careers fair, supporting mock interviews, helping with CVs and work experience.

The Careers and Enterprise Company are trialing some flexible work experience models rather than the traditional two solid weeks of work experience. The new trial means that work experience can start any time from year 7 and can span through to year 11 and this is something that will be rolled out further. The Careers and Enterprise Company are also working on a diagnostic tool to see what the local situation is in the region to see what schools are doing work experience, what time of year and pulling all this information together. An action plan will be created from this information.

Amanda Percy added that the Solent Careers Hub recently went to Miltoncross Academy as part of a pilot programme taking place in 2025 to look at how to develop this. They are developing a project week where employers will offer projects where the young people have a project to deliver over five days within school. Kier Construction London & Southern were the first business to sign up to this and they have asked a group of year 10 students to design a new café and classroom. This will involve the architect having a conversation with the young people, someone to talk about green and sustainability and a communications person. At the end they have an immerse day at Bournemouth where Kier are developing a site for a college, they will then be taken to Southampton Solent University to look at some courses available relevant to this project. The aim is to have several employers across different sectors willing to do this so young people get experiences of the world of work, rather than work experience. This was an exciting project, and it was hoped this would go live in 2026 across the city. Information interviews, where people have a conversation with someone currently doing a role, are also a valuable tool for a young person to find out about a role.

Amanda Percy said that the next step would be training for employers, so they have the confidence and skills to help support young people in their workplace who are care leavers. Another event is taking place in two weeks to co-produce with young people who are care experienced to work out the support they need. They have noticed that young people need a lot of support through the early weeks and months as this works. What they really want is for more businesses to ringfence posts for care experienced young people and get involved with the Employability Academy to offer visits, so the young people to have choice.

Kev added the hub have an initiative asking employers to 'give an hour' and this is for young people to have a workplace encounter. Amanda Percy said this is something that PCC could run a campaign on.

In response to questions officers advised:

- The Employability Academy work with those young people on alternative provision and they are looking to expand the programme to include the youth offending team. There is a programme starting in February which is a Kings Trust programme for young people on the edge of knife crime who are interested in construction to get them a CSCS card so they can work in construction.
- Officers are keen to get a version of the Employability Academy into the Harbour School to get employers involved to work in the school. It was hoped that some funding could be obtained through the careers hub.

Councillor Vernon-Jackson said he was Deputy Lord Mayor and he felt there was an opportunity for young people to have work experience in the hospitality industry for the various Lord Mayor hosted events, and he would look into this, officers said that would be very welcomed.

Members said they all had networks of people who own businesses, and it would be helpful to have an email from the Employability Academy to say what they are looking for and members could forward this on to increase the number of employers. Amanda Percy said she would be very grateful and action this. She added that since the review started, more directorates at PCC are coming forward offering placements. The supported internship has been very successful and part of this is because there was more choice.

The Panel thanked all the witnesses for attending today and felt this had been a very refreshing and positive meeting.

The meeting concluded at 6.10 pm.

Councillor Hannah Brent
Chair