

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Information Report

Committee	Employment in Hampshire County Council
Date:	09/11/2011
Title:	<i>Internships Plus</i> ; the new specially supported apprenticeship scheme for care leavers – progress report
Reference:	3419
Report From:	Gavin Wright Director of Human Resources

Contact name: Susan Baker

Tel: 01962 833027

Email: susan.baker@hants.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to update EHCC on progress made following the Cabinet decision taken on 24th January 2011 to give further employment related support to young people, especially those from the most vulnerable groups for whom the Council has corporate parent responsibilities. At that meeting approval was given to the design and implementation of a new employment scheme aimed primarily at 16 – 18 year old care leavers without plans for education, employment or training. It was estimated that there would be approximately 40 in 2011. The initiative was developed on the basis of an idea from the Leader as to how to best support young people. The Leader recommended to Cabinet and the Council who agreed that £600k be made available to fund the scheme with the intention that it be used primarily for wages/employment related and pastoral support costs.

1.2. EHCC received the first progress report on the new scheme, ***Internships Plus***, on 20 July 2011. At that date the preparatory course hosted by the University of Winchester had just begun with 19 participants joining the scheme.

1.3. This paper seeks to:

- a) Describe further detail of the implementation of ***Internships Plus***
- b) Give a status report on the uptake of internships
- c) Outline the key challenges and critical success factors of implementation to date
- d) Consider the financial implications of the scheme for future years
- e) Briefly consider the future direction of the scheme.

2. Internships Plus

- 2.1. The scheme is a specially supported 12 month apprenticeship. Recruitment to the scheme took place in June/July this year. It was non competitive and inclusive; the pastoral coordinator offered all young people in the target group a personal meeting. At that meeting advice and guidance was given about the scheme and other opportunities available. The next step was a 'preparation for work' course led by the lifelong learning team at the University of Winchester which took place in the last week of July. Work placements began in September. During this placement most¹ interns will study for a level 2 qualification in Customer Care supported by Catch 22, the training provider. They aim to complete this in 12 months (but with possibility of an extension of up to 18 months if needed in order to complete the qualification). Pastoral support for the interns has been in place from the initial recruitment activity and will continue throughout the scheme. In addition there is ongoing proactive support and guidance for managers of interns.
- 2.2. Hampshire County Council managers offered 48 work placements. There was an excellent range of choice both geographically and the type of work involved. Unfilled placements have been held over until January when a second cohort of interns is planned.
- 2.3. 19 young people undertook the preparatory course which was held from 18 to 21 July 2011. On the final day of the course, managers and team members offering placements attended an 'Opportunities Showcase' of all the roles available. Young people identified their top 3 preferences. In the month following the course they were matched to placements and attended an introductory meeting with their prospective line manager. Although this was not a competitive recruitment process they were told that managers expected to see evidence of their commitment and to hear what they felt they would bring to the team.
- 2.4. 11 of the 19 have begun their work placements. These are in roles such as training administration, catering, drivers' and fitters' mates. Of the remaining 8, 2 have made other career choices (starting college/joining the army) and the others either need more preparation to be ready to work or are awaiting the resolution of issues in their personal circumstances.
- 2.5. The University of Winchester will host a second preparatory course in January 2012 and we aim to have a second cohort of young people beginning placements in February/March 2012. The timing of this is planned to attract young people whose college or career plans fall through this Autumn as well as the potential interns from July who were not at that stage ready for the workplace. Publicity through care workers is underway and there is already

¹ Some interns have chosen other qualifications such as Business Administration and others may require greater input on literacy and numeracy skills

some interest in this from young people in addition to those identified in 2.4 above.

- 2.6. There has been very positive interest from other local authorities keen to know the structure and design of the scheme and from local press and BBC Radio Solent. Recruitment and attendance has so far surpassed all expectations².
- 2.7. Ofsted, in their recent assessment of Children's Services, commented very favourably on *Internships Plus*

3. Key challenges of implementation and critical success factors

3.1. The key challenges have so far been as predicted when the scheme was set up, and as described in the first progress report to EHCC in July. Perhaps the greatest was the imperative of developing an innovative and robust scheme in a relatively short period of time; the small project team was highly aware that there was a risk of failing these vulnerable young people through inadequate support or insufficiently thought through processes.

3.2. The operational issues included:

- a) ensuring an effective and appropriate recruitment process
- b) putting in place the right levels of pastoral support for interns and guidance for managers
- c) fully engaging the managers
- d) making sure the scheme was aligned to the various underpinning HR and Finance processes, and that those processes had enough flex in them to enable us to address the particular needs of this group.
- e) successfully balancing support and good performance management

3.3. The scheme is still in its infancy but critical success factors include:

- a) Strong partnerships externally between ourselves, the University of Winchester and Catch 22, and strong working relationships internally between Children's Services, County Treasurer's and Human Resources.
- b) Investing in labour intensive, personalised recruitment to the scheme with involvement from all the partners and stakeholders, (particularly time invested in engaging and briefing managers).
- c) Wholehearted commitment from managers offering work placements. This has ensured that roles offered to interns are real and worthwhile jobs that match their capabilities, and that that the vulnerabilities and often challenging behaviours of these young people are sympathetically but effectively managed. As a result interns have reported that they feel welcomed into the teams and treated as normal

² However, these numbers, and all estimated figures, should still be viewed with caution due to the unpredictability and fluid nature of this group.

employees. While it is the case that many of these placements would not have been possible without the employment costs being funded centrally, it is equally true that no managers have taken on an intern simply because the posts are funded. In every case managers and team colleagues have shown a commitment to making a difference for these young people and have invested a great deal of themselves in supporting and enabling the new intern to work well

- d) Flexibility continues to be a necessary approach to all aspects of ***Internships Plus***. Whether this is in relation to the qualification studied or responding to the daily issues and concerns raised by interns, care workers or managers.

4. Finance

4.1. The £600k has been set aside to fund the following, spanning the financial years 2011/12 – 2012/13:

- a) An estimated 35 - 40³ interns, with staggered starts, on 12 month contracts with the possibility of an extension to a maximum of 18 months to complete their qualification. This includes payment for attendance on the preparatory course.
- b) Employment associated costs such as travel, uniforms/appropriate work wear
- c) Pastoral support and coordination provided through Children's Services
- d) Workplace support and guidance provided through Catch 22.

4.2. The level of pastoral support required is higher than anticipated. Currently 10 hours a week @ Band F is funded through the project. It is recommended that, if the scheme continues, this is increased to at least 0.6 FTE and ideally to 1FTE

4.3. The average yearly funding required to run this scheme, on the model set up in this pilot, is predicted to be circa £500k per annum. This assumes;

- a) a rolling programme with yearly intake of up to 40⁴ interns, with 2 entry points one in July and one in January
- b) the University and Catch 22 continue to charge only direct costs to the project (such as external speakers, catering for interns)
- c) Overall coordination of the scheme provided by the project team (Children's Services and HR through the Hampshire Learning Centre)

³ This estimated number should be viewed with great caution due to the extremely changeable plans, aspirations and life circumstances of these young people. However, recruitment to the scheme is inclusive rather than competitive, and every support will be given to encourage interns to maintain placements.

⁴ This is an extremely broad estimate.

continues not to be costed to the project but absorbed into the roles of project team members and departmental workloads

- d) that interns' wages continue to be paid at national minimum wage for their age rates
- e) over 50% of the interns are 16 – 18 years old (and therefore on the lowest rate of minimum wage for their age)

5. Future Direction

- 5.1. In February 2012 the first cohort of interns will have had approximately 6 months in post and the second cohort will have just begun their work placements. A mid scheme evaluation is planned which will consider more criteria than simply the number of interns whose placements have been sustained. A better understanding of the impact of factors such as the personalised approach to recruitment will enable us to see what wider impact and benefit the scheme has had.
- 5.2. The project team is already aware of various 'snagging' issues to remedy. A key need is the importance of better engagement of and support for care workers and carers, so that they know what **Internships Plus** is able to offer and can advise the interns accordingly.
- 5.3. If **Internships Plus** successfully meets its objectives and proves itself to be a viable and sustainable model for specially supported apprenticeships, the project team would like to explore ways of extending it through partner organisations and, in the longer term, local businesses.

6. Recommendation(s)

- 6.1. That EHCC note the progress made in developing and implementing *Internships Plus*.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Cabinet; Employment Opportunities for vulnerable young people	2527	24 January 2011
Cabinet; Employment Opportunities for vulnerable young people; Progress Report	2867	18 April 2011
EHCC; Internships Plus; a new initiative in the HCC apprenticeship scheme, assisting care leavers into employment	3081	20 July 2011

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. A full EIA is available on request. The primary objective of this initiative is to enable the vulnerable young people leaving Care at age 16 – 18 to compete more equally in a challenging and competitive job market.

1.2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

Care Leavers and NEETS are often disproportionately represented in the crime statistics. Although this is a relatively small group of young people, if they are successful in entering and sustaining employment they are considerably less likely to become young offenders.

2. Climate Change:

2.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

This is a small cohort of young people and, although interns will be using public transport, the immediate impact of this employment scheme on Hampshire's carbon footprint is negligible.

2.2 How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

As Hampshire County Council uses its weight as a large local employer to bring new support possibilities to its role as corporate parent the longer term development of this scheme will have more of an impact on community sustainability and economic wellbeing as more young people take up employment. A number of the internships are offered in the Environment Transport and Economy department. The individuals who take up these posts will develop knowledge and skills specific to this area – and indeed all interns will improve their general knowledge and skills through exposure to their department's continual improvement work in this area.