



Buckinghamshire County Council

Select Committee

Young People Ready for Work Inquiry

Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee

Report to the Young People Ready for Work Select Committee Inquiry

Title: Youth Service/Duke of Edinburgh's Award
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Electoral divisions affected: All

Purpose of Agenda Item

This report is to provide an overview of the Youth Service and how it contributes to the Ready for Work agenda, supporting young people (predominantly aged 13 – 19, but up to 25 in some cases) to develop the skills, qualities, abilities and knowledge to prepare them for the world of work. This includes delivery in relation to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

1. Background

The recent Buckinghamshire Skills Study (Warwick University Sept 2012) prepared for Bucks Business First suggests young people can be perceived by employers to be "poorly prepared" for work:

- Lack of basic/core skills
- Lack of common sense
- Poor attitude
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of life/work experience
- Lack of maturity



“An entrance to employment qualification would be a valuable asset and something which employers would be keen to see” (p66)

Independent research published by the United Learning Trust (2009) identified the following attributes and characteristics to be most valued by employees when recruiting staff:

- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Self-motivation
- Communication
- Confidence
- Consideration
- Ability to learn

The Youth Service, working in partnership with other providers as appropriate contributes to equipping young people with the skills described above to support them to become work – ready.

2. Summary

Key points in this report include:

- The Youth Service is well placed to work with young people on employability skills. The youth work approach has proved to be effective in moving young people from NEET to EET.
- Intensive work with small groups is particularly impactful (i.e. Project X and Raise Your Game).
- DofE is one vehicle to work with young people on this agenda and is particularly significant due to the level of credibility it holds and the value placed on it by employers. It could be viewed as an “entry to employment” accreditation given the range of skills young people develop as a result of participating.
- Due to the Council’s reinvestment in DofE all affiliated schools in Buckinghamshire are benefitting from increased support to enable them to improve completion rates. Additional support is provided to upper schools where young people are least likely to complete their award, and where arguably the need is greatest, and the impact is the most significant.
- A specific DofE NEET project is currently being researched and designed, and referrals are being accepted. The impact of this will need to be assessed as the project progresses. In the first instance referrals will accepted for young people who are at risk of NEET as well as those who are already NEET.

3. Youth Service Overview

The Youth Service works in creative and challenging ways with young people to enable them to reach their full potential and contribute positively to their communities. This includes:

- Working holistically with young people
- Creating opportunities for development and change
- Encouraging participation and leadership
- Celebrating difference and diversity, contributing to cohesive communities
- Being led by young people's needs
- Advocating on young people's behalf
- Promoting positive images of young people
- Targeting specific groups, areas and issues, including those who need additional support
- Making learning and development fun.

Service delivery consists of:

- Targeted youth work, including group work and one to one (e.g. mentoring)
- Mobile and detached youth work
- Creative arts, including the Soundstudio youth music project and the Roundhouse
- Creative Arts Centre in High Wycombe
- Centre based youth work at Youth Space Aylesbury, and Youth Space Wycombe
- Participation youth work including youth cabinets, UKYP and specialist work with Looked after children and young people and those with disabilities
- Training and accreditation for young people including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Staff training for youth workers and those working with young people
- Management of the County process for Educational Visits including advice, authorisation and approval
- Supporting the delivery of open access youth activities across communities.

The key strands of work the Youth Service are engaged in can broadly be grouped under the following headings:

- Relationships (social skills, friendships, self-awareness and identity, sexual health, CSE, online safety, confidence and self-esteem etc.)
- **Employability** (employability skills, leadership, communication, work experience, NEET to EET work etc.)
- Anti-social behaviour (community cohesion, intergenerational work, diversionary activities, youth crime and ASB reduction activities)
- Risky behaviours (offending behaviours, prevention activities)

- Health and wellbeing (emotional resilience, Kids in Sport, physical health and fitness, personal safety including bullying alcohol, drugs, smoking etc.)
- Independent living (budgeting, accommodation issues, staying safe, independence, cooking and nutrition etc.)
- Participation/Voice of the Child (young people influencing decision-making, evaluating services etc.)
- Attendance, behaviour and achievement (alternative provision, work with underachievers, exclusions, work with travellers EHE, accreditation including DofE).

Employability Offer

The Youth Service's Employability offer is focused around supporting young people to gain skills, qualities and attributes to prepare them for work. It adopts an informal education approach that uses 1:1 and groupwork processes. Activities are designed to support young people's personal and social development. The approach is holistic, starting where a young person is at, and is led by the individual and their specific needs. The approach is based on voluntary engagement and the relationship between the youth worker and young person is central to the success of the programme.

Youth Service targets that link to employability:

- The number of young people from disadvantaged or priority groups that have successfully increased their skills, abilities or knowledge as a result of being supported by the targeted Service (500 young people)
- Increase the take up of the DofE scheme by identified vulnerable groups to support them to subsequently secure employment (12 young people)
- Increase the completion of the DofE scheme by upper schools to support them to subsequently secure employment (230 young people)
- Apprentices to achieve a level 2/3 diploma in youth work (2 young people)

Example Projects

(1) **Raise your Game:** A drop in project delivered in partnership with Connexions to build confidence and self-esteem, and support young people to gain interview skills, CV writing, and identify appropriate pathways to employment. Usually delivered over 6 weeks.

Specific Outcomes

- Raise Your Game has worked with 15 young people consistently. All 15 have achieved pre-entry level AQA's and 9 have completed an entry level AQA.
- All young people applied for jobs or apprenticeships while attending the project;
- 3 have gained apprenticeships, 1 leading to permanent employment with the Council

- 1 gained employment
- 6 signed up with LEAP
- 1 began volunteering
- 1 gained a work experience placement

(2) **Project X:** A 7 day activity programme, exploring key personal and interpersonal skills, as well as employability and basic business skills, in a fun and creative way. Completion of this entitles participants to £300 each to invest in their own personal action plan to bridge the gap between NEET and EET. Participants benefit from 2 follow up days to receive mentoring and support with individual projects. Delivered as part of the child Poverty Strategy.

“Doing Project X gave me something to look forward to. It gave me hope and a focus. If I hadn’t of done it I probably would have done something stupid and ended up in prison”

(19 male, 3 months after ending Project X, now in work)

- One young person self-referred due to his friend being in the first Project X cohort. Two young people were referred by Connexions.
- All three young people were awarded £300 and used all or part of the money to buy equipment to help them in the job/training market.
- The young people were able to have intensive 1-2-1 support. This was invaluable when it came to completing the ASDAN.
- **All three young people successfully made the transition from NEET to EET.** AA is doing a full-time bricklaying course at Amersham and Wycombe College. He used his £300 to buy tools that he needed to do the course. UK is doing a full-time IT course at Amersham and Wycombe College. She used her £300 to put towards buying an ipad that she will use in lectures and at home to further her IT skills. IK is in full-time employment as security personnel. He was supported a great deal by the staff to complete forms, gain his security card and photocopy id. He used part of his £300 to buy smart work boots.

Specific Outcomes

- 100% young people went into employment or training.
- 100% of participants feel that their ability to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses has improved
- 75% of participants feel that their ability to recognise and communicate their own needs has improved
- 100% of participant feel that their positive attitude towards work and motivation to engage in work or training has improved
 - 75% of participants feel that their work based skills have improved.

- 100% of participants left the programme with a clear set of personal goals to help them achieve work or new training opportunities.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE)

DofE is an Award programme that can be completed at three levels: Bronze, Silver or Gold. Young people aged 14 - 25 achieve an Award by completing a personal programme of activities in four sections (five if they're going for Gold).

- Volunteering: undertaking service to individuals or the community
- Physical: improving in an area of sport, dance or fitness activities
- Skills: developing practical and social skills and personal interests
- Expedition: planning, training for and completing an adventurous journey in the UK or abroad
- At Gold level, participants must do an additional fifth Residential section, which involves working and staying away from home doing a shared activity

DofE and Employment

Employers consider DofE to be of value over and above alternative activities undertaken at school. Research has demonstrated employers believe the skills and attributes DofE equips young people with are of primary importance when selecting staff to work in their organisations. It has been suggested that employers regard DofE at Gold level as an additional or alternative A' level and recognise the time, energy and commitment young people put in to achieve the Award.

To give a local example, in Buckinghamshire, Chiltern Railways require all their apprentices to complete the Gold Award as they feel it equips them with the personal and social skills that are needed to enable them to be successful in their job role.

DofE in Buckinghamshire

DofE has benefited from significant reinvestment following last year's MTP process. This has enabled us to deliver in 4 main areas:

1. **Continue to hold the Operating Authority License for Buckinghamshire** which enables all schools and other providers of services to young people to affiliate to us, and deliver the Award at all levels to their young people. We provide support, verification and approval to these affiliated groups, and hold responsibility for ensuring the expedition section of the Award is completed safely. This is particularly important since this section requires young people to be unaccompanied by an adult and remotely supervised, which differs from most other programmes or activities of a similar nature.

2. **Coordinate and deliver the Open Award.** This ensures all young people from across Buckinghamshire who wish to participate in DofE outside of their school setting are able to do so. The Open Award is open to every young person regardless of their individual circumstances or which school they attend (not all schools offer the DofE Award and of those who do, many limit their numbers).
3. **Provide intensive hands on support to upper schools already engaged in the DofE** to support them to improve their completion rates. This is a new project that came about following an analysis of the completion rates across the county. Broadly speaking, the completion rates in Grammar and Independent schools are significantly higher (38%) than in upper schools (7%) where arguably young people could benefit most from the Award.
4. **Deliver a new project aimed at NEET young people, or those at risk of becoming NEET.** This project launches in January and its focus is on developing young people's employability skills, getting them to a point where they are work-ready. This project will link directly with local employers and is designed to both develop the softer skills that employers have identified young people can often lack (i.e. confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, communication, leadership, initiative, motivation etc.) as well as providing participants with direct work experience giving them an understanding of the world of work and the expectations that come along with this.

Buckinghamshire Schools/Centres Currently Delivering DofE

Academies

Amersham School
Aylesbury Grammar School
Beaconsfield School
Chalfont Community College
Chesham Grammar School
Chiltern Hills Academy
Dr Challoners Grammar School
Dr Challoners High School
Great Marlow School
Highcrest Academy
Holmer Green Senior School
John Hampden Grammar School
Princes Risborough School
Royal Grammar School
Royal Latin School
Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School
Sir William Borlases Grammar School
Waddesdon School

Wycombe High School

LEA Schools

Beaconsfield High School
Buckingham School
Cottesloe School
Cressex Community School
Stocklake Park Community School (Harding House)
Stony Dean School
Wendover House School
Wye Valley

VCS Groups

Stoke Poges Award Group
Wendover Youth Centre

Independent Schools

Akeley Wood School
Macintyre School
Pipers Corner School
St Mary's School
Stowe School
Thornton College
Thorpe House School
Wycombe Abbey School

Other

Aylesbury College
Chiltern Railways
Education Youth Services – Chesham (EYS)

4. Resource implications

The delivery described in this paper is currently resourced through the core Youth Service budget.

5. Next steps

The work delivered by the Youth Service that contributes to employability is complimented by a range of other provision delivered by other providers both within the Council and externally. Work is underway currently to map the provision across the county to ensure any duplication is reduced and there is a clear pathway for young people to get the support they need. This work is being progressed through a multi-agency NEET forum in High

Wycombe, led by the Youth Service. Once this is in place it will be broadened to cover the county as a whole.

The outcome of this work will inform any further development of the Youth Service Employability Offer.

Youth Service Employability Offer

Level 1

Raise Your Game
Street based or centre based.

Focus is on providing specific skills linked to employability in community locations. Drop In basis but with the aim of attracting a core group who attend each session. Flexible programme. Accredited via AQA

Level 2

Skills Based Courses

Focus is on providing training on specific skills that will enhance young people's likelihood of employment e.g. Lifeguard Training, Music technology, Bike Maintenance, First Aid etc.

Accredited via AQA and individual accreditations depending on skill

Level 3

Project X

Focus is on providing more intensive support for small groups of individual young people with the aim of integrating them into EET.

Structured programme that must be attended in full. Accredited via ASDAN or DofE

Level 4

Work Experience

Individual Young People placed across Youth Service teams to experience meaningful placements with key outcomes based on their level of need and areas of interest.

One to One Work

Referrals made in line with the Youth Service one to one referral process. Young People can be referred into this process at any stage as deemed appropriate

