

Redditch Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 19th June 2012

Work Experience Opportunities Task and Finish Review – Monitoring Report

Background

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Work Experience Opportunities Review on 24th May 2011. Final recommendations were endorsed by the Executive Committee on 21st June 2011 as set out in section 2 of this report. This report sets out 12 months progress against each of those recommendations in section 2 of the report.

Until April 2011, the Government funded Education Business Partnerships to support work experience placements for school pupils at Key Stage 4 (KS4). However, in April 2011 that funding ceased. Worcestershire Education Business Partnership (EBP) was managed through Worcestershire County Council but since Government funding ceased, has established itself as an independent Company Limited by Guarantee. This involved reducing its staffing from 6 to 2 full time staff and 1 part time staff, and focussing on arranging work experience placements – i.e. the service no longer provides wider curriculum and teacher training support for schools. Worcestershire EBP currently charges £18 per placement which compares very favourably with EBP's in other parts of the country.

When Worcestershire EBP was considering continuing as an independent Company, participating schools expressed an overwhelming desire to continue using EBP's services, and since EBP has become independent, EBP are only aware of one school in the County that has chosen to 'opt out'. In addition, EBP now provides services to the independent sector in the County. EBP continues to maintain a comprehensive database of companies offering work experience placements in Worcestershire, categorised by type of opportunity available and works with schools to match pupil needs to placements – seeking new employer placements when required to meet pupil needs.

Despite the loss of Government funding, there remains a statutory requirement for schools to provide an equivalent of 10 days 'work related learning' for all KS4 pupils (although this may well be removed if the Woolf recommendations are implemented). However, this need not involve work placement, schools could provide this as part of the curriculum. There is also a proposal in the Wolf Report to increase the age at which pupils undertake work related learning to between 16 and 18, in line with raising the raising of the participation age to 18. It seems likely that the Government will accept this recommendation despite the reservations of those working in the

field, who see work experience at 14/15 as fundamental in preparing young people for the world of work, and helping inform their academic choices

Recommendations – monitoring response

1) Support be given to the current work experience scheme, which provides work experience opportunities for 14 and 15 year olds at Key Stage 4 at school, being continued locally

Worcestershire EBP has continued as an independent Company supporting work experience placements for KS4 pupils in the Borough, with all relevant schools participating in work experience programmes (although St. Augustine's is not working with EBP, it is understood that the school is still undertaking work experience). Participating schools express a high degree of satisfaction with this service and there is no indication that further schools will 'opt out' in the future. The Borough Council have also contributed £100 per annum to each of the four schools, to be awarded to students on work experience who have gained most from the experience – this is administered by the schools but Members have been involved in presentation events. However, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the recommendation in the Wolf Report that the age for work related learning is raised to 18.

2) The work of the Worcestershire Education Business Partnership be supported

As an independent, not for profit Company, Worcestershire EBP has a sustainable Business Plan that does not rely upon subsidy over and above income received from schools for work placements. However, both Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership are developing skill strategies that recognise the need for measures to improve the employability of young people, of which suitable work experience is an important element. The North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration Team will work with those LEP's to ensure that work experience is integrated into wider employment support packages for young people in the North of the County.

3) Those local employers that already participate in providing work experience opportunities be thanked for their efforts and others be encouraged to deliver presentations for their own benefit as well as the students, and to strengthen the existing links between schools and local industries, with officers pursuing these aims through the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit and the Local Strategic Partnership

Worcestershire EBP continues to work with local employers to develop suitable work experience opportunities. This tends to be driven by the needs and aspirations of the pupils – there is a danger that if employers are encouraged to offer placements when there is insufficient demand for those placements, this may de-motivate employers. However, North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration Team are working with employers in the Borough through the Redditch Business Board to match skill needs of local businesses with both curriculum development in schools and colleges and employability skills (including through work placement). This has involved undertaking a sample pilot skills survey amongst employers, and work to develop a locally based training and apprenticeships scheme in collaboration with local employers and colleges.

4) There should be a clearly identifiable point of contact at Redditch Borough Council for schools to arrange work experience placements at the Council

Juliana Morgan (Human Resources) acts as the point of contact for schools within the Council for work experience programmes.

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