
Apprenticeships, Work Placements, Work Experience, Internships and Volunteering – Policy

Version Number:	6.0 (draft)	Date Issued:	3rd May 2013	Review Date:	
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Name and title of originator/lead author:	Duncan Kerr/Paul Gaunt
Contact details of originator/lead author	
Name of lead director/manager:	John Wilkinson
Ratified by (include ratification date)	
Audience:	
Date of Equalities Impact Assessment:	August 2012, (revised April 2013)

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Apprenticeships, Work Placements, Work Experience, Internships and Volunteering Policy

1. Policy Statement

“The Council should seek to maximise its social return on investment in the local community by creating apprenticeships, paid and unpaid work placements, work experience, internships and volunteering so enabling more people to gain access to a broad range of employment opportunities”

2. Context

This policy statement supports the Council’s vision to “build a stronger economy” with a broad range of job and employment opportunities that recognises the different needs of rural, town and city communities.

This policy directly supports that vision by helping the Council to lead on:

- Reducing the number of JSA claimants in the region, overall, but with a specific target of the 18 – 24 age range
- Increasing the number of apprenticeships offered in B&NES and within the Council
- Assisting more people into employment

The Council has a lead role in the regeneration of the local economy and has a commitment to support an increase in new business start-ups and enterprise. It is also leading a number of development projects, for example a new Council HQ at Keynsham, development of the Somerdale site, Western Riverside and other key areas, and this will give the Council a lead role in creating and developing opportunities to increase the provision of apprentices, paid and unpaid placements and volunteering, through its role as a procurer and commissioner of services (the Council has a supply chain which can be encouraged to invest in local people).

It is acknowledged that there are members of the community who are particularly vulnerable to unemployment and the Council can take the lead in providing opportunities for them to gain skills and experiences which will help them into the labour market.

In addition, there is concern locally about graduate retention and by offering paid and unpaid placement opportunities the Council can enable local Higher Education & Further Education students to gain valuable work experience, so contributing to the retention of talent in the local economy.

3. Principles

Apprenticeships, work placements (paid and unpaid), work experience and volunteering provide opportunities for people to improve their skills, qualifications and employability.

Such opportunities enable the local skills base to be improved and local people improve their employability. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2012) highlighted the importance of creating opportunities to increase employability for those not in education, training or employment.

As one of the largest local employers, the Council is in a good position to provide such opportunities and by providing a range of paid and unpaid opportunities, including volunteering, the Council will deliver a broad range of job and employment opportunities that recognises the different needs of rural, town and city communities, in particular:

- Work placements – paid and unpaid – for unemployed local people
- Internships and work experience for both post and under graduates at local universities and students at local colleges
- Apprenticeships across the full range of services, from those aligned to entry level and level 2 qualifications to advanced apprenticeships with professional level training (eg AAT) provided by local colleges
- Volunteering opportunities across a range of services, offering people in the community the chance to get involved in local service delivery within their communities, and to gain important employability skills.

4. Research undertaken in 2012

The research undertaken in 2012 built upon the original work undertaken by the Policy and Partnerships Division regarding volunteers in 2011. There are currently 26 apprentices working in the Council in 2013 three apprenticeships about to be filled and four proposed for next year. In addition a number of paid and unpaid placements are already offered by managers. When these are unpaid they tend to be focussed on project work, but also include people working towards professional qualifications such as social workers.

Project Search has been offering up to 10 supported work experience placements within the Council per year and has supported 26 young people with varying disabilities over the last three years. The Council also has a well-developed approach to offering volunteering opportunities. There has been a lack of a transparent, consistent approach to the recruitment and management of some of these volunteers and there is a requirement to share best practice and make opportunities more widely promoted and co-ordinated.

This research showed that managers believed there were some key business benefits in providing a range of employment opportunities (eg apprenticeships, work experience, internships and volunteering) including the opportunity for existing staff to gain experience in managing and mentoring people taking a first step into employment.

A review of Council Volunteers was undertaken by Human Resources and Policy and Partnerships in 2011 to look at the working in practices of volunteers. The review also highlighted the need for a co-ordinated approach as there were a number of inconsistent practices identified in different service areas. However the review also highlighted that volunteering roles continue to offer best value in terms impact on service delivery, adding value to existing service provision and also offer individuals in the community the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of local services, develop their own skills, and support for some to gain access to employment opportunities.

The Council however has begun to record the volunteering activity across individual service areas:- there are over 600 volunteers working across the Council in a variety of roles. Some of which are regular commitments for instance heritage services (Roman Baths/Fashion Museum), youth service and libraries. Other roles offer more adhoc commitment for instance community litter pick teams.

5. Scope

It is proposed that this approach should be followed by all Council services and that any apprenticeship or work experience scheme should follow the same broad principles.

There is a currently a significant amount of un-coordinated and ad hoc activity supporting apprenticeships, paid and unpaid placements, work experience and volunteering within individual services and Directorates. This policy and manager's guidance will help to develop more opportunities for people to gain valuable skills and experience (more apprentices, placements, volunteering) and higher quality outcomes (a transparent and consistent approach to recruitment, training, support, better sharing of good practice).

6. Policy Implementation

1. The Council will demonstrate its commitment to the delivery of its objectives of 'positive lives for everyone' and 'building a strong economy', through its own good practice in the provision of apprenticeships, work placements, internships, work experience and volunteering.
2. Through adopting this policy the Council will develop and launch a more standardised programme of opportunities across services and will ensure more effective co-ordination of the Council's recruitment, induction, training

and support for apprenticeships, paid and unpaid work placements, work experience, internships and volunteering.

3. This will include:
 - The provision of support, advice and help to managers
 - Increasing the numbers participating in apprenticeships, work placements, work experience, internships and volunteering through identifying suitable new roles which do not displace existing staff
 - Making the sharing of good practice more effective
 - Ensuring that the council continues to adopt a best practice approach to the recruitment and retention of apprentices
 - The setting of a minimum standard which can be applied in order to ensure that all services know what is expected of them when recruiting and managing participants
 - Ensuring that we build on the commitment that some managers have already shown to the creation of apprenticeships, work placements, work experience, internships and volunteering through influencing and negotiation by adopting a standard approach across the Council.
4. Council services will be asked to make a commitment:
 - to identify opportunities for apprenticeships, paid and unpaid work placements, work experience, internships and volunteering as part of the annual work force planning process
 - to undertake an annual survey of activity, to collect data on opportunities offered
 - to re-imburse travel expenses for people undertaking unpaid work placements and work experience
 - to report regularly to Directors' Group on any issues, successes, concerns.
5. The approach will support future policy development for procurement and commissioning.
6. The Council will prioritise the marketing of opportunities, encourage applications from and provide advice on applying for apprenticeships, paid and unpaid work placements, work experience, internships and volunteering opportunities to:
 - Care leavers'
 - Groups who are most at risk of long term unemployment
 - Those who live in disadvantaged wards
 - Those living in rural areas