



Haringey Council

Agenda item:

[No.]

General Purposes Committee

On 11 March 2008

Report Title: **Work Placement / Experience Strategy**

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): N/a

Report of: **Stuart Young, Assistant Chief Executive People & Organisational Development**

Ward(s) affected:

Report for:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide a co-ordinated strategy for managing work placement or work experience schemes which are currently in place across the council.

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member

- 2.1 I concur with the contents of the report and have arranged quarterly feedback on progress. The Council awards a lot of contracts to organisations and this is a good way of getting the unemployed off the unemployment list.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Committee approve a co-ordinated strategy for managing work placement/ experience schemes across the council.

Report Authorised by: **Stuart Young, Assistant Chief Executive (People & OD)**

Contact Officer: **Carole Engwell, HR Employment Strategy Consultant, x3377**

4. Chief Financial Officer Comments

4.1 The Chief Financial Officer has been consulted over the contents of this report and has no additional comments to make.

5. Head of Legal Services Comments

5.1 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted on the content of this report. Section 7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to appoint on merit. However, this does not exclude the duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to make reasonable adjustments to prevent a provision, criterion or practice from placing a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage. The under-representation of disabled people within the Council's workforce demonstrates the need to consider specific adjustments to the normal process of recruitment within the authority such as the scheme set out in the report. The 1995 Act does not prevent an employer from treating disabled people more favourably than those who are not disabled.

5.2 The arrangements described regarding the co-ordinated strategy for work placements and work experience schemes fall within the general powers of the Authority to promote the economic and social well-being of the borough.

6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

6.1 N/a

7. Strategic Implications

- 7.1 The introduction of a co-ordinated strategy for work placements will operate in all directorates and will offer real opportunities for work experience to the following groups:
- Work experience placements for Year 10 Haringey school students – placements normally last for a maximum of two weeks
 - New Start Apprenticeship scheme – successful candidates are appointed to a specific vacancy on one year's fixed term contract
 - Haringey Guarantee scheme – local unemployed people who are on a short term work experience placement and who apply for an advertised vacancy are guaranteed an interview alongside other short listed candidates. Opportunities for placements will be provided by the council and also through links with our large service contract providers.
 - Opportunities for local disabled residents to get into paid work – through a joint partnership scheme working with the Richmond Fellowship, the Haringey Deaf Job Club and Mencap Pathways.
 - There are also plans to develop work placements for 14 – 19 year old students studying for a new Diploma qualification and to introduce work placement opportunities for those on the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme which is run by the Haringey Adult Learning Service
- 6.2 The scheme will involve Human Resources and Haringey Employment & Skills Team working together to ensure that suitable vacancies are identified as opportunities for work experience. This will also involve possible placements and work experience opportunities being offered by our large service contract providers through co-ordinated work with Corporate Procurement.
- 6.3 This strategy will become a major employment initiative for 2008 and it should help to give disabled people as well as people who are out of work valuable experience to assist them in seeking employment.
- 6.4 In addition it provides managers and other staff an opportunity to experience working with disadvantaged workers.
- 6.5 For those workers with a disability, depending upon the nature and severity of their disability, some candidates may be at a considerable disadvantage in a standard, competitive interview when compared to a non-disabled candidate. Therefore the opportunity for a two week job trial approach will enable disabled candidates to show in a practical way, the skills that they have and how they will be able to carry out the duties of the role. This approach is permissible under the Disability Discrimination Act as a "reasonable adjustment". The supervision undertaken by the line manager during the work trial is critical and must be fully documented. If, at the end of the trial, it is decided that the individual is not suitable, full feedback regarding the reasons why this decision was reached must be available to both the individual and to the provider. The vacancy will then be advertised externally.
- 6.6 Whilst there are many positive aspects to the introduction of the scheme, there will be a need for regular review meetings to be held between staff from Human Resources and the Employment & Skills Team and providers, to ensure that issues are dealt with and

improvements identified. Due to possible changes in funding received by providers, it is recommended that the scheme be reviewed at the end of each financial year to ensure it remains viable.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct costs involved as any costs which may be incurred in employing a support worker for a candidate, will be borne by the relevant provider. The cost of any additional equipment or adaptations which may be required for disabled workers can be reclaimed from the Disability Advisory Service run by Job Centre Plus. Once other agencies / providers become part of the scheme the level of additional support provided by them will need to be negotiated and agreed in advance of a candidate starting work.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Legal advice has confirmed that in the situation of trials for disabled workers an interview can be classed as a “reasonable adjustment” under the DDA. However, work trials should be offered as an option to those with a disability as there may be a case for a non disabled person to consider themselves to be in a less favourable position if they were obliged to undergo an interview. A non-disabled person would not be able to challenge preferential treatment (including the offer of work trials) given to a disabled person if the work trail was optional.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1 There are positive equalities implications in opening up recruitment to enable disadvantaged workers to gain valuable work experience and hopefully take up employment. The council’s commitment to diversity will be strengthened and managers and staff will be in a better position to understand the difficulties faced by those people without a job.
- 9.2 Due to the relatively small numbers of people expected to join the scheme in any one year, there will still be the opportunity for entry level jobs to be externally advertised and recruited to in the normal way.

10. Background

- a. Work trials can provide those who have experienced barriers to gaining work, meaningful skills and experience of working life which can be a valuable step to helping them to find permanent work.
- b. There are several work placement or work experience schemes which are currently in place across the council, including
 - New Start Apprenticeship scheme – successful candidates are appointed to a specific vacancy on a years fixed term contract

- Haringey Guarantee scheme – local unemployed people who are on a short term work experience placement and who apply for an advertised vacancy are guaranteed an interview alongside other short listed candidates.
 - Work experience placements for Year 10 Haringey school students – placements normally last for a maximum of two weeks
- c. There are also plans to develop work placements for 14 – 19 year old students studying for a new Diploma qualification and to introduce work placement opportunities for those on the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme which is run by the Haringey Adult Learning Service.
- d. The E2E programme is designed to help young people who may not be ready to gain a place on an Apprenticeship programme, to receive training in basic and social skills whilst being able to gain relevant work experience on a short term placement. The placements are initially for 4 weeks but can be extended for up to 3 months depending upon the skills being developed. The placements will initially be promoted when managers are asked if they would like to take on a New Start Apprentice from this September. The trainees who undertake a placement with the Council this year will then be encouraged to apply to the New Start Apprenticeship Scheme next year. The range of placement / experience schemes which are currently in place have tended to focus on the needs of either young people or local unemployed people, there is a gap in the provision specifically geared to helping disabled residents into work. This strategy therefore aims to close this gap and to ensure that disabled people, who have traditionally been at a disadvantage in the job market also have access to work experience and to jobs.
- e. A CSCI report in 2006 identified that the Council needed to demonstrably ensure that it acts as a positive role model for the employment of disabled people. The introduction of the job trail scheme will be a great step forward to ensuring that the council's employment practices are in line with recommendations previously received from the Disability Rights Commission and that the workforce more accurately reflects the number of disabled residents living in Haringey. The council is the largest employer in the borough and increasing the profile of disabled employees in our employ may act as an incentive to encourage other local employers to do the same thing. Whilst the council has offered short term work experience opportunities to some disabled people, it has been on an ad-hoc and uncoordinated basis and the council's standard recruitment practices have not supported candidates in moving on to a permanent job.
- f. In order to assist local disabled residents into paid work, a co-ordinated scheme has been devised by the HR Policy team working closely with colleagues in the Learning Disabilities team in Adult, Culture and Community Services and with colleagues in the Employment & Skills Team in the Regeneration Unit. The scheme will enable the council to set up closer working links, initially with the Richmond Fellowship, the Haringey Deaf Job Club and Mencap Pathways. The providers will offer job preparation training to candidates and those who successfully complete it and are identified as being a match for a specific vacancy, will be offered a two week work trial with the council. If the trial is successful, the job will then be offered either permanently or an a temporary

contract depending upon the status of the vacancy. It is proposed that a pilot scheme be set up initially for 6 months, in the Directorate of Adult, Culture and Community Services.