

Lancashire County Council Beacon Case Study – Future Horizons

Lancashire County Council founded the Future Horizons pre-apprenticeship programme which is aimed at young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). It was found that whilst recruiting to the council's apprenticeship programme some looked after children and NEET young people were not ready for an apprenticeship at that time. Future Horizons addressed this problem by giving the skills and knowledge needed to apply for an apprenticeship in the public sector.

Background

Lancashire County Council employs over 40,000 people, making it the biggest employer in the county. A workforce of this size enables the council to make a huge difference to employment and the economy. Worklessness and improving skills are key economic priorities for Lancashire and were identified as key areas of the Lancashire Local Area Agreement (LAA). The County Council is using its capacity to reduce NEET and contribute to NI -117.

The County Council has significantly extended its apprentice scheme, devised and implemented a pre-apprenticeship programme aimed at NEET and Looked after Children and has developed and implemented the first UK public-sector work trial (WorkStart) in partnership with Jobcentre Plus.

These innovative solutions aim to meet the economic and regeneration priorities within Lancashire; to give people who live in Lancashire a genuine, supported chance to gain employment with the county council, and to secure and develop a talented and skilled workforce for the future to serve the residents of Lancashire.

The problems and how we tackled them, including outcomes and impact

We found whilst recruiting to our apprenticeship programme some Looked After Children and NEET young people were not ready for an apprenticeship. They found it difficult to compete in the apprentice selection process. Future Horizons addressed this problem.

The programme has been developed in partnership with North Lancs Training Group and provides employability qualifications, basic and life skills, career information and advice, and a structured eight week work placement (which can be extended) at the county council (or a partner organisation) – an essential stepping stone in securing an apprenticeship.

At least 50 percent of the young people of the young people accessing Future Horizons have been successful in securing an apprenticeship in public or private sector.

Outcomes

- Two candidates are on the V-Talent programme (apprenticeship in youth work).
- Two candidates have signed up to a full time college courses
- Five candidates are on the LCDL/CXL Supported Apprenticeship Scheme (private sector apprenticeships).
- Three candidates have been successful in securing a Lancashire County Council Apprenticeship
- Two candidates are on Future Horizons+
- One candidates has secured a private sector apprenticeship

Toni Brockbank, a participant in 'Future Horizons' who is now an Lancashire County Council apprentice, said:

"I've really enjoyed working in HR Department for the Lancashire County Council. I also found the opportunity to sit in on interviews great as I now know what potential employers are looking for"

Antony says "I heard about Future Horizons through my adviser at Connexions. After finding out a little bit more about it I thought it would be a really good opportunity to go for because it seemed it would get me experience, support and maybe a clearer idea on what career path I would like to take."

Lessons Learnt

Due to LAA time constraints, the team had no option but to develop these initiatives from vision to implementation in an embryonic way, without having the opportunity to always look with a medium to long-term view.

However, due to the success of all these schemes, the sustainability has now been demonstrated and the initiatives are being resourced accordingly.

Next steps

Some young people who have been through the Future Horizons programme still need further development before progressing onto Lancashire County Council's Apprenticeship Scheme.

Future Horizons+ is for those young people who need additional support. As a continuation of the Future Horizons programme Future Horizons+ offers a 12 month training contract and an opportunity to complete a NVQ 2 in their chosen area. Instead of returning the participants to the NEET register, Lancashire County Council would like to continue supporting those that have expressed an interest in becoming an apprentice by offering a Future Horizons+ development programme.

For further information contact

Name: Charlotte Iddon, Senior HR Officer (Skills and Employability)
Phone: 01772 530 505
Email: charlotte.iddon@lancashire.gov.uk
Or visit www.nweo.org.uk/apprenticeshipsandworkexp/