

COUNTY COUNCIL

23 SEPTEMBER 2015

QUESTIONS FROM AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIPS

QUESTION FROM MID DURHAM AAP

We are all aware that access to employment and training is becoming trickier for our school leavers. Mid Durham AAP are also aware that each school has responsibility to deliver careers advice to their pupils, but during recent conversations with young people the form of this advice differs from school to school. How therefore, does the council monitor this provision to ensure that each pupil across the county has access to good quality careers advice?

Response

Thank you for asking this question and I am pleased to note the priority we all give to the importance of high quality careers, education, information, advice and guidance in ensuring that young people are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to prepare them for adulthood. Undoubtedly good quality careers education and guidance helps to achieve the best possible outcomes for our young people; raising their aspirations, challenging stereotypes and helping each one of them to reach their potential.

You note that schools now have a statutory duty to “secure independent guidance that includes information on the full range of education and training options, including apprenticeships and vocational pathways”. Schools are required to do this in the best interests of the young person and it is indisputable that all young people need access to good quality information on the options available to enable them to make informed choices about their future plans. The guidance for schools does not identify any minimum requirements on how this duty might be met and it is up to each school to put in place provision that meets the needs of their students.

In County Durham , as in other Local Authorities, schools have adopted a range of approaches to meeting the duties placed upon them including: inviting speakers into classes/year group assemblies; hosting and attending careers events; delivering a careers education programme; providing access to the internet and partner websites; and, most importantly, ensuring the provision of individual and personalised careers guidance.

Whilst the LA has no duty to monitor school compliance with the duty (careers education information and guidance is more prominent in the new Ofsted framework and schools are judged on the Destination Measures published by Department for Education), DCC is committed to supporting high quality

Careers Education Information And Guidance delivery in schools in line with the statutory duty.

The LA has proactively worked with school partners to ensure that all were made aware of this change in statutory responsibilities through distribution of information and facilitating events.

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QUESTIONS FROM TEESDALE AAP

QUESTION 1

Teesdale Action Partnership was recently able through its Area Budget Funding to support the creation of two apprenticeships with the Council's Leisure Services Team. This is a fantastic opportunity for the two young people from the Teesdale area who have been appointed to these posts and it would be good if they were the first of many. Living in a rural area often possess additional issues for young people looking to enter the world of work, access to transport probably being the major barrier. By being able to offer young people apprenticeships within their own communities helps to sustain those communities and ensures that young people can take up opportunities they might otherwise miss. What is the Council doing to ensure that young people can access apprenticeships and training no matter where they live in County Durham?

Response

I'd like to thank the Teesdale AAP for their question and welcome the opportunity to respond on the excellent employability work that is being delivered. Working with our partners to create employment opportunities for local people is a top priority for the Council.

The County Council's Employability team supports the creation and take up of jobs across County Durham by identifying labour force priorities and raising awareness of opportunities with employers and existing and/or potential employees.

The team delivers a number of time limited projects in partnership with associated agencies including the Employability Mentoring project. This was introduced to combat unemployment and associated issues such as transport and accessibility in the rural areas of Weardale and Teesdale (the original project began in 2009). The elements of the original rural project have been taken on board in all aspects of employability support, which aim to provide a coordinated programme that enables workless people to access opportunities and build the skills that lead to sustainable employment. In addition, employer engagement is essential to identify staffing needs to help match vacancies from the target group.

As with all other employability initiatives, the rural project has benefitted from a flexible, discretionary fund of support to help overcome barriers such as transport, equipment, training and in some instances, wage subsidy. The flexible fund is administered in terms of eligibility to the specific programme

and based on individual need to enhance the person's ability to attend training or employment. Since 2009, 514 Teesdale residents have engaged with the project, of which 212 (41%) have moved into employment.

The success of the original rural project has led to additional funding being acquired to support the scheme in the more urban areas of the county.

A full briefing of the employability portfolio is available upon request.

QUESTION 2

Being able to access transport is a key aspect of living in a rural community. The Teesdale area has been able to maintain its key public transport routes over recent years and local people have successfully campaigned to save services which have been threatened. However there are still fears that cuts to services are on the cards as the Council addresses the continued challenges of austerity measures. In this difficult environment what is the council able to do to protect the limited bus services that already exists in the Teesdale area, which for some people is their only means of getting out and about?

Response

Again I'd like to thank the Teesdale AAP for their question and welcome the opportunity to respond on the issue of fears over future bus cuts.

Durham County Council recognises the importance of bus services to communities, including the role they have in providing access to education, training and employment for young people and others. Where bus services are not commercially viable on the basis of fares income, contracts are arranged using the Council's £3 million budget for supporting bus services, including by innovative means.

The conventional bus service network serves almost all communities in Co Durham, including the rural areas of Teesdale. Only the smallest, most isolated communities do not have regular services during at least weekday daytimes, with buses into at least mid-evening on many routes. Durham County Council's "dial a ride" service, branded Link2, is available in all parts of the county on Monday to Friday between 0800 and 1800, serving the individual travel needs of places where there are too few people to make a conventional bus service feasible even on a subsidised basis.

The Council has a long term record of sustained support for bus users. While funding cuts have meant that Sunday and evening services were reduced back in 2011, we have been successful in protecting the remainder of the network and, in January 2012, we were able to reinstate services in Teesdale when Arriva chose to withdraw theirs.