

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE

5 March 2014

Recruiting and retaining young people

Purpose of report

1. To update Staffing Policy Committee on the schemes used to recruit and retain young people, particularly those aged under 25 years.

Background

2. At the Staffing Policy Committee on the 8 January 2014 it was requested that a report be produced for the following meeting outlining the work that is being done to support the recruitment and retention of staff aged under 25 years.
3. The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show that the number of 16 to 24 year-olds across the UK who are unemployed is almost 1 million at 920,000 meaning the unemployment rate for the under 25 age group is 20%. This compares with an overall unemployment rate of 7.1%.
4. In terms of Wiltshire, the council has an ageing workforce. 22% of our current workforce is over the age of 55, and 30% of these staff are at the age where they can take their state pension. In real terms, this means that 7% of the workforce could leave with a state pension tomorrow and from 1st of April 2014 all 22% are eligible to take retirement and receive their Wiltshire Council pension due to the change in pension regulations.
5. As an employer we therefore need to ensure that we have promising new talent emerging to replace our older employees who will be retiring.
6. Wiltshire's people strategy 2012 – 15 identifies the under 25s workforce as an under-represented group. Our workforce statistics show that 7.5% of the Wiltshire council workforce is under 25 in comparison with 16% of the working age community. Wiltshire Council's percentage of under 25's, however, is high when compared with the level seen across other local authorities (4.8%).
7. The council's business plan demonstrates the commitment "to provide opportunities for every child and young person to improve their attainment and skills so they can achieve their full potential". It is therefore key that we have initiatives in place to support this commitment.

Main considerations

Recruiting young workers

8. Currently the council targets young applicants through the following schemes:

National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)

9. This programme is designed to support and develop the most promising graduates to become local government leaders. Individuals are given the opportunity to study for a post graduate qualification and get to network with like-minded graduates from across the country, as well as gain valuable experience working on a variety of projects within the Council.
10. National management Trainees (NMTs) are given the opportunity to move across services and undertake a variety of roles (usually 3 or 4) which will help them to develop the multi-functional knowledge required by our leaders.
11. We currently have 3 individuals on the external scheme and a further 3 on our internal version known as the Wiltshire Graduate Development Programme (please see section on retention).

Apprenticeships

12. The approach to apprenticeships has changed and these schemes are now viewed as key alternatives to college or university which can be very expensive. This is quite a change from the traditional view where they were regarded as being suitable primarily for manual roles.
13. An apprenticeship is a comprehensive work-based development programme for people in employment. This can include school leavers, those already in work or those who are seeking to start a new career.
14. Apprentices learn on the job, building up knowledge and skills whilst gaining nationally recognised qualifications. An apprentice follows a structured development programme to achieve a competence based qualification in their occupational area.
15. Depending on the type of apprenticeship, a programme usually takes between 1 and 3 years to complete.
16. The council has already been instrumental in placing a number of apprentices in Wiltshire businesses on apprenticeship schemes. Economy and Regeneration and Learning in Wiltshire (OD and Learning) are continuing to promote apprenticeships externally in Wiltshire and build on working relationships with the local business community.
17. Currently we can offer apprenticeships in:
 - Health and social care adults
 - Supporting teaching and learning in schools
 - Business and administration
 - Children and young people's workforce (social care and early years – two separate qualifications)
 - Customer service
 - IT applications
18. Within the last 2 years we have had 6 apprentices within the council. Work is currently being undertaken within HR and OD and Learning to develop our approach to apprenticeships and to encourage managers to consider this route to fill vacancies.

Traineeships

19. Similar to apprenticeships, Traineeships are designed to reduce numbers of young people currently not in employment, education or training (NEET), by offering them the opportunity to gain access into a work environment, where barriers may have previously prevented them to do so, due to lack of formal qualifications and work experience.
20. Traineeships are offered to help those who do not feel ready for an apprenticeship with the overall aim of making a trainee ready for either an apprenticeship or other work role.
21. The core content of a traineeship is a high quality work placement, work preparation training and qualifications in English and Maths. They typically last between six weeks and five months.
22. Traineeships are a relatively new scheme and Wiltshire now has funding to offer its first 6 placements this year. The OD and Learning team are currently working to promote the scheme and identify managers who are willing to take on a traineeship opportunity.

Volunteering

23. A volunteer is a person who donates their time, skills and experience without receiving any form of compensation from Wiltshire Council. Volunteers can apply for jobs using the volunteer centre Wiltshire or by responding to adverts which are sent locally accompanied by application forms.
24. Volunteering can increase the chances of a young person finding work as it offers individuals knowledge and insight into the work that Wiltshire Council does. This in turn gives them the experience valued by employers when attempting to enter the jobs market.
25. We currently have approximately 1100 volunteers of which we estimate that around 15% are under 25. These are mainly within libraries and the youth service.

Work experience

26. Work experience placements are offered across many of our services. Most placements are matched on a reactive and ad hoc basis and managers are approached when a request is received for a placement in a particular service area.
27. There is also a specific work experience scheme within our looked after children service to offer opportunities to our young people who are leaving the care system.
28. Placements can range from a week for school work experience students to a year's placement for someone at university and are arranged at a local level between the service and the individual requesting work experience.
29. These placements offer young people the ability to gain experience of a working environment and are also used to allow individuals to network and understand the roles on offer at the council.

Retaining young workers

Currently the council aims to retain young people through the following schemes:

Wiltshire Graduate Development Programme (WGDP)

30. The WGDP is the internal version of the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP), which is detailed above. The key difference with this initiative is that the applicants are sourced from our internal graduate pool and they remain in their current roles rather than have placements in the organisation.
31. We currently have our first 3 internal graduates on the scheme and there are plans to increase this number in order to continue to develop our younger workforce.

Learning and development opportunities

32. Wiltshire Council offers a number of learning and development opportunities including internal development courses and external nationally recognised qualifications.
33. This is a key benefit for young people who are keen to develop their education and gain additional qualifications.
34. Employees are able to access courses leading to a nationally recognised qualification which is directly linked to their role. For example, employees in trainee posts can gain professional qualifications in engineering, ILM level 3 and 5 management qualifications and customer services qualifications. Higher qualifications are also available e.g. a level 5 diploma in Social Care.

Coaching

35. All staff and managers have the opportunity to be coached at work by a colleague.
36. Young people who believe they would benefit from coaching are added to the Wiltshire Council coaching pool where they are matched with a coach who can support them in defining and achieving learning and development goals.
37. Working with a coach helps a young person to explore different ways of looking at situations and be able to see different solutions to challenges.

HR Rising Stars

38. The Public Sector People Manager Association (PPMA) runs a yearly event to encourage young talent in HR to showcase their skills, called PPMA Rising Stars.
39. Young HR professionals are tasked with writing a business case for an innovative idea, presenting that idea and then implementing it. Wiltshire Council have had a young applicant taken through to the final of this scheme in both of the last 2 years.

Young and in local government (YILG)

40. Similar to the HR rising stars event, the YILG scheme develops the communication skills of people in the early stages of their working lives or those who are performing

voluntary work in the community.

41. It does so through an annual series of residential courses and competitions of between two and four days duration. Run by two charities (the Young Programme and the Institute of Contemporary Scotland) it aims to encourage the research, writing and presentational abilities of delegates, helping to build confidence where it is fragile as well as enhancing the talents of more experienced participants.
42. The minimum age for entry is 18 and there is no upper age-limit, but the programme is particularly relevant to anyone in the formative years of their career.

Wiltshire rewards

43. The council offers a range of employee benefits schemes to help retain staff such as Wiltshire Rewards. This scheme allows staff to purchase gift cards from a number of retailers at a reduced price, and earn cash back on their purchases.
44. Whilst this scheme is available to all staff, the use of modern technology, apps, instant discounts and cash back is particularly appealing to our younger staff. There are also a wide range of retailers and activity centres offering discounts to suit the younger age-group.

Future schemes

45. The following schemes are being evaluated to decide whether they would add value and complement the other strategies above that are already implemented:

Social worker academy

46. Social worker academies are aimed at a social worker who has been qualified for 6 months or less. A typical academy provides:
 - A 6 month development programme
 - Balanced, reduced caseloads for year 1
 - Dedicated management
 - Fortnightly reflective supervision
 - Coaching, mentoring & peer support
 - Excellent ongoing training, support and career opportunities
47. Work is currently being scoped to determine whether this type of scheme could be beneficial in Wiltshire to develop our newly qualified social workers.

Supported Internships

48. Wiltshire Council is acting as a pathfinder in advance of the new children and families bill of which supported internships is one aspect.
49. A supported internship is a programme of work and study based primarily at an employer's premises for disabled young people with learning difficulties and / or disabilities.

50. They are designed to better enable disabled young people to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for the workplace e.g. treating them as employees throughout the programme.
51. For the young person, the internship should contribute to their long-term career goals and fit with their working capabilities. For the council, the internship must meet a real business need; with the potential of a paid job at the end of the programme of study should the intern meet the required standard.
52. The overall goal of supported internships is for disabled young people to move into paid employment. The structured study programme includes on-the-job training provided by expert job coaches, and the chance to study for relevant qualifications, where appropriate.
53. The job coaches also provide support to employers, increasing their confidence of working with disabled young people and helping them to understand the business case of employing a diverse workforce. Job coaches also provide support after the structured study programme for those young people who are not offered a paid job at the end of the programme.

GROW events

54. These events are currently being designed by employees within HR/OD along with existing National Management Trainees as part of their personal development and the ongoing work to increase employee engagement. GROW stands for goals, responsibility, obstacles/opportunities and working together.
55. The events are expected to be largely informal and will be used to help current young employees find out more about how the council's structure, the learning and development opportunities, the career paths, the breadth of services within the council and the types of roles available across the council.
56. It is expected that the events will be shaped by those who attend. There will be presentations and group work formats to allow a mix of individual learning and networking.

Support to school leavers

57. The education and skills act 2008 introduced from September 2013 the requirement that all young people in England have to stay on in either:
 - a. full time education;
 - b. or training (apprenticeships);
 - c. or at least part-time education with either a part time job or at least 20 hours of volunteering per weekuntil the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 years of age.
58. The council will be looking at ways to liaise with Wiltshire schools and colleges and develop appropriate apprenticeship opportunities to help support this act and provide opportunities for young school leavers.

Changes to job descriptions and interviews

59. We will continue to look at how we recruit to make the process more attractive and offer equal opportunities to younger applicants.
60. We are aware that some roles are advertised asking for unnecessary experience and/or qualifications that may be impossible for an otherwise talented and capable young individual to meet. We will continue to educate managers to reduce these requirements and therefore allow younger applicants to compete.
61. Job family modelling will help to explain the essential requirements of a role and is therefore expected to make these clear to both applicants and managers.
62. Behavioural interview questions aim to find out exactly what behaviours a candidate has demonstrated in the past as usually evidence of past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour.
63. Wiltshire Councils behaviours framework introduced the concept that it is more about "how you do it, than what you do". We now expect that 50% of all interview questions are behavioural. This allows a young person to compete with older applicants as using this method concentrates on potential and cultural fit rather than previous experience & current skills.
64. We understand that whilst we have already made good steps towards these goals we must continue to develop & embed them to ensure that there are truly equal opportunities for young applicants during the recruitment stages.

Conclusion

65. As can be seen from this report the council has an ageing workforce population and it is therefore important that we have innovative schemes in place to encourage younger people to come and work for us.
66. The council does currently offer a variety of schemes to help recruit young workers e.g. graduate schemes, apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience schemes. Work is ongoing to improve our uptake in these areas and to encourage managers to take part in these schemes.
67. There are also a number of retention initiatives that have been implemented e.g. WGDP, HR Rising Stars, Wiltshire Rewards and learning and development opportunities, and there are opportunities to continue to develop our offer further.
68. It is appreciated that more can still be done to improve the recruitment and retention of our young workforce, so we are currently looking at ways in which we can improve our representation of this group of staff through innovative schemes e.g. supported internships, support to school leavers, a social worker academy and GROW events.

Recommendations

69. It is recommended that Staffing Policy Committee note the contents of this report and continue to support the recruitment and retention of young workers.

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