

Preparing for Adulthood Strategy Informal Scrutiny meeting notes

Officers: Sarah Wells, Chris Smith, Charlotte Baron, Jodie Stephenson

Councillors: Jones, Critchley, S Brookes, Flanagan (Chair)

Co-opted Member: Jo Snape

Cabinet Member: Councillor Benson

Young people representatives: Mia, Kieran and Amy

There were no declarations of interest.

Sarah Wells, Co-Production Practice Lead gave an overview of the draft Preparation for Adulthood document. The plan was developed to help young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve their ambitions.

The document was co-produced with young people, professionals, parents and adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to help those aged 14-25 who have SEND to live the life they chose. The strategy followed the same format and language as similar strategies nationally.

Elected members asked the young people representatives what barriers they felt were in place with regards to employment opportunities, and what Scrutiny Members could do to support them.

Mia, Kieran and Amy raised the following concerns:

- Gaps in knowledge with regards to what the different types of further education were, what courses were available to them, what employment opportunities were available;
- Lack of support with completing applications;
- Whilst they acknowledged Progress Mentors were available to support them to write personal statements, they felt that the number of mentors was not enough to spend sufficient amount of time with each individual.

A discussion regarding the offer from some of the Council Owned Companies provided with regards to apprenticeship / Internship places and asked whether this could be across the board of all the companies in the future. Chris advised that there were currently 12 places available annually for internships, which would be increased to 20 places in 2024, and whilst this provided amazing opportunities, it was still not enough.

With regards to employment, it was acknowledged that the main barrier for employers stemmed from lack of understanding of the needs of the SEND person. At the Work Readiness Conference it was identified that employers were nervous of doing something wrong or offensive with regards to perception and understanding of the individual's SEND. In June 2023 the Council ran a free training session for employers centered on Asperger's which received phenomenal feedback, a series of additional training sessions would be available in 2024.

Chris Smith updated Members on 'Project Search' and explained that this was a one-year work placement program for students with an EHCP who were seeking a pathway into employment. Staff

members acknowledged that there was a stigma attached to Project Search and more would be need to promote the service and break the stigma.

There were currently 1,472 people aged from birth to 25 years old with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) in Blackpool, of these there were:

- 99 in year 11
- 98 in year 12
- 89 in year 13

However, when the young person attended college they often fell away from the statistics, this was due to the fact that colleges were independent and used different data systems. Discussion took place with regards to GDPR and data sharing.

Recommendations:

- Members requested additional information regarding Social Enterprise solutions be included in the document;
- Members asked for colleges to be approached with regards to data sharing of students with EHCPs;
- Members were offered the opportunity to shadow the team and attend site visits at the SEND Schools; and
- Request the CYP Scrutiny Committee carry out a review or Deep Dive in to the area concerning 'Transition for Young Adults with SEND'.