

Traineeships in Denbighshire County Council

Overview of volunteering, apprenticeships, graduates, internships, traineeships and work experience across the organisation

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Denbighshire County Council
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Summary

Volunteering

From the research carried out it is estimated that there were 768 people volunteering corporately with Denbighshire County Council in 2011-2012 with a further 732 volunteering within schools.

Further it is estimated that between April 2012 - November 2012 this rose to 837 people volunteering corporately with a further 729 volunteering within schools.

There is no clear consistent approach to the way in which volunteer opportunities are recruited, managed or developed. This is not aided by there being a lack of any guidance, policies or procedures in place.

Apprenticeships

The number and range of apprenticeships has increased and the support mechanisms and awareness of apprenticeships has improved.

Denbighshire County Council is in the final for Large Apprentice Employer of the Year in Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2013.

Other Traineeships

During 2012 – 2013 there have been:

- 20 Job Growth Wales
- 6 Steps to Employment opportunities
- 13 Summer Placement Scheme

Graduates

There have been 10 graduates on the Denbighshire County Council Graduate Training Scheme. Those who have left the

scheme have been retained by the organisation.

In addition to this, the Graduates are responsible for the development and running of the Employee Development and Networking Group 'Synergy'.

Under the Go Wales Paid Work Placement Scheme there were 9 opportunities offered to graduates/undergraduate for 6-10 week projects. The match funding for these posts has now been used.

Internships

In light of the success of the Go Wales Paid Work Placement Scheme, Denbighshire County Council is launching a paid internship scheme in September 2013.

The scheme will provide undergraduates/graduates with the opportunity to apply for paid project based work which will last 6-12 weeks. Putting into practice what they have learnt in the classroom in the workplace.

Work Experience

The new work experience process is being launched October 2013 for placements to take place in June/July 2014.

Opportunities will be clearly identified and information will be provided on what candidates can expect.

To support this, an Employability Skills Certificate has been launched emphasising the importance of soft skills.

Context and Background

It was becoming increasingly apparent that with the ageing workforce in Denbighshire County Council, there would be significant problems in the future if the necessary investment was not explored to develop opportunities for younger people entering the organisation as well as developing our current workforce.

There are a number of opportunities which have been implemented in order to address some of these issues including; Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme, National Graduate Development Programme, Unpaid Internships, Volunteering and Work Experience. However despite this, there was a lack of awareness corporately of what was taking place and potentially opportunities were being missed.

Utilising these opportunities effectively across the whole of the Council will make a meaningful contribution towards some of the corporate priorities, especially in terms of developing the local economy. Taking into account the austerity measures the authority is facing both now and which it will inevitably face in the future, these opportunities will be notable.

Grant funding was sourced through the People and Places Board to employ 1.5 Graduates to develop and co-ordinate a number of work streams to include Graduates, Apprenticeships, Volunteering, Work Experience, Internships and Work Placements. This was in light of a number of issues including; concerns arising out of the ageing workforce, the need to attract younger employees into the organisation, youth unemployment, as well as providing additional resources for activities which add significant value to existing services.

The objectives of the graduate project were to:-

- Identifying the range of opportunities for a range of traineeships across the council.
- Ascertain possible areas of funding for these positions.
- Recognise and map the range of trainee routes which can generate valuable employment opportunities, build skills & qualifications, meet the skills gaps within the council to support front line service delivery and to meet the corporate priorities.

This report provides a summary of the work which has taken place as part of that project.

Section 1: Volunteering

1.1 Summary of Research Findings

In order ascertain the position in respect of volunteering and due to the lack of information being recorded centrally, a questionnaire was forwarded to Middle Managers in October 2012.

The research undertaken identified:-

1. Each department records data differently which has resulted in the duplication of information.
2. There is an inconsistent approach as to how volunteers are managed across the organisation with pockets of good practice, different policies and procedures in place. This has led to there being a variation into the 'volunteer experience'.
3. Managers who currently do not use volunteers feel that they would benefit from support and guidance in order to develop volunteering in their service in the future.
4. The organisation does not corporately measure the overall cost of volunteers.
5. Denbighshire County Council would benefit from some form of central coordination to promote and attract volunteering.

From this research a volunteer focus group was established and coordinated by one of the Graduate Officers. This focus group included officers from each service who currently use volunteers and has been involved in reviewing; a draft volunteer policy, volunteer strategy and the management information system.

1.2 Number of Volunteers

It is estimated that there were approximately 768 people volunteering corporately with Denbighshire County Council in 2011-2012 with a further 732 volunteering within schools (a breakdown of these results can be provided). Further it is estimated that between April 2012 - November 2012 this rose to 837 people volunteering corporately with a further 729 volunteering within schools.

It was clear from the information collated that there were inaccuracies and only an estimated figure can be provided, as no one department uses the same approach to record volunteers. Other reasons for the inaccuracies include:-

- Volunteers recorded iTrent may have left or did not start. Managers do not always inform HRDirect that a volunteer has left.
- Duplicated numbers from iTrent as this is only used for volunteers requiring a CRB check. These could be included in other figures.
- Someone who volunteers from more than one service could be counted twice i.e. one person could be volunteering within Countryside and Youth Services but could be counted 3 times, one from CML, one from Countryside and one from iTrent due to needing a CRB.

1.3 Volunteer Activities

There are a vast range of volunteer opportunities undertaken across the organisation ranging from more specific opportunities such as attending a one off event whilst others are more generic across a department. Some of these opportunities include:

- School Governors
- Front of House in Theatres
- Active Lifestyles
- Youth Work
- Older People
- Gardening
- Reading to Children
- Supporting Teachers
- Countryside (clearing paths, building walls)
- Trade Union Reps
- Committee Members
- Heritage work
- Archives
- Trustees
- Non-executive members
- General office work
- Librarians
- CERVs (Community Emergency Response Volunteers)
- Development of public policy through campaigning and consultation processes.

1.4 Recruitment & Reward of Volunteers

Similarly to the management of volunteers, the approach taken to recruit and reward volunteers also varies across the departments (again highlighting that there is no consistent approach).

Currently different departments are recognising their volunteers in different ways including:

- Awards
- Christmas Party/Social
- Free Entry to Heritage Sites
- Training

Many of these social recognition events have taken place due to Managers paying for things out of their own pocket rather than using council expenses.

However this year Excellence Denbighshire Awards will include a Council Volunteer of the Year category.

1.5 Recommendations

1.5.1 Management Information System

From the results of the questionnaire and discussions with the focus group, it is recommended that a central management system would improve the way each department manage and coordinate their volunteers. The additional functions of iTrent have been looked at however it was deemed not appropriate.

This management system will allow the Council to promote, recruit and report on their volunteers in one system eliminating duplication. It will enable volunteers or potential volunteers to log on and view all opportunities available as well as letting the volunteer select key interests, should there be volunteering opportunities in the future. Their personal profile can log the amount of hours they have volunteered as well as check for training opportunities and their CRB clearance.

For officers it will reduce the amount of time inputting information and data, enabling them to focus on other work priorities and increase their interaction in voluntary activities. The system provides a central portal enabling the Council to connect quickly with its community and helps improve their current communication with all volunteers.

Similarly this can promote and feed into our other traineeship schemes as opportunities can be advertised and promoted as they are recruited.

Overall the system would help improve the management of volunteers as well as attracting new people to get involved, enabling the organisation to get closer to the community and helps modernise the way in which it works. If the Council was to centrally promote all volunteering, it would provide further opportunities to; gain new skills, demonstrate employability and develop social skills.

1.5.2 Additional Resources

Due to the nature of volunteering being so diverse and the lack of consistency, the organisation would significantly benefit from central coordination. This post could be responsible for establishing policy, procedures and toolkit for managers which would provide guidance for a consistent approach i.e. what can and cannot be done in relation to volunteering, developing new volunteering opportunities and also develop a more standardised effective ways of working.

2. Apprenticeships

2.1 Summary

Denbighshire County Council has had an established Apprenticeship scheme in place since 2001, however over the last three financial years the number of apprenticeships within the Council has been in decline; with a majority of the apprentices deriving from the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme and largely all the apprentices were doing the Business Administration framework.

Financial Year	Number of Apprentices
April 2009/ March 2010	43
April 2010/March 2011	33
April 2011/March 2012	22

Since April 2005 – March 2012 there have been 117 Apprentices, of which 84 were retained within the organisation and 55 of those are still working for the council.

During April 2012/March 2013 the number of apprentices increased to 34 apprentices consisting of Business Administration, Youth Work, Housing, IT and Catering. During April 2012/March 2013 there were 10 apprentices who left the scheme and only 2 did not obtain roles within Denbighshire County Council, but have gone on to obtain roles elsewhere.

So far this financial year there have been 35 apprentices completing; Business Administration, Housing, Creative Digital Media, ICT, Welding and Catering frameworks. During this period 6 have left the scheme with all 6 obtaining posts within the organisation.

Additional support mechanisms have been introduced to assist the apprentices to provide a quality training experience. A detailed summary report including the history of the scheme, an overview of work which has taken place and the future of the scheme can be provided.

2.2 Outcomes

In summary the outcomes of this project have been:-

- Creation of further opportunities for younger people within the community in a broader range of frameworks.
- Through the development of support mechanisms and increase of opportunities to develop the apprentices' employability and to ensure that they are in a good position to apply for posts within the organisation.
- The range of internal training is made available for the apprentices so that they can continue to develop above and beyond their apprenticeship.
- The support schemes encourage the apprentices to develop their confidence which is key so early on in their career. Many apprentices have commented how their confidence has developed since being on the apprenticeship which has largely been due to manager encouragement, engagement and support put in place.
- Support mechanisms such as Synergy have also impacted on their engagement and have in turn acted as a device to promote apprenticeships through the organisation. Through this group the apprentices have had the opportunity to take part in a Focus Group for Modernising the Council, attend the LSB Apprenticeships Work! Networking Event, opportunity meet; the Leader, Chief Executive, Government Minister Lesley Griffiths AM, attend the Employability Bootcamp, present to staff and the public at events held with Open Doors Rhyl City Strategy, present to school students on what it is like to work at Denbighshire County Council etc.
- Development of a toolkit for managers including guidance and information on apprentices, recruitment and the support mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of apprenticeships going forward.
- Through the apprentices attending careers events and schools to promote the council as being 'closer to its community' which is one of the organisations core aims. This also provides schools students with a real life example of what being an apprentice is like so that they can obtain an insight of what opportunities are available to them locally.
- Research carried out on behalf of the LSB showed that from Managers responses 100% said that Apprentices added value to the department and 88% said apprentices had a positive impact on morale and motivation within the team.

A substantial amount of work has taken place in relation to apprentices with an emphasis on raising the profile of the scheme and the benefits throughout the organisation. A good illustration of how this has been effective is that Denbighshire County Council is a finalist in Large Employer of the Year in Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2013.

3. Other Traineeships

In addition to the apprenticeships there have also been a range of paid and unpaid opportunities:-

3.1 Job Growth Wales

20 opportunities

Job Growth Wales posts funding through Llandrillo Menai, WCVA and Go Wales consisting of a wide range of opportunities from Coastal Wardens, Customer Services, Childcare, Project Support and Administration.

The programme caters for young people that are job ready but have had difficulty securing employment. The incentive provides unemployed young people aged 16-24, with a job opportunity for a six month period paid at national minimum wage . The jobs created must be additional to, and not replace, positions that would otherwise be filled.

3.2 Steps to Employment

6 placements

Steps to Employment provides participants who are referred from the Job Centre to Llandrillo Menai whereby they undertake employability courses, ECDL and BTEC Edexcel Workskills (and more) over a 26 week period. In order for them to obtain their qualification they are required to have a work placement.

3.3 Summer Placement Scheme

13 Opportunities

Summer Placement Scheme offering paid administration post for approximately over the summer period.

4. Graduates

In 2012 Denbighshire County Council started its own graduate scheme away from the NDGP due to difficulty attracting young graduates to the area. The emphasis of the new scheme was to create opportunities locally for graduates within the North Wales area.

4.1 Graduate Training Scheme

Over the course of the 18 month period there have been 10 graduates on the Graduate Training Scheme.

This has included two Corporate Graduates who have rotated every four-six months undertaking a range of projects across the organisation. The other graduates have been based in one specific

department working on a range of projects strongly linked to the modernisation and/or corporate priorities.

There have been two graduates who have left the scheme and both have been retained within the organisation.

In order to support Managers on what opportunities are available for graduates, a toolkit has been made available including: the options available taking into account budget and timescales, recruitment, preparation, support mechanisms and template documents.

4.2 Go Wales Paid Work Placements

GO Wales receives funding from the Welsh Government and the European Union Social Fund (ESF) and they are based in Welsh universities working alongside job shops and work experience coordinators. In order to be eligible for the schemes which Go Wales provides, the participants need to be graduates or undergraduates in a higher education and; either (1) successfully completed their first year of study; and living in Wales, or studying at a Higher Education Institution in Wales; or (2) a higher education graduate and living in Wales.

A funding pot of £8,500 was obtained to partially fund undergraduates/graduates taking part in 6-10 week paid work placements. The Graduates were required to be paid a minimum of £250 per week and Go Wales subsidise £95 from the funding pot and all placements undertook the City and Guilds Professional Development Award.

From the scheme, 9 work placements were offered working on a variety of projects in Housing, Bridges and Structures, ICT, Education Support, New Work Connections etc. Of those 9 opportunities, 2 graduates were retained within the organisation, 5 returned to university to complete their studies and 2 obtained posts elsewhere.

The funding for this scheme has now ended.

4.2.1 Go Wales; Job Growth Wales

Of the 20 Job Growth Wales posts which have been offered, 2 of these have derived from the Go Wales Job Growth Wales Scheme. Of which 1 of the graduates has been successful in obtaining a post on the Graduate Training Scheme and the other graduate is due to be extended in their post.

5 Internships

Following research into unpaid internships it was decided to pull the scheme which had been running for one year, due to the potential risk of breaching the National Minimum Wage Legislation. This can be seen in the internship report which can be made available.

5.1 Denbighshire County Council Internship Scheme

Following the success of the Go Wales scheme an Internship scheme will be launched in September 2013 to provide paid work experience placements for a 6-12 week period on project based work. This scheme will be available to managers throughout the year to recruit.

6 Work Experience

Similar to the volunteering, it is unclear how many work experience opportunities we currently offer. Some managers record them as volunteering whilst others simply do not record them at all. Katie Poole investigated the issue and produced a report outlining the concerns (this can be made available).

6.1 Summary of report

- Corporately Denbighshire County Council only offered 10 work experience opportunities in 2011, 28 in 2012 and at the moment we have only done 18 in 2013. It is thought that the decline this year is due to the new Careers Wales database which indicates that all the placements with DCC have been taken.
- Current figures on work experience are not accurate.
- We have a considerable number of enquiries for work experience however many are declined by managers.
- There is no clear process in place for recording work experience placements and the standard of opportunities offered is not monitored.
- As a council Denbighshire offer very few placements for School Students with the majority of School based work experience go on placement within Denbighshire Schools
- Denbighshire's central figures and Careers Wales figures do not match
- Denbighshire needs to provide more work experience opportunities.

6.2 Action taken

Following presenting the information to SLT they agreed to adopt a new work experience process which involved researching best practice from both the public and private sector. This approach has already been implemented by North Wales Police and Denbighshire County Council have been working collaboratively on this project.

This process is a more simplistic sustainable approach to offering work experience opportunities which is designed to offer a consistent range of quality placements throughout the organisation and to raise the profile of what career opportunities exist within the local area.

As part of this process we have identified a number of work experience opportunities which will be made available on our website to view. Candidates can then apply for the opportunities during a select recruitment window.

As part of the process two distinct weeks will be offered; one inside the school work experience week with priority given to school students who live and study in Denbighshire and one outside the school work experience week to suit other groups.

Those looking for any other opportunities outside of this process will be encouraged to look at our other traineeships or volunteering.

In order to support this process, a toolkit for managers is in the process of being developed outlining what needs to take place at every stage of the process. This includes, planning the placement, what to do on the first day, during and at the end of the placement, what forms need to be completed, what health and safety considerations there need to be etc.

Alongside this an Employability Skills Certificate has been launched to assess soft skills and raise the importance of these in the workplace. This will be forwarded to those who complete the work experience week along with an opportunity to provide feedback.

