



Cabinet 7 December 2021

Opportunity for expansion of Northumberland HEE Project Choice

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Purpose of report

To communicate to members the opportunity to develop a wider scope of delivery for Health Education England's Project choice within Northumberland in order to more rapidly deliver on Northumberland County Councils education priorities and SEND priorities.

Recommendations

Cabinet are recommended to:

1. Review the proposal for Health Education England to deliver supported internship provision for young people with Special Educational Needs &/or Disabilities within Northumberland County Council departments.
 2. Subject to approval, authorise HR&OD to commence discussions with NCC departments, using comm's to promote, establishing where capacity and aspiration to accept placements exists for:
 - a. Short placements in 2021-22 academic year.
 - b. Full academic year rotational placements for an NCC specific cohort in academic year 2022-23.
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Link to Corporate Plans

Links to NCC Corporate Plan 2020-21

Project Choice internship proposal is in strong accordance with the **Living, Enjoying, Connecting, Learning** and **Thriving** priorities of NCC Corporate Plan 2020-21

Links to Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019-24

Project Choice internship proposal is in strong accordance with the following priorities of Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019-24:

- A.** Grow the business base
 - B.** Support inclusive employment
 - C.** Deliver productive places
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Links to Northumberland Local Area Strategy.

Project Choice internship proposal is in strong accordance with the following priorities of Northumberland Local Area Strategy:

- Priority 01:** Working together
 - Priority 02:** Delivering the right support at the right time
 - Priority 03:** Inclusive education & success for all learners
 - Priority 04:** Effectively prepare children and young people for adulthood
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Links to Education & Skills Directorate priorities.

Project Choice internship proposal is in strong accordance with **Priority 01, 04, 05, 10** and **11** of NCC Education & Skills Directorate.

Links to HR & OD People Strategy 2021-25.

Project Choice internship proposal is in strong accordance with the following strategic themes of HR & OD People Strategy 2021-25:

Strategic Theme 01: Enriched Experience

Strategic Theme 03: Planning our People for the Future

Strategic Theme 04: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion for everyone

Key issues :

In Northumberland County too many young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities become entrenched in an education cycle which adds insufficient value and does not prepare them for a move to sustainable employment. In a survey aimed at our SEND community (August 2020) 426 families responded. A strong theme was the need to provide clearer pathways to prepare children and young people for adulthood.

Our SEND community regularly exhibit value adding talent but meet significant obstacles in finding opportunity to showcase these talents despite having much to offer organisations across the county.

Pathways that offer greater opportunity to become work-ready are not widely available in county and those that are available are too frequently not well defined, promoted or impactful.

This project is designed to begin to provide the opportunity to our young community with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities to access work ready skills and to access progression opportunity from internship, through apprenticeship and into sustainable career paths.

Children, young people, their parents/carers and education providers will know what pathways young people can follow into adulthood. Young people will know what to expect and what support is available to them, more young people will be enabled to access these opportunities year on year and a reducing fraction of our SEND community will be seen to move into adult social care.

Background:

Project Choice is a specialist post-16 education programme providing work experience via a supported internship programme that helps young adults between the ages of 16-24 with disabilities, learning disabilities, difficulties and/or Autism gain work experience and improve employability and independence skills.

The programme is typically based within NHS settings and is delivered by Health Education England (HEE), the provider, and part of the NHS.

Health Education England provide internships within healthcare settings and other NHS partner organisations, creating supported environments and helping to get Interns ready for the working world, the ultimate goal being progression to apprenticeship programmes within their host organisation.

The support is tailored to each Intern and role options are matched to each Intern's skills. Interns spend 1 academic year (36 attendance weeks) learning work skills in three placements, each placement being typically 12 weeks long.

Having developed a close collaborative relationship, Health Education England, supported by Northumberland County Council, are piloting a supported internship programme in Northumberland during the 2021-22 academic year, the cohort size is targeted at 10 in the initial pilot phase.

The role of Northumberland County Council (NCC) is to provide advice and guidance to individuals interested and eligible to study on the Project Choice programme and support their transition onto the programme with HEE. NCC also support the learners on programme by providing high needs Element 3 funding to support their progress, this is valued at £28,275 for the NHCT cohort in academic year 2021-22.

Health Education England have recently appointed a Northumberland area manager demonstrating their commitment to growing the provision of this opportunity across Northumberland.

Opportunity

Health Education England, having recently appointed a Northumberland area manager, have resource to invest in growing their provision within Northumberland.

Within the 2021-22 academic year HEE are delivering a pilot programme with a cohort of 10 interns with placements within Cramlington NSEC and Wansbeck hospitals. The intention is to grow the scale of the provision during academic year 2022-23, potentially within a wider range of NHS settings. Northumberland County Council will continue to support the programme through recruitment from its known SEN audience and by providing high needs funding.

The close working relationship which has emerged between Health Education England and Northumberland County Council Education Directorate has provided a range of opportunities which will contribute to the delivery of a range of education and SEND based priorities.

Opportunity 1 (short term): Northumberland County Council will have opportunity to engage in small scale internships placement pilot activities.

In collaboration with Northumberland County Council, Health Education England are prepared to offer a number of the 2021-22 supported interns a placement of circa 12 weeks within an NCC setting as part of their current programme.

This will provide an opportunity for organisational learning to prepare NCC for hosting an NCC cohort in future academic years. The interns would receive the same significant support from HEE that they experience during placement in NHS settings, HEE would also support NCC in developing as a host employer.

HR & OD will provide support to each department to ensure that all involved are fully engaged in making sure the desired outcome is achieved and to enhance inclusive culture across the organisation. HR & OD will also create resources for the individual on placement and the placement supervisor whilst providing additional pastoral support to make sure everyone involved feels connected and to support interns and their line managers.

Opportunity 2, medium term: Northumberland County Council will have opportunity to host an NCC specific cohort of supported interns.

In collaboration with Northumberland County Council, Health Education England will manage a cohort of NCC supported interns in the same way as seen in NHS settings, the cohort would be distributed throughout NCC where capacity and aspiration to host an intern exists, also considering the aspiration and strengths of the intern to find a mutually beneficial opportunity. HEE would continue to support NCC in developing as a host employer.

NCC would continue to support HEE with recruitment and to provide high needs funding for the interns.

This will allow NCC to continue to be a direct participant in contributing to Preparation for Adulthood outcomes around employment and assisting our SEN audience grow closer to the labour market, increasing opportunity for achieving sustainable careers.

The approach has the scalability to grow providing organisational capacity can be identified which would allow the impact delivered toward Preparation for Adulthood outcomes to be scalable in direct proportion to identified capacity.

HR & OD will review and evaluate the pilot placements, promote and develop the offer to other service areas within NCC, develop the Work Experience offering for Northumberland SEN students building on evidence and feedback from the pilot cohort. HR & OD will also continue to support the service areas that will host the 36-week internship opportunities.

Opportunity 3, longer term: Northumberland County Council will be recognised as a best practice supported internship placement provider and will coach other organisations in county in best practice placement delivery.

Following a period of engagement in opportunity 2, HR & OD in conjunction with Health Education England would develop potential to provide mentoring/coaching to partner organisations across Northumberland where aspiration and capacity for supported internship placements exists, but not yet the confidence or provider relationship to allow engagement.

In contributing to growing capacity within the network of employer placement providers in Northumberland, equality, diversity & inclusion impacts can be extended beyond NCC and further demonstrate NCC commitment to being a leading inclusive organisation.

In this arrangement, interns could potentially receive the same significant support from HEE and NCC that they experience during placement in NHS and NCC settings.

Moving provision into partner organisations across public and private sector delivers further opportunity to grow the volume of supported internships in county and again raise the impact delivered toward Preparation for Adulthood outcomes.

Implications

Policy	This proposal is in strong accordance with Preparation for Adulthood outcomes and Northumberland County Council SEND Strategic Action Plan.
Finance and value for money	NCC will provide high needs funding to Project Choice interns from the existing high needs Element 3 funding allocation. Estimated between £27K and £30K per year depending on individual need within the cohort.
Legal	None
Procurement	None
Human Resources	Some coordination activity with departments via HR & OD is required, this requiring a manageable amount of capacity to be allocated, this will fluctuate across the academic year cycle.
Property	NCC Placements will be delivered in current work areas, some isolated cases of accessibility would need to be assessed on an individual basis.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Equalities impact assessment is appended to this briefing
Risk Assessment	NCC risk assessments may be necessary in a minority of cases in relation to specific individuals' circumstances when placed in a department. HEE will risk assess each placement as part of their obligation in delivering internship programmes.
Crime Disorder &	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
Customer Consideration	The proposals set out in this report is based upon a vision to act in the best educational and employment interests of young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Northumberland.
Carbon reduction	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have any positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
Health and Wellbeing	Sustaining a valuable career is inextricably linked to health & wellbeing, particularly relevant to audience who experiences obstacles to entering the labour market.
Wards	Applicable to all wards.

Background papers:

Appendix 01 - Health Education England Project Choice briefing paper - Equalities Impact Assessment.pdf

Appendix 02 - Health Education England Project Choice - Employer Brochure.pdf

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

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