

CYP Select Committee – Review of Employment and Education Business Site Visits

Visit to Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies UK Ltd. – 15 October 2013

In attendance:

Dianne Hiscocks – Head of Organisational Development
Councillor Carol Clark
Councillor Ken Lupton
Roland Todd
Louise McDonald
Judy Trainer

- The company deals with full scale biological manufacturing from initial concept to commercial product.
- The site at Billingham is an established site with an expanding work force, currently:

500 staff on site – with a broad demographic
Research and Development - 180 posts
Production – 100 posts
Quality Assurance 50 post
Plus Business Administration
- Research and Development staff – PHD/ Science Graduates recruited from University locally and further afield; R&D staff were also recruited following summer student placements. The Company enjoyed a good relationship with Sunderland University who adapt their degree course to the company's needs.
- Production Staff – the company struggle to fill these posts. Staff needed to be capable of running the plant but also needed to understand the science. The company were taking on more apprenticeships to fill these vacancies and were having to “cast their net wide” for suitable candidates.
- It was also difficult to find candidates with the right attitude and flexibility. The company were prepared to sacrifice experience for the right attitude. Having the correct attitude was considered to be the most important attribute and the company were reintroducing psychometric tests. The Company would also headhunt for particular posts.
- Working Cultures could also be an issue as some employees were unfamiliar with a more modern working environment. For example, the employee/ manager relationship. Also companies from other nationalities often worked in different ways. For example, Japanese companies tended not to be so concerned with Job Descriptions.
- A lot of Quality Assurance work was carried out within the company, however, there were no formal qualification for this type of work so training and development was “on the job”. Apprenticeships for Quality Assurance work was identified as an area which could be explored.
- Young people seemed unaware of the various industries which existed and types of occupations/ opportunities within them together with qualifications would help to obtain employment. It was acknowledged that young people would be unaware of the range of jobs which existed in the Company including communications, marketing and sales.

- Better careers advice was needed – the Company would be interested in being involved with a more co-ordinated approach and a higher profile with local schools. The company had sponsored students taking degrees and were setting up a more formal bursary. It was important to find new ways of engaging with young people and schools in an interactive way to attract them into industry. There was also a sense that education was too subject based.
- Work Readiness was an issue although the company felt that issues in relation to dress/behaviour/time keeping were the company's responsibility to deal with and address.
- Turnover was minimal; the company was growing
- There was a shortage of process engineers due to competitive salaries offered in the oil/gas industries
- The Company were keen to explore apprenticeships further – six were taken on in the last year but in the traditional areas. Apprenticeships tended to be advertised through training providers but this could also be explored through schools – but the infrastructure needed to be in place.
- Job opportunities tended to be advertised through Job Websites and through agencies rather than in the local press. They would therefore encourage anyone looking for work to sign up with an agency.

Visit to Cotswold Manufacturing – 23 October 2013

In attendance:

Michelle Burnett and Stuart Burnett – Cotswold Manufacturing
 Councillor Norman Stephenson
 Councillor Barbara Inman
 Roland Todd
 Judy Trainer

- The Company had been established for 8 years; starting with 5 staff they now employed 54 staff and had a turnover of £8m; they moved from Billingham 3 years ago to refitted accommodation in Thornaby; they secured a large contract with the MOD five years ago which has seen them through the recession; they enjoyed good workforce stability and benefitted from repeat business as well as new customers.
- The Company had invested £600,000 in the door line capacity and had taken on 12 additional members of staff on for the new work. They had worked closely with the Council and Job Centre Plus (Work Based Skills Academy) and as a result 30 young people had been put through a selection process resulting in 12 young people being taken on. The process worked well with young people having benefitted from initial training time at Tees Achieve.
- The Company had found that a common problem was that young people were not prepared for the work environment often displaying an immature attitude with attendance and work ethic being issues; the Company had taken on five apprenticeships and had experienced problems with all but one of them; they had worked hard with the apprenticeships and they were progressing but commented that the time commitment should not be underestimated. Based on previous experience, they had decided to identify a suitable mentor for any apprentice taken on in the future. One idea would be to take on more apprenticeships than posts to provide an element of competition.
- It was suggested that some type of “pre-apprenticeship” induction programme would help as a way of introducing young people into the work place and helping them to become work ready. Having a safe training environment would also be beneficial from a health and safety perspective.

- The Company were, however, keen to bring in young people and were conscious of the need for succession planning. The older workforce tended to lack the experience in new technologies such as operating CNC (Computer Numerically Controlled) equipment.
- Stockton Riverside College had been utilised to provide training for the existing workforce to bring all employees up to the same level, however, funding had recently ceased. It was felt that there was a need for more accessible training courses and there was also a lot of confusion about funding.
- There were different routes into industry and schools needed to provide information about all of them. It was noted that, in Germany, they had the best apprenticeship programmes which were given the same status as doing a University Degree. It was felt that not enough training was given on writing CVs, interview skills etc. in schools.
- The Company employed staff with minor learning difficulties and an ethnic mix; they would also consider taking on young offenders depending on the nature of the offence. They advertised in Job Centres, local press and on-line.

CYP Site Visit to Nifco UK – 14 November 2013

Frances Hoy – HR Manager
 Councillors Carol Clark and Norma Stephenson
 Roland Todd, Judy Trainer

- Currently have 17 Apprenticeships out of approx. 380 workforce
- £42m turnover and is growing. Estimated to be £70m in 2015 with the workforce increasing to 500 over the next 12 months
- Apprenticeships recruited via SEMTA who put them in touch with National Apprenticeships Programme, SW Durham Training
- Low staff turnover
- Have recruited admin apprenticeships from Darlington College and polymer apprenticeships from SRC
- Young people not ready for interview
- Have worked with the local secondary school (Egglescliffe). After an initial event where only 2 pupils has attended they now enjoy a more positive relationship and have recruited from the school
- The apprentices are high quality running over 3 – 4 years and all lead to employment.
- The company invest a lot of money in training and are keen to retain staff/ their investment
- 100 plus CVs are received for vacancies
- Young people's expectations tend to be too high
- The company agree to all expressions of interest in work experience
- Some schools seem to want to "hang on" to pupils and to do not provide advice on the other routes available
- The majority of teachers have no experience of industry and careers advisers are not up to date
- Education is too subject based
- There is a need to get out the message that apprenticeships can be the start of a rewarding career pathway
- The quality of careers advice should feature more strongly in Ofsted inspections.
- Schools and colleges are not devoting enough time to careers guidance and there is a need to education parents also
- Colleges put on courses that will generate income and not what industry needs
- They are keen to work with all schools and colleges and communications are improving

CYP Visit to Matty's Bistro – 11 November

Councillor Carol Clark, Barbara Inman and Ken Lupton
Carolyn Chubb, Judy Trainer

- Engagement Activity targeting hard to reach young people - building confidence, discipline and team working; also undertake IAG with young people#
- Scheme provides a sympathetic environment for participants to work towards becoming work ready
- 24 workshops per programme providing catering for events etc.
- Mondays/ Tuesdays 10am – 3pm
- Participants gain Level 2 Health and Hygiene Certificate
- Scheme has good progression to work (78% of cohort of 60 young people)
- A number of businesses have approached the scheme to find employees
- Young people tend to be 17 upwards; funding runs from 16 – 19 unless LDD
- Some Young People have dropped out but the scheme is oversubscribed

Careers Interventions

Northfield School – 12 November - Councillor Carol Clark and Ken Lupton

Ian Ransey – 21 November – Councillor Barbara Inman

NEET interventions – IYSS – 7 January – Councillor Carol Clark

NEET interventions – IYSS – 14 January – Councillors Clark, Stephenson, Lupton

CYP Visits - LDD Young People supported by STEPS – Durham University Sports Centre and Greengates School

Councillors Carol Clark, Norma Stephenson, Barbara Inman
Judy Trainer

- STEPS work with people to identify their skills, abilities and development needs. They also provide advice and guidance to employers of people with a disability. STEPS support disabled people into college, voluntary work, work experience and paid work
- Young People often start by carrying out voluntary work then progressing into employment
- Employment provides work experience and income and also builds confidence
- The young person (aged 22) we met worked one day each week (3 hours) as a Sports Assistant on a 12 month contract. He was very enthusiastic about the job and wanted to continue in similar employment. When we visited, he was helping with a groups of disabled young people and adults and provided an excellent role model or the group
- He said the most enjoyable aspect of the work was meeting people and he had no concerns about any aspect of the work in his current role
- Another young person worked one half day each week at Greengates School cleaning and preparing art materials for use by the pupils. She had aspirations to work in a childcare setting and enjoyed her current role. The support worked had assisted her in getting started and worked with her initially until she was confident in completing her duties. Support has also included helping her to become familiar with the bus route to the school
- The service were keen to encourage local employers to consider areas of work which would be suitable for a placement from STEPS