

SCRUTINY INQUIRY – APPRENTICESHIPS IN HOUSING SERVICES

Background:

Housing Services has for over a decade operated a formal apprenticeship scheme in trade based professions, e.g. carpentry, plumbing, electrical work etc to support its property maintenance / repairs service. In addition, short term casual work experience and placements have been offered on an informal basis covering a wide range of housing activities within offices and housing management on estates.

It is planned to expand formal apprenticeships into more service areas in 2013 and future years to assist with recruitment issues and support local skills development.

Scope & Volume:

Housing Operations currently has 13 trade apprentices in a range of professions with each apprenticeship costing between £25 – 50k to complete over 2-4 years. This represents approx 6% of the workforce; tradesmen are assigned as mentors / advisors.

For 2013, approval has been obtained to recruit up to 5 trade apprentices plus, new for this year, 1 business admin apprentice and 2 housing management apprentices.

In addition, consideration is being given to introducing apprenticeships in Supported Housing and two pre-apprenticeship initiatives are being trialled this year; these are 2 placements from Rainbow Life Chances Project in trade and office admin and working with City College to offer short term practical work placements to students undertaking Business Admin NVQ courses both with a view to a possible apprenticeship next year.

Recruitment Process:

Recruitment is aimed at young people from 16–24 with most new intake being engaged at the ages of 17-20. Apprenticeships being offered are advertised extensively through Tenants Link magazine, Hampshire recruitment portal, through schools and colleges at careers events / notice boards and through Youth Workers and the internal staff bulletin. Recruitment takes place from February – May to start from September each year.

Apprentices are engaged for fixed period with no employment guarantee on completion.

Apprenticeship Objectives:

- To attract suitable young people as potential future employees to meet service need
- To 'grow our own' trades staff to meet skills shortage and engender an SCC culture
- Where possible recruit from local council housing estates / from within the City
- Contribute to local skills development and economy and help reduce deprivation.

Observations / Issues:

- From September 2013, Housing expect to have 20 people in formal apprenticeships
- Since 2001, there have been 50 trade apprentices with a completion rate of around 90% of which approx 1/3rd are still employed by SCC [see attached summary table]
- Post apprenticeship career progression path / pay for trades is not fully established.
- Currently 80% from Southampton and less than half from local housing estates
- Hard to recruit from estates as applicants need A-C grades in English & Maths
- Seeking to establish link with 'adopted school' in housing area to promote careers

- College courses change / not offered; working with City College to tailor programme
- Unable to trace what happens to past apprentices; still employed in local economy?

Housing Operations - Apprenticeship Scheme Analysis for Period 2001 - 2013

Trade Activity	Duration	Cost	Sex	No	Current	Drop Out	Completed	At SCC	Left SCC
Bricklayer / Plasterer	3 Years	£38k	M	2			2		2
			F						
Carpenters	3 Years	£38k	M	13	1	1	11	2	9
			F	1	1				
Electricians	4 Years	£50k	M	10	3	1	6	5	1
			F	2			2		2
Gas Engineers	4 Years	£50k	M	7	3		4	3	1
			F	1		1			
Painter & Decorator	2 Years	£25k	M	2			2		2
			F	3	1	1	1		1
Plumbers	3 Years	£38k	M	7	2		5	2	3
			F	1	1				
Maintenance Operative	2 Years	£25k	M	1	1				
			F						
Totals			M	42	10	2	30	12	18
			F	8	3	2	3	0	3

Note: 4 Apprentices graduated in 2012 - 3 engaged on 1 year contracts, 1 was not retained due to performance
 Excludes apprentices due to complete their apprenticeships in August 2013
 Approval obtained to recruit 5 further trade apprentices for September 2013

