

Newport City Council HR Service is submitting this application for the Most Effective Partnership Award at the PPMA Awards 2017. There are three examples of successful partnership working which are outlined.

### Workplace Apprenticeships

Newport City Council HR Service has been working in partnership with ACT Training to deliver Workplace Apprenticeships for the past four years. Currently there are seventy-two employees working towards various qualifications. The working partnership has assisted Newport City Council HR Service to evolve the working environment to actively promote a learning culture, measured through an increased uptake in attendance on courses offered.

September 2016 saw further work with ACT with the introduction of 16-24 year old Apprenticeships, initiated through existing partnership working and a workforce planning objective to launch a defined Apprenticeship Scheme. ACT assisted with the job advertisements via the Career Wales website and filtering through the hundreds of applications received for eleven roles in Business Administration and Finance. ACT carried out the first shortlisting exercise of applications, ensuring they were completed correctly and met our requirements per post. The second shortlisting exercise was via a phone call to talk to the possible apprentice. ACT in conjunction with Newport City Council HR Service organised all of the sixty-six interview appointments. Upon appointing the Apprentices, ACT and Newport City Council HR Service jointly ran the corporate induction day, working with the Apprentices to explain the qualification further and carrying out all tests required to commence the qualification.

ACT made what could have been a very time consuming and demanding situation possible, which would not have happened if we did not have a strong partnership or if the usual process of Newport City Council HR Service undertaking recruitment independently. This approach will definitely be used again the future for the same or similar purposes.

## Education HR Services

Newport City Council HR Team are a leading provider of education based HR services in Wales. This has been evidenced through the effective delivery of partnership working through the specialist HR service to the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and successful and evolving partnership working with schools.

In 2012 regional consortia delivering education services were established across Wales to provide school improvement services to all public sector school bodies. In South East Wales the consortia is the Education Achievement Service and covers some 250 schools. The National Model for Regional Working guidance, published by the Welsh Government in April 2015, advocated for the creation of a specialist HR service to work with regional consortia and local authorities, to support people management activity which is compatible with evolving school improvement activity. As a result, Newport City Council HR Service has provided the EAS with a specialist HR service, delivered in conjunction with regional HR colleagues in four other Local Authorities. This is currently the fifth successive year that Newport City Council has delivered this service, having been re-awarded the work in November 2016.

The successful delivery of this specialist HR service has resulted in strengthened collaborative working more widely within schools and across the region, ensuring consistency of approach to HR issues within schools, and building ever stronger working relationships with regional partners. Work has resulted in common policies and practices being developed, the successful delivery of training to school leaders and governors on HR processes and the provision of advice and training to Challenge Advisers and EAS Senior Management, as well as collaborative working with trade unions.

In addition to the EAS specialist HR service, Newport City Council HR Service has been contracted by Welsh Government, to develop national guidance on managing attendance in schools which was published in July 2016, and other local authorities, in the past twelve months, due to the reputation of sound judgement, professionalism, depth of experience and passion to make a difference to teaching and learning.

Internally, partnership working with schools now incorporates termly business partnering meetings with Headteachers and Senior Leadership Teams in schools; developing effective communication with key stakeholders and the sharing of consistent data reporting. This approach has successfully reduced the cost of absence in Primary Schools in the past year by 32%, between the Autumn Term 2015 and the Autumn Term 2016. The success of this partnership working is also measured by the number of Headteachers requesting business partnering meetings, which has increased in the past six months. This approach, in conjunction with HR Business Partners attending Headteacher meetings for clusters of schools which they support, has also supported the successful implementation of policies and processes in a more timely way; successfully implementing change. This partnership working initially involved headteachers in the creation and subsequent development of the report; monitoring and evaluating this approach continuously with clear responsibilities for all parties being committed to and delivered.

Learning exchanges on key HR topics, delivered by HR Business Partners for schools, has resulted in developing leadership skills and knowledge. This has led to investigators being identified internally; further developing skills and saving costs for schools through partnership working. Through asking schools which topic areas would be useful for learning exchanges, the way of delivering these training sessions has been altered to a cluster or individual school basis, based on requests.

Other successes of partnership working include developing a 'preparing for headship program' with the involvement of experienced headteachers, which has supported succession planning within education and developing a new employee engagement survey specifically for schools.

Through a change in the way the HR service operates; being proactive rather than reactive and operating consistently across all schools through partnership working, HR Business Partners are now operating strategically rather than just on a case by case basis and ensuring sustainable change. There is a smooth running of the service through agreed shared goals with key stakeholders, which are developed collaboratively. By developing a greater understanding of needs, improved ways of working have been implemented, for example wellbeing strategies.

When surveyed by the Education Service under the Welsh Audit Office questionnaire, schools that procure the Service Level Agreement have rated the HR service as 'Very Good', the only support service to schools which was rated in this category, and in the previous two cycles of Service Level Agreement contracts, 100% of business has been retained.

### Assessment Centres

Partners were invited to be part of an assessment centre to appoint Newport City Council's 'Director – Place'. A wide net was cast to partners who would be involved working with the Director and asked who would like to be part of a conversation with each candidate. The panel was made up from colleagues from Public Health Wales, Natural Resources Wales, Citizens Panel and our Employee Panel. HR's role is to enable Members to select the best people for Chief Officer roles. The partner panel formed an integral part of the assessment asking insightful questions to candidates and reporting findings back into the Member Panel. Partnership working is an integral part of what we do – it's something which is valued and helps shape how services are delivered. Feedback from partners who were involved in the day was that they found the day challenging and rewarding; they also rated first the candidate who was appointed so were thrilled the overall feedback chimed with their experience.