850 young people engaged through #FinProLCR talent scheme

Wednesday 27 November, 2019

Leeds-based social enterprise, Ahead Partnership, is celebrating the achievements of the #FinProLCR Talent Scheme launched last academic year. Following the schemes success, the organisation is once again providing the professional and financial services sector with an opportunity create a more inclusive future for young people under the new programme name #AheadInFinPro.

The Talent Scheme aims to improve the pipeline of young talent in Financial and Professional Services roles across the Leeds City Region through a calendar of varied and impactful school and college career activities.

The #FinProLCR pilot achieved phenomenal success last June with 850 young people aged 8-18 benefitting from the scheme and 11 businesses and 43 volunteers from industry taking part in ten events across the region.

Professional and financial services businesses such as Pinsent Masons, Barclays, Gilbanks, CYBG and PwC sponsored events to tackle the growing sector-skills gap across Leeds City Region. Representing law, banking, insurance, consultancy, investment and property management, diverse business partners supported primary school 'World of Work' days, speed networking, workplace visits and career panels.

Stephanie Burras CBE, Chief Executive of Ahead Partnership, said:

"#FinProLCR has been exceptionally well received and enabled collaborative careers inspiration across all areas of the financial and professional services sector. During our engagement month alone, 100% of the business volunteers involved felt #FinProLCR increased the profile of their business with the future talent pool.

"Going forward, it is clear that financial and professional services firms need diversity of talent to ensure their success and relevance. Now, employers have a year-round platform to raise their appeal amongst young people while connecting with a diverse group of potential recruits."

Ahead Partnership developed the pilot following a period of consultation with businesses working within the financial and professional services sector in Leeds. This work highlighted the increasing difficulty faced by companies to attract diverse young people needed to fill high-skilled roles.

Research conducted by Robert Half Financial Services last year found that nearly half (49%) of senior leaders in the financial services sector see finding skilled candidates as the biggest challenge over the next twelve months, demonstrating the importance of both attracting and retaining talented employees within the sector.

Likewise, nearly 80% of financial services industry leaders who took part in the latest PwC global CEO survey said they were looking for a broader range of skills when recruiting than in the past. Encouraging greater diversity and inclusion is a critical part of meeting new talent demands.

The Northern Powerhouse Partnership is now calling on employers of all sizes across the North – from SMEs to global industry leaders – to support the same number of young people on skills activities each year as they have employees within their workforce.

This Academic year Ahead Partnership is once again working with the Financial and Professional services sector to give organisations the opportunity to collectively tackle the skills gap in their sector and help generate a diverse talent pipeline. The newly named #AheadInFinPro talent scheme will enable employers to create an individual programme of activities to meet their own responsible business, diversity, and talent objectives, as well as take part in the #AheadInFinPro Festival in June 2020; a month of employer engagement activities reaching 1000 students and culminating in a celebration event.

Alex Duckett, Managing Director of Gilbanks, who have been heavily involved in the scheme to date, said:

"It was great to be involved in the #FinProLCR Talent Scheme earlier this year, which saw all the businesses located in One Park Row work collaboratively to address an industry need and help young

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people to gain invaluable work experience.

“As the second-largest financial district outside of London, the Leeds City Region now needs even more businesses to support the scheme moving forward and help more young people realise the enormous opportunities available to them right here.

“The talent shortage in the region has been well reported, and hopefully, this scheme will start opening dialogue between some of the regions students and the wealth of experience and ambition across Leeds, including here at One Park Row.”

To find out more about inspiring the next generation or to get involved in #AheadInFinPro Festival in June 2020, please contact Ahead Partnership: dani.grant@aheadpartnership.org.uk.

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