

Long Term Exchange is internationally regarded as the Flagship programme of Youth Exchange. Whichever Youth Exchange activity appears to dominate in RIBIDYEA, when we meet our partners abroad we are left in no doubt that success in LTEP is the yardstick by which the quality of what we are doing is measured. Not only that, when international colleagues speak about Youth Exchange it may generally be assumed that they are referring exclusively to the Long Term programme.

For some years and for a variety of reasons in RIBI the interest among students and Rotarians in LTEP declined. It is gradually being renewed with increasing numbers of Registrations of Interest at the website but the volume is nowhere near where it used to be yet. This is not assisted by the previous Government's policy, still in place, whereby the Schools Minister has restricted incoming school age students from non-EEC Countries to a maximum of six months in a state school on the grounds that more would be 'replacement education'. This stops the potential inbound student from being granted an entry visa and inevitably removes from our students the opportunity of going away on this programme.

Where does this lead us?

- Campaigning and Lobbying the Government.
  - Steering our potential outbound LTEPs to Europe.
  - Dealing with Countries in which Europeans have settled – almost everywhere but Asia. YEOs in these countries will quickly find a student with entitlement to a European passport to send to UK. In fact they will find more than we could handle.
- Sometimes in the effort to circumvent the visa problem some districts will suggest elaborate three or four way 'circular' exchanges. So far this has not caught on but some DYEOs may try it if such an arrangement would facilitate a particular placement.

## How the Long term Exchange Works.

LTEP students spend a school year abroad, attending local school and living as family members with two or three host families over the year. The students receive pocket money from the host club and each has a Student Counsellor to monitor the student's welfare and to provide neutral ongoing support. Our UK students generally go out after GCSE (aged 16+) although the official age range is 15 – 18½ . An exchange must finish by the time a student reaches 19½ , the cut off age for many student visas.

Students can expect a mismatch in the education offered for the year compared with what they have left behind them and if there is a language barrier this in itself will delay academic progress. This may frustrate the student and concern the parents and very often what they are gaining instead might not be immediately obvious. By the end of the year it becomes very clear to all that the students have made considerable gains rather than losses and on return stand taller than the cohort which they left behind. They return to where they left off in the UK education system without any credit and with a different year group. This is regarded as par for the course. In any case they usually thrive.

The exchange provides an in depth cultural experience, not only of the host country but also due to the mix of cultures of the other international students on the programme. Students gain a wider world perspective and understanding as well as extending themselves. They explore the limits of their comfort zone, gain independence and self reliance, develop leadership skills and may learn another language. They mature considerably, are articulate and opinionated and will stand out in

any interview panel. The Exchange is a truly life enhancing experience.

Students are expected to be Ambassadors for their country and Ambassadors for Rotary. They are expected to attend school and make an honest attempt to keep up with academic work while also being expected to become involved in Rotary projects, attend Rotary meetings regularly and give presentations to different groups. When they return we ask them to help us promote the programme.

In order to deal with all this a student does not need to be the most academically gifted but definitely needs to be able to cope with the pressure surrounding the demands upon them. Clubs need to satisfy themselves that any applicant on this programme has sufficient strength of character to stay the course.

**Where do the applicants come from?** From among any of the following:

Through a Rotary connection

Random self selection through the website

Application following a School presentation

Clubs might approach a group of local schools and set up a competition for the most suitable candidate. This has the potential for raising awareness as well as increasing the prestige of the programme in the eyes of the community with the effect of increasing the numbers of applicants for all exchanges and long term in particular.

### **LTEP and the Club**

The club which sponsors the Outbound student can expect to host the inevitable other half of the exchange, the inbound student, who is most likely to be a direct swap though not necessarily concurrent with the outbound.

The financial aspect of the Long Term programme is seen as one of the obstacles to its popularity among Rotary clubs. This is dealt with in *IF1: Cost of Exchange Programmes to Districts, Clubs and Students* and *IF2: Funding the Long Term Exchange Programme*.

It is worth pointing out that inbound student, rather than the outbound student whom the club has chosen, who receives the year-long attention and financial support from the club. However, without this the life changing experience which the club wants for its own student will not happen.

### **London Experience**

This is a weekend when inbound LTE students from around RIBI are guests of Rotary in London. Sightseeing and orientation are on the agenda and students involved with other exchange programmes often join in the activities.