



FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL.

1. Introduction.

This document sets out the Apprenticeship Programme for Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC), as an employer and the positive action that the Council will take in its approach to apprenticeships as part of the wider Workforce Strategy.

It is aligned with the Council's Plan 2017-2021 "Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future" which sets out its strategic ambitions for Nottinghamshire and for the Council through the commitment to ensuring that Nottinghamshire has a thriving jobs market with a higher level of skills across a flexible and varied workforce, including vocational routes into employment such as Apprenticeships for people of all ages. This links with the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership Skills and Employability Strategy.

This Apprenticeship Programme represents the Council's response as an employer in its own right and whilst spanning the period 2017-2021, is intended to be dynamic and will be regularly reviewed, developed and updated in response to local and national changes. The key actions for the delivery of the Programme are set out in detail in the underpinning Delivery Action Plan which will be overseen by the Personnel Committee.

The Programme will also be used to help identify the actions that individual service areas will take in support of the Council's overall approach and in meeting the specific skills challenges they face. The Apprenticeship Programme also supports and complements other talent and entry to work initiatives, such as work experience, traineeships and Graduate Programmes as part of the Council's wider talent management approach.

2. Vision.

Apprenticeships within the Council are seen and valued as high quality pathways to successful careers, providing opportunities for new and existing employees to develop and which assist the Council in meeting its current and future skills needs.

The Council faces future challenges which can only be met with the right people with the right skills at the right time to meet changing demands. Apprenticeships will form an integral part of the Workforce Strategy to provide the Council with the talent pipeline that supports current and future skill needs.

3. Background.

Driven by an ambition to address the shortage in skills and invest in the UK's future workforce, the UK Government has made a commitment to an additional three million apprenticeship starts nationally by 2020.

Full details of the Government's Apprenticeship reforms can be found in the [vision for 2020](#).

In order to support this commitment to apprenticeships, from 6th April 2017 an **Apprenticeship Levy** is payable by all employers with a wage bill in excess of £3m

per annum who employ 250 staff or more. This will be paid as a 0.5% tax on employers' payroll collected monthly by HMRC.

The Levy puts employers at the centre of identifying the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are required of the workforce of the future and to ensure the apprentices receive high quality training to meet the chosen professional standards.

The public sector has been asked to achieve a greater proportion of growth in apprenticeships and this takes the form of a **Public Sector Duty** to ensure that 2.3% of the workforce are apprenticeships by 2020.

Against a background of rapid global and public sector change and this Council's own transformation programme, it will be important to create Apprenticeships with the Council that are aligned to future skills needs, and not solely as a means to meet the public sector duty, in order achieve organisational priorities and to create a stable economic future for the County.

Nottinghamshire County Council will need to plan to be able to sustain and grow its corporate commitment to providing placements for Apprentices across the authority to ensure that the cost for the national Apprenticeship Levy is fully recovered. The Council has adopted a flexible approach which allows it to work towards full compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Duty in a manageable way.

4. Context.

4.1 Meeting Current and Future Skill Needs

The County Council aspires to be an Employer of Choice, ensuring that it attracts, develops and retains the most diverse, creative and innovative individuals with the key skills and abilities required now and for the future. Nottinghamshire County Council has previously hosted up to 60 Apprenticeship placements a year aimed at, but not limited to, young people aged 16-24 years, around 80% of who went on to employment or further education.

Apprentice qualifications have traditionally been perceived as only relevant for school leavers in junior entry level roles. To meet the proposed headcount target and maximise the use of the Levy, Apprenticeships will need to be redefined and the number of Apprenticeships offered increased to 176 who will be directly employed by the Council. The inclusion of Maintained Schools in the Council's Levy will increase the total headcount target to 372.

The Council's Apprenticeship Programme goes beyond meeting these targets and aims to support the Council's wider strategic commitment to sustainably improve the employment prospects and social mobility of local people, and to strengthen the skills base of our existing and future workforce by providing high quality jobs and learning opportunities with related qualifications which are embedded in career progression routes.

4.2 Supporting Nottinghamshire's Strategic Ambitions

The Council aims to help create prosperous places across the County for the benefit of Nottinghamshire's residents and its businesses as the way we live, work and study and the kind of jobs we do and the skills we need to do them

continue to evolve over the next decade.

As one of the largest employers in the County, providing apprenticeships and routes into apprenticeships with the Council is an integral part of Nottinghamshire's wider Economic Development strategy and also supports educational improvement priorities by helping to raise skills and aspirations, working with partners in the wider region to take a strong lead in harnessing the energy of communities and institutions to drive the skills agenda.

The challenges of finding work are particularly acute for young people aged 16-25, as well as for care leavers, long term unemployed people, returners to the labour market and people with disabilities, as they try to compete against more experienced candidates.

Providing opportunities for existing employees to undertake apprenticeships and developing an apprenticeship culture at all levels within the Council will help to raise skills within the workforce in support of skills and wider workforce planning priorities around recruitment and retention and improve the age diversity profile of the workforce by attracting younger people into Apprenticeship placements.

Consideration will be given to investigating how, under available provisions, after the first year, any Levy money not spent on directly employing Apprentices could be channeled by the Council to support the wider take up of Apprenticeships and development of skills appropriate to local needs in occupational areas not covered by Council services. This would involve working with non-Levy paying small and medium enterprises; the Council's supply chain and other priority sectors in the County to offer Apprenticeships in occupational areas that cannot be provided direct by the Council.

5. Apprenticeship Programme Aims.

The Apprenticeship Programme will help to deliver the Council's objectives of becoming a Learning Organisation and an Employer of Choice as set out in the current [Workforce Strategy](#)

Our Apprenticeship Programme will:

1. Embed Apprenticeships within the workforce

The Council will aim to achieve 176 new apprenticeship starts within the first year of implementation of the Apprenticeship Levy by:

- Increasing the opportunities available to be employed as an Apprentice by the Council in a supernumerary entry level placement from 60 to 90
- Amending the recruitment process to ensure that all vacancies are considered for an Apprenticeship where a relevant apprenticeship standard can be applied
- Actively engaging with the national development of additional standards that are relevant to Council occupations

- Actively encouraging and supporting all Apprentices to gain the **knowledge, skills and qualifications** that will meet the needs of the Council; support their future employability and work towards an appropriate qualification at a level relevant to their job.

2. Maximise workforce capability

The Council will review services to identify existing and future skills gaps and ensure that priority is given to Apprenticeships that are designed to meet these challenges and develop skill sets relevant to the future workforce. This will include developing career pathways to provide opportunities for the growth and development of staff that will be focussed around existing and anticipated future skills needs.

Existing employees will be encouraged to use apprenticeships as a means of developing their skills and career path with the Council where a relevant apprenticeship standard can be applied.

3. Develop the workforce diversity and inclusivity, maximising opportunities for those who face the most challenges to accessing employment

The Council will support the social mobility of citizens and support them to take a step onto a professional career path, opening up jobs with realistic requirements for prior educational attainment and creating a parity of esteem.

All Apprentices will be treated as equals and potential barriers to under-representation identified and addressed with additional support offered to Apprentices and managers as required to ensure that placements succeed with emphasis on the importance of potential and training provided by good quality training providers.

Acting in the Council's capacity as Corporate Parent, the Council will work across services to support care leavers and offer apprenticeships to Care Leavers and Looked after Children who find it hard to access the opportunity, or develop the ability to navigate the complexities of finding and sustaining work. This approach will help more disadvantaged young people in the County get a foot on the ladder of employment and begin their journey to independence.

The Council will also identify opportunities to engage young people with special education needs, and to work with local schools, colleges and supported employment organisations, creating effective ways to support these young people to access apprenticeships and secure sustainable employment.

The Council will also offer opportunities to people who have been out of employment on a long term basis, including women and older returners to the job market, the long term unemployed and members of the Armed Forces seeking a career change on completion of service as part of support for the British Armed Forces Covenant.

Pre-apprenticeship and pre-employment support will be a feature of the overall Apprentice programme and coaching through the Council's in-house Coaching Network will be offered to all Apprentices to assist with this.

4. Support the Continuous Professional Development of existing employees

The Council will offer a wider variety of training opportunities which are supported by the available apprenticeship standards and help to address skill shortage areas within the Council. We will create apprenticeships that achieve the best mix of quality and economic efficiency and align to the Council's strategic priorities. Providing opportunities for existing staff to utilise apprenticeships to gain skills and progress their career will support talent management within the organisation.

Work will be undertaken to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the types of apprenticeships available, particularly higher level apprenticeships, and the benefits they offer for both new and existing employees which will be essential to increasing the number of employees undertaking an apprenticeship.

5. Support people to progress in employment by promoting apprenticeships as a high quality path to successful careers

The Council recognises the particular challenge in finding employment for young people aged 16-24 when entering a jobs market where they are competing with experienced workers. To assist people, including younger job seekers, into entry level posts within the Council, a target of recruiting 90 apprentices in 2017-2018 into supernumerary positions providing entry level qualifications has been set.

Support will be provided to all apprentices in supernumerary placements at the Council to move into employment with the Council or another employer or onto further education at the end of their apprenticeship.

6. Develop partnerships with training providers and other Local Authorities within the region

The Council will work with training providers and other local authorities regionally and nationally to identify gaps in apprenticeship standards to ensure that new standards which are relevant to the Council and reflect the requirements of the public sector are developed.

The County Council will work as part of D2N2 Apprentice Levy Forum to bring together public sector employers to look at four areas for joint work:

- Using the Apprenticeship Levy to meet workforce and labour market needs
- Identifying gaps in the market and working with training providers, assessment organisations and sector bodies to develop new courses and Apprenticeship Standards
- Promoting Apprenticeships to support recruitment and helping Apprentices to succeed
- Shared the cost of procurement.

The Council will continue to work with “Futures” Advice, Skills and Employment (jointly owned by Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council), and with the Inspire Community Benefit Society as associated organisations, looking at opportunities to work on joint initiatives such as apprentice recruitment and the development of skills training provision which meets both the Council’s and the wider local economy’s skill needs.

Joint working with trades union colleagues to develop and promote apprenticeship opportunities across the public sector will also continue.

7. Engage with Maintained Schools to ensure they maximise benefits from the levy

The Council will ensure that Local Authority maintained schools are aware of the impact of apprenticeship reforms and work with them to advise and support them to enable them to engage with and benefit from the Levy.

In addition to providing advice, information and guidance relating to the reforms the Council will work with schools to promote the benefits the changes can offer in helping to meet skills gaps and future workforce needs. This will include raising awareness of the new Apprenticeship standards in development for Teachers, Teaching Assistants and School Business Managers, as well as a range of other broader standards that could be used by the wider schools workforce in helping to create apprentice opportunities. As new school focused standards are developed, the Council will ensure that schools are kept up to date with their availability.

6. Supporting the development of Apprenticeships at Nottinghamshire County Council.

There are over 250 Apprenticeship [Standards](#) currently available, covering a wide variety of career opportunities. Further work is being led by national organisations such as the Local Government Association (LGA), to ensure that apprenticeship standards relevant to roles within the public sector are being developed.

The Council’s new approach provides the opportunity to be proactive in recruitment of apprentices into a wider range of service areas across the Council. This will include identifying apprenticeship opportunities as part of wider workforce planning with changes made to the Vacancy Control Decision Record (VCDR) process to ensure that all vacancies are considered for an apprenticeship to embed apprenticeships in as many service areas as possible.

To support the implementation of the programme, Apprenticeships will be created through three main routes:

1. Widening the entry level programme

Apprenticeships within the Council have to date provided entry opportunities for young people employed through the Future accredited training agency to undertake

a placement with a related qualification including Business Administration, Customer Service and Youth Work.

With the implementation of the Levy, from April 2017, apprentices will be directly employed by the Council. This provides the opportunity to transform the current Apprenticeship Programme and offer a wider range of opportunities enhanced by the apprenticeship standards delivery. Expanding the approach to provide an entry route into other occupational areas will also help support the Council's skills needs. The Council has a diverse range of job roles and will seek to identify relevant apprenticeships that can support the skills needed within specific occupational areas which will be crucial in helping to maximise the Levy funding and mitigate potential skill shortages. These opportunities are open to all ages and are aimed at, but not restricted to, young people aged 16 – 24.

2. Converting planned external recruitment

All vacant posts will be considered for designation as higher level Apprenticeships through the re-designed VCDR process (if not required for redeployment). The essential requirements of the post will need to be met and full range of duties undertaken with training provided to achieve the appropriate level of qualification. Managers will be encouraged to consider all levels of vacancies for application of an applicable apprenticeship standard. Appropriate qualification training will be provided to every Apprentice recruited in this way.

3. Offering existing employees increased opportunities to develop skills and obtain occupational qualifications

Providing opportunities for the Council's existing workforce to gain occupational skills and obtain qualifications, including management and leadership, through Levy funding to enhance their career prospects will help to grow and retain talent within the Council.

7. Performance Monitoring

This Apprenticeship Programme is underpinned by an **Apprenticeship Delivery Action Plan** which sets out how the priorities will be delivered and progress against this reviewed each year. The delivery plan will be regularly reviewed and reported on at the Council's Personnel Committee.

In accordance with the public sector duty requirements the Council will also publish annually, data relating to progress towards the 2.3% apprenticeship target set by the Government.

The HR function will work closely with colleagues in Economic Development, Education and Social Care to ensure that the Council's strategic response to Apprenticeships as an employer is closely aligned with the Council's wider strategic priorities relating to supporting local people into sustainable employment.

For further information email: nottinghamshire.apprenticeships@nottsc.gov.uk