

Skills Development and Employment Opportunities Strategy

Introduction

The Council continues to be one of the largest employers in the county. It seeks to build on its brand as an employer of choice and to deliver on the commitments set out in the new Council Plan 2021–31 to build skills that help people to get good local jobs. As part of the “Levelling-Up” agenda, the aim is to develop a sustainable programme of skills development which provides the best opportunities for Nottinghamshire residents to access meaningful employment.

We are already committed to a number of employment and training initiatives which provide demonstrable proof of the work underway to improve employment chances. Ultimately this will have an overall positive impact on the local economy. Attracting and retaining a new and talented generation who have grown up with modern technologies will be key to generating a strong and vibrant economy in our County. However, to reflect our developing “all age” approach, the strategy reflects training and employment opportunities available to all sections of our communities whatever their level of academic attainment or work aspirations.

Having an agreed ambitious programme which provides a range of work experiences to enable our existing and future workforce to see what opportunities are available for them within the Council, provides a potential talent pipeline for future recruitment. This is within the local and national context of recognised skills gaps and the ongoing challenges particularly in hard to recruit to areas.

We know there is an aging profile across our current workforce which presents a number of challenges but also creates opportunities and by encouraging our younger residents to consider the Council as a place they can begin and develop their careers, is critical to guaranteeing the Council has access to new employees. It is our ambition to provide them with the relevant skills, knowledge and experiences to ensure the continuing success of the Council in delivering its identified priorities.

The development and implementation of the new Council Plan with its refreshed focus on economic recovery and regeneration post-Covid, provides the opportunity to review the Council’s approach to employment and skills development within this wider context and to maximise the potential opportunities and improve outcomes for everyone including young people, people with disabilities and any groups who experience additional challenges in securing and maintaining sustainable employment.

This strategy sets out our high-level approach to how the Council, together with partner organisations, will draw together the existing areas of good practice into one cohesive plan to deliver on the ambitions set out above.

Strategic Context

Our people are our most important asset and it is vital that we continue to attract new talent to the workforce that will future proof the Council's ability to innovate and react to the challenges of delivering effective and efficient public services.

Finding employees with the right skills, attitudes and expertise can be an ongoing challenge. Bringing in young people who can grow and develop with the Council makes excellent business sense and will support our workforce plans by:

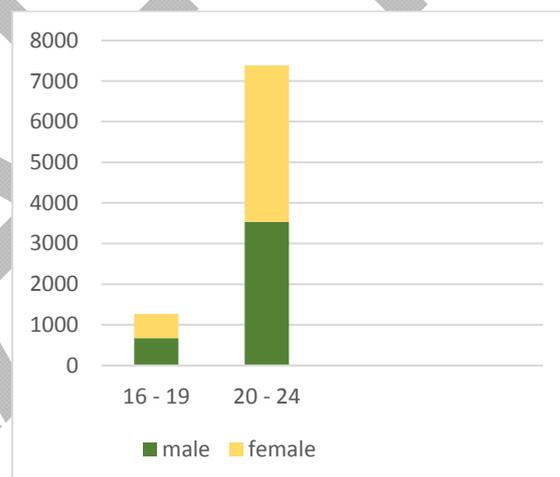
- Building a talent pipeline
- Providing new skills, attitudes, and different motivation
- Improving workforce diversity
- Embedding a culture of learning and development
- Growing our own workforce
- Boosting the reputation of the Council as an employer of choice
- Developing existing employees through mentoring and coaching programmes

Developing skills and employment opportunities is also vital to support our residents and communities, particularly after the challenging nature of the last few years.

Young people (aged 16 – 24 years) were the most affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic in the UK compared with other age groups. The employment of young people declined while unemployment increased in 2020. More young people became economically inactive between March and July 2020 than in the same period in previous years.

The increase in economic inactivity has been linked to an increase of young people going into full-time education in 2020. This increase in full time education was driven by young people aged 16 to 17 years. In addition, the numbers of young people unemployed can be attributed to employment in industries most affected by the pandemic such as hospitality, retail and food services.

Current Figures for Nottinghamshire Young People claiming Universal Credit:



The most impact has been felt by the 16-19 age range in Nottinghamshire for whom the unemployment figure has increased from 16.1% in the period July 2019 – July 2020 to 23.2% in the period July 2020 – July 2021.

This strategy includes the objectives set out by the Government in the "A Plan for Jobs" policy, published in July 2020 to address the impact of the pandemic on the employment opportunities for young people. The subsequent initiatives available to employers include:

- T Levels industry Placements
- Traineeships

- Sector-based Work Academies

It will also include developments relating to initiatives already being offered by the Council that encompasses:

- General and specialist work experience programmes
- Kickstart
- Apprenticeships
- Change100 Internships
- Supported Internships
- Graduate Placements

In addition, it will set out the Corporate Parenting commitment to supporting Looked After Children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire to find appropriate employment with industry linked learning and development that meets their individual aspirations.

As one of the largest employers in the County, providing opportunities with the Council is an integral part of Nottinghamshire's wider Economic Development approach 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.

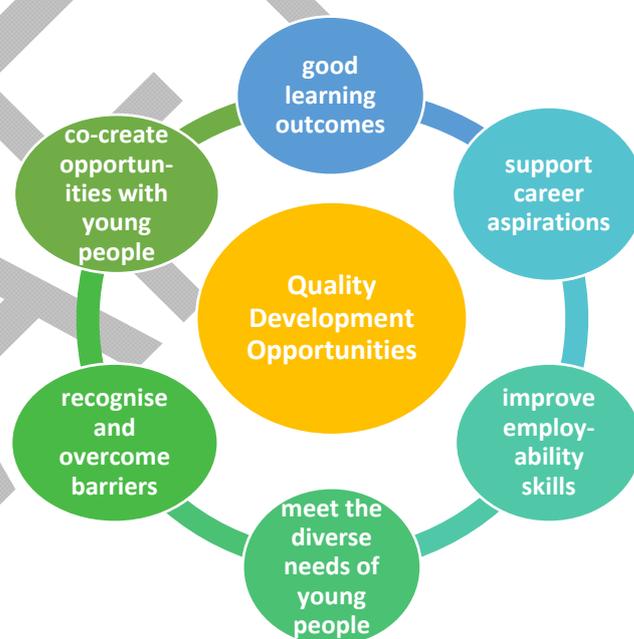
Principles

This strategy is underpinned by a number of principles which reflect how the Council operates and the financial implications of employment including:

- To ensure the Council maximises the development opportunities available for all sections of our communities to enable them to successfully gain permanent and sustainable employment
- To maximise the use of the apprenticeship levy both in-house and with businesses across Nottinghamshire in the most creative ways possible within the laid down criteria
- To continue to explore new ways to create sustainable employment for Looked After Children, Care Leavers and other groups of young people currently under-represented within our workforce
- To build improved commitment from managers to utilise these programmes as part of effective workforce and resource planning
- To ensure Nottinghamshire is a place people have access to quality development opportunities and access to local employment to build successful careers
- To secure local talent to ensure the Council continues to meet the aspirations and objectives set out in the 2021 Council Plan for the immediate and longer-term future
- To expand communication about opportunities by engaging with schools and further education providers
- Developing a joined-up approach to maximise opportunities with our key stakeholders and partners
- To draw together the excellent work which is delivered within various

departments for different cohorts and share learning across the Council and our partners

- To be an employer of choice and encourage people to engage with the development opportunities we have on offer
- The strategy will deliver by providing quality development opportunities which provide:



These principles are underpinned by the attributes we are looking for in our future workforce. These include being:

- Flexible
- Agile and adaptive
- Innovative and creative
- Engaged in the work of the Council
- Continually improving
- Agree to maximise the use of new technologies
- Able to deliver excellent services
- From a diverse range of backgrounds with a wide range of skills and experiences.

Employment Opportunities and Programmes of Work

There are a number of programmes outlined in this strategy that can be accessed separately but could also be progression routes into careers in Local Government for anyone who aspires to this goal. Participation in any stage of this programme should provide people with the transferable skills, knowledge and behaviours for them to be enabled to pursue their career goals.



Pre-Employment Opportunities

Preparing young people and those who are finding it difficult to gain employment, for the world of work is key to long-term productivity and competitiveness in society. The current economic situation has resulted in fewer opportunities for young people and people from other disadvantaged groups to experience the world of work and build those initial skills in preparing for the workplace.

This strategy delivers a number of pre-employment opportunities that will welcome young people into a supportive workplace and provide a quality learning programme to develop key transferable skills.

The following programmes sit under the pre-employment offer:

Work Experience

The Council's work experience offer is currently being reviewed to better reflect the hybrid working arrangements that have been emerging for some time. There are new challenges for people starting their working lives with the changes arising from the pandemic.

The new blended programme will allow young people to engage in a weeklong programme that provides an experience of working for the council and the roles within the departments. The initial sessions can be added to by the young person if they have identified areas they may be interested in as a future career. These programmes will

include employability skills, be facilitated by Council employees and the participants will complete a workbook and receive a certificate of completion. Regular termly news items promoting the opportunities will be circulated to qualifying schools, training providers and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

The Council will also work with schools to provide discovery workshops and insight days for pupils prior to offering work experience placements, and will maintain contact with schools and individuals through bulletins and social media stories to promote new opportunities and to sustain engagement.

Traineeships

A traineeship is a skills development programme that includes a work placement for young people aged 16 – 24 years.

Programme length can vary but most will last between six months and a year. Traineeships deliver qualifications in English, maths, digital skills and work-related qualifications that will enable the young person to access an apprenticeship, employment or further education.

Traineeship work experience needs to offer at least 70 hours of a meaningful and high-quality work experience.

T Levels

T Levels focus on vocational skills and are available to 16 – 19-year olds as an alternative to A levels. The T Level student spends 80% of their time with a training organisation and the other 20% in an industry placement that lasts at least 45 days. Most T Level courses are two years in duration

Sector-based Work Academies

Sector-based work academies are available to anyone claiming unemployment benefits over 18 years of age and are designed to support the recruitment of a workforce with the right skills for job vacancies or for an apprenticeship. The duration is between one and six weeks depending upon the sector.

The Sector-based work academy has three elements:

1. Pre-employment training - accredited with the Qualifications and Credit Framework, is fully funded through the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and is delivered by a training provider.
2. Work experience placement
3. A guaranteed job interview – this can be for either a job vacancy or for an apprenticeship opportunity

Sector-based work academies would be beneficial to the Council if there are many vacancies that are difficult to fill. The work experience placement can be used as a work trial.

Development Opportunities

For young people who want a more sustained experience of working for the Council, these initiatives offer greater potential to engage with projects across departments to get a real insight into the types of services, projects and programmes a local authority delivers. The majority of these initiatives include a salary.

Kickstart

The Kickstart Scheme offers six-month work placements, in new jobs created using grant funding from the scheme, for 16 to 24-year olds who are currently out of work claiming Universal Credit and are at risk of long-term unemployment. 100% of their time is spent in the workplace with in-work

training to help develop transferable skills aimed at increasing their chances of sustained employment.

Young people are referred through their DWP Job Coach and the grant funding pays for salary at Age Related Minimum Wage, National Insurance and pension contributions as well as funding employability training and job start-up costs.

The Kickstart scheme is only currently available for new starters until March 2022.

Internships

An internship is a period of work experience that can last for up to 12 months and are typically undertaken by students and graduates looking to gain relevant workplace skills.

In addition to the Council's successful Graduate Development Programme, we are increasingly receiving requests from universities and individuals looking for paid internships.

Internships provides an opportunity to build relationships with our potential future workforce. It is intended to provide some guidance for managers if they are approached as to what is recognised best practice when offering this type of placement.

Supported Internships

The Council has an existing commitment to create and develop a supported intern programme as part of the Employment and Health Strategy 2020 to 2030. Progress has been hampered by the Covid pandemic as the young people who would benefit from this type of traineeship have particular support needs. We need to revitalise our commitment as we move towards the "new normal" bearing in

mind the impact of hybrid working on this potential cohort of trainees.

A supported internship is one type of study programme specifically aimed at young people aged 16 to 24 who have a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan, who want to move into employment and need extra support to do so. All young people should be helped to develop the skills and experience and achieve the qualifications they need to succeed in their careers. The overwhelming majority of young people in this cohort are capable of sustainable paid employment with the right preparation and support. Supported internships are structured study programmes based primarily with an employer. They are intended to enable young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve sustainable, paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work through learning in the workplace. These internships normally last for a year and include unpaid work placements of at least six months. Wherever possible, they support the young person to move into paid employment at the end of the programme.

Change100 Programme

Our continued involvement in the Leonard Cheshire Change 100 programme provides opportunities for final year students with a disability to have a three-month paid internship in one of the Council's services.

This has led to employment opportunities for previous participants and has provided all participants with valuable experience of what could be available after they graduate.

Year in Industry

The Year in Industry placements are for those currently studying at University

who are looking to enhance their academic studies with a paid work placement that offers the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to a real business project or work stream.

Students committed to undertaking a Year of Industry placement with the Council could qualify for a fast-tracked entrance into our Graduate Programme.

Employment Opportunities

In addition to the standard recruitment relating to job vacancies, the Council offers two main routes for young people to enter into employment.

Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is paid employment in a recognised role with learning and development delivery against an appropriate Apprenticeship Standard.

Apprenticeships offer a monitored and structured route for the Council to:

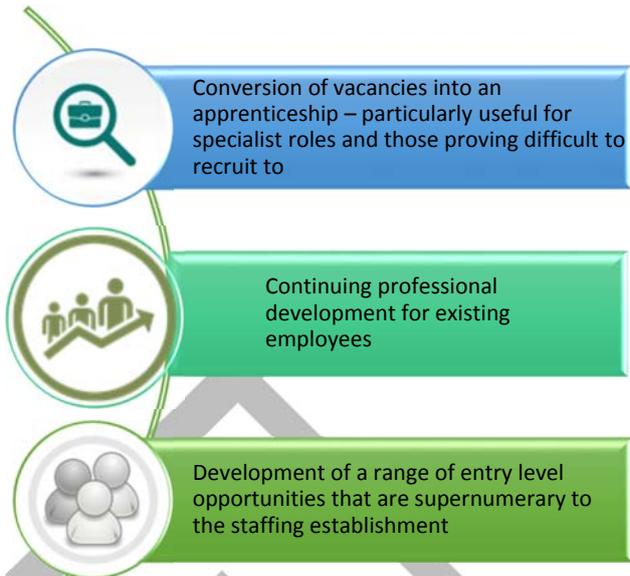
- Proactively address skills gaps
- Meet resource needs and improve workforce planning including succession planning
- Develop a committed and competent workforce and
- Develop employees to meet future requirements of the workplace

The Council currently offers three routes into apprenticeships:

The Council is also committed to developing an internal apprenticeship opportunity for a looked after young person or care leaver wherever possible. In situations where this is not possible due to the career aspirations of the young person, arrangements are in place to support an external apprenticeship through the transfer of levy funding.

As an Apprenticeship Levy paying employer, it is important that the Council maximises the use of levy

funds and utilises the opportunity to transfer the allowed percentage of



unspent funds to support apprenticeships for local people and local businesses. The application process has been available to employers since August 2020 and prioritises those applications that offer apprenticeships to young people and addresses identified skills gaps in Nottinghamshire.

Graduate Programme

The Council has been delivering a very successful in-house Graduate Programme since 2018.

The two-year programme offers an excellent opportunity to work in different departments and on a range of projects to provide participants with a wealth of experience to boost their career. The graduates undertake a Level 5 Management Apprenticeship and a project management qualification during the programme.

The current scheme has proved highly successful in identifying and developing new talent. It also gives us significant intelligence on the graduate market more widely.

It is also important for a large employer like the Council, to have close working relationships with our local universities so we can work together on areas of current and future skills shortages and develop programmes of work which assist and support local businesses and the overall economy.

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Approach

This strategy will be delivered through a series of action plans and programmes of work that will be regularly reviewed and aligned to ensure a cohesive, collective approach to delivery of the priorities within the Council Plan and the People Strategy.

We have seen how investment in our graduate trainee programme has delivered significant opportunities to each cohort and want to develop this approach to all our skills development programmes. Whilst there will be some immediate opportunities, it is expected that our approach will develop over time as we discover how the future of work will be shaped by a number of external factors.

The approach will require dedicated resource to bring together the range of activity across the council within all four departments. This team will formalise existing excellent relationships to maximise the impact of delivery of the strategy. The ambition is to create a resource model which delivers sustainable employment opportunities for all, including those groups who previously have been disadvantaged within the job market. This will also address known and future skills gaps and the all-age approach will enable early identification of new and emerging skills requirements so focus can be directed to the areas required.

The delivery of this strategy relies on the commitment of the Council's senior leadership to support these initiatives and departmental managers to identify fresh opportunities for people to work within their teams. Successful outcomes will be achieved through the co-ordination of existing internal resources across departments and

aligning both the approach and opportunities. The need for effective resourcing discussions will be key to delivering sustainable employment opportunities which address existing skills gaps. It will be necessary to promote the business benefits of this approach to engage individual managers and to convince them of the advantages to be gained by investing their time in developing new cohorts of employees. Current challenges in attracting suitably qualified and experienced candidates will be a key lever to change existing recruitment practices.

To further widen successful outcomes, there is a great opportunity presented in this strategy to work collaboratively with schools and Further Education providers, local training agencies, District and Borough Councils, and our external partners such as VIA, ARC and Inspire.

Experience has shown that those young people without employment experience have struggled to engage with programmes without specific support. A mentoring programme to offer learning support to young people will support this transition into work and existing employees will develop their own skills by undertaking mentor development programmes that will complement our existing coaching offer. The coaching offer is currently available to all staff and can be extended to provide specific development support to young people on the longer term initiatives covered in this strategy.

The recent study undertaken by the Institute of Employment Studies supported by further research

undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management highlights the importance of supporting young people into employment and once employed. The pandemic has created greater social isolation and all our skills development programmes need to consider how this can be addressed to ensure young people have the support they need to successfully complete their traineeships and transition into permanent employment opportunities.

This high-level strategy will be underpinned by the various action plans which are currently being developed to deliver this ambitious programme of skills development and employment. It will also require consideration of our employee well-being programme to ensure the support our trainees require to maintain their physical and mental health is available and easily accessible.

The importance of setting targets is recognised as being important to enable Members to measure the successful implementation of the strategy. An initial target of 25% of all vacant posts to be recruited to up to and including grade 5 will be filled by an apprentice within 12 months of the strategy being approved. There is already an existing target for the Council to provide 3 supported internships identified in the Employment and Health Strategy. The most recent graduate trainee cohort has 8 members. This will remain under review and consideration given annually to the number appointed in order to maximise take up of the scheme.

An important part of the action plans will be the tracking of trainees through their development opportunities into permanent employment. As our approach develops, this will provide

important information on the success of the various programmes to enable informed decisions to be taken on where to focus our resources. This approach is currently used to track the career progression of our graduate trainees since we moved from the national to an in-house scheme.

This strategy will be incorporated into the overarching People Strategy and will initially be reviewed after 12 months along with the various action plans and associated workforce plan.