

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND  
EMPLOYEES****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Elected Members of the actions taken to ensure continued support to existing apprentices during the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact the pandemic has had on the Council's apprenticeship programme. This report also contains information on the 2019/2020 Public Sector Target for Apprenticeship starts and an update on the transfer of the Council's unspent Apprenticeship Levy to support local communities and businesses in developing the skills of Nottinghamshire residents.

**Information**

2. The delivery of apprenticeship training to employees has continued with minimal disruption during the pandemic due to the relaxation to the guidelines on the methods of delivery to include remote and distance learning. Contract management meetings have been held with all training providers to ensure that apprenticeships can continue and when required, new enrolments have taken place. The Institute for Apprenticeships have also been working with End Point Assessment Organisations to adjust assessment methods in order that apprentices can complete to the original timeline as much as possible. There has been only four apprentices out of the Council's 213 apprentices that have been placed on a temporary break in learning until such time that the assessing body can conduct their exams.
3. The majority of our apprentices are existing employees undertaking their apprenticeship as part of their continuing professional development so the adjustments to the ways of working have not had a significant impact on their learning opportunities. There were a number of appointments to the Business Administrator level 2 apprenticeship that started between November 2019 and January 2020 who in the main are younger apprentices (aged 17 to 21) many of whom are in their first employment. For these apprentices a number of support mechanisms have been put into place which includes additional pastoral support from the training provider, the offer of mentoring from another more senior apprentice and discussions with line managers around the option of extending contracts of employment for a further few months to ensure they have an opportunity to consolidate their learning before moving into further employment. The coaching offer remains available for all apprentices.

4. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the numbers of apprenticeships the Council has been able to recruit to and numbers of apprenticeship starts are significantly reduced in comparison with the same period last year:

Period	Corporate	Schools	Total
Apr-Oct 2019	53	24	77
Apr-Oct 2020	18	7	25

5. These figures have also been affected by the Government's withdrawal of the old Apprenticeship Frameworks which came into force on 31<sup>st</sup> July, the biggest impact of this being the Business Administration Level 2 and Teaching Assistant Level 2.
6. There has been a significant change in how apprenticeships are being viewed across the Council, with more teams identifying skills gaps and converting vacancies to include an apprenticeship to meet this need and opening opportunities to existing staff to build on their skills and continue their professional development. These apprenticeships all fall into the higher/degree level category.
7. Apprenticeships that have been commissioned this year include:
- Internal Audit Professional Level 4 – two vacancies created in the audit structure, advertised externally, apprentices started in September
  - Social Worker Degree Level 6 – one vacancy created within Adult Social Care and Health – currently recruiting internal candidates (Children and Families also intending to create a number of vacancies)
  - Occupational Therapist Degree Level 6 – two vacancies created within ASCH – currently recruiting internal candidates
  - Learning and Development Professional Level 5 – two internal employees enrolled July
  - HR Level 5 – one internal employee currently undergoing enrolment
  - Senior Leader Level 7 – three Head Teachers currently undergoing enrolment
  - Data Scientist Degree Level 6 – progression for an apprentice who has successfully completed Level 4 Data Analyst – currently enrolling with Keele University
  - Commercial Procurement and Supply Level 4 – seven internal employees within the corporate procurement team and in other procurement roles - currently undergoing enrolment.
8. There has been a significant increase in the number of relief care workers appointed during the Covid-19 pandemic. These workers are usually exempt from undertaking an apprenticeship due to the nature of their contract of employment. However, after negotiations with the training provider that delivers the Level 2 and Level 3 Adult Care Worker apprenticeships, we are now able to offer an apprenticeship to any relief worker that has been employed for at least six months and can evidence the hours worked over those six months meets the average required. For all other relief workers, a route has been identified where they can undertake a Level 2 Diploma at no cost to the Council. A claim to the Workforce Development Fund can be made for qualifications in Adult Social Care. In May 2020, a total of £14,300 was successfully claimed and transferred into ASCH finances.

9. The government have introduced a new incentive payment to employers in England of £2,000 for each new apprentice they hire aged under 25, and £1,500 for each new apprentice they hire aged 25 and over. These payments are for any **newly recruited** apprentices that start their employment between 1st August 2020 to 31st January 2021. These payments will be in addition to the existing £1,000 payment the government already provides for new 16-18 year-old apprentices, and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan where that applies. In order to benefit from these incentives, planned recruitment for a number of apprentices that are additional to the staffing established will take place in November for a January start. Apprenticeship opportunities have currently been identified in ASCH Direct Services and Maximising Independence teams and Children's Residential Homes – The Big House, Minster View and Caudwell House.

## 10. Public Sector Target reporting

Public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England have a target to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their workforce as **new apprentice starts** over the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Bodies in scope must have regard to the target. The Government considers the duty to 'have regard' to the target to mean: that in making workforce planning decisions, apprenticeships should actively be considered for either new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff. Apprentices will only count towards the target as 'new apprentice starts' in the year in which they begin their apprenticeship.

11. An annual report has to be made to Central Government within six months of the end of each reporting period, that is, by the 30<sup>th</sup> September each year from 2018 to 2021. The report is in two parts:

- **Data Publication**

The data publication includes figures which will enable the Government, the public and wider stakeholders to understand the Council's headcount and the number of apprentices they employ.

- **Apprenticeship Activity Return**

The apprenticeship activity return includes both information on the Council's progress against the target and information to assess actions taken towards, and challenges faced in, meeting the targets.

12. The report has been submitted to HMRC in line with the guidance declaring the Council's percentage for 2019/2020 and a full description of our Workforce Development plan for apprenticeships that demonstrates our regard of the target. The table below shows how our percentage has increased since the implementation of the Apprenticeship Levy:

Reporting period (Apr-Mar)	% of Apprenticeship starts (PST)	Apprenticeships % of total headcount
2017/18	0.51%	0.47%
2018/19	0.74%	1.17%
<b>2019/20</b>	<b>0.86%</b>	<b>1.25%</b>

13. There is a requirement to publish the data but not the accompanying narrative. Government is not being prescriptive about where the information should be published but it must be easily

accessible to the public “for example on the internal and external facing website of a public sector body”.

#### **14. Apprenticeship Levy Transfer**

An agreement is in place between the Council and Impact Apprenticeships Limited which is the Apprenticeship Training Agency arm of Futures. This agreement is in line with the proposal presented to Personnel Committee in October 2019 for the priority target groups :

- Nottinghamshire County Council looked after children or care leavers to enable them to undertake an Apprenticeship in a local business/organisation
  - Nottinghamshire Young People 16 to 25 who are in contact with a Council Early Intervention Service and are currently either Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or vulnerable of NEET status (for example Youth Justice Service; Family Service)
  - Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Young People aged 16-25 as this is a group who are currently under represented in the Council's workforce.
15. The agreement ensures these young people are fully supported to identify their career aspirations and will identify learning pathways for individuals so that any apprenticeship they undertake will result in a positive outcome. A referral process has been developed by Futures but progress in working with young people has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the difficulties this has created in identifying potential employers.
16. The Council's Human Resources, Workforce and Organisational Development team (HR&WOD) has been collaborating with colleagues in the Economic Development Team, the D2N2 Growth Hub and the East Midlands Chamber to identify how the transfer of the Council's Apprenticeship Levy could benefit local businesses and communities. The Levy Transfer Application for Businesses was launched in July via the Council's Website ([www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/apprenticeship-levy](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/apprenticeship-levy))
17. The amount available to transfer for 2019/2020 is £389,497. The amount approved for transfer August – October is £129,000. There are further applications totalling £254,000 for which answers to clarification questions are required before a decision can be made.
18. Applicants are asked to demonstrate how the transfer of Apprenticeship Levy will work towards achieving the strategic aims in the Council Plan and if the application meets any of the priority areas identified. The priority areas include:
- Apprenticeships for a looked after child/care leaver
  - Addresses an identified skills shortage
  - Higher level apprenticeship.

Case studies of some of the successful applications are included in Appendix 1.

#### **19. Kickstart Scheme**

Whilst the Kickstart Scheme sits outside the scope of the Apprenticeship Levy, HR&WOD are currently exploring options of how the Council can best offer opportunities to young people under the Kickstart Scheme. There are a number of criteria the Council must meet in order to offer this programme. The financial impact and any potential risk to the authority need to be

considered carefully before agreeing a way forward. A further report will be brought to this Committee for consideration about how the Council can engage with the newly created Kickstart scheme.

### **Other Options Considered**

20. It remains open to the Council not to transfer funds to other employers which would result in the unspent funds being removed from the levy account and used to fund the wider Government programme, consequently with no guarantee that these funds would benefit employers and residents of Nottinghamshire. It was therefore considered important for the Council to develop a model which maximises the benefits to be drawn from transferring the levy as agreed by Personnel Committee previously.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

21. Providing Apprenticeships and routes into Apprenticeships is an integral part of Nottinghamshire's wider Economic Development strategy and 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. It also enables the Council to ensure that it has access to the critical skills and experience it needs now and in the future.
22. Transferring the Apprenticeship Levy supports the Council's aim to help create prosperous places across the County and will benefit Nottinghamshire's residents and its businesses, particularly 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.
23. The challenges of finding work are particularly acute for young people aged 16 to 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. This situation is likely to be exacerbated by increasing numbers of people facing redundancy from industries and services most impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions. In transferring the levy, the Council can support the growth of Apprenticeships and successful careers for those sectors of the community which find themselves with additional challenges in the labour market.
24. The priority of Apprenticeships for our Looked after Children and care leavers in careers outside the remit of the Council, supports our Local Offer for Care Leavers and our corporate parent responsibilities.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

25. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Data Protection and Information Governance**

26. There are no data protection or GDPR issues arising from this report as all the information contained is generic and cannot be attributed to individual employees or local businesses.

## **Financial Implications**

27. HMRC deduct the levy on a monthly basis and place it in the Council's digital account, set up by the National Apprenticeship Service. The amount paid in by the Council varies but is on average approximately £131,000. Apprenticeship Levy that remains in this account unspent for 24 months is removed by HMRC. All associated costs in this report are covered by the Apprenticeship Levy. The maximum amount of levy transfer of 25% is based on the previous financial year 2019-2020, which equates to £389,497.

## **Human Resources Implications**

28. The use of the Apprenticeship Levy enables the Council to maximise career development opportunities and to expand the offer of in-work training to ensure its workforce has the right skills and knowledge required in a modern, public service organisation.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

29. The proposals in this report meet the Council's existing commitment to meeting, and where possible exceeding, the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The recommendation to transfer levy funds with a focus on delivering opportunities for under-represented and vulnerable groups of young people supports the Council in meeting its statutory obligations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- 1) Elected Members agree to further work being undertaken to sustain and grow the Council's corporate commitment, as a good employer, to providing placements for Apprentices across the authority.
- 2) Agree to continue to transfer the unspent Apprenticeship Levy allowance to support Nottinghamshire businesses and residents, in particular those identified priority groups.
- 3) Agree to receive a further report on the Apprenticeship Levy in six months' time.
- 4) Agree to a report on the Kickstart Scheme to be added to this Committee's future Work Programme

**Marjorie Toward**  
**Service Director, Customers, Governance and Employees**  
**Chief Executives Department**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Lyndsey Woolmore, Acting HR, Workforce and Organisational Development Senior Business Partner, Tel. 01159932720 or email [Lyndsey.woolmore@nottsgov.uk](mailto:Lyndsey.woolmore@nottsgov.uk)

### **Constitutional Comments (KK 26/10/20)**

30. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

### **Financial Comments (RWK 26/10/20)**

31. As stated in paragraph 27 of the report all costs incurred on the activities detailed in the report are funded from the Apprenticeship Levy.

### **HR Comments (JP 02/11/20)**

32. The range of activity highlighted in this report will continue to ensure that the Council underpins career development opportunities both within the Council and the wider community.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All