

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Elected Members on the range of employment and development opportunities Nottinghamshire County Council have available to young people and the measures the Council is taking to address the impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on youth unemployment, including reviewing its Apprenticeship Strategy.

Information

2. With job prospects and living standards suffering under Covid 19, the role of the Council in supporting the local economy has never been so critical. The impact of the pandemic has been especially hard on youth employment and figures show a significant increase in young people claiming unemployment benefits. There is now, more than ever, the need for the Council to take a leadership role in creating new opportunities for young people, particularly those who have left care, have a disability or who are from an ethnic minority currently under-represented in the Council's or wider local workforce.
3. The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the number of new apprenticeship starts as it has on recruitment more widely. Clearly this has affected employers' ability to maximise the spend of the Apprenticeship Levy but the Council continues to seek creative ways of sharing this locally. The current situation provides us with a moment to reflect on what has been achieved so far in terms of apprenticeships but also presents a real opportunity to review our current strategy and better align it with the priorities emerging in the new Council plan around skills development.
4. The Council puts children and young people at the heart of everything it does and sets great store on its role in achieving better and consistently good outcomes with its range of existing support. This report will provide an overview and update on the existing programmes offered by the Council through the HR & Workforce and Organisation Development (HR&WOD) Service and will cover:
 - Work Experience
 - Kickstart Programme
 - Apprenticeships

- Graduate Programme
- Leonard Cheshire Change 100 interns

Work Experience

5. The Council's work experience programme has been impacted by the measures in place as a result of Covid 19 due to the limitations of many services not being physically present in our buildings. As a result, a Virtual Work Experience Programme has been designed to initially accommodate requests for placements from schools but with future plans of offering opportunities to a wider audience and for specific professional areas.
6. The Virtual Work Experience Programme will be delivered through a learning platform linked to My Learning, My Career and through a collaborative externally facing workspace that participants will be allowed access to for the duration of their placement.

The programme includes:

- eLearning modules designed to build an understanding of working for the Council and authored to be young person friendly
 - a range of real-life examples, exercises, case studies and work tasks
 - guided sessions with a Council employee through the collaborative MS Teams space
 - reflective journals and evaluation sessions at the end of each day to consolidate learning
 - certificates of completion.
7. The School's programme will be launched in July with sessions offered through August as a trial and open to applicants from September. A specific programme aimed at 14–18-year-olds interested in a career in Social Work went live on 14th June. Developed in collaboration with a range of employees from both adult and children's social work teams and including current social work students, the programme will run for a week and will be repeated at intervals throughout the year.
 8. Most of the development of the Virtual Work Experience Programme has been delivered by the Level 3 Business Administrator Apprentice working in the HR&WOD team. This is a fantastic example of the creativity and innovation that young people can bring to the Council.

Kickstart Programme

9. The Kickstart Programme is a Government funded initiative for 16-24-year-old claimants of Universal Credit with employers offering a six-month paid work placement with training and development opportunities. The Council is registered with The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as a Kickstart employer and placement proposals are submitted to the DWP for young people to apply.
10. A recruitment process has been developed so that a unique link to the placements on offer will be provided to the DWP and candidates can access the information and application form for the placement they are interested in via this link. This will ensure that only applications from young people meeting the eligibility criteria for the Kickstart Programme are able to apply.

11. The learning and development element has been designed to meet the criteria of the Kickstart Programme to develop work related skills. The content of the programme has been planned in collaboration with Inspire and will include access to the My Learning, My Career portal for relevant eLearning and professional development opportunities and will include:
- development of employability skills including CV's, application forms and interview skills
 - role specific development that may include a nationally recognised qualification where available
 - Functional Skills in English, Math and ICT if required
 - Personalised mentor support and guidance.
12. There are currently six placements submitted to DWP; three for Chief Executive's department; one from Place; one from Children and Families and the final one from a maintained school.
13. It is the intention that, wherever possible, the successful Kickstart applicant will progress after the six-month placement into either an apprenticeship or employment via a vacancy with the Council. The Apprenticeship budget that sits with HR&WOD team will be ringfenced to provide the employment costs for the progression into these apprenticeships if required.

Apprenticeships

14. The Council's apprenticeship programme utilises the Apprenticeship Levy to offer learning and development opportunities via an approved apprenticeship standard to existing staff as continued professional development and through the conversion of appropriate vacancies to an apprenticeship or by the creation of entry to employment level apprenticeships additional to the staffing establishment.
15. There has been a steady increase in the number of young people employed on an apprenticeship programme with the Council, and whilst many of our Apprentices are existing employees, there has been a noted increase in the number of young people applying for apprenticeship vacancies. There are currently 219 Apprentices employed by the Council; 62 of these are under 25 years old and 11 apprentices are aged 16-18 years.

Corporate			
Department	Total	Status	
ASCH	43	CPD	83
C&F	27	Vacancy	26
Chief Executive's	62	Supernumerary	21
Place	31	Mandatory Qualification*	33
Total	163		163

*Diplomas in ASC and Children's Residential

Table continued over page.

Schools	
District	Total
Ashfield	3
Bassetlaw	7
Broxtowe	7
Gedling	6
Mansfield	14
Newark & Sherwood	10
Rushcliffe	11
Total	58

16. There is a small budget within HR&WOD for the employment costs associated with the Apprenticeship Programme that are additional to the staffing establishment and this is prioritised for those aged 16 – 18 years; looked after children and Care Leavers and anyone eligible for an apprenticeship on completion of a Kickstart placement.
17. At Personnel Committee in October 2019, Members agreed that the Council would transfer the 25% unspent levy as approved by HMRC. This transfer has been prioritised for young people at risk of NEET status and an agreement is in place with Futures to offer employment support and an apprenticeship if the Council is not able to offer that professional route. To date there has not been the demand from young people for this service. A proportion of the Levy Transfer has been committed to providing apprenticeships and associated support for any young person in contact with Children and Families Department, specifically looked after children and care leavers. The agreement in place with Impact Futures provides young people with careers information, advice and guidance and employability skills where appropriate and to identify apprenticeship opportunities with a local employer that meets the young person's aspirations. Whilst the referral process is in place, there have only been two young people to date that have been identified for this service.
18. In addition to the Futures agreement, the Council has launched the Levy Transfer application for SMEs in Nottinghamshire or for Nottinghamshire residents to access apprenticeships. The criteria for applications align to the aims of the Council Plan and prioritise apprenticeships for disadvantaged groups and in areas where there are recognised skills shortages. The first application was received in August 2020 and to date there have been 33 successful applications funding 51 apprenticeships with a total commitment of **£468,500.00**.

Graduate Programme

19. The Council's Graduate Development Programme is a two-year programme that is designed to shape the next generation of local government managers. Applicants should have graduated with at least a 2.1 degree within the last five years from one of the Nottingham Universities or be a Nottinghamshire resident. The scheme is also open to existing Council employees.
20. The programme offers a rotation of placements across the departments that are designed to build on knowledge, skills and behaviours and the participants undertake the Level 5 Departmental Manager Apprenticeship throughout the programme.

21. Now in its fourth year of being delivered in-house, the quality of applicants remains exceptionally high and with assessment centres and interviews being conducted throughout June, the new cohort of six will start in September. Members of this Committee had the opportunity at January's meeting to meet members of the different graduate trainee cohorts and question them on their experiences of the scheme. This was very positively received.

Change 100 Programme

22. Working in partnership with Leonard Cheshire, the Change 100 programme is designed to open employment opportunities to disabled people who are either in their final year of university or have recently graduated. As part of the programme, the Council offers paid three-month internships for candidates over the summer.

23. The Council has been participating in the Change 100 scheme since 2017 with four placements available and continued to offer placements throughout the Coronavirus restrictions last year all be it at a reduction of one placement. Two of the participants in previous years have been successful in gaining employment with the Council as a result of their engagement in the scheme.

24. This year we again have capacity for four placements and have a number of options for participants to be matched to across all departments. The placements are due to start mid-June for three months and include development days with Leonard Cheshire for the participants and bespoke disability awareness sessions for the teams hosting the placements.

Other Options Considered

25. As one of the largest local employers in Nottinghamshire, the Council has a lead role in identifying employment opportunities at varying levels for our residents. Engagement in the schemes identified above, ensures we maintain our offer to provide such opportunities and we continue to work with partner organisations to maximise our offer. Kickstart is a recent example of a new initiative which we have committed to, and further updates will be provided to future meetings as to the progress made on all these programmes of work. The option to do nothing would result in people who face additional challenges in accessing employment being left unsupported with the real possibility of falling into long term unemployment with all the issues associated with this.

Reasons for Recommendations

26. The Council seeks to build on its brand as an employer of choice and our commitment to these initiatives provides demonstrable proof of the work underway to improve employment chances which has an overall positive impact on the local economy. Having a programme of work which provides work experience opportunities to enable young people to see what opportunities are available for them within the Council provides a potential talent pipeline for future recruitment particularly in hard to recruit to areas. Given the age profile of our current workforce, encouraging younger residents to consider the Council as a place they can begin and develop their careers, is critical to guaranteeing the Council can access new employees with the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to ensure the future success of the Council on delivering its identified priorities.

27. The development and implementation of the Council's Recovery Framework and new Council Plan with a renewed focus on economic recovery and regeneration post covid provide the opportunity to review the Council's approach to employment for young people within this wider context and maximise the potential opportunities and improve outcomes for young people.

Statutory and Policy Implications

28. 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

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

Financial Implications

30. Financial implications to the Council are for the employment costs of participants in the Graduate Programme, Change 100 and the Apprenticeship Programme. Finances relating to the Kickstart scheme are drawn down from DWP grants and utilise existing funding initiatives available to Inspire through Education and Skills funding. The delivery of Apprenticeships is funded through the Council's levy payments. The transfer of unspent levy to Nottinghamshire employers and residents ensures these funds are maximised and remain in the local economy.

Human Resources Implications

31. The range of programmes for young people on offer enables the Council to maximise career development opportunities and to develop an effective talent pipeline by expanding 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

32. 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.

Smarter Working Implications

33. Any smarter working implications will be considered as part of the emerging Hybrid Working Policy which will apply to relevant sections of the Council's workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members of Personnel Committee:

- 1) Support the work that is already underway to improve employment opportunities particularly for those who have additional challenges in securing regular and meaningful employment.
- 2) Approve a review of the current apprenticeship strategy to ensure it aligns with the emerging priorities post covid in relation to key skills development.
- 3) Agree to receive a further report in September which includes the refreshed Apprenticeship Strategy, and which has a focus on employability and job opportunities for those reaching the end of their 2-year apprenticeship.

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@nottscc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments [KK 16/06/21]

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

Financial Comments [SES 16/06/21]

35. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

36. Financial implications to the Council are for the employment costs of participants in the Graduate Programme, Change 100 and the Apprenticeship Programme. Finances relating to the Kickstart scheme are drawn down from DWP grants and utilise existing funding initiatives available to Inspire through Education and Skills funding. The delivery of Apprenticeships is funded through the Council's levy payments and any unspent levy is removed by HMRC after 24 months. The transfer of unspent levy to Nottinghamshire employers and residents ensures these funds are maximised and remain in the local economy.

HR Comments [JP 17/06/21]

37. The initiatives described in the report support the Council's overall objectives in supporting young people in employment.

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