

Report of the Directors of City Development and Children's Services

Report to Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture)

Date: 21 January 2014

Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry – Apprenticeships

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report provides evidence for the second session of the Scrutiny Board inquiry into apprenticeships. The report summarises the range and type of pre-apprenticeship support and training for those young people that do not meet the initial functional skills requirements of an apprenticeship.
2. The report also sets out the current position on participation in apprenticeships by 16-18 year olds and the outcomes of the recent desk based research on apprenticeship applications to support a better understanding of the factors that influence the application activity of young people.
3. The report also provides information on the role of schools and colleges in providing impartial information, advice and guidance, including information about apprenticeships and the role of the Connexions service in supporting young people to access apprenticeships.
4. In addition to the activities detailed in the provision session, this report highlights the provision made by the Council to support young people with information and schools and academies to fulfil their responsibilities to provide high quality impartial advice and guidance. The report also points to additional activity that could be undertaken to further support young people to identify and access provision that will help them to secure an apprenticeship.

Recommendation

5. The Scrutiny Board is asked to consider the issues raised by this session of the inquiry.

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report to provide information for the consideration of Scrutiny Board on pre-apprenticeship provision, traineeships and support for those not meeting the initial functional skills requirements of an apprenticeship. The report also provides information on the role of schools and colleges in providing impartial information, advice and guidance, including information about apprenticeships and the role of the Connexions service in supporting young people to access apprenticeships.

2.0 Pre-apprenticeship provision

- 2.1 There is a wide range of provision termed 'pre-apprenticeship training', a term increasingly used to attract learners to the aim of the provision to support them through a progression route into an apprenticeship. The provision supports young people to acquire the necessary skills to compete for and secure an apprenticeship. The required skills can be categorised as personal, functional and employability skills. Provision usually includes elements of or a combination of the following:-
- personal and social development activity –building confidence, self-esteem and improving communication skills,
 - support to achieve functional skills – Level 2 English and Mathematics, and
 - general and or sector specific employability skills – such as job search and interview skills, time-keeping and team working, leadership, problem solving and independent inquiry which are usually gained through work experience or contact with the world of work through workplace visits, shadowing or mentoring by employers.
- 2.2 There are a significant number of providers that provide some or all the above skills training ranging from commercial and third sector training providers, colleges, sector skills councils and employers at both a local and national level. It is not practical to provide an up-to-date and comprehensive list of all available provision; however, summary information on the types of provision available locally is listed at Appendix 1 for information.
- 2.3 Programmes tend to have either a focus on NEET prevention and reduction or apprenticeship progression but providers may need to combine funding from different sources to do both. The approach that ranges from engagement to apprenticeship preparation is often the most effective as it provides multiple entry points arranged as a ladder of progression opportunities that match the abilities and aspirations of participants. Recruitment and delivery will vary by type of provision with NEET focused provision more likely to offer open access recruitment, pastoral care, longer programmes to meet a broad range of learner needs in alternative learning environments. Apprenticeship feeder programmes are more likely to be selectively recruited to and be delivered as a short term programme of outcomes led support focused on securing an apprenticeship.
- 2.4 The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) has end to end responsibility for the delivery of Apprenticeships including a web-based vacancy matching system and the co-ordination of funding, standards and accountability for the delivery of national targets. There is no recognised national standard or single

body which oversees pre-apprenticeship provision. Training is funded from a variety of sources including Government Departments and agencies, sector skills councils and employers. Where training is funded from the public purse, the commissioner or main deliverer will be subject to inspection by OFSTED.

- 2.5 The wide range of provision available that can be confusing to young people and without the benefit of high-quality impartial information advice and guidance it can result in young people making ill-informed choices. While the wide range of generic and sector specific provision aims to meet a wide range of skill needs, learning styles and aspirations it can mean that that the progression pathway into the desired apprenticeship role is not always readily apparent.
- 2.6 Where the pre-apprenticeship programme is delivered by an apprenticeship provider then the provider will be well placed to support the learner to progress to an apprenticeship through its existing network of employers. Other providers may need additional support and or need to work with apprenticeship providers to support individuals in securing an apprenticeship.

3.0 Apprenticeship Participation and Applications

- 3.1 At the previous Scrutiny Board meeting there was concern expressed around the decline in the number of 16-18 year olds starting apprenticeships and also around some vacancies receiving very low levels of applications. Since then a detailed analysis of the data has been undertaken to provide a fuller picture of the situation.
- 3.2 Since the last Scrutiny Board meeting we have received updated data from the National Apprenticeship Service that shows a slightly improved position with regard to starts, see Appendix 2. Rather than simply focusing on starts, an alternative way to gauge our success around apprenticeships is to consider participation. When 16-18 apprenticeships are viewed in terms of participation they show a decrease of 6.28% over the past two years compared to a 25.33% decrease in terms of starts. It should also be noted that the participation figures for 18 year olds actually show an increase of 1.74% over the same period.
- 3.5 An analysis of the apprenticeship application data has been undertaken to identify key factors and ascertain the influence they have on the number of applications for vacancies. This detailed analysis is included as Appendix 3.
- 3.6 The average number of applications per vacancies is currently around 16 for intermediate level opportunities and 18 for advanced level opportunities. However, there were around 8% of vacancies that did not receive any applications.
- 3.7 Surprisingly, the wage offered does not appear to influence the application rate. Beyond a greater average number of applications for vacancies located in the city centre, location also does not appear to significantly influence the number of applications. The apprenticeship framework does however appear to be a key factor influencing the number of applications with certain frameworks such as accounting, retail, warehousing and legal services proving popular. The employer does appear to be influencing the number of applications with large or well-known employers generally receiving higher numbers of applications. A major influencing factor that is not easily demonstrated statistically is the wording of the advert itself,

with those adverts that clearly give the impression that the person will be a valued employee and have long term career prospects generally receiving higher numbers of applications. We are exploring ways to support employers to improve their job adverts to ensure they are attractive to young people in particular.

4.0 Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

- 4.1 As a Council we see access to high quality impartial careers education and information advice and guidance (CEIAG) on learning and employment opportunities as vital to ensuring that young people not only progress to a positive destination post 16, but also continue to remain engaged in learning and employment beyond the age of 18.
- 4.2 The responsibility for providing universal Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance no lies with the schools. However, to support this we have continued to invest in Leeds Pathways (www.leedspathways.org.uk) our on-line information and advice service for young people, parents/carers and professionals. We have undertaken extensive development and improvement of the Work and Apprenticeship section and the Local Jobs and Careers resource. These now provide an extensive range of valuable information that supports young people to understand apprenticeships and make informed career choices. We have produced an Apprenticeship Resource Pack available through the Parent, Teacher and Professional area of the site and have offered schools and colleges support and training to ensure that they are all aware of and confident in using the full set of online resources relating to apprenticeships and the world of work.
- 4.3 To assist schools we have developed a quality assured list of approved providers of CEIAG services. Many schools are now purchasing additional support from providers on this list. We have also put in place a Careers Network that provides training and development for staff from schools and colleges. It also provides a useful forum for them to share their own good practice.
- 4.4 We have also been working with young people to ensure they have a real voice around the type of CEIAG they receive. The Leeds Youth Council have designed a CEIAG calendar which outlines the specific types of information, advice and guidance they want to receive and when they would like to receive it. The young people presented this to the schools and colleges at the Careers Network meeting in the Autumn.
- 4.5 We are keen to ensure that schools provide high quality impartial information advice and guidance around all the post 16 pathways that are available to young people including apprenticeships. To help ensure this is the case we have developed and launched a detailed self-assessment tool to support schools to develop their Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance offer and ensure they are meeting their statutory duties.
- 4.6 We are currently working on the development of a specific package of support for young people who are looked after or care leavers. We want to ensure they get the best possible level of support and assistance to secure an apprenticeship if that is their preferred career choice.

5.0 The role of Connexions

5.1 Unlike many councils, we have committed to making a major financial investment to ensure that the most disadvantaged young people who are NEET continue to receive the kind of information, advice, guidance and support that is vital for them to make properly informed choices around post 16 opportunities including apprenticeships. From 1 April 2013 this service has been provided by igen and their partners. All the Connexions personal advisers have received detailed training around apprenticeships to ensure they are full equipped to provide high quality advice and support to young people wanting to access apprenticeships.

6.0 Corporate Consideration

6.1 Consultation and Engagement

6.1.1 The Council plays a leading role in co-ordinating the activity and encouraging collaborative working across a number of training providers to better meet both learner needs and the skills needs of businesses in the city through the Leeds Apprenticeship Steering Group. The Group's priorities and action plan developed with stakeholder input reflects the priorities and objectives of the Best Council Plan 2013-17 to support people to improve skills and move into jobs.

6.1.2 The priorities for action in the above plans were identified through consultation with elected members and officers in the Council, NAS, colleges and learning providers, employers and young people accessing apprenticeship services. The planned activities will continue to be monitored, reviewed and amended in light of service user and elected member feedback. Planned activities will be communicated to young people, their parents and carers, schools, employers and elected members through a variety of means including the web, social media, written and face to face briefings.

6.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

6.2.1 Equality Impact Assessment screening was undertaken to support the development and implementation of the programmes of activity commissioned by the Council and the Leeds Apprenticeship Steering Group. The current and planned activities will support the provision of progression routes for young people that are currently NEET and will also be targeted to young people currently in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance benefit. Data relating to service users will be captured and monitored and activity plans reviewed to ensure the needs of equality groups are met to access these services.

6.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

6.3.1 The activities outlined in the report support the achievement of key objectives set out in the Best Council Plan 2013-17, namely to 'promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth by improving the economic wellbeing of local people and businesses' with a specific focus on meeting the skills needs of local businesses to support recovery and growth and by helping young people to acquire skills and move into employment with training.

6.3.2 These activities also contribute to the achievement of the Children and Young People NEET obsession and the Children and Young People Plan priority to

'Increase numbers in employment, education or training'.

6.4 Resources and Value for Money

6.4.1 There are no specific decisions arising from this report. Expenditure on existing programmes delivered by the Council referenced in this report were taken in accordance with the Council's financial and decision-making policies and procedures.

6.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

6.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.6 Risk Management

6.6.1 Existing Council programmes of delivery are supported by risk management plans which are reviewed on a regular basis.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 The Council along with partners has invested additional resources in infrastructure and services to support an increase in the number of apprenticeships offered by employers in the city and to provide support to young people to access these opportunities through a recently established clearing system and brokerage service through the Apprenticeship Hub and Apprenticeship Training Agency. The Council continues to provide targeted support to young people identified as NEET through the Connexions service and support and resources to schools and academies to self-assess and further develop their Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance offer to young people.

7.2 However, it is clear that a number of young people fail to meet the key functional skills requirements to secure and undertake an apprenticeship. While information collated on the pre-apprenticeship provision indicates that there is sufficient provision available, it clear that further work is required to ensure that there is an increased awareness of this provision among young people, their parents and carers, schools and academies.

7.3 In raising awareness of the provision, further work is required to structure information in a way that supports individuals to recognise and understand the alternative pathways to current apprenticeship vacancies and career pathways in key sectors in the local economy. The opportunity exists to take forward this work through the Apprenticeship Hub to further enhance the Pathways website and link this to the emerging debate on young people led CEIAG entitlement within Children's services.

7.4 Activity to raise awareness of the provision also needs be aligned to activity to promote and support collaboration between pre- apprenticeship and apprenticeship providers to create progression pathways that support young people into an apprenticeship. The Apprenticeship Hub and the Leeds Apprenticeship Steering Group includes a number of these providers and is therefore well placed to take this work forward.

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 The Scrutiny Board is asked to consider the issues raised by this session of the inquiry.

9.0 Background documents¹

9.1 There are no background documents.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.