

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 20 April 2016

Subject: Leeds Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. The Council's Apprenticeship Hub, funded through the City Deal, works with training providers, sector skills bodies and employers to broker apprenticeships to meet business development needs and promote these opportunities to young people in both schools and community settings. Working with partners in the city, the Apprenticeship Hub delivered the Leeds Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair at the First Direct Arena on the 14 March 2016. Held for the last 3 years, this year's event was the most successful yet and the biggest event held in Leeds City Region during National Apprenticeship Week.
2. The event supported 116 employers and training providers to promote apprenticeships and advice and recruit to over 240 current vacancies and was attended by over 5,000 young people and their families and carers to learn more about what apprenticeships are on offer in the city and the career opportunities they offer.
3. Apprenticeships are a key tool to promote access to employment and continuing skills development to young people and to address the growing technical and professional skills shortages in the workforce to boost productivity and support growth. These activities contribute to the achievement of the More Jobs, Better Jobs Breakthrough Project and the Best Council Plan objectives of promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth and building a Child Friendly City.

Recommendations

4. Executive Board is asked to note the successful delivery of the above event to promote apprenticeships and support the proposal to deliver a series of future events in 2017 to respond to the demand for information by young people and businesses to prepare for the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide an update on activity to support young people to access Apprenticeships, in particular, the Leeds Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair held at the First Direct Arena on 14 March at the beginning of National Apprenticeship Week.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Apprenticeships offer entry level jobs with skills training and enable progression through recognised career pathways across all sectors of the local economy. The Council's Apprenticeships Hub, funded through the City Deal, currently works with 40+ training providers, sector skills bodies and around 600 employers each year to broker apprenticeships to meet business development needs and promote these opportunities to young people in both schools and community settings. It has supported over 500 young people into apprenticeships and provided information and guidance to many more.
- 2.2 Delivered by the Hub, working in partnership with local training provider, schools and employers, the Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair has become an annual event providing information and guidance on apprenticeships and the wide range of vacancies available with local businesses.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Previously held in July at the Town Hall, the event was designed to engage those young people who had either not applied for vacancies or had yet to find a suitable opportunity at the end of the school term. However, feedback from employers and schools indicated a preference to undertake recruitment and support job search and applications earlier in the school year. The event was scheduled in March to take advantage of the significant promotional activity undertaken by local, regional and national partners during National Apprenticeship Week 14 to 18 March.
- 3.2 The Victoria Hall and the Crypt at the Town Hall had previously enabled the display of around 60 information stands by employers and training providers and the attendance of around 1,700 visitors. To accommodate the increasing number of exhibitors and maintain a central location accessible by public transport, the First Direct Arena was selected as the venue for 2016. The increased space and layout enabled more interactive and welcoming visitor displays as well as a wall display of current vacancies.
- 3.3 116 employers and training providers attended the event representing a wide range of job roles across all sectors including business administration roles at Ernst and Young, Eversheds and Lloyds Banking Group; construction / built environment roles at Carillion, Keep Moat and NG Bailey; customer service roles at British Gas; engineering and manufacturing roles at One Subsea, Sulzer Pump and Volkswagen; financial services role at First Direct and Yorkshire Building Society; health/care and public service roles at Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust, Leeds City Council, Yorkshire Ambulance Service; hospitality / catering and leisure and tourism roles at Raddison Blu, Marriott, Premier Inn and Q Hotels; information technology roles at BAE Systems, Unilever and Yorkshire Water; law at Addleshaw Goddards, Eversheds and Gordons LLP.

- 3.4 The primary mechanism for promoting the event to young people and their families was a mail out of the event flier to approximately 25,000 young people in Leeds using the Children's Services Insight database (Years 11, 12 and 13, plus the NEET cohort aged 16-19). This was supplemented by other promotional activity including:-
- An electronic invitation to schools, colleges and stakeholders throughout the city and 16-18 year olds registered as jobshop customers;
 - Posters and fliers for display at key locations across the city to include Jobcentre Plus offices, Council Community Hubs and Job Shops & Libraries, Connexions Services, Secondary Schools, Colleges and other community venues;
 - Fliers distributed by elected members to a variety of locations within their wards;
 - Promotion on the Council intranet Insite and Essentials pages and Leeds.gov.uk Jobs webpage along with information on all outgoing Council emails
 - Advertisements on the Apprenticeship Hub Facebook page.
- 3.5 In the two weeks preceding the event, adverts were also run in the Yorkshire Evening Post and in the Metro newspapers with digital copy displayed on their websites along with information on the Breeze Website, Leeds Pathways and First Direct Arena Facebook page. Regular Tweets were issued via the Leeds Apprenticeship Hub Twitter feed as well as training providers using their own marketing resources to promote the event. Digital displays were also delivered at Millennium Square and at Trinity Shopping Centre, the Vue cinemas in Kirkstall and Birstall, information displayed on billboards in Armley and Headingley and streetliner adverts on the side of 30 buses on busy routes in the city.
- 3.6 Learning from the feedback gathered from parents at the event in the previous year, it was clear that there was still a low level of awareness and knowledge about apprenticeships. The flier included additional explanatory notes, 'Apprenticeships Explained', to address this. It provided further information on the way in which apprenticeships are delivered and the roles of the employer and the training provider to better enable parents to support their children make informed choices and encourage them to attend the event, and apply for vacancies.
- 3.8 Visitor feedback from the event was largely positive with comments reflecting the large number and range of exhibitors and the help and information available. However there were negative comments about the long queues to access the venue and to access information from particular employers and training providers. It is clear there is a huge appetite for information on apprenticeships that is not currently being met.
- 3.9 Feedback forms enabled visitors to rate the various aspects of the event as poor, fair, good or excellent. Completed forms indicated that 80% rated the event as good or excellent; 77 % rated the range of exhibitors as good or excellent and the 84% rated the scheduling of the event in March as good or excellent. 39% of respondents indicated that they were informed about the event by post; 9% by e-mail; 18% through the internet or social media; and 16% through their school or college.

- 3.10 Exhibitors were asked to complete evaluation forms and the feedback was very positive and there is clearly an appetite from employers and training providers to engage in future events. All respondents rated the event as either good (32%) or excellent (68%); 96% rated the venue as excellent and 97% rated the timing of the event in March as good or excellent.

“I just wanted to say how worthwhile we found hosting a stand at the Apprenticeship fair on Monday. It was incredibly well run. The venue was excellent. All the ushers/staff were so welcoming and helpful. We were amazed by the turn out. We spoke non-stop for 3 hrs to many, many quality candidates. We were pleased by the genuine interest in the construction industry and by the eloquence, confidence and maturity of Leeds’s young people. I was personally pleased to talk to three girls about my experience within the construction industry. We came away with over 50 expressions of interest, many of which have been followed up by further correspondence from the candidates. A truly tiring but inspiring evening” – **National civil engineering consultancy**

“Just wanted to send you a quick e-mail to congratulate you and your team on a brilliant night last night – a real testament to all of the hard work and preparation that took place. Please pass on my thanks to everyone who came over to make sure everything was OK before and during the event. We have had great feedback and been able to capture lots of data, which we are planning on using to create our new Apprenticeship Scheme. Looking forward to supporting again next year” – **National financial services provider**

“Leeds City Council is at forefront of promoting apprenticeships in the UK. It should provide a masterclass to other agencies demonstrating good practice on engaging potential apprentices and businesses” – **CILEX Law School**

“What a fantastic event last night!! We had huge interest in our vacancies and met some great candidates. We never stopped talking to people for the whole 3 hours. This was such a great event that we would like to make sure that we get our name on the list for next year. Therefore I would be grateful if you could mark us in your records for next year” – **Kirk Newsholme**

- 3.11 Over 5,000 young people and their parents and carers attended the 3 hour event and had access to employers and training providers with live and planned vacancies. Visitors were able to obtain information on a wide range of possible job roles and careers or to seek more detailed advice on specific job roles or employers. Employers were able to promote existing apprenticeship vacancies but were also able to gather information to inform the planned expansion of their apprenticeship programmes in response to the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and Public Sector Targets for Apprenticeships.
- 3.12 Over 1,100 expression of interest forms were completed by young people at the event in response to live vacancies and these have now been processed by

Apprenticeship Hub staff and referred to the appropriate employers and training providers. These will be tracked over the next few months to record how many are offered and start an apprenticeship and to ensure that those that do not can continue to access help and support to access other opportunities.

3.13 Given the appetite by young people for further information on apprenticeships evidenced by the high attendance numbers and the planned expansion of apprenticeships by the Government through the introduction of the Levy for large employers and introduction of targets for public sector bodies, it is proposed to hold a series of events over the coming 12 months including a similar event in National Apprenticeship Week in 2017.

3.14 Further detailed work will be undertaken with partners and stakeholders to evaluate and learn from this event and establish a working group to commence event planning. Opportunities to provide meaningful work experience for undergraduate students in marketing and event management will also be discussed with the Universities. It is proposed that now the annual event has an established track record with business, that we will seek a headline sponsor and charge exhibitors to ensure that event costs can be recovered.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 The Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair event was developed and delivered as part of a wider programme of activities to promote awareness of apprenticeships, to support an increase in the number of young people starting an apprenticeship and support SME businesses to create and recruit to apprentice positions. The programme has included a range of activities including advice sessions and application workshops for young people in school and community settings, recruitment fairs, and sector focused support for businesses. The programme was designed and delivered in partnership with local training providers including Leeds City College and Leeds College of Building, the Chamber of Commerce and the National Apprenticeship Service.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 In 2014/15, there were a total of 6,718 apprenticeship starts in Leeds. 54.2% of those starting an apprenticeship were female and 45.8% were male and 11.2% of starters were BAME against a school year 11 BAME population of 21.2%. Data on apprentices with disabilities is not available at the local level.

4.2.2 Work is currently being progressed with a range of community and third sector organisations working within BAME communities to address the under-representation of BAME young people participating in apprenticeships and to deliver against the Council's Equality Improvement Priority to improve access to apprenticeships for young people from BAME communities. Work includes engagement with young people from BAME communities to better understand any additional cultural barriers they may face and how these may be overcome. Targeted information and activity is also being delivered through community led organisations such as Hamara and Path Yorkshire, as well as the Council's Prevent co-ordinator, and media

campaigns through local radio in community heritage languages to engage with parents and carers.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

4.3.1 The work of the Apprenticeship Hub and this particular event will contribute to the achievement of the Best Council Plan 2015-20 objectives to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth by meeting the workforce development and skills needs of local businesses. This will also contribute to the achievement of the Child Friendly City objective by supporting a reduction in youth unemployment and the number of young people identified as NEET and to our ambition to be a compassionate city based on a strong economy.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The total cost of the event, including venue hire charges and the promotional activity, was £29,688. This was funded through external grant funding allocated to the Apprenticeship Hub under the City Deal to promote apprenticeships.

4.4.2 While the overall event costs increased, largely related to venue hire, this enabled a higher participation rate by young people with a broader range of employers showcasing a wider variety of job roles and future progression pathways. Employers and training providers covered their own costs associated with attending the event.

4.5 Legal Implications, access to information and call In

4.5.1 There are no specific implications for this report

4.6 Risk management

4.6.1 There are no specific implications for this report

5 Conclusions

5.1 The high attendance levels at the recent event are reflective of the need to strengthen the provision of good quality, impartial Information, Advice and Guidance for young people and specifically the inclusion of apprenticeships to ensure that young people can make informed choices about the full range of career options and alternative pathways to higher level skills qualifications.

5.2 Progress has been made in engaging schools, young people and their parents or carers on apprenticeships through the Apprenticeship Hub, but there is far more to do and a high profile event that brings young people into direct contact with leading employers in the city will make a significant contribution to raising their awareness of the wide and growing range of opportunities that apprenticeships can deliver. The attendance at the event and feedback from leading employers in the city is evidence of their willingness to engage in collaborative work to invest in young people's skills development and ensure that they can meet their future workforce development needs.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Executive Board is asked to note the successful delivery of the above event to promote apprenticeships and support the proposal to deliver a series of future events in 2017 to respond to the demand for information by young people and businesses to prepare for the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 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.