

TITLE OF REPORT: **Apprenticeship Strategy & Delivery Plan**

REPORT OF: **Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet endorsement of the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy 2021-2024 and Delivery Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 2 and 3 to this report, and its referral to Council for approval; and also, to highlight the progress made in support of the draft Strategy and Delivery Action Plan.

Background

2. In April 2017 the Government introduced several changes to the national apprenticeship framework, including:
 - The introduction of the apprenticeship levy which can only be used to pay for training and assessment costs of apprenticeships. The Council's annual levy fund is approximately £910k per year (including maintained schools). It must be spent within 24 months or will be returned to the Treasury.
 - The introduction of a public sector apprenticeship target. The Council (including maintained schools) requires approximately 171 apprentices to be enrolled annually to meet the target (2.3% of the workforce).
 - The transfer from Apprenticeship Frameworks to Apprenticeship Standards which focus on "on the job learning". These cover a wider range of occupations and provide the opportunity to achieve qualifications up to level 7 (post-graduate level).
3. Apprenticeships are an important part of Gateshead's strategic ambitions within the Thrive Agenda: i.e., to create opportunities for employment and economic growth. In addition, they will support the Council to improve the skills base of existing employees and meet the challenges around workforce planning and skills gaps.

Proposal

4. The Apprenticeship Strategy supports a strategic approach to how apprenticeships will help the Council to attract, retain and develop our workforce. The strategy sets out the positive action that the Council will take in its approach to apprenticeships, aligned to the wider Workforce Strategy, Economic Strategy and the Community Wealth Building Strategy. The strategy is intended to be dynamic and will be regularly reviewed and updated in response to local and national changes.

5. The apprenticeship strategy aims to:
 - Embed a positive apprenticeship culture.
 - Maximise workforce capability by identifying and promoting a range of suitable apprenticeship opportunities for new apprentices.
 - Support the continuous professional development of existing employees.
 - Develop workforce diversity and inclusivity.
 - Engage with maintained schools to maximise benefits from the levy.
 - Engage with training providers and other local authorities to maximise apprenticeship provision within the region.
 - Engage with other employers, particularly our supply chain, to maximise the use/transfer of the levy.
 - Work towards achievement of the Public Sector Apprenticeship target
6. The key actions for the delivery of the strategy are set out in detail in the underpinning Delivery Action Plan. The Delivery Plan sets out the proposed activity, the resources required to deliver this, timescales and desired outcomes to achieve each of the strategic aims. Progress against the Delivery Action Plan will be reviewed each year and will be overseen at a senior management level by SMG Services & Performance, and within the Council's Performance Management Framework by the Housing, Environment & Healthier Communities OSC.
7. The Council's Apprenticeship Co-ordinator, working closely with colleagues in Business, Employment & Skills, Corporate Procurement and LearningSkills, will ensure the Council has a robust and effective approach to apprenticeships and that the aims and objectives in the Strategy and Delivery Plan can be, and are being, achieved.
8. Work undertaken to date in support of the Strategy and Delivery plan is detailed in Appendix 4.
9. Future options to further drive-up demand for apprenticeships and maximise levy spend are detailed in Appendix 5.

Recommendations

10. It is recommended that:
 - i. the attached Apprenticeship Strategy 2021-2024 and Apprenticeship Delivery Action Plan are endorsed by Cabinet; and
 - ii. Cabinet recommends the Strategy and Delivery Action Plan to Council for approval.

For the following reason:

To ensure the Council's strategic ambitions within the Thrive agenda to create opportunities for employment and economic growth are achieved and that the Council can meet the challenges around workforce planning and skills gaps by having a highly trained, ambitious and flexible workforce.

Policy Context

1. The proposals will have a direct impact on the outcomes set out in the Council's strategic approach, Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives, as well as supporting the Council's Economic Strategy and community wealth building aims.
2. The Apprenticeship Strategy will form an integral part of the wider Workforce Strategy to provide the Council with a talent pipeline that supports current and future skill needs.

Background

3. Corporate Resources OSC considered an initial draft Strategy and Delivery Action Plan in October 2019 and whilst they were supportive of it, further work was needed to finalise the Strategy and Plan. There has been a delay in finalising the Strategy and Delivery Action plan partly due to problems appointing to the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator role and partly because of the impact of the Pandemic. Throughout the first year of the Pandemic, the focus was initially on maintaining existing apprenticeships and addressing issues with providers rather than addressing the wider aims of the Strategy. However, significant progress has been made to ensure that the Council's response to apprenticeships is robust and effective and that the aims and actions as outlined in the Strategy and Delivery Plan are being achieved.
4. Unfortunately, the Council has not achieved the public sector apprenticeship target as demand for apprenticeships across the Council has fluctuated since 2017. There has been a modest reduction in the number of *new* apprentices recruited; however, the use of apprenticeships to upskill the existing workforce has increased year on year, despite recruitment and workforce numbers reducing. Financial constraints continue to impact the ability to recruit to posts, with vacant posts being deleted. Consequently, managers need experienced workers who can hit the ground running rather than taking on apprentices, as services do not have the capacity to support and mentor apprentices to achieve their potential.
5. In addition, COVID has significantly impacted the ability to take on new apprenticeship starts due to the implications of social distancing and need for COVID secure workplaces, particularly in trade areas where the nature of delivery is very 'hands on'. Managers have also been wary of taking on apprentices whilst working from home as they are concerned about the ability to effectively support an apprentice. The requirement to redeploy and furlough staff has also affected the ability to develop employees' skills using apprenticeships. Despite the impact of COVID, both Workforce Development and Learning Skills have continued to ensure that apprentice opportunities are maximised, and existing apprentices remain fully supported.
6. In addition to financial constraints, and the impact of COVID, there continue to be barriers to the use of apprenticeships such as:

- The continuing perception amongst the workforce that apprenticeships are low-level qualifications largely aimed at young people.
 - Concerns from managers over the requirement for apprentices to spend 20% of their time undertaking 'off the job' learning and the impact this has on service delivery, particularly in frontline services.
 - Insufficient providers being able to successfully join the Council's 'Approved List' due to failures on health and safety and/or safeguarding matters.
 - Insufficient providers in the region or nationally to deliver the apprenticeship programmes the Council requires.
 - The continued financial constraints facing the Council continuing to impact on services ability to recruit new apprentices.
7. Action taken to address barriers include regular engagement with management teams, improved communication, promotion & processes; external procurement of training providers; establishment of a regional apprenticeship network; and participation in an LGA apprenticeship project group.
8. Action taken has proved successful in relation to the recruitment of new apprentices to the Council, with 30 new apprentices being recruited to the Council in September 2021 (compared with 3 in 2020), with further apprenticeship starts expected as a result of upskilling of existing employees. This is in addition to the commitments the Council made recently in respect of the 'Kickstart' programme and facilitating 'T level' placements across Adult Social Care.

Consultation

9. The views of the Leader Portfolio, as well as those of the Economy and Children and Young People's Portfolios have been sought on the proposals and they are supportive of the recommendations.
10. The Council's recognised non-teaching Trade Unions have also been consulted on the proposals and they are supportive overall of the Strategy and Plan.
11. UNISON have advised that they are of the view that the **national** apprentice program is underfunded and littered with poor quality apprenticeship programs. They are also of the view that the most effective apprenticeships are developed by a collective approach, involving employers, trade unions, training providers, and apprentices. UNISON support high quality apprenticeships which lead to meaningful jobs which in turn make an important contribution in addressing urgent shortages, skills gaps, inequality and tackling youth unemployment.
12. UNISON notes that Gateshead Council's LearningSkills team is the second largest Local Government apprenticeship provider in the UK and currently provide an extensive apprentice program across Gateshead and the wider region. However, they feel that the Council's strategic apprentice structure/framework appears 'dysfunctional' as they do not think that LearningSkills resource, experience and knowledge is being utilised strategically across the organisation, including LearningSkills extensive relationships with schools and academies.
13. However, UNISON do welcome the use of apprenticeship programs to further develop the continuous professional development offer to all current employees.

14. In response to the comments from UNISON, it is acknowledged that further work continues to be undertaken, in collaboration with LearningSkills and other apprenticeship providers, to improve the Council's strategic approach to apprenticeships. This is ultimately the purpose and aim of the Strategy i.e., to provide an approach/framework which delivers across all areas of the Council.
15. LearningSkills do have significant experience and knowledge in respect of the delivery of apprenticeships and this will need to be maximised in the delivery of the Strategy. However, they are currently unable to deliver across all areas as required by the Council. For example, social care and trade apprenticeships cannot be delivered by LearningSkills at present as they do not have the infrastructure which providers such as Colleges can offer. However, the Strategy and the actions outlined in the Delivery Plan will ensure a collaborative approach is taken on all aspects of apprenticeships to address the needs of the whole Council.
16. GMB are supportive of the Strategy and acknowledge that the Council always pays new apprentices on national minimum wage rates for their age, or above, rather than the government apprenticeship rates.
17. UNITE are supportive of the Strategy and Delivery Plan and acknowledge that if followed, the Council has a good chance of achieving their targets.

Alternative Options

18. No alternative options have been considered in depth. If the Council does not implement an Apprenticeship Strategy and Delivery Plan, this will impact on the achievement of the Thrive agenda as well as the Council's Economic Strategy and community wealth building aspirations. In addition, the Council will be unable to provide high-quality pathways for existing employees to develop and progress, which will limit the Council's ability to meet current and future skills needs.

Implications of Recommended Option

19. **Resources:**
 - a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources & Digital confirms that there are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, an increase in the number of apprenticeships within the Council will require funding to be available to cover employment costs. The Government incentive payments for new apprentices hired by 30 September 2021 will be used to support the costs of employing apprentices and to provide a resource to support the overall achievement of the Apprenticeship Strategy and Delivery Plan.
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** – The Council's Apprenticeship Strategy and Delivery Plan are designed to recruit, develop, motivate and retain as necessary employees with the skills and attributes required to deliver Council services. It is part of the Council's overall human resources policy framework, through which it aims to be an exemplary employer.
 - c) **Property Implications** - there are no property implications arising from the recommendations within this report.
20. **Risk Management Implication** – The plan does not introduce any new risk. It will support the Council's Risk Management Strategy by ensuring that we have

employees with the necessary skills and knowledge who are deployed effectively to deliver the best outcomes for our customers.

21. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The Strategy and Plan support the establishment of a diverse and inclusive workforce.
22. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – there are no Crime and Disorder implications.
23. **Health Implications** – there are no health implications.
24. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** – there are no climate emergency and sustainability implications.
25. **Human Rights Implications** – there are no human rights implications arising from this report.
26. **Ward Implications** – there are no specific ward implications.
27. **Background Information** - none

Apprenticeship Strategy 2021-2024



Links to Other Policies and Strategies:

[Thrive Agenda](#)

[Workforce Strategy](#)

[Workforce Plan](#)

[Maximising Employee Potential \(MEP\) Guidance](#)

Effective date:

1st September 2021

Review Date:

August 2024

Status:

This strategy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Council may amend it at any time.

HR and Workforce Development Strategies in Gateshead Council

Gateshead Council's HR and Workforce Development strategies take into account current legislation, rules, regulations and best practice guidance from a range of professional and public bodies, including the following:



UK Legislation



ACAS



CIPD Best Practice

Contents

Foreword.....	10
1. Introduction	11
2. Vision.....	11
3. Context.....	11
4. Aims	13
5. Performance Monitoring.....	15

Foreword

Our ambition is to make *Gateshead a place where everyone thrives*. We want our communities to flourish, prosper and succeed. Helping to grow apprenticeships, and routes into apprenticeships, is an important part of enabling our communities to succeed and is a key component of our wider economic development strategy.

High quality skills and professional development delivered through apprenticeships for both new and existing employees can make a positive contribution to this, by creating opportunities for people, of all ages, to undertake relevant qualifications, helping to raise skills, capabilities and aspirations.

As one of the largest employers in the borough, Gateshead Council aspires to be an employer of choice and one that attracts, develops, and retains the most diverse, creative and innovative individuals, with the required skills and abilities for now and into the future. Apprenticeships form an integral part of our workforce strategy as a mechanism to support our workforce to develop both the current and future skills requirements.

A key theme of the Council's Workforce Strategy is 'skills and behaviours'. Apprenticeships have an important role to play in this as we support the development of key skills, including leadership and development, of our existing workforce and encourage new talent into the organisation.

We highly value apprenticeships as an employer and look forward to working together to meet the future skills needs of Gateshead.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Gannon'.

Councillor Martin Gannon - Leader



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sheena Ramsay'.

Sheena Ramsay - Chief Executive

1. Introduction

This document sets out the Apprenticeship Strategy for Gateshead as an employer, and the positive action that the Council will take in its approach to apprenticeships as part of the wider Workforce Strategy. It is aligned with the Council strategic approach 'Making Gateshead a place where everyone thrives' which sets out the ambition for Gateshead to be a place where people flourish, prosper and succeed.

The strategy is intended to be dynamic and will be regularly reviewed, developed and updated in response to local and national changes. The key actions for the delivery of the strategy are set out in detail in the underpinning Delivery Action Plan which will be overseen by SMG Services & Performance – a sub-group of the Council's Corporate Management Team.

The strategy will also be used to inform service business plans to help identify the actions that individual service areas will take in support of this strategy and in meeting the specific skills challenges they face. The Apprenticeship Strategy also supports and works alongside other talent and 'entry to work' initiatives such as work experience and traineeships.

2. Vision

Apprenticeships within the Council are seen and valued as high-quality pathways to successful careers, providing opportunities for new and existing employees to develop and which assist the Council in meeting its current and future skills needs.

The Council faces future challenges which can only be met with the right people with the right skills at the right time to meet changing demands. Apprenticeships will form an integral part of the Workforce Strategy to provide the Council with a talent pipeline that supports current and future skill needs.

3. Context

3.1 Government Reforms

As part of its stated ambition to address the shortage in skills and invest in the UK's future workforce, the UK Government has introduced significant changes to the way in which apprenticeships are funded and delivered. Since April 2017 an Apprenticeship Levy is payable by any employer with a wage bill in excess of £3m per annum who employs 250 staff or more. This is paid as 0.5% of the monthly pay bill which can only be used for apprenticeship training and assessment.

In addition, the Public Sector Target aims to ensure that 2.3% of the workforce is engaged in apprenticeships.

The levy puts employers at the centre of identifying the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are required of the workforce now and into the future. It is, however, important that the increase in apprenticeships within the Council is aligned to our future skills needs and organisational priorities and not just to meet a Government target.

3.2 Supporting our strategic ambitions

Providing apprenticeships and routes into apprenticeships are an important part of Gateshead's strategic ambitions to create opportunities for employment and economic growth. Gateshead has a lower proportion of the population with higher level qualifications (21.5%) than the national average (27.4%)¹.

Developing a pro-apprenticeship culture at all levels within the Council will not only help support our skills needs and assist in meeting the Government's apprentice targets; but also support the Council's wider strategic ambitions, including the exploration of different ways of working through the public service reform agenda, and having a workforce that is empowered and has responsibility for making decisions.

As a leader of public services and one of the largest employers in the area, it is also important that our workforce is representative of the communities we serve. Within the Council currently 4% of our workforce is aged under 25. The challenges of finding work are particularly acute for young people aged 18-24, as well as for care leavers, long term unemployed, returners to the labour market and those with disabilities. These groups face strong competition against more experienced candidates and the Council, as an employer and as a strategic leader, has a responsibility in helping to create opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

Having a strategic approach to workforce development through the use of apprenticeships will not only support the building of progression routes and skills development but will also support the Council in the achievement of its Community Wealth Building aspirations to have fair employment and just labour markets, both within the Council and within anchor organisations in the region.

3.3 Meeting current and future skills needs

Some areas within the Council, particularly Social Care, are experiencing skills shortages as competition for skilled workers increases. Adopting a more strategic approach to 'growing our own' future workforce will become increasingly important. We will work in partnership with other public sector organisations to develop career pathways that cut across the different sectors and partner organisations: e.g., NHS.

In addition to identifying apprenticeship opportunities for new employees, a 'grow our own' approach will also need to apply to our existing workforce if we are to ensure we have the capacity and capabilities we need. Providing opportunities for existing staff to utilise apprenticeships, particularly higher-level apprenticeships, to gain skills and progress their career will further help to develop talent pipelines within the organisation.

¹ Gateshead JSNA - 2011 Census

4. Aims

Set against this wider context, it is therefore essential that the Council determines its approach to apprenticeships. In particular, how we attract, develop and retain apprentices and develop apprenticeship opportunities that:

- Support our workforce skills needs
- Support Gateshead Council's strategic ambitions relating to Thrive
- Meet the challenges of the Government's apprenticeship reforms.

Our Apprenticeship Strategy aims to:

4.1. Embed a positive apprenticeship culture

We will actively promote apprenticeships within the Council as valuable recruitment and talent pipeline opportunities and develop a positive apprenticeship culture amongst managers and employees. Developing a greater awareness of the types of apprenticeships available and the benefits they offer for both new and existing employees will be essential to increasing the number of employees undertaking an apprenticeship.

4.2. Maximise Workforce capability

Maximising the use of apprenticeships is critical in helping to build the capabilities we require. We will work across Council services to identify apprenticeship opportunities as part of service-led workforce planning activity to support current and future skills needs. This will include:

- Mapping apprenticeships to critical skills needs
- Developing new entry-level apprenticeship opportunities
- Developing career pathways to support succession planning and talent management
- Considering all vacant posts for designation as apprenticeships.

4.3. Support the continuous professional development of existing employees

Apprenticeships provide real opportunities for existing staff to gain skills and progress their career and supports talent management within the Council. One of the Council's priorities under the Workforce Strategy and Plan is to develop and strengthen leadership and management capability across the workforce. We will work across Council services to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the types of apprenticeships available and the benefits they can bring, particularly in relation to leadership and management.

4.4. Develop workforce diversity and inclusivity

The Council will support the social mobility of citizens and support them to take a step onto a professional career path, opening up jobs with realistic requirements for prior educational attainment.

One of the Council's strategic indicators is to ensure that young people leaving care are supported to have an opportunity of an apprenticeship within the Council. Acting in its capacity as Corporate Parent, the Council will offer apprenticeship (as well as traineeship or work experience) opportunities to care leavers and looked after children who find it difficult to navigate the complexities of finding and sustaining work. This approach will help more disadvantaged young people in the borough get a foot on the ladder of employment and begin their journey to independence.

The Council will also seek to identify opportunities for those with learning difficulties and disabilities creating effective ways to support people to access apprenticeships (as well as traineeship or work experience) and secure sustainable employment.

Additional support will be offered to apprentices and managers as required to ensure that placements succeed with emphasis on the importance of training provided by good quality training providers.

We will consider options to expand opportunities to other vulnerable and under-represented groups, for example those from deprived communities, long-term unemployed, BAME, women returners and ex-armed forces personnel.

4.5. Engage with maintained schools to maximise benefits from the levy

We will work with our maintained schools to raise awareness of the Apprenticeship Standards for Teachers, Teaching Assistants and School Business Managers, as well as a range of other broader standards that could be used by the wider schools' workforce in helping to create apprenticeship opportunities.

In addition to this we will also strengthen the relationships with the wider Schools population to promote apprenticeship opportunities as routes into jobs and careers within the Council.

4.6. Engage with training providers and other local authorities to maximise apprenticeship provision within the region

We will work with training providers, other local authorities and anchor organisations (as per the Community Wealth Building approach) to identify gaps in apprenticeship training provision and establish viable cohorts particularly for niche areas.

4.7. Engage with other employers, particularly our supply chain, to maximise the use/transfer of the levy

Levy-paying employers are able to transfer a maximum of 25% of their annual levy funds to as many employers as they chose, to fund apprenticeship training and assessment costs. Transfers can only be used for new starts.

The Council will work with organisations in its supply chain, partners, and community and voluntary organisations within the borough to identify opportunities to passport levy funds in order to increase the uptake of apprenticeships. Priority will be given to allocating funds to those organisations who are based in the borough or those who do a significant amount of business in the borough and who are working closely with the Council to deliver the Thrive Agenda.

5. Performance Monitoring

This Apprenticeship Strategy is underpinned by an Apprenticeship Delivery Action Plan which sets out how the priorities will be delivered and progress against this reviewed each year. The delivery plan will be regularly reviewed and reported on at SMG Services and Performance.

In accordance with the public sector duty requirements the Council will also publish annually, data relating to progress towards the 2.3% apprenticeship target set by the Government.

Workforce Development will work closely with colleagues in Business, Employment & Skills and LearningSkills to ensure that the Council's response to apprenticeships as an employer, is closely aligned with the Council's wider strategic priorities relating to supporting local people into sustainable employment.

Further Information

Gateshead Council recognises that from time-to-time employees may have questions or concerns relating to the content of this document. In certain situations, employees' rights and obligations may change; in such circumstances the Council will abide by any statutory obligations.

The Council wishes to encourage open discussion with employees to ensure that questions and problems can be resolved as quickly as possible. Employees are encouraged to seek clarification on any issues with the appropriate line manager in the first instance.

Sustainability

Improving our environmental performance and doing things in a more sustainable way should be seen as integral to our core business practices. To demonstrate the Council's commitment to improving environmental and sustainable performance, please be mindful if printing this document – keeping paper usage to a minimum (print only version), printing on both sides, and recycling.

Equality Statement

Gateshead Council is an equal opportunities employer where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. We are fully committed to equality, diversity and human rights and to ensuring our culture, working environment, policies, processes and practices are free from bias. This strategy applies to all employees regardless of protected characteristics, subject to any eligibility criteria which may include length of service, grade, working pattern or other applicable national terms and conditions of service.

Inclusive Communications

It is our ambition to ensure that Council documents are readable, accessible and engaging for staff. In formatting this document, good practice principles around engagement and inclusive communications have been adhered to. If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact HR and Workforce Development.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner where applicable to reflect changing the needs of the Council and any other legislative or good practice requirements.



Apprenticeship Delivery Action Plan

The Council's Approach to Apprenticeships:

Attract, develop and retain apprentices and develop apprenticeship opportunities that:

- Support our workforce skills needs
- Support Gateshead Council's strategic ambitions relating to Thrive
- Meet the challenges of the Government's apprenticeship reforms
- Maximise Levy funding both within the Council and the wider Gateshead community and support progression towards meeting the Public Sector target of 2.3%

Our Apprenticeship Strategy aims to:

1. Embed a positive apprenticeship culture
2. Maximise workforce capability
3. Support the continuous professional development of existing employees
4. Continually improve the apprentice experience
5. Develop workforce diversity and inclusivity
6. Continue to engage with maintained Schools to maximise benefits from the levy
7. Engage with training providers and other local authorities to maximise apprenticeship provision within the region
8. Passporting levy funds to other organisations
9. Work towards achievement of the Public Sector Apprenticeship target

These aims will support the Council in achieving their strategic approach to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives by creating opportunities for employment and economic growth. They also support the Workforce Strategy core theme of having an engaged and empowered workforce, equipped with the right skills and knowledge to deliver the best possible outcomes to our customers and confident in the responsibilities they have.

1. Embed a positive apprenticeship culture

Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Desired Outcome
Actively promote apprenticeships within the Council as a valuable recruitment and upskilling opportunity	Apprenticeship Co-ordinator (AC), Workforce Development (WD), Communications (Comms) and LearningSkills (LS)	Ongoing	Increased number of applications for apprenticeships across the Council
Embed the use of apprenticeships within the Council's Workforce Strategy and Plan.	AC & LS	Ongoing	Apprenticeships embedded into the learning and development culture of the Council Improved skills levels
Attend GMTs and SMT's and undertake presentations to managers to highlight the benefits of apprenticeships for both new and existing employees.	AC, LS and Service Managers	Ongoing	Apprenticeships are seen and valued as high-quality pathways to successful careers, providing opportunities for new and existing employees to develop and which assist the Council in meeting its current and future skills needs
Develop guidance for managers to assist with recruiting to apprenticeships	AC, HR, LS	Completed	Apprenticeships are considered at the earliest opportunity and utilised as a valuable recruitment tool
Investigate the possibility of establishing a new recruitment process of all new vacancies mapped against apprenticeship standards at request to recruit stage	AC and HR	Ongoing	Opportunities to 'grow our own' approach is recognised across all services to meet skills needs
Adopt a more pro-active approach to identifying apprenticeship opportunities for new entrants by analysing and regularly reporting to the SMG Services & Performance on the number of roles that have been advertised and where apprenticeships have not been considered	AC and HR	Ongoing	Pro-apprenticeship culture developed

Continue to develop a positive apprenticeship culture amongst managers and employees	AC, HR & WD, all service managers, LS	Ongoing	Apprenticeships are utilised in support of service skills needs
Plan regular information and update sessions for managers throughout the year	AC and LS	Ongoing	Apprenticeships are utilised in support of service skills needs
Attend all Workforce Development training advisory groups and ensure apprenticeships are discussed and considered	AC	Ongoing	Apprenticeships are utilised in support of service skills needs
Review all comms around apprenticeships and the Levy and evaluate to feed into new action plan to be implemented in 2021.	AC, LS, Comms	Completed	Increased awareness and take up of apprenticeships
Agree a comms plan to inform all staff of the Strategy & Delivery Plan and associated processes including any future/proposed recruitment strategies.	AC, LS, Comms	Ongoing	All staff will be aware of the strategy and operational processes
Increase promotional activity of the different types, levels and key benefits of apprenticeships to staff and managers.	AC, Comms	Ongoing	Ensure appropriate and key information is being communicated
Regularly communicate case studies and success stories through variety of communications methods	AC, LS, Comms	Ongoing	Promotion of the Council's apprenticeship programme and as an employer of choice across the existing workforce and more widely
Involve current apprentices in the design and promotion of social media campaigns; Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram	AC, LS	2021/2022	Increase apprentice engagement
Increase the attraction of potential applicants through greater use of social media and digital platforms to promote apprenticeship opportunities and as a route to jobs and careers within the Council	AC, Comms	Ongoing	Increased applicant pool
Develop and host 'Gateshead Council levy funded apprentices' awards and award ceremony. Encourage applications from managers and publishing case studies of the winners on the intranet and Gateshead Council website.	AC	2021 onwards	Increase apprentice engagement and promote apprenticeships across the Council

Apply for the Institute top 100 apprenticeship employers' awards annually	AC	Completed in 2020 and ongoing thereafter	Promotion of Gateshead Council as an apprenticeship employer of choice
Liaise with other organisations who were within the top 10 to identify what the Council can do to improve its approach to apprenticeships	AC	Ongoing	Increase the apprenticeship offer and experience of Gateshead Council

2. Maximise workforce capability

Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Desired Outcome
As part of service workforce planning activity, work with services to identify skills gaps and workforce requirements which could be met by apprenticeship opportunities to support current and future skills needs. Work with LS to ensure any skills gaps identified are considered as part of workforce planning activity	AC, LS	Ongoing	<p>All employees aware of the opportunities for development via apprenticeships.</p> <p>Increased number of existing employees undertaking apprenticeship standard qualifications</p>
Participate in the LGA Apprenticeship Accelerator Programme. Provider services (focusing on 3 key teams) identified as a priority area for development for analysis of workforce data, mapping of apprenticeship standards to job roles and development of career pathways to support succession planning and talent management	LGA and Council (HR & WD and ASC)	Completed	<p>Apprenticeships are utilised in support of service skills needs</p> <p>Council has a workforce with the knowledge, skills and behaviours it needs for the future.</p>
Evaluate AAP support and roll out Provider Services example to wider services and teams, in partnership with Managers, to meet critical skills needs	AC, WD Advisers	2021 - 2022	<p>Posts identified which can be converted to apprenticeships</p> <p>Apprenticeships will be embedded into workforce planning activities and succession planning</p> <p>Development of social care career pathway and ASC graduate management trainee pathway</p>

3. Support the Continuous Professional Development of existing employees

Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Desired Outcome
Identify opportunities to use relevant leadership and management apprenticeship standards to support aspiring and developing managers	AC, Service Managers/Team Leaders, LS	Ongoing	A flexible approach to leadership and management development
Develop opportunities to utilise higher level apprenticeships in support of skills needs; raising skills and aspirations	AC, Service Managers	Ongoing	Develop and strengthen supervisory and management capability across the workforce
Work with Learning Skills and services to develop and promote appropriate apprenticeship cohorts e.g. Team Leader L3, Management L5, Customer Service L3	AC, Service Managers/Team Leaders, LS	Ongoing	Apprentices have access to a network of colleagues across the Council who can support each other throughout the apprenticeship and beyond
Support services who have identified workforce development needs; succession planning, ageing workforce, recruitment and retention difficulties and identify how apprenticeships can address this.	AC, HR	Ongoing	Apprenticeships embedded in workforce planning activities and as part of change and transformation programmes. Council has a workforce with the required knowledge, skills and experience.
Ensure apprenticeship opportunities are integrated within the Council's core learning and development offer for employees, supporting appraisal and development and maximising employee potential	AC, WD, LS	Ongoing	Career development opportunities provided
Enrich capability by supporting existing staff to access functional skills at all levels - allowing access to apprenticeships if entry requirements are a barrier to progression	AC, LS, TU's	Ongoing	To allow entry onto apprenticeship programmes for existing staff who do not meet English and/or Maths requirement
Provide apprenticeship opportunities for existing employees aligned to skills development requirements across the organisation. Raise awareness of apprenticeships as route to progression for all employees.	AC, HR, WD, Service Managers, LS	Ongoing	Career development opportunities provided Levy funding maximised

4. Improving the Apprentice Experience

Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Desired Outcomes
Create an induction programme for new apprentices to Gateshead Council to include a buddy for each apprentice	AC, WD, LS	Completed	Apprentices have an in-depth knowledge of their specific business area, but also a wider knowledge of how the council operates
Apprentices Employer Evaluation to be created to gain feedback on what Gateshead Council has done well, and what improvements could be made in our apprenticeship offer.	AC	2021	Apprentices feel their feedback is valued and Gateshead Council can improve the service/offer they provide.
Quarterly non mandatory drop-in sessions for apprentices to come and speak to the AC & discuss how things are going / catch up with other apprentices.	AC	2021	A culture of supportiveness and networking is created amongst apprentices. The AC can keep up to date with the apprentices and their circumstances/experiences.
Reviews established with apprentice, AC, line manager & training provider as and when a need is identified.	AC, line managers, training providers	Ongoing	

5. Develop workforce diversity and inclusivity

Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Desired Outcome
Further develop work experience and traineeship opportunities as a pathway into apprenticeships, providing opportunities for diverse and vulnerable groups including young people, ex armed forces, women returners, those from deprived communities, long term unemployed, BAME backgrounds and those with physical and/or learning disabilities.	AC, LS, Neighbourhood and Community teams, Business, Employment & Skills (BES)	Ongoing	<p>Accessible routes into talent pipeline provided.</p> <p>Support social mobility</p> <p>Ensure our workforce is more representative of the communities we serve</p> <p>Development of enterprise and work readiness skills in young people in Gateshead</p>
Align placement opportunities with skills gaps and skills shortage areas across the Council	AC, HR, WD, LS	2021 onwards	Supports service skills needs
Map placements with apprenticeship opportunities and promote opportunities as a pathway into employment with the Council	AC, HR, WD, LS	2021 and ongoing thereafter	Grow and develop future workforce and skills
Create a working group to develop, implement and embed a diverse work experience and traineeship programme that offers opportunities and progression pathways into apprenticeships and securing sustainable employment for LAC and Care Leavers.	Judith Sewell (RELAC), Beverly Hunter Smith (LAC), AC	Completed	Support the Council's Corporate Parenting Responsibilities by ensuring apprenticeships are available and accessible to Care Leavers
Work with EET panel and Corporate Parenting EET workstream to develop appropriate processes and strategies to support LAC and care leavers to access apprenticeships	AC	Ongoing	Support the Council's Corporate Parenting Responsibilities by ensuring apprenticeships are available and accessible to Care Leavers
Consider whether apprenticeship opportunities can be ringfenced to LAC and Care Leavers.	AC, HR	Ongoing	Support the Council's Corporate Parenting Responsibilities by ensuring apprenticeships are available and accessible to Care Leavers

Offer additional supervision, pastoral and transitional care, advice, guidance and information for LAC young people (aged 16-18) and care leavers (aged 19-24) to sustain and complete apprenticeships and aid progression into further employment	AC, LS where relevant	Ongoing	Grow and develop future workforce and skills Development of enterprise and work readiness skills in young people.
Ensure LAC young people and care leavers are supported to overcome any financial barriers to enable them to access apprenticeships. Ensure LAC / care leavers are aware of the financial bursaries available when starting an apprenticeship	AC, LS where relevant	Ongoing	Ensure financial barriers do not discourage LAC and Care Leavers to undertake apprenticeships
Signpost training providers to the additional financial support available to meet the additional cost in supporting LAC and Care Leavers to transition from education to the world of work. *In line with Government funding criteria	AC	Ongoing as needed	LAC and Care Leavers receive adequate support
Develop matching process to identify appropriate apprenticeships for LAC and care leavers	AC, working group, Managers	Ongoing	Increase retention rates and provide sustainable jobs
Develop a mentoring / buddying programme for LAC and care leavers throughout the apprenticeship	AC, Working Group	Sept 2021	Increase retention rates
Ensure additional appropriate guidance for all managers to aid them in supporting LAC and leaving care apprentices in successfully navigating the complexities of employment, to maximise the probability of sustaining and achieving their apprenticeship.	AC, working group	August 2021	Increase retention rates as apprentices fully supported
Offer 'meet the team' days to LAC and Leaving Care apprentice recruits before their official start dates. Allowing for relationship building and prestart worries to be mitigated.	AC, service managers	Ongoing	Increased engagement from LAC and care leaver apprentices
Continually improve the promotion and attraction of apprenticeships as career choices for young people - ensure Gateshead Council has a presence at all local recruitment, careers, post 16 pathway outreach events and fairs to support the apprenticeship message and the Authority as an employer of choice regionally	AC, LS	Ongoing	Value of apprenticeships is promoted. Apprenticeships are accessible to the widest demographic.

Engage with local schools to promote the opportunities of apprenticeships for their LAC students, ensuring a cohesive message is provided across all points of authority for LAC and young care leavers.	AC	Ongoing	Value of apprenticeships is promoted. Apprenticeships are accessible to the widest demographic.
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6. Engage with maintained schools to maximise benefits from the levy

Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Desired Outcome
Ensure local authority-maintained schools are aware of the apprenticeship standards and levy arrangements and how they can support the development of their workforce.	AC, HR and LS	Ongoing	Apprentices are recruited in line with organisational skills needs
Work with schools to utilise levy funds to meet skills gaps and plan future workforce needs	AC, HR, LS	Ongoing	Skilled workforce and secure talent pipeline
Raise awareness and promote benefits of apprenticeship standards for Teachers, Teaching Assistants and School Business Managers, as well as all other relevant standards.	AC, HR, LS	Ongoing	Value of apprenticeships and vocational route ways is promoted
Strengthen the relationships with the wider school's workforce to promote apprenticeship opportunities as routes into jobs and careers within the Council.	AC, HR	Ongoing	Increased take up of apprenticeships
Promote engagement and collaborative working with managers/Head Teachers in utilising the AC and engaging with Gateshead Council procurement policy to ensure value for money is achieved.	AC, HR	Ongoing	Funding rules followed and best value for money secured

7. Engage with training providers and other local authorities to maximise apprenticeship provision within the region

Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Desired Outcome
Continue to develop a portal of approved suppliers offering a variety of vocational areas by engaging with providers to register with the portal and maximising benefits of apprenticeship delivery for the Authority.	AC, Procurement	Ongoing	Availability of a range of high quality and scope of deliverable standards
Review existing standards that are fit for purpose and develop flexible, tailored delivery models to meet organisational requirements and demands.	AC, Providers	Ongoing	Future skills requirements are built into the delivery content of apprenticeships.
Work with training providers to identify and develop apprenticeship training provision and identify priority areas for development based on skills needs and gaps.	AC, Providers	Ongoing	Training provision gaps are reduced
Work with training providers and other local authorities to establish viable cohorts particularly in niche areas	AC	Ongoing	Training not limited by low internal learner numbers
Develop contacts with other local authorities and public services (Fire Service, NHS and Social Care Integration) to work on apprenticeship approach across the region.	AC in partnership with internal and external partners	Ongoing	Sharing information and best practice Promote the public sector as a career Develop cross-organisational apprentice networking opportunities

Join the Apprenticeship Ambassadors network and work with other regional large employers to promote apprenticeships in the North East	AC	Ongoing	Sharing information and best practice Promote the public sector as a career Develop cross-organisational apprentice networking opportunities
Work with ESFA to ensure that apprenticeship standards can be delivered by more local / regional providers	AC	Ongoing	Levy funding is spent in region Reduced apprenticeship training travel costs
Review existing apprenticeship standards and identify those that meet our joint requirements; view to join up to leverage best provision from training providers.	AC, internal and external partners	Ongoing	Sharing information and best practice Supply of skills meets the needs of employers
Participate in the LGA's Apprenticeship Action Groups and work with peers from other Local Authorities to raise issues and work together to problem solve, generate new ideas and learn from each other's experiences and continue to grow the apprenticeship programme.	AC	Ongoing	Improve Gateshead Council apprenticeship offer
Work with recognised trade unions to promote apprenticeships, encourage take-up and continue to develop the Council's approach.	AC and TU's	Ongoing	Increased success of wider apprenticeship approach. Promotion of the Authority as an employer of choice.

8. Passporting levy funds to other organisations

Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Desired Outcome
<p>Establish a Gateshead levy fund and make available up to 25% of the Council's levy fund to passport to other local businesses.</p> <p>Work with organisations in the Council's supply chain, partners, BES, neighbourhood teams, community and voluntary organisations within the borough to identify opportunities to passport levy funds to support apprenticeships and the THRIVE agenda.</p> <p>Work in partnership with other levy paying organisations within Gateshead to pool resources and work together to offer a collective Gateshead levy fund to support our business community through the passporting of levy monies.</p> <p>Develop a policy and process for the transfer of levy funding to other employers ensuring this is closely aligned to the aims and objectives of THRIVE. Communicate this process to partners and stakeholders.</p> <p>Prioritise apprenticeship fund to support Gateshead residents who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAC and Care Leavers • Young people, particularly NEETS • Parents or carers looking to return to work • People with disabilities • BAME <p>Funds to be prioritised to organisations creating new jobs or hiring new apprentices to fill existing vacancies in order to increase employment opportunities for Gateshead residents.</p> <p>Consideration to be given to transferring funds to employers to upskill existing employees where this would support the Council's Thrive agenda and fill a skills gap or support the CV19 economic response and recovery.</p>	AC, BES and relevant partner organisations	Completed	<p>An increase in Apprenticeships across the Gateshead area. Levy funding will support employers that have either used their funding or have no access to levy funding.</p> <p>Support the THRIVE agenda</p> <p>Supports community wealth building objectives</p> <p>Increase the number of local people in sustainable employment and the uptake of apprenticeships</p> <p>Encourage the recruitment of Gateshead residents and ensure much needed funding remains in the local economy supporting post-COVID economic recovery.</p>

Sign post other local businesses to access LearningSkills as a preferred apprenticeship provider where they receive levy funds from organisations other than the Council.	AC, BES	Ongoing	Income generation for Gateshead Council
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9. Work towards achievement of the Public Sector Apprenticeship target

Actions	Responsibility	Timescales	Desired Outcome
Prepare Apprenticeship Activity return and submit it to the Department for Education and publish it in a place easily accessible to the public. This will include information on progress towards the headcount target of 2.3% of the workforce as apprenticeships	AC	Ongoing	Meet requirements of the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Regulations 2017.

* Government funding criteria

Additional funds available:

Employer

- **Employers receive £1,000 incentive payment for hiring an apprentice:**
 - aged 16 to 18 years old
 - under 25 with an education, health and care plan or who has been in the care of their local authority (LAC).

The payments come via the training provider in 2 instalments, one at 3 months and one at 12 months. It is not paid into the levy account.

- **Additional incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice between 1 August 2020 and 30 September 2021:**
 - For new apprentices who joined the organisation between 1 August 2020 and 31 March 2021 aged:
 - 16 to 24, employers will receive £2,000
 - 25 and over, employers will receive £1,500You must apply for these incentive payments for these apprentices before 31 May 2021.
 - For new apprentices who joined the organisation 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021, employers will receive £3,000 for new employees of any age. You can apply for incentive payments for these apprentices from 1 June 2021.

The money can be spent on anything to support the organisation's costs e.g. on uniforms, apprentice's travel or their salary.

Payments are made in 2 equal instalments for each apprentice – one after an apprentice completes 90 days of their apprenticeship and the second is after 365 days. To receive the full payment, the apprenticeship must last for at least one year.

Providers

- 16-18-year-old £1,000, 2 instalments 3 months and 12 months. Direct from Government, not levy account.
- 19-24-year-old previously LAC or EHCP £1,000, 2 instalments 3 months and 12 months. Direct from Government, not levy account.

Apprentice bursary - for LAC and Care Leavers

- £1,000 bursary, 16 to 24-year olds. One payment via training provider.

Work undertaken to date in support of the Strategy and Delivery plan

Establishment of a North East Apprenticeship Network

The Apprenticeship Co-ordinator has been instrumental in establishing a north east apprenticeship network group with representatives from each of the North East authorities. These network meetings are also attended by a representative from the LGA and are aimed at sharing best practice, collaborating on niche cohorts and enhancing apprenticeships for North East residents.

Participation in the LGA Apprenticeship Action Groups

The Apprenticeship Co-ordinator was successful in gaining a place on the LGA Apprenticeship Action Groups programme. This programme provides the Council with the opportunity to work with peers from other Local Authorities across England through a series of monthly virtual live problem-solving discussion groups. Each session offers members the opportunity to raise their challenges, issues or ideas and work together to problem solve, generate new ideas and learn from each other's experiences.

Development of new apprenticeships

In areas within the Council which are experiencing skills shortages and recruitment difficulties, a more strategic approach to 'growing our own' future workforce is being pursued. This is the case particularly within social care where Social Worker Apprenticeships, Health & Social Care Apprenticeships and an Adult Social Care Career pathway have been developed by the Workforce Development Team and colleagues within the Children, Adults and Families Group. It is anticipated that this approach will be rolled out to other services who are experiencing similar difficulties.

Apprenticeships for Looked after Children

The Apprenticeship Strategy supports the Council's responsibility as a corporate parent and aims to ensure that young people leaving care have the opportunity of an apprenticeship within the Council.

There have been some difficulties with care leavers and looked after children (LAC) successfully securing and completing their apprenticeships with the Council. This is in part due to managers and other employees not necessarily understanding that some of these apprentices may require additional support and also in part due to the young people not being 'work ready'. An eLearning module for managers is being developed to ensure appropriate guidance is in place to support these apprentices who may need additional support.

Work is also on-going with the Employment, Education and Training (EET) panel and Corporate Parenting EET workstream to develop appropriate processes and strategies to support LAC and care leavers to access apprenticeships.

The Gateshead Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Scheme

Aligned to the Community Wealth Building work, the Council is striving to ensure its apprenticeship levy remains in Gateshead and is used to enable local businesses and

residents to develop skills to support our local economy and enable it to grow. The Gateshead Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Scheme agreed recently by Cabinet makes available up to £200k per annum of the Council's levy to be transferred to local businesses to increase the uptake of apprenticeships and increase the number of local people in sustainable employment.

The scheme applies to employers whose business is either located in Gateshead or is doing a substantial amount of business in the borough. Employers will use the transferred levy funds to fund the cost of apprenticeship training and assessment.

Future options to drive up demand for apprenticeships and maximise levy spend

In order to ensure that the Council is driving up demand for apprenticeships and maximising the spend of its levy, it is proposed that the following options are implemented:

- **Every vacancy being considered as a potential apprenticeship opportunity:** This would ensure that only in circumstances where there is a clearly articulated business case, or where no apprenticeships standard is available, would it be agreed that a job can be filled without being designated as an apprenticeship. This approach would entail new vacancies being mapped against apprenticeship standards prior to approval being given to fill the post and would support the development of a skilled workforce, whilst also addressing skills gaps and enabling the Council to continue to thrive and succeed in the future. Whilst this would need careful management to ensure service and Council needs are met, it would focus minds on justifying why a role could not be suitable as an apprenticeship, rather than, as is the case currently, justifying why it can be.
- **Mandatory Team Leader and Operational / Supervisory Manager apprenticeships:** Consideration could be given to making it mandatory that where an employee moves into a Team Leader or first line supervisory or management role they will be required to undertake either the L3 Team Leader / Supervisor or Level 5 Operational / Departmental Manager apprenticeship, if they do not already possess a management qualification. This would ensure that all supervisors and managers are supported to become skilled and confident managers who can lead a team to success and deliver results and that the Council has strong leaders and managers who can support the Council to achieve its strategic priorities and implement innovation and change. Note: an apprenticeship requires 20% 'off the job' training so would impact on service delivery.
- **Use of financial incentives:** In response to the impact which the pandemic has had on the uptake of apprenticeships, the government introduced a time limited incentive payment of £3,000 for any new apprentice hired between 1 April 2021 and 30 September 2021. This incentive can only be used to support an apprenticeship programme and can include offsetting the cost of an apprentice's first year salary and for initiatives such as the development of an annual Apprenticeship Awards (or similar) programme to celebrate and recognise the achievements of our apprentices, and to provide a resource to support the overall achievement of the Apprenticeship Strategy and Delivery Plan. The incentives will also be used to support apprentices with the costs associated with employment where needed, e.g., IT equipment, transport costs etc.
- **Succession planning model for assessors / tutors on craft apprenticeships:** Given the level of skills and competence within the Housing Environment and Healthy Communities (HEHC) Group and recognising the ageing workforce in these services with many employees struggling with the physical demands of such roles, consideration could be given to a succession planning model. Where appropriate, older trade employees could have an opportunity to move into LearningSkills roles as assessors and tutors on craft apprenticeships. This would enable LearningSkills to expand their apprenticeship offer and have appropriately skilled and experienced tutors / assessors available to deliver the trade apprenticeships. This would also enable those older workers to use their skills and experience to support new employees rather than undertaking the heavy manual element of their role or being

absent on short- or long-term sickness. HEHC could recruit new apprentices into these trade roles and increase productivity.

- **A requirement to offer LAC and Care Leavers a guaranteed interview:** It is vital that all managers commit to supporting LAC and care leavers to get a chance to secure an apprenticeship, therefore, consideration should be given to requiring all managers to offer LAC and Care Leavers a guaranteed interview, where they meet the essential criteria for a role.
- **Use of traineeships as a route into Apprenticeships for LAC or Care Leavers:** Consideration will be given to offering traineeships within the Council to LAC and care leavers to ensure that they are work ready and have the best opportunity to secure an apprenticeship. Traineeships are an extended work experience program (6 weeks up to a year) for young people aged 16-24 (25 with an EHC) and will give the young person a minimum of 70 hours as a placement within the service, with the remaining time with the training provider to improve their employability skills and knowledge.
- **Analysis of training spend to identify possible apprenticeship opportunities:** To ensure that use of the apprenticeship levy is being maximised, an analysis of training spend across the Council will be undertaken to identify whether any spend on training or qualifications could be replaced by using the apprenticeship levy to develop employees. Whilst maximising the use of the levy this would also result in a saving of mainstream funding.