

Subject: Draft Apprenticeships Strategy and Action Plan 2011 - 2014

Date: 22nd March 2011

1. Background

This Apprenticeship strategy outlines what we want to achieve in the next four years across Kent. Through this strategy our primary objective is to increase the number of Apprenticeships that are undertaken by young people in Kent. We will work in partnership with a number of organisations both internal and external to KCC, promoting the benefits of Apprenticeships but also filling gaps in delivery such as helping employers, particularly small employers overcome the hurdles of recruiting Apprentices.

This strategy will have a key role in delivering Bold Steps for Kent, with its work impacting on all three priorities. Whether it is delivering a skilled workforce to help the economy grow, helping tackle disadvantage by developing specialist apprenticeship models for vulnerable young people, or giving them the tools to take control of their lives.

The strategy itself is ambitious and will build upon the partnership already established in Kent between Kent County Council, the Kent Association of Training Providers (KATO) and the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). We will also strengthen the links internally between the Supporting Independence Programme, the 14 to 19 innovation Team and Personnel & Development to ensure that the transition from school into Apprenticeships is seen as a real, viable option for the young people of Kent.

2. Current Status

The strategy has been presented to, and agreed by; the Apprenticeship Steering Group, Communities Senior Management Team and key internal partners who have had the opportunity to input. The Learning & Skills Board agreed the strategy on 15th March 2011.

3. Next Step

We are now consulting with a range of partners and will be collating responses to the Strategy before taking the paper to KCC's Corporate Management Team in May.

Feedback is required by the close of play on **19th April 2011**.

Kent County Council Apprenticeship Strategy 2011 - 2014

1. Introduction

“Kent County Council is central to meeting the skills challenge. Through its place shaping mandate and leadership role across the public sector, it can act as a key link between education provision and the sub-regional economic demand for young people with appropriate work related skills.....”

It is our belief that applied learning through an apprenticeship is the best way to provide young people with applied skills that businesses need whilst gaining a relevant vocational qualification. This provides the best financial returns for the individual and society.”

Skills for the 21st Century: No more wasted opportunities

Apprenticeships remain central to providing a skilled workforce and KCC is in a unique position to be able to promote and provide advice in Kent as well as influence and support businesses in all sectors to take on Apprentices.

Through this strategy our primary objective is to increase the number of Apprenticeships that are undertaken by young people in Kent. We will work in partnership with a number of organisations both internal and external to KCC, promoting the benefits of Apprenticeships but also filling gaps in delivery such as helping employers, particularly small employers overcome the hurdles of recruiting Apprentices.

This strategy will have a key role in delivering Bold Steps for Kent, with its work impacting on all three priorities. Whether it is delivering a skilled workforce to help the economy grow, helping tackle disadvantage by developing specialist apprenticeship models for the most, or giving young people the tools to take control of their lives.

The strategy predominantly looks at the development of Apprenticeship opportunities for young people aged 16 to 24 however, it recognises the need to look beyond 24 at adult Apprenticeships and also influence young people at 14 when they are taking key decisions with regards to their future.

Currently the training element of Apprenticeships is fully funded for 16 to 18 year olds, 50% covered for 19 to 24 year olds and not funded at all for 25+ year olds (apart from in a few selected sectors). This means that for young people aged over 19, employers will be required to pay either 50 or 100 per cent of the training costs associated with an Apprenticeship which is a challenge for many employers.

The national Apprenticeship landscape is changing and we will ensure that this strategy is flexible enough to meet the needs of national policy.

2. Opportunities for growth

If we want to increase the number of young people who benefit from an apprenticeship opportunity there are a number of areas where progress can and should be made. Here we will examine some of these areas, whilst discussing below potential solutions.

2.1 SME Support

At present the National Apprenticeship Service has the responsibility for providing advice and support to the business community who may be interested in taking on a young person. However due to their limited resources they have naturally decided to focus on employers with over 250 members of staff, as these are fewer and potentially offer a quick win. However for the Kent economy this will not deliver the numbers we are looking for because in Kent 98% of our 50,000 businesses employ less than 100 people.

It is vital to support SMEs as many are put off taking an Apprentice because of the perceived and real bureaucracy involved.

2.2 Knowledge of Apprenticeships

There is currently a lack of understanding around Apprenticeships by employers and young people as there have been many changes in recent years. Many employers have outdated knowledge of Apprenticeships and do not understand the current qualification and this in turn puts them off from taking on an Apprentice. Parents and teachers do not know the range of Apprenticeships that are available and still hold views that Apprentices are not a positive progression route from school.

2.3 Progression

Apprenticeships are not necessarily viewed as part of a career pathway for many jobs. Progression through the different levels of Apprenticeships is not actively promoted in all cases and relevant courses at Higher Apprenticeship level are currently very limited.

Young people do not currently have the option to apply for an Apprenticeship as they do for college or sixth form. This is mainly due to employers not aligning their opportunities with the academic year.

This also means that there are limited opportunities for young people undertaking vocational courses aged 14-16 to progress into an Apprenticeship post 16.

2.4 Procurement

The public sector spends a large amount on procurement and potentially this will increase if we are to become a strategic commissioning organisation.

Currently there is no way of guaranteeing that this spend delivers benefits to the community.

3. Kent Success (KCC Apprenticeship Model)

3.1 Development of current offer

When KCC introduced Kent success four years ago the take up of apprenticeships within the council was limited, and the limited delivery was very much on an ad hoc basis. Over the years the programme has developed and grown so that now there are approximately 80 apprentices employed at any one time.

KCC has come to accept apprentices as a valuable commodity, and has recently changed its recruitment policy so that the three entry level grades can only be recruited from an apprenticeship pool, unless there is a strong business case not to do so and having considered employees who are at risk of redundancy.

We will continue to deliver and improve the existing Kent Success programme.

To build on this very successful programme we will work with business units to develop career pathways in areas where there are, or are likely to be, skill shortages. These pathways should be designed to allow young people to understand how they can progress from entry level to expert.

Possible areas include:

- Trading standards
- Social work
- Youth work
- Early years
- Learning Support within schools
- Planning
- Highways
- Customer Service (Lib, Gateways , Contact Centre)
- IT
- Personnel

We will look at the progression from Level 2 to Level 3 Apprenticeships within our Kent Success programme to ensure that KCC's Apprentices are progressing and reaching their potential.

3.2 Wider Development of Kent Success

Where previously we have worked closely with public sector colleagues to promote apprenticeships, we would now want to develop the Kent Success programme to deliver apprentices to these organisations. This would enable

them to train and develop the staff that they need without having to develop the infrastructure, but allowing them access to our knowledge and experience.

4. Procurement

The public sector is a large procurer of services within the county.

Kent County Council will include in its contracts over £1 million a requirement that the provider must deliver 1 apprenticeship opportunity per £1m spend on labour.

We will provide support and guidance for bidders and contract winners on how they can meet these obligations.

Where contracts are less than £1m, but where the council has an aggregate spend higher than this, we will support Members and senior officers to promote apprenticeships to these suppliers.

Once this process is up and running we will work with other public sector partners in Kent to support them to implement similar procedures within their organisations. We will also look to influence national and regional procurement contracts such as the Community Payback contract.

5. Employers

To achieve our ambition of increasing the number of young people participating in an Apprenticeship across the public and private sector, employer engagement and support is vital.

KCC will work with the National Apprenticeship Service to deliver a service to the small and medium size businesses in Kent from initial engagement with employers through to the appointment of an Apprentice.

We will develop a one stop shop for SME employers to ensure that the employment of an Apprentice is a simple and straightforward process. KCC will provide one to one support for employers, guiding them through the process, providing draft contracts and facilitating the relationship with the training provider.

In our work with employers, both internal and external, we will encourage them to align the appointment of Apprentices with the academic year so that young people can register an interest in undertaking an Apprenticeship in November, will be interviewed by employers in March and will start their Apprenticeship in September – thus making this route a real progression from school. The period between March and September can be used to prepare the young person for employment.

To increase the number of employers taking on Apprentices, we will work with NAS to develop an integrated marketing strategy. We will ensure that employers have access to the most up to date information regarding

Apprenticeships, understand what an Apprenticeship entails and what the benefits to them as an employer are, and know what support is available to them.

6. Young People

Kent has a proven track record of delivering vocational courses for 14 – 16 years olds, we will look to increase the number of these young people progressing into apprenticeships.

To ensure young people understand the benefits and opportunities that apprenticeships offer we will work with schools, and other influencers of young people to provide them with up to date and relevant information, including how to access further advice.

Once we have employers on board with September starts we will promote these opportunities via schools and websites.

7. Specialist Delivery

We will continue to support vulnerable young people into Apprenticeships building on the lessons that we learn through this project. We will then look to target specific areas and groups who would benefit from this type of programme and support, attracting external funding where possible.

8. Training Development

It is important that Apprenticeships are viewed as part of career pathways, we will work with the Local Enterprise Partnership to identify key skill areas for the Kent economy and identify how Apprenticeships can be used to fill these gaps.

We will work with training providers, colleges and universities in Kent to develop appropriate training, at all levels, which is relevant to Kent Employers.

9. Conclusion

It is clear that Apprenticeships offer excellent opportunities for both businesses and young people and that they will be at the heart of the Government's skills agenda moving forward. Kent has traditionally led the way and by implementing the strategy outlined above we can continue to do so.

Apprenticeship Strategy – Action Plan 2011/12 (to be refreshed for 2012/13)

Project / Development	A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates	
1.	Kent Success (KCC Apprenticeship Model)				
1.1	Oversee current supernumerary programme	Lucy Bett	Recruit young people and match to vacancies utilising RMS where feasible	75 recruited (four year target of 350, but accepting that 2011/12 will see major changes across the council the in year target reflects this)	March 2012
1.2	Embed the changes to recruitment procedures across the council	Nigel Fairburn	Deliver apprenticeship opportunities through KR 2-4 vacancies	75% of all suitable vacancies that are openly recruited are filled by apprentices	March 2012
1.3	Explore opportunities for developing career pathways within KCC utilising apprenticeships	Lucy Bett	Discuss with relevant managers and P & D Develop processes	One pilot scheme implemented	Sept 2011
1.4	Evaluate introduction of pilot in 1.3, and expand	Lucy Bett	Work with training providers, managers and schools to develop pathways	Recruitment processes up and running for September starts	Feb 2012
1.5	Deliver a Kent Success service on behalf of public sector agencies	Lucy Bett/ P& D	Work with public sector partners to explore desirability	One partnership up and running	March 2012

Project / Development	A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates	
2.	Procurement				
2.1	Implement procurement policy regarding apprenticeships	Procurement Unit	Ensure through the tendering process that where appropriate (£1m labour spend) apprenticeship places are secured.	All appropriate contracts comply	March 2012
2.2	Support potential suppliers with meeting the apprenticeship requirements	Lucy Bett	Provide advice to potential suppliers	Briefing sheet on apprenticeships	May 2011
2.3	Members/senior officers to champion apprenticeships to suppliers who are outside of procurement levels	Lucy Bett	Inform these key groups and offer support	All members/tier 1 & 2 officers informed, and aware of who to contact for support	Sept 2011
2.4	Promote KCCs procurement model to other public sector partners in Kent, regionally and nationally	SIP Manager	Engage with public sector bodies	Discussed at appropriate Kent Forum board – follow up as necessary	Sept 2011

Project / Development	A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates	
3.	Employer Engagement & Support				
3.1	Develop an end to end service to support SMEs to recruit apprentices	SIP Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop partnership with NAS to understand level of need and build on their existing provision. • Engage with employers to understand their needs • Develop process and supporting material • Identify existing employer support 	Clear understanding of need and proposed model	May 2011
3.2	Implement service model	SIP Manager	Align resources to enable delivery	SMEs receive end to end service	July 2011
3.3	Align appointment of apprentices with academic year	Lucy Bett	Promote benefits of planning recruitment e.g attracting high achievers	Opportunities available (100)/recruitment procedures in place for Sept 2012 recruitment	March 2012
3.4	Integrated marketing strategy to business	SIP Manager	<p>Ensuring employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have up to date information • understand what an apprenticeship entails • understand the benefits to their organisation • know what support is available to them 	Marketing strategy implemented	September 2011

Project / Development	A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates	
4.	Young People				
4.1	Strengthen links between vocational delivery and the apprenticeship offer	Lucy Bett/Sue Dunn	Work with vocational centres/schools to ensure students understand progression routes	Increase number of students progressing from vocational course to apprenticeships	Sept 2012 (progress to be reviewed March 2012)
4.2	Integrated Marketing Strategy to young people and their influencers	Lucy Bett/Sue Dunn	Ensuring young people and their influencers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have up to date information • understand what an apprenticeship entails • understand the benefits to them • know what support is available to them and where to access it 	Increased number of young people registering an interest in apprenticeships	March 2012
4.3 (link with 3.3)	Promote apprenticeship opportunities	Martin Blincow	Establish mechanism for advertising apprenticeship employment opportunities to enable young people to apply	Young people applying for opportunities	Nov 2012
4.4	Support implementation of actions arising from Student Journey Select Committee	SIP Manager	As arising		March 2012

Project / Development	A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates	
5.	Specialist Delivery				
5.1	Continue to support vulnerable young people into apprenticeships	Lucy Bett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Internal/External partners to develop opportunities for young people. • Support existing VL Apprentices in their placements • Introduce job coaching for VL apprentices approaching end of placement 	80 vulnerable young people undertaking work based training	March 2012
5.2	Implement recommendations from interim evaluation report	Lucy Bett	As arise	Improved programme	June 2012
5.3	Examine opportunities to extend scheme where appropriate	Lucy Bett	Work with external funding team/international office	Funding secured	March 2012
5.4	Align with Work Programme opportunities/community based budgeting	Lucy Bett	Ensure project is known and understood by relevant organisations	This approach is incorporated into the work of these providers	March 2012
5.5	Developing area specific projects targeting on areas of need	SIP Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish target areas • Develop appropriate offers • Identify suitable funding/delivery partners 	Area specific project in place	March 2012

Project / Development	A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates	
6.	Strategic Development				
6.1	Developing career pathways ensuring that they are deliverable in Kent	Lucy Bett	Work with training providers, colleges, universities to develop appropriate opportunities	Career progression to level 4 is available in skills areas important to the Kent economy	Review March 2012
6.2	KCC to take responsibility for the marketing and matching service in Kent	SIP Manager/ David Whittle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposition • Lobby government 	Proposition developed, lobbying begun	Sept 2011
6.3	Use findings from vulnerable learners project to improve apprenticeship offer national	Lucy Bett/David Godfrey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate project • Identify areas for improvement • Make recommendations • Lobby government 	Changes to national policy	Evaluation begins April 2012. Lobbying July 2012
6.4	Promotion of KCC work to national/international audiences	SIP Manager/ Lucy Bett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend conferences • Take part in studies • Offer support to other organisations 	Work of KCC is recognised as innovative and progressive	Review March 2012
6.5	Explore opportunities for external funding to further this work	SIP Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities • Apply for funding where appropriate 	One funding bid made	March 2012

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