

Durham County Council Apprenticeship Strategy 2019 - 2022



Foreword

The council's apprenticeship programme is an integral part of the council's approach to address current and future skills needs. Apprenticeships help us to attract and retain the very best talent and to benefit from a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce.

We are committed to investing in the continued expansion and development of our apprenticeship programme. Through increasing the range and extent of apprenticeship opportunities, we can help to improve the skills base of our own workforce and across the County.

This apprenticeship strategy identifies how we will use apprenticeships to attract new talent to the organisation as well as identifying opportunities for the development of our existing employees aligned to our strategic approach to workforce planning.

Terry Collins
Chief Executive

Simon Henig
Leader of the Council

1 Introduction

The council's Apprenticeship Strategy outlines what we want to achieve as an employer and the positive action we will take over the next three years to increase the number and range of apprenticeships within the council as part of our wider Workforce Development Strategy.

The strategy embeds our OPEN values of outcome focused, people focused, empowered and innovative, by investing in our employee's skills and development to equip them to deliver high quality services for our communities and to achieve the best outcomes.

This strategy is aligned to our Council Plan outcomes through commitments to increase the number of people in employment and training, and to support young people to progress and achieve in education, employment and training to achieve their potential. The strategy also links to the Regeneration Statement, Procurement Strategy and the council's strategic approach to supporting and sustaining care leavers in employment.

We will work with a range of organisations and services both internal and external to the council, to deliver and promote the benefits of apprenticeships, and link apprenticeships to career pathways, workforce development and workforce planning for new and existing employees.

The strategy will be used to inform workforce development plans to help identify the actions that service areas will take in support of the strategy and in meeting the specific skills challenges that they face. The apprenticeship programme also supports and complements other workforce development initiatives to support entry to employment, including work experience, traineeships and graduate programmes as part of the council's wider talent management approach.

2 The council's apprenticeship vision

To increase apprenticeship opportunities for new and existing employees by offering high quality apprenticeship programmes across all service areas of the council that are linked to career pathways to support workforce development and workforce planning

Apprenticeships will form an integral part of workforce and succession planning to ensure we have the right people with the right skills at the right time to deliver high quality services and to build a council for the future.

Apprenticeships provide the council with the opportunity to:

- Meet the priorities of the community such as tackling local unemployment, NEET (not in employment, education or training), worklessness and skills issues and contributing to our strategic ambitions and other priority themes of the council;
- Influence suppliers and partners to employ and train local people by promoting apprenticeships via social value commitments during procurement and planning projects;
- Support the council's 'corporate parenting' responsibility by offering employability opportunities to care leavers;
- Set an example to the wider community as both an exemplary employer and commissioner of services;

- Grow talent and use strategic workforce planning to ensure the council has the skills needed to deliver short and long term objectives;
- To be an inclusive employer and further develop our workforce diversity for example by bringing young people into an ageing workforce to address inequalities in the council's age profile and people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as a Disability Confident Employer.

3 Strategic context

3.1 Meeting current and future skills needs

The council aspires to be an employer of choice, ensuring that it attracts, develops and retains the most diverse, creative and innovative individuals with the key skills and abilities required now and for the future. Apprenticeships can support this by offering a wide range of career opportunities for all ages.

We will develop workforce plans for all services with each Head of Service and apprenticeships will be a key element to support workforce planning and will be used alongside the wider corporate workforce development offer to develop current and future skills.

We also have an ageing workforce and so adopting a more strategic approach to 'growing our own' talent has become increasingly important and apprenticeships will form a key part of that strategy to enable us to meet our corporate and service objectives both now and in the future.

The council's apprenticeship programme aims to support the council's wider strategic commitment to sustainably, improve the employment prospects and social mobility of local people, and to strengthen the skills base of our existing and future workforce by providing high quality jobs and learning opportunities with related qualifications which are embedded in career progression routes.

3.2 Government reforms

Driven by an ambition to address the shortage in skills and invest in the UK's future workforce, the UK Government has made a commitment to an additional three million apprenticeship starts nationally by 2020.

In order to support this commitment to apprenticeships, from 6 April 2017 an Apprenticeship Levy was introduced which is payable by all employers with a wage bill in excess of £3m per annum. This is paid as a 0.5% tax on the employers' payroll.

The levy is a significant cost to the council, it is therefore imperative to ensure that it is utilised as effectively as possible.

The public sector apprenticeship target was introduced by the Government in April 2017 in accordance with The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017. The regulations set a target for any public sector employer in England with at least 250 employees to employ an average of 2.3% of their employees as new apprentice starts between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2021.

The target is for new apprenticeship starts which includes both newly employed apprentices and any existing employees that have begun an apprenticeship. The Government considers the duty to 'have regard' to the target to mean that in making workforce planning decisions, public bodies

should actively consider apprenticeships, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing employees.

Against a background of public sector change and the council's transformation programme, it is important to create apprenticeships that are aligned to future skills needs, and not solely as a means to meet the public sector duty.

The council introduced a corporate approach to apprenticeships in May 2018 to enable robust planning to be able to sustain and grow its commitment to apprenticeships across the council to ensure that its apprenticeship levy is maximised.

3.3 Supporting the council's strategic priorities

As one of the largest employers in the North East, providing apprenticeships and routes into apprenticeships within the council is an integral part of the council's wider regeneration approach and also supports educational improvement priorities by helping to raise skills aspirations.

In December 2018, there were 12,330 people of working age classed as unemployed in County Durham. 2,905 were aged between 18 and 24 years, this relates to 5.9% as a proportion of the resident population of the same age for County Durham which is higher than both the North East and national average (ONS).

In particular the challenges of finding work impact on young people, as well as for care leavers, long-term unemployed people, returners to the labour market, people with disabilities and people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

Providing opportunities for existing employees to undertake apprenticeships and developing an apprenticeship culture at all levels within the council will help to raise skills within the workforce in support of skills and wider workforce planning priorities around recruitment and retention and improve the age diversity profile of the workforce by attracting younger people into apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships can be an alternative option to University whereby young people can undertake structured training whilst earning money and working towards nationally recognised qualifications on which to build a future career.

In line with our social value obligations, when procuring contracts and commissioning services we will work with potential suppliers to encourage apprenticeships to be an inherent part of our contracts where appropriate.

4 Apprenticeship programme aims

It is important that the council is able to attract and retain apprentices and that we develop an apprenticeship programme that:

- Supports our workforce skills needs
- Supports the council's strategic ambitions and objectives
- Maximises the use of our apprenticeship levy
- Has regard to the public sector apprenticeship target

Consequently, our Apprenticeship Strategy aims to:

1. Continue to develop the council's apprenticeship programme to increase the occupational range and number of high quality apprenticeship opportunities across the council
 - We will work with service managers to identify existing and future skills gaps and ensure that priority is given to apprenticeships for new and current employees that are designed to meet these challenges and develop skill sets relevant to the current and future workforce. Existing employees will be encouraged to use apprenticeships as a means of developing their skills and career path with the council where a relevant apprenticeship standard can be applied to support talent management within the council.
2. Develop and apply robust systems to support apprentices and to monitor the quality of the apprenticeship experience
 - We will make sure apprentices receive high quality training and support and feel engaged with the council and the work it does.
3. Widen participation in the council's apprenticeship programme, by targeting and maximising opportunities for those who face the most challenges to accessing employment
 - As the corporate parent we will support care leavers to access apprenticeship opportunities, identify opportunities to engage with young people and adults including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and work with other disadvantaged groups e.g. long-term unemployed, returners to the labour market, people with a disability and people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.
4. Support people to progress into employment through the apprenticeship route
 - We will work with apprentices to support them to develop the skills they need to move to the next stage of their career.
5. Work in partnership with Members, Trade Unions, training providers, suppliers and other local authorities to promote and deliver apprenticeship opportunities
 - Joint working with Members and Trade Union colleagues to develop and promote apprenticeship opportunities will continue. The council will work with training providers and other local authorities regionally and nationally to deliver high quality apprenticeships and to ensure that new standards relevant to the council are developed and delivered.
6. Engage with maintained schools to ensure they maximise the benefits from the levy and promote apprenticeship opportunities
 - Local Authority maintained schools, as part of the council, are subject to both the levy charge and are required to 'have regard' to the 2.3% apprenticeship target. We will continue to provide advice, information and guidance on apprenticeships and

work with our schools to develop opportunities to meet skills gaps and future workforce needs to maximise the use of the levy. We will also support schools to provide information on apprenticeship opportunities.

5 Performance monitoring

This apprenticeship strategy is underpinned by an Apprenticeship Delivery Action Plan which sets out how the aims of the apprenticeship programme will be delivered. The delivery plan will be monitored by the Head of People and Talent Management and progress will be reported to Corporate Management Team on a bi-annual basis through the Apprenticeship Activity Report.

In accordance with the public sector duty requirements the council will also publish annual data relating to their progress in meeting the 2.3% apprenticeship target set by the Government.

The Organisational Development/Workforce Development Team within People and Talent Management will work closely with colleagues in Economic Development, Education, Children's Social Care and Corporate Procurement to ensure that the council's strategic response to apprenticeships as an employer is closely aligned with the council's wider strategic priorities to supporting local people into sustainable employment.

Action plan for the delivery of Durham County Council's Corporate Apprenticeship Programme 2019- 2022

| Actions | Responsibility | Timescale | Update/Progress |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------|--|
| 1. To continue to develop the council's apprenticeship programme to increase the occupational range and number of high quality apprenticeship opportunities across the council | | | |
| Work with Heads of Service to identify apprenticeship opportunities as part of workforce planning and a 'grow our own' approach to addressing skills shortages/hard to fill posts | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Annual audit undertaken to identify skills shortages, hard to fill posts and apprenticeship opportunities To be embedded into wider workforce development plans for each service area |
| Undertake an annual recruitment programme which advertises apprenticeship vacancies across the council | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Annual rolling programme |
| Review the recruitment process to assess the suitability of vacancies for apprenticeships | Head of People and Talent Management | December 2019 | To be undertaken as part of the review of the Recruitment and Selection Policy |
| Develop processes to ensure consideration is given to include apprentices at appropriate levels through restructure processes | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2020 | To be undertaken as part of the review of restructuring policy work |
| Introduce apprenticeships in additional vocational areas for existing and new apprenticeship standards | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Promoting apprenticeship opportunities to managers and highlighting when new standards become available Drop in sessions arranged for managers to increase their awareness of apprenticeships as part of National Apprenticeship Week |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------|--|
| Map apprenticeship standards to identify relevant standards against the council's job roles | Head of People and Talent Management | April 2020 | Working with managers to map standards against their service areas |
| Increase higher and degree level apprenticeships to aid succession planning and address skills shortages | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |
| Identify and develop the role of service champions to promote apprenticeship opportunities within service areas | Head of People and Talent Management | June 2019 | |
| 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 | Head of Communications and Marketing | March 2022 | Intranet page developed with information on apprenticeships in the council https://www.durham.gov.uk/Apprenticeships Social media campaigns for annual recruitment exercise and National Apprenticeship Week |
| Provide apprenticeship opportunities for existing employees aligned to skills development and workforce planning requirements by integrating apprenticeship opportunities within the Council's core learning and development offer and through the PDR process | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |
| Use cross cutting apprenticeships to develop skills across the council e.g. management apprenticeships | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Current cross cutting apprenticeships in place including Level 3 and 4 Management, Level 2 and 3 Business Administration. A data analyst apprenticeship is being investigated |
| Create career pathways using the Apprenticeship Standards to support workforce and succession planning | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Link to work on workforce development |
| Develop pathways to apprenticeships through maximising opportunities for work experience/placements, traineeships, supported internships etc. | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | OD/WFD team working with service areas and ALSS to progress these initiatives |

| 2. Develop and apply robust systems to support apprentices and monitor the quality of the apprenticeship experience | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------|---|
| Provide information, advice and guidance to managers including their responsibilities for supporting apprentices | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Apprenticeship Guidance for Managers has been updated to reflect the co-ordinated corporate approach to apprenticeships, managers' responsibilities and support offered by the OD/WFD Team |
| Support apprentices with an effective induction programme | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Two corporate induction events were held for the September 2018 intake of apprentices which included presentations by CMT, Members, Trade Unions, People and Talent Management and a range of service areas |
| Apprenticeship forums to be held to give updates on what is happening across the council, build a network of support, discuss support/information required and provide feedback on how the apprenticeship programme can be improved | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Held on a quarterly basis |
| Introduce an apprenticeship development programme including skills based and team building events | Head of People and Talent Management | April 2019 | |
| Establish a process and timetable for the OD/WFD Team to undertake independent apprenticeship reviews to identify if the apprentice is being provided with a structured work programme and if they require any additional support in the workplace/with their training to make the apprenticeship a fulfilling and successful experience | Head of People and Talent Management | April 2019 | Pilot undertaken within Building and Facilities Management |
| Ensure all apprentices are allocated a workplace mentor and offer support to mentors through mentoring skills training | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |
| Monitor progress of apprentices and completion of apprenticeships through on-going liaison with training providers, apprentices and managers | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Set up process to evaluate completed apprenticeships for satisfaction levels and identify learning and opportunities for continuous improvement of the Apprenticeship Programme | Head of People and Talent Management | September 2019 | |
| Engage with apprentices through a range of communication methods including an apprenticeship newsletter | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |
| Appoint apprentice ambassadors/spokespersons and link into the National Apprenticeship Service Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Network | Head of People and Talent Management | April 2019 | 5 ambassadors identified as part of the current cohort of apprentices |
| Share apprenticeship success stories and development through a variety of communication channels with all employees and managers | Head of Communications and Marketing | March 2022 | Success stories published using appropriate media channels including: Buzz / DC News/ Press releases and social media |
| Promote internal, regional and national apprenticeship awards to recognise achievements and celebrate success | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |
| Review the apprenticeship guidance for managers including pay rates and support for apprentices | Head of People and Talent Managements | March 2020 | |
| 3. Widen participation in the council's apprenticeship programme, by targeting and maximising opportunities for those who face the most challenges to accessing employment | | | |
| Advertise apprenticeship vacancies via a wide range of channels to reach target groups | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Vacancies advertised through NEJP, National Apprenticeship Service website and social media |
| Attend appropriate careers events to reach target groups | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | On-going attendance at career events |
| Continue to work closely with schools and partners to raise the profile of the council's apprenticeship programme | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |

| | | | |
|--|---|----------------|--|
| Support the council's corporate parenting responsibilities by ensuring apprenticeships are available and accessible to care leavers including ring-fencing suitable apprenticeships | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Guaranteed interview scheme in place for care leavers who meet the essential criteria Traineeships in place to prepare Care Leavers for an apprenticeship An apprenticeship has been ringfenced to Care Leavers in the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Team |
| To promote/implement the DCC Pathway for Care Leavers and the introduction of pre-apprenticeship training and support for Care Leavers participating on DurhamWorks to enable them to maximise their opportunity at being successful in applying for apprenticeships | Strategic Manager Progression and Learning | March 2022 | |
| To develop a structured approach to broaden opportunities for people with special educational needs and disabilities | Head of People and Talent Management/Strategic Manager Progression and Learning | December 2019 | |
| 4. Support people to progress into employment through the apprenticeship route | | | |
| Establish tracking systems to monitor retention and achievement | Head of People and Talent Management | September 2019 | |
| Work with managers to support the retention of apprentices within the council | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |
| Equip apprentices with employability skills and ensure they have the skills needed to make that next move in their career | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |
| Conduct exit interviews with apprentices leaving the council to ascertain actual progression routes | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |
| Establish processes to offer support to unsuccessful apprenticeship applicants through the council's Durham Works Programme and Adult, Learning and Skills Service if required | Head of People and Talent Management | May 2019 | |

| 5. Work in partnerships with Members, Trade Unions, training providers, suppliers and other local authorities to promote and deliver apprenticeship opportunities | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------|---|
| Work with elected Members to promote the apprenticeship programme across the County | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Members attend corporate apprenticeship induction events |
| Work with recognised trades unions to promote apprenticeships, encourage take-up and continue to develop the council's approach | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Trade Unions attend corporate apprenticeship induction events Updates on the apprenticeship programme given at the Corporate Consultative Forum |
| Engage with our internal training provider – Adult Learning and Skills Service and external training providers to ensure quality of apprenticeship training provision to meet the identified skills gaps within the council | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | |
| Engage with trailblazer groups to develop new apprenticeship standards | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | CYPS part of trailblazer group to develop the Social Worker Apprenticeship Standard |
| Identify opportunities to engage with other local authorities in partnership working on specific apprenticeship projects | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2020 | |
| Identify social value opportunities via procurement and contract management activities | Chief Procurement Officer | March 2022 | Updates based on delivered outcomes |
| 6. Engage with maintained schools to ensure they maximise the benefits from the levy and promote apprenticeship opportunities | | | |
| Support maintained schools to maximise apprenticeship opportunities and access levy funds to meet skills gaps and plan future workforce needs | Head of People and Talent Management | March 2022 | Presentation on the government reforms and apprenticeship opportunities within schools to School Business Managers Group established to progress the approach to apprenticeships within schools which includes Head Teacher representation |
| Support maintained schools to comply with the Baker Clause to give education and training providers the opportunity to talk to pupils in years 8 to 13 about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships | Head of Education | March 2022 | |

For advice regarding the application of this document please contact:

HR Advice and Support

hradviceandsupport@durham.gov.uk

Durham County Council complies with all relevant statutory obligations. Personal information processed by the Council will be handled in accordance with the Council's privacy statement, which can be accessed [here](#). Human Resources privacy notice provides more specific information on the data collected and how it is handled, a copy of which can be accessed [here](#).

If you have any concerns about how your data is handled, please contact either the Data Protection Officer at dpo@durham.gov.uk or the [Information Commissioner's Office](#).

| Author | Version | Last review | Next review |
|-----------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| HR OD/WFD | V 1 | N/A | March 2020 |

