

Apprenticeship Strategy 2017-2020

Introduction

The Government expects public sector organisations such as Leicestershire County Council to lead the way in offering an increased number of apprenticeships and will introduce targets for the public sector's contribution to its commitment of three million apprenticeships nationally.

This apprenticeship strategy outlines what we as a Council, want to achieve over the next three years. By building on the successes of our current approach to apprenticeships, our aim is to increase the number of apprenticeships at all levels, across the organisation. We will work to promote the benefits of apprenticeships to all and link this to the development of local skills, workforce development and the Leicestershire economy. This will in turn support the Council to be an employer of choice by:

- Developing the right level of skills to meet the future requirements of the business and to grow our workforce for the future
- Supporting increased productivity and retention
- Developing succession planning opportunities

Our Vision

Leicestershire County Council's vision is to increase apprenticeship opportunities by supporting high quality apprenticeship programmes across all departments and maintained schools, ensuring access to a broad range of training and development that meets the needs of the business.

Our apprenticeship programme will attract participation and raise the aspirations of our workforce, enabling the Council to benefit from a motivated, skilled and flexible workforce.

Our Aims

- To build on and expand the current apprenticeship programme whilst continuing to ensure high quality across all levels and pathways.
- To increase the range of vocational areas that apprenticeships are offered in.
- To offer apprenticeships at a wider range of levels with a particular focus on growth at level 3 and higher apprenticeship levels and where a skills shortage has been identified.
- To enhance progression routes for apprentices as part of a wider proactive approach to workforce development and succession planning, enabling us to 'Grow our own'.
- To support 300 apprenticeships across the organisation by 2020 through a phased approach.

Background

This strategy sets out our plans for the next 3 years. It aims to build on the successes of the past and to set ambitious targets for increasing apprenticeship opportunities across the council.

Leicestershire County Council recognises the opportunities that apprenticeships provide in supporting the continuous professional development of existing staff and offering new opportunities to those joining the organisation. We also recognise that apprenticeships offer young people opportunities other than staying in further education, whilst enabling access to transferrable, nationally recognised qualifications.

The national and local apprenticeship context

Nationally, apprenticeships are recognised as contributing substantial benefits to businesses and those that offer them see them as beneficial to their long term development. According to the British Chambers of Commerce, most organisations that employ an apprentice do so to improve their skills base within their business.

The Government's goal is for young people in particular, to see apprenticeships as a prestigious, high quality route to successful careers across all sectors of the economy. (English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision)

The National Apprenticeship Service has set a target of one in five young people aged 16-19 to be working as an apprentice by 2019/20.

The revised apprenticeship funding arrangements through the Apprenticeship Levy provide an opportunity for us to increase our investment in apprenticeships on a long term, sustainable basis.

Ensuring the quality of our apprenticeships

The Government's Review of Apprenticeships (English Apprenticeships: our 2020 Vision) sets out a clear vision for an apprenticeship system which is more rigorous and more responsive to the needs of employers, so that training is trusted and transferrable across sectors.

A report from Ofsted in 2015 (Apprenticeships: Developing Skills for Future Prosperity) identified that some apprenticeships were of poor quality and that supervision of apprentices was inadequate. The report states that the national approach to apprentices is unlikely to achieve its outcomes unless the overall quality improves and that more businesses become involved in the development of the programmes and there is a clear focus on a greater number of advanced apprenticeship standards leading to the development of higher skills.

To ensure the quality of apprenticeship standards from April 2017 the Institute for Apprenticeships will help ensure that employers get the quality skills that they need from the apprenticeship system by acting as the ultimate decision maker on approving apprenticeship standards and assessment plans.

As a council we will contribute to the high quality of apprenticeships through effective commissioning and contract management of specialist provider apprenticeships. We will maintain the high quality of our 'in house' delivery, whilst expanding our offer to meet the changing needs of the organisation.

Widening Participation

Economic benefits are generated when education and training help individuals to achieve higher level qualifications, thereby increasing their employment prospects, productivity and wages.

Currently only 5% of young people choose to undertake an apprenticeship with some schools and colleges failing to provide informed and impartial advice to young people who could benefit from apprenticeship opportunities (Ofsted 2015)

The Government particularly wants to address any barriers faced by groups, including care leavers; women; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We will work with the Council's workers groups to ensure apprenticeship programmes are inclusive and barriers to entry are reduced.

We will ensure that as a Council we provide inclusive, high quality apprenticeship opportunities that are recognised and valued by departments as career pathways to future success. This will ensure that progression opportunities are more readily available to our people, in developing their careers and achieving their potential.

Summarising our key priorities

The priorities which will underpin our Apprenticeship Implementation Plan:

1. Continuing to to increase the number of apprenticeships across the council reaching 300 by 2020;
2. Developing and applying effective quality assurance measures to ensure high quality training and support;
3. Ensuring that every service area in the Council offers Apprenticeships by 2020;
4. Increasing the uptake of higher level apprenticeships across all vocational areas; initially with a specific focus on skills shortage areas in the early phase of this strategy;
5. Ensuring apprenticeships are a key component in business and workforce planning and supports our approach to skills and succession planning;
6. Widening participation in the Council's apprenticeship programme and supporting underrepresented groups of people in accessing the scheme;
7. Continuing to work closely with community and voluntary aided schools in ensuring education staff can access high quality vocational apprenticeships.

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