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**To:** Personnel Committee      **Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Subject:** Apprenticeships and Young People

**Classification:** **Unrestricted**

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**Summary:** This report updates Committee on the progress of the Apprenticeship agenda in KCC as well as other elements of the KCC Early Careers Development Programme.

## **1. Background**

**1.1** Our People Strategy will shape the future of work at our Council for the next four years. Our approach will create an environment that people want to be part of, continuously improving and delivering for the people of our County. A crucial part of our strategy is to build a workforce that meets current and future skills needs by attracting, developing, and retaining diverse individuals who desire to deliver meaningful work with purpose.

**1.2** To achieve the outcomes of our strategy, we must have clear pathways to encourage young people into our organisation. By introducing and strengthening our existing Early Career Programmes, we will mobilise and sustain opportunities for young people aged 16-25 to access careers within the Council.

**1.3** As one of the largest employers in Kent, providing entry routes for young people within the Council is an integral part of our approach that will help to improve our residents' skills and career aspirations, tackle disadvantages, support NEETs into work and encourage Kent's young people to make the most of opportunities to learn and prepare for their future.

**1.4** In addition to standard recruitment, the Council offers two main routes for young people to enter employment or gain valuable experience of the workplace.

## **2. Apprenticeships in KCC**

**2.1** Since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in 2017 KCC has utilised this to develop a significant workforce development offer for new and existing staff; enabling career and professional development.

**2.2** KCC supports colleagues to access all levels of apprenticeship training and since 2017, 1343 individuals have commenced apprenticeship programmes, of these 372 are currently studying, utilising 30 different courses. Furthermore, 305 of those accessing apprenticeship training are in the age group 16 – 25 years.

## 2.3 Examples of KCC apprenticeship training

- Level 2: Accounting, Children and Young People's support, Adult care worker, Customer care.
- Level 3: Supporting teaching and learning; Early Years education; Lead adult care worker; Operational delivery; Payroll.
- Level 4: Project manager, Regulatory compliance, Commercial procurement, Business improvement, Data analysis, Accountancy; Children Young People & Families practitioner.
- Level 5: Leadership and management; Care leadership and management; Children Young People & Families manager, HR management
- Levels 6 & 7: Social work degree, Occupational therapy degree, Project manager; Laboratory scientist, HR management, Finance,

**2.4** All apprenticeship training is funded from the KCC apprenticeship levy contributions with salaries being funded by the relevant business unit. The learner is expected to spend 6 hours per week learning new knowledge and skills to support their apprenticeship learning.

## 2.5 Particular successes

In March 2023 the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of KCC social work degree apprentices (the largest cohort in the country) graduated. All 24 apprentices were existing staff based in CYPE and ASCH. This successful intervention to 'grow our own' social workers has been repeated with a second cohort of 33 existing staff who commenced their studies in March 2023.

More recently KCC has been successful in bidding for funding from DfE for 12 social work degree apprentices who started in February 2024 and DHSC funding for a further 13 who join KCC in September 2024.

Kent Scientific Services offer a carer pathway based on apprenticeship training. Opportunities are offered to A level students who initially study at diploma level and then move onto the full degree programme. The service has benefitted from 'growing their own' scientists who start their post degree work life with valuable workplace experience.

KCC Future Manager programme which is designed for high performers with potential incorporates the level 3 Team Leader apprenticeship. Since it's launch in 2022 48 talented individuals have completed the programme and a further 33 are progressing well. Projects undertaken as part of the programme are delivering benefits to both staff in KCC and savings/efficiencies to business processes.

Apprenticeship training has also been utilised to enable 38 procurement colleagues to become professionally qualified with a further 17 on programme.

**2.6** KCC financial contributions to the apprenticeship levy are calculated 0.5% of our payroll costs as set by Government; this equates to approximately £2.6m per year.

When the levy was introduced the government's funding model was based on the assumption that levy paying employers would only utilise 50% of their levy funds, with the intention being that the unused funding would be re-distributed to the 98% of employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy, to cover the cost of their employee's apprenticeship training.

From 2019 the government began to clawback contributions that had been in the digital account, unused for 24 months and KCC like 82% of other Councils have experienced this clawback. For the period 2019 – 2022 KCC clawback averaged 26% per year equating just over 50% of the government's expectation. KCC have achieved this through increasing spend on apprenticeship training and successfully sharing the levy as detailed below.

### **2.6 Sharing the Levy**

Since the summer of 2018, all levy paying employers have been able to share up to 25% of their levy contributions with other employers to support apprenticeship training. KCC has been sharing levy since 2019 with a robust application process accessible via [kent.gov.uk](http://kent.gov.uk). Support is provided and applicants are required to identify how the funding for training will contribute to the delivery of KCC's strategic outcomes ;-

- Children & young people
- Kent economic growth
- Older & vulnerable residents
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From April 2024 the Government has increased the permitted sharing threshold to 50%.

**2.7** KCC are currently supporting 134 Kent employers / 308 employees to access apprenticeship training with a commitment value of £1.7m.

Levels of study and professional areas are varied;-

<b>Apprenticeship Level</b>	<b>Number</b>
L2&L3	230
L4	36
L5	29
L6	6
L7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>

<b>Professional Area</b>	<b>Number on programme</b>
Adult Social Care	152
Early years and Education	66
CYPF	27
Senior Leadership/Management	15
Customer care	7
Administration	7
Nursing	6
Sport/Health	5
Accountancy	3
Junior Content Producer/Content Creator	3
Science	3
Creative Venue Technician	2
IT	2
Production Chef/Commis Chef	2
Digital Marketing/Multichannel Marketer	2
Hospitality Team Member	1
Plumbing and Heating	1
Outdoor Activity Instructor	1
Project Management	1
Carpentry and Joinery	1
Construction	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>

Additionally, there are a further 32 employer/ 48 employee applications to access apprenticeship training in the pipeline

### **3. Kent Graduate programme**

**3.1** The KCC Kent Graduate Programme is designed to; -

- Improve alignment to workforce development strategies.
- Establish better links with other entry points for young people.
- Offer a 'profession-based' scheme with pre-defined pathways embedding Apprenticeship standards.
- Offer a programme of activities to support wider networking and personal development.

The KCC offer is unique in the marketplace as it offers the opportunity to develop professional learning pathways and offers a genuine role whilst training. Successful completion of the programme confirms a permanent role in the relevant professional area.

**3.2** Since 2019, 9 cohorts / 41 graduates have been recruited and cohort 10 will start their programme in October 2024. Of these 31 are continuing their careers in KCC.

Professional streams have been established such as -

- Accountancy
- Commercial & Procurement
- Project management
- Business change
- Regulatory compliance
- Data analysis
- Software development
- Paralegal

**3.3** In recognition of the talent that these high calibre graduates bring to the organisation all have been allocated to high profile /high impact work within their business area such as;-

- Redesign of a suite of reporting resulting in higher levels of access leading to fact-based decision making
- Work on responsible investment (Carbon Footprint Analysis) for KCC's Pension Fund
- Automation Projects on business-critical processes/workflows improving efficiency and generating cost saving.
- Supporting our Major Capital Programme to deliver improved Highways Infrastructure in Kent
- Developing new policies to strengthen the Council's IT disaster recovery response.

**3.4** KCC is recognised as the **top** Charitable, Education and Public Sector organisation in the Top 100 employers for graduates to work for (The Job Crowd) and Number 30 in the Top Graduate Employers generally.

#### **4. Pre- Employment Opportunities**

The KCC pre-employment offer aims to support the following outcomes -

- Improving outcomes for young people in terms of attainment, progression, destination and life skills.
- Improve provision available below level 2 which enables successful completers into further learning or employment

The various opportunities detailed below enable young people to experience local government. They provide a chance to learn about a job or an area of work and gain valuable insights into employability skills.

Some of the benefits offered by these programmes are; -

- Gain up to a level 2 qualification,
- Achieve functional skills in Maths and English at Level 2
- Improve life skills
- Prepare for work
- Identify a pathway to work or further learning

#### **4.1 Student Placements/ Internships**

These opportunities are for students who need to complete a placement as part of their undergraduate degree or graduates who wish to gain experience prior to further study. The placement will enable the student to learn about our organisation and get exposure to the challenges of professional services, working with service users, benefiting from on-the-job learning and development opportunities.

Student placements and internships are offered in several services across the Council; there are three specific examples below; -

##### **4.1.1 Social work**

KCC work in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent to facilitate student placements for Social Work Degrees (MA and BA). This includes the 70-day placement which is the first placement students complete and the 100-day placement which is their final placement.

In addition, we support the two-day readiness for practice programme which students complete in the first year of their degree.

Once these students have graduated, they become our Pipeline for Newly qualified social workers.

### **4.1.2 Public Health**

Public Health is active in supporting undergraduate and post-graduate work placements. Work-based placements are essential in clinical studies to allow trainees to apply knowledge to practice. Members of our Public Health Consultants are qualified educational supervisors; therefore, they oversee GPs, psychologists, psychiatrists, and PH trainees. Trainees are assigned specific projects whilst on placement (which can be from one month up to a year), such as researching and reviewing alcohol and drug plans, undertaking projects linked to our suicide prevention strategy and contributing to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

### **4.1.3 Highways**

Sandwich year and shorter-term placements are offered in Highways and Transportation to Civil Engineering students either during their undergraduate programme or prior to commencing masters level study. This activity is undertaken to attract these students to one of our hard to recruit / retain professions.

## **5 T Levels – Industry Placements**

**5.1** T Levels are two-year vocational courses for 16-19 year olds, equivalent to three A levels. They combine classroom learning and work experience in a specific sector. Employers and businesses have designed the T Level curriculum to meet industry standards and needs. T Level students spend 80% of their course at college and 20% on an industry placement of at least 45 days.

**5.2** KCC supports T Levels as a high-quality vocational pathway for Kent's young people. We promote T-Level placements across our service areas and engage with managers to ensure their feasibility and support for placement opportunities.

**5.3** Following the success of the 2022/23 cohort, two science T-level students from Mid-Kent College completed a 45-day industry placement at the Kent Scientific Services Laboratory, in 2023/24. They gained valuable experience in various aspects of laboratory work, such as sample preparation, quality control, and instrument operation. KCC will host another two science T-level students in 2024/25

**5.4** KCC also hosted a Business Admin T-Level student within DCED Business Management & Client Relationships (BMCR) team in partnership with East Kent Colleges. The manager praised the students integration into the team and the valuable contribution to key project work. BMCR will host another placement for the 2024/25 cohort.

**5.5** KCC continues to work in collaboration with further education providers, such as Mid-Kent College and East Kent College. We aim to offer placements in various sectors, such as digital, health and social care, planning, legal and finance. Additional teams have volunteered to host Business Admin T-levels, and two additional placements are in the planning stage.

## **6. Supported Internships**

**6.1** A supported internship is a work-based study programme for young people aged 16-24 with special educational needs (SEND) who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and aspire to move into employment but require support. The programme lasts for a year and includes a work placement of at least six months, facilitated by an expert job coach.

**6.2** The aim is to help the intern transition to paid employment where possible at the end of the programme. Supported internships are an effective way to enable young people with SEND to develop skills, experience, and confidence for work and further learning. They combine work experience with personalised support and training, leading to qualifications and positive outcomes.

**6.3** Kent County Council (KCC) has partnered with Kent Supported Employment (KSE) to develop a tailored Supported Internship programme. This initiative aims to support SEND students in various roles, meeting the needs of both the Council and the individuals. A personalised approach is taken from referral and job profiling to identifying an appropriate placement team. This strategy ensures participating teams are suitable, have the capacity, we can cover different locations across the county

**6.4** The initial group of six interns has successfully concluded their placements. They are continuing with their education, and one has opted to volunteer for the libraries' summer reading program. Over the summer, referrals have begun arriving, and efforts are being made to align these referrals with placements starting in September and concluding in July.

**6.5** KCC continues to inspire its teams to offer opportunities for supported internships and apprenticeships. The goal is to increase the quantity and diversity of these internship placements. KCC teams will proactively support these internships and, when possible, transition them into apprenticeship or paid employment roles, either within KCC or other organisations, with continued support from KSE.

## **7. Work Experience**

**7.1** Work experience enables people to learn about the working environment directly, usually for one or two weeks. It helps individuals make informed choices about post-16 options and benefits organisations when integrated into workforce planning by identifying new talent and building a pipeline.

**7.2** KCC provides a range of work experience opportunities to young people in business areas that can accommodate this. Applicants can complete a form on [kent.gov.uk](http://kent.gov.uk) and a matching exercise will follow.

**7.3** Since KCC resumed the management of work experience from The Education People in April 2024, 187 applications have been received for work placements, with 43 placements being offered.



**7.4** KCC is dedicated to creating a virtual work experience program that, alongside practical on-the-job training, will provide a comprehensive blended work experience. Completing a virtual experience offers benefits such as skill enhancement and the chance to explore different career opportunities.

**7.5** We are currently concentrating on refining the application process and producing valuable content that provides meaningful insights and opportunities. It's essential to create engaging material for the virtual platform that both informs and captivates, enhancing the learning experience in an enjoyable and effective manner. Our goal is to improve employability skills like communication, teamwork, and time management, along with sector-specific abilities through skill development.

## **8 Future Developments**

The new Government plans to introduce the Skills England Bill; the aim of which is to bring together businesses, training providers, unions and Government to ensure a highly trained workforce exists.

The Apprenticeship Levy will become a Growth & Skills Levy and is likely to be able to be used more flexibly. It is likely that a minimum of 50% will need to be allocated to apprenticeship training either for KCC staff or others via our 'sharing the KCC levy programme' referenced earlier.

It is proposed that use of the levy will be extended to enable funding of pre-apprenticeship training which would create the opportunity to develop further pre-apprenticeship routes for young people into KCC such as level 1 and level 2 programmes alongside the Functional Skills Hub which is already in development.

The introduction of the Youth Guarantee whereby all young people aged 18 -21 will have access to training, apprenticeships or help to find work will place more emphasis on employers to enable this demographic group to enter the workplace and as one of the largest employers in Kent we must respond to this.

## **9. Conclusion**

9.1 Whilst the KCC Apprenticeship and Graduate programmes are successful, recognised and established, further routes and support are either being piloted or in development. We are committed to ensuring that opportunities are accessible to all, creating pathways into work either with us or other employers. Ultimately delivering our aims outlined in the People Strategy, in creating the environment our workforce want to be part of.

## **10. Recommendation**

Personnel Committee are invited to note the contents of the report and endorse the further development of the KCC Early Careers Programme.

## 11. Contact details

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