

To: Communities Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member, Amanda Honey, Managing Director, Communities

Date: 16th September 2010

Subject: Kent Apprenticeships

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary To update members of the committee of the latest position regarding the development of the Apprenticeship offer in Kent

FOR INFORMATION AND COMMENT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council is committed to delivering opportunities for young people, and ensuring that they are able to develop their skills. This is an area where our work has been recognised as being innovative, and where a number of public sector organisations have come to us for advice¹.
- 1.2 As part of our strategy for delivering on this commitment, KCC has developed an Apprenticeship Scheme that will provide a blueprint for public and private sector recruitment, whilst reducing the skills shortage facing the nation; and tackling the effects of youth unemployment: both on the young person and on the state.
- 1.3 This paper provides an outline of a complex and evolving situation which is reliant on clarity over funding streams and government policy. Members will be updated on developments and future plans as the landscape becomes clearer.

2. Background

2.1 What is an Apprenticeship?

Apprentices learn through a combination of on the job training acquiring practical skills, knowledge and understanding of the workplace, while theoretical underpinning knowledge is provided off the job and will be delivered by either a training provider or college.

Apprenticeships offer employers a way of tackling skills shortages, reducing staff turnover and providing young people with the opportunity to train, learn and earn on the job. There are a wide range of Apprenticeships available so the right Apprentice can be found for any organisation.

¹ East Sussex County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue have consulted the Supporting Independence Team regarding apprenticeship programmes.

The Apprenticeship qualification is made up of 3 main elements:

- NVQs – National Vocational Qualifications
- Key Skills – transferable skills
- Technical Certificate – to underpin the knowledge of the NVQ

The time it takes to complete the qualification varies depending on the young person and the Apprenticeship they are completing but typically lasts for around a year.

Apprenticeships are designed by Sector Skills Councils for their relevant sector or industry and they decide on the Apprenticeship content. This means Apprenticeships offer the organisation relevant, recognised qualifications because they have been developed by people who genuinely understand what the organisation does.

2.2 How is an Apprenticeship funded?

Apprenticeship funding is available from the National Apprenticeship Service. The size of the contribution varies depending on the sector and the age of the candidate. If the apprentice is aged 16–18 years old, employers will receive 100 per cent of the cost of the training; if they are 19-24 years old, employers will receive up to 50 per cent; if they are 25 years old or over employers may get a contribution depending on the sector and area in which the organisation operates.

This funding is paid directly to the organisation that provides and supports the Apprenticeship; in most cases this will be a learning provider.

The employer is required to cover the costs of the salary of the Apprentice. The national minimum for Apprentices is £95 per week and from October 2010 a National Minimum Wage of £2.50 per hour will be introduced.

3. **National Picture**

- 3.1 In April 2009, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) was established. It has “end to end” responsibility for Apprenticeships in England. The NAS has been designed to increase the number of Apprenticeship opportunities and provide a dedicated, responsive service for both employers and learners. They are simplifying the process of recruiting an Apprentice through Apprenticeship vacancies, an online web-based matching service.
- 3.2 No decision has been made as yet on the future for the Apprenticeship entitlement, for raising the participation age, or programme -led Apprenticeships. The Coalition has, nevertheless, made it clear in general terms that increased participation 16-19 and Apprenticeships (particularly level 3) are worthwhile. Due to the Parliamentary recess and with the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, it may be a while until clear direction emerges at the national level.

4. Kent Picture

Kent Success

- 4.1 Kent Success is the name given to the part of the Kent Apprenticeship Programme that has been developed within KCC since October 2006; this is now established across the Council. The Programme is aimed at 16 to 19 year olds who would like to start their career within local government; the target is to provide at least 250 Apprenticeship opportunities within KCC and placements are being offered across all Directorates in departments including Legal & Democratic Services, Waste Management, the Youth Service, Kent Adult Social Services as well as placements within KCC schools and nurseries.
- 4.2 KEY Training Services currently deliver the training aspects of these Apprenticeships in the following skill areas;
- Business & Administration
 - Customer Service
 - Child Care
 - Health & Social Care
 - Warehousing
 - IT
 - Teaching Assistants
- 4.3 The Kent Success Programme has been developed to provide much more than just the formal work based learning placement. A support package for the Apprentices has been designed, providing them with structured training in confidence building, assertiveness, CV writing, KCC application forms and interview techniques. Peer Group Meetings take place once a quarter and provide personal development opportunities. Placement Managers are also provided with support and receive a Manager's Guidance booklet when they take on an Apprentice that outlines the roles and responsibilities within the Programme.
- 4.4 The Personnel function within the Council has supported the Programme from the start and has developed an Apprenticeship Contract, ensured guaranteed interviews for apprentices who meet the minimum criteria when applying for roles within KCC, offer personalised support to apprentices in the last 3 months of their contract and have removed the need for experience for lower grade roles. KCC pays the Apprentices £105 per week which is above the national minimum of £95 per week.
- 4.5 Since October 2006, 343 young people have undertaken Apprenticeships within Kent County Council, with 95 still in training across a variety of departments. The Apprentices have come from a range of backgrounds, some have just finished school and come straight onto the Programme, others have worked in a different job for a while but decided that this is a more positive route for them. Their educational background is also varied, some have 5 A-C grade GCSEs and others may have one or two A-G grade GCSEs.

All young people undertake numeracy and literacy assessments to ensure that they will be able to achieve their qualification and so that an individual learning plan can be developed for them.

4.6 Kent Success has an overall completion rate of 75% which is above the national average for Apprenticeships (70%). Of the 187 young people who have completed their Apprenticeship within Kent County Council, 73% have gone on to gain full time, permanent employment within KCC or the wider public sector. A further 25% of those who have completed their Apprenticeship have moved into employment within the private sector. 61 young people have not achieved their full Apprenticeship qualification. They have left for a variety of reasons including continuing with further study or moving into permanent employment elsewhere. Only 6 young people have been dismissed as not suitable to work within KCC.

4.7 Kent Success Case Studies

Below are some case studies from young people and managers who have been part of Kent Success:

4.7.1 Apprentice Case Studies

Aimee Sutton

“Before I started my apprenticeship I was working as an office junior in a small property lawyers. Unfortunately when the recession struck I was made redundant, after 3 months of looking for permanent work things weren't looking good until I saw the Kent Success Apprentice scheme and within a week of applying I was in a job doing an Apprenticeship in Customer Service.

The apprenticeship for me was the best thing to happen to me in my life so far, I gained new skills, on the job experience, a qualification all whilst earning a wage to enjoy myself in my spare time, also I was nominated for Apprentice of the year at the LSC Awards and won highly commended award which really boosted my confidence, if I had not taken this opportunity I would still be struggling to find a job.

I now work full time as a Support Service Officer in KCC Exchequer Services and am due to start an AAT accountancy course in September.”

4.7.2 Manager Case Studies

Dawn Byde, Legal & Democratic Services

“We have had some very positive experiences with Kent Success Apprentices. The very first Apprentice we took on (7 years ago) is still with us and is now a Legal Secretary. We have another who also stayed with our team after completing his qualification and is now training to be a Legal Executive. More recently, we had an apprentice who was with us for 8 months and has just recently moved to a permanent position with a team

that is also at Clover House. We have just taken on our fourth apprentice and they are settling in well. All our apprentices have been very diligent, eager to learn and have integrated very well into our legal office.”

4.8 Kent Apprenticeships

In addition to providing opportunities within the Authority itself, KCC also works with the rest of the public and private sector to encourage employers to take on Apprentices. Working in partnership with the National Apprenticeship Service, the Kent Association of Training Organisations, KCC has established the Kent Apprenticeships Partnership.

The Partnership acts as an information, advice and guidance service, providing excellent information to young people, and their parents/carers and employers in Kent. Kent Apprenticeships is working across the County to create a stimulating learning journey for young people in Kent, developing the necessary employability skills fit for the 21st century by giving them real choice and diversity of provision appropriate to meet their ambitions, aspirations and ability.

4.9 Thanet Pilot

In Thanet, as part of Kent Apprenticeships, KCC have partnered with Beyond Excellence to support young people and Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) to better engage with Apprenticeships. A scheme has been piloted where employers receive a subsidy from KCC to pay just over half of the Apprentice salary whilst they cover the remaining £50. Apprentices have been supported through Beyond Excellence developing their confidence, self esteem and work ready skills.

Employers have also been supported in the recruitment of Apprentices by supplying CVs and arranging interviews and acting as a point of contact in reference to any questions, concerns or disciplinary issues. To further support the employer Kent Apprenticeships write and administer the apprentice's contract and pay the apprentice through Kent Top Temps payroll and invoice on a monthly basis. Feedback from employers has shown that they find the process of recruiting and employing an apprentice very simple.

Evaluation of the project has found that the majority of the employers feel that the financial subsidy was an essential part of why they took part in the scheme, particularly in the current economic climate. The subsidy enabled them to make recruitment savings while increasing their business' competitiveness and productivity. Only a small number of employers stated that they would have taken on an apprentice if the subsidy was not in place.

4.10 KCC Procurement

Within the KCC Apprenticeship strategy, it was identified that public sector procurement is an area that could be developed to increase the number of Apprenticeships in Kent. Discussions have taken place with procurement managers across all KCC Directorates and it is clear that there is a genuine will to develop young people, and to achieve this through our procurement.

Detailed guidance for procurement managers is being developed to ensure that apprenticeships are considered at every stage of procurement, and will be developing ways to assist suppliers to meet their obligations under these clauses, including the development of the South East Apprenticeship Company as a way to ensure even short term (less than 6 months) contracts can produce apprenticeships.

KCC, through the Public Service Board will be encouraging the rest of the Public Sector in Kent to develop Apprenticeships through their procurement activities.

4.11 South East Apprenticeship Company (SEAC)

SEAC is a one-stop shop for Apprentices and employers that was launched by the Labour Government in the Spring 2010. It is one of 10 new Apprenticeship Training Agencies set up throughout England. It brings together key training providers across the South East of England to create 1,600 Apprenticeships by 2013.

SEAC will support Apprentices by assessing existing skills and offering careers guidance, prepare them for interviews, offer a variety of work experiences and offer a safety net if things don't work out with one business then they will find an alternative placement. The support offered to employers is from initial advice to placements. They will help employers screen and interview candidates, remove bureaucracy by employing the apprentice on their behalf and act as a link between employers, apprentices and training providers.

KCC will be working with SEAC on a number of initiatives and have a seat on the SEAC Board to ensure that there are linkages between the two organisations.

5. Marketing

- 5.1 KCC has led, in partnership with NAS and Kent Association of Training Organisations (KATO), the implementation of a Kent Apprenticeships "button" on Kent Choices for you and Your Choice in Medway allowing young people to access generic information on Apprenticeships and register their interest online for the first time. This website targets 16 to 19 year olds who are in full time education or who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- 5.2 Apprenticeships are promoted through the Kent Apprenticeships website that provides information, advice and guidance for young people and employers who are interested in finding out more about how to access them. Please see www.kentapprenticeships.com for further information.
- 5.3 Members of the Supporting Independence (SIP) team also attend countywide Chamber and Business Network breakfasts engaging with employers and

encouraging them to take on Apprentices, highlighting the benefits for them and also offering support to develop their programmes.

- 5.4 Promotion has also been carried out within schools, with KCC officers attending year 11 career briefings to provide information on Apprenticeships as an alternative route post 16. A series of events were held in April and May where young people and their parents could come along and find out more about the Apprenticeship offer in Kent and register their interest.
- 5.5 A “Kent Apprenticeships bus” has been commissioned by SIP and is being sent out and about in Kent to tell employers and young people how apprenticeships can develop talent, be a real benefit to businesses and open up a route to success. The bus will be primarily used to promote Apprenticeships to employers and will be taken to business events, large industrial estates and retail parks. It will also be positioned in town centres to attract employers, young people and their parents to provide the most up to date information about Apprenticeships in Kent.

6. Role of Schools

6.1 Delivering Apprenticeships

Kent Schools have been running the Young Apprenticeship (YA) (14-16) programme for a number of years; the programme (cohort) is run over a two year period which includes 50 days work placement over the period. Cohort 6 (248 learners) is currently running in its second year and Cohort 7 starts from September 2010. The planned number of apprentices in Cohort 7 is 360 following a number of sectors including Construction, Motor Vehicle, Hairdressing, Sports Leadership and Art & Design. Kent also has within the South East region the largest YA programme. Also within the 14-19 Vocational Centres and Schools over twelve thousand young people in years 9-11 are following vocational courses and the strategic aim will be to ensure that these young people access Apprenticeships post 16.

6.2 As an employer

The 14 -19 Entitlement Unit, in conjunction with SIP, have been working directly with schools and explaining and demonstrating the benefits of the apprenticeship programme, and schools in the main have embraced the concept and employed apprenticeships into their workforce. To date, there have been 55 young people who have undertaken Kent Success Apprenticeships in schools and nurseries.

The 14 -19 Entitlement Unit is also hoping to scope a plan to encourage schools to employ apprentices by offering six pilots to help Head Teachers/Principals develop their workforce by piloting a Laboratory Technician Apprenticeship through the Sittingbourne Science Park facility, ICT through a National leader in the field and Ground Staff through a local Horticulture provider. Ideally six to ten schools will employ young people in each of these areas and have a target of 50 apprenticeship starts by March 2012.

6.3 Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG)

Working with the National Apprenticeship Service, KCC has issued guidance to all schools about apprenticeships through a dedicated resource pack. The resource pack has been developed to be used with a range of audiences. Material includes fact sheets, teacher resource sheets and activity sheets. These can be used as appropriate with each audience.

Through the online prospectus process pupils also have access to IAG via a dedicated Apprenticeship website. Kent's online prospectus, Kentchoices4u.com, contains details of almost all learning opportunities for 14-19 year olds and has a prominent link to Kent Apprenticeships. In September there will also be an IAG portal sitting in front of the prospectus which will have a section on apprenticeships, linking to NAS and other relevant organisations.

7. **Next Steps**

7.1 Kent Success Apprenticeship Pool

From September 2010, KCC is extending the Kent Success Apprenticeship Programme. Changes to recruitment procedures agreed by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) mean that Managers will be required to appoint Apprentices to any KR2 - KR4 roles, which have been agreed as suitable and if there are no redeployees.

Apprentices will continue to be placed around the organisation in supernumerary positions but as and when vacancies arise they will be put forward for interview and will be appointed where appropriate. This could happen at any point during their Apprenticeship placement. When the Apprentice is appointed against a vacancy, they will continue to be paid an Apprenticeship salary until they complete their qualification and are deemed to be able to carry out the full duties of the role. Managers and Apprentices will receive ongoing support from the Kent Success Support Officers and also from the KEY Training tutors.

The Apprentice, whether in a placement or appointed against a post, is fully employed by KCC on an Apprenticeship contract. As an employee they are subject to the same terms and conditions and procedures as all other employees.

The enhanced Kent Success programme will give young people undertaking an Apprenticeship within KCC a greater opportunity to gain permanent employment with the organisation and therefore enhance the age profile and inject new ideas and enthusiasm into KCC.

7.2 Supporting Vulnerable Learners into Apprenticeships

KCC has a major role to play in tackling worklessness and is already managing "Future Jobs" funding enabling young people in long term unemployment to access work. Through the current apprenticeship programme we are providing new opportunities for young people to gain the right skills to enter full time employment. However, there is more that can be done. For this reason, from September 2010, KCC is leading a pilot scheme

that will increase the employment potential of vulnerable young people by supporting them into Apprenticeships.

The following four groups have been chosen for this scheme due to the high possibility that they will become, or already are, NEET (not in education, employment or training). They are potentially disengaged from learning and skills and are currently finding it difficult to access Apprenticeship opportunities.

The target groups are;

- Teenage Parents
- Young Offenders
- Care Leavers
- Young people with learning or physical disabilities or mental health problems

We will be working with 20 young people from each target group. Those taking part in the scheme will have a range of needs, for example young offenders may have committed low level offences; others may be leaving Cookham Wood Young Offender Institution. The development of this Apprenticeship Scheme will link to KCC's Employment Strategy for Socially Excluded Adults and 20 of the vulnerable young people will be employed by KCC as part of the Kent Success Programme. The remaining 60 young people will be employed by SEAC and placed with employers across the County.

The scheme will be closely evaluated from the start to ensure that we are able to evidence the value of employing these young people into Apprenticeships and to identify the barriers for them in participating in this type of training. Young people will be placed with employers who have real jobs to offer these young people to ensure that each is given the best opportunity to stay in permanent employment.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Excellent work is being carried out in Kent to promote Apprenticeships to young people and employers ensuring that both understand the benefits. Partnership work has been vital to the developments outlined above, both internally between SIP, CFE and Personnel & Development and with external partners such as the National Apprenticeship Service and the Kent Association of Training Providers. Kent is leading the way nationally with the Kent Apprenticeships Partnership.
- 8.2 It will be a challenge to move the Apprenticeship agenda forward both due to the current economic climate and the uncertainty of the future direction of the

Coalition Government. However, Kent is in a prime position to do this and to shape the Apprenticeship offer.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Members of the POSC are asked to note the latest developments of the Kent Apprenticeship Programme
- 9.2 Members of the POSC are asked to let officers know if any further information is required to enable them to become Ambassadors or Champions for Apprenticeships.

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