

To: Cabinet

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

Subject: Draft Apprenticeships Strategy and Action Plan 2011 – 2014

Date: 20 June 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 young people 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), the Kent Association of Further Education Colleges (KAFEC) 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, Customer & Communities Directorate Management Team, the Learning & Skills Board, CMT and key internal partners who have had the opportunity to input. We have also consulted more widely on the strategy, involving not only the National Apprenticeships Service, the Kent Association of Further Education Colleges and Kent Association of Training Organisations but also some of the Apprentices on KCC's Kent Success Programme.

The draft strategy has been shared with members of the Skills for Business Growth Board for comment, and national interest has been shown by Hertfordshire County Council and the South East Director of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

3. Recommendation

Members of Cabinet are asked to:

- Agree the draft Apprenticeship Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2014

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Kent Apprenticeship Strategy

2011 - 2014

1. Introduction

Our vision is to make apprenticeships the skills option of choice for young people and employers.

Our objectives in achieving this vision are to:

- Raise awareness of the value of apprenticeships
- Support the businesses of Kent to offer apprenticeships
- Support young people in applying for and undertaking an apprenticeship

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 goal 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 learners, or giving young people the tools to take control of their lives.

1.1 National Context

The government see Apprenticeships as forming a key part of the skills agenda over the coming years, and as an excellent way for businesses to ensure that they have the skilled workforce that they need. Over the period of the Spending Review up to 2014-15, the further education resource will be reduced by 25%, however there will be an expansion of apprenticeships, including adult apprenticeships, where an extra 75,000 places will be available by 2014-15.

There will be an increased focus on achievements at a higher level, with Level 3 Apprenticeships being the level to which learners and employers aspire. Whilst there will also be an effort to ensure that there are clear routes from Apprenticeships to higher level training including, but not exclusively Level 4 apprenticeships.

As part of the “Skills for Sustainable Growth” strategy there will efforts to ensure that vocational qualifications reflect the changing needs of employers, and that there is a reduction in the reliance of some sectors of the economy on migration to fill jobs.

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 latest figures for apprenticeship starts (2009/10 academic year) show that nationally 279,700 people started apprenticeships, with 116,800 of those between 16-19, and a further 113,800 19-24 year olds.

1.2 The Kent Landscape

In Kent it has been a priority for the County Council to develop a system of learning that recognises the different aspirations of young people. We committed to, and have delivered, a pioneering 14-16 vocational programme, setting up 25 Vocational Skills Centres across Kent. These centres have enabled 8,500 14-16 year olds to undertake a vocational course. Clearly we are creating a cohort of young people who are ready to move into an apprenticeship.

We have invested in promoting and developing Apprenticeships in Kent, and have made significant progress over the past four years, delivering an additional 1400 Apprenticeships over the period, through a combination of strong leadership by us, excellent partnership working with training providers, and promoting to businesses and the rest of the public sector, all this has been brought together under the banner of Kent Apprenticeships.

The figures for apprenticeship starts in Kent show the impact of the council's efforts over the Towards 2010 period:

	Apprenticeship Starts			
	16-18	19-24	25+	Total
2005/6	1700	1360	N/a	3060
2009/10	2070	2110	840	5020

Although this improvement is to be welcomed, it should be recognised that out of a total cohort of 57,471 16-18 year old learners, only 2070 (6.5%) started an apprenticeship in 2009/10, this clearly shows that there is still significant room for growth. This is highlighted by the fact that last only 3,500 organisations employed apprentices out of a total of almost 50,000 businesses.

The youth unemployment figures for Kent reinforce the need for further action, with 18-24 year olds accounting for 28.6% of all unemployment in Kent (7,780 young people out of a total claimant count of 27,917). The table below shows the trend for youth unemployment since the start of the economic downturn.

	March 2008	March 2009	March 2010	March 2011
No. 18-24 year old claimants	4,300	8,485	8,905	7,780

In Kent we are uniquely placed to meet these challenges with a partnership between KCC, the Kent Association of Further Education Colleges (KAFEC), the Kent Association of

Training Organisations (KATO) and the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), who work together under the banner of Kent Apprenticeships to deliver a coordinated service for the people of Kent.

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.

2. Meeting the Apprenticeship challenge in Kent

In Kent, there is currently a lack of understanding around Apprenticeships by employers and young people as there have been many changes in recent years and this route is not seen as the skills option of choice for all young people and employers. Many have out-dated knowledge of Apprenticeships and do not understand the current qualification and this in turn puts them off. 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.

Apprenticeships are not necessarily viewed, by either young people or employers, 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.

To address this, we will work with the Kent Apprenticeships Partnership Group to develop an integrated marketing strategy. We will ensure that employers, young people and their influencers have access to the most up to date information regarding Apprenticeships, understand what an Apprenticeship entails, what the pathway into their chosen career may be and what the benefits are, and know what support is available to them.

Alongside raising the profile of Apprenticeships, we will develop support services for both employers and young people to ensure that the Apprenticeship process is simple and straightforward for all.

2.1 Employer Engagement and Support

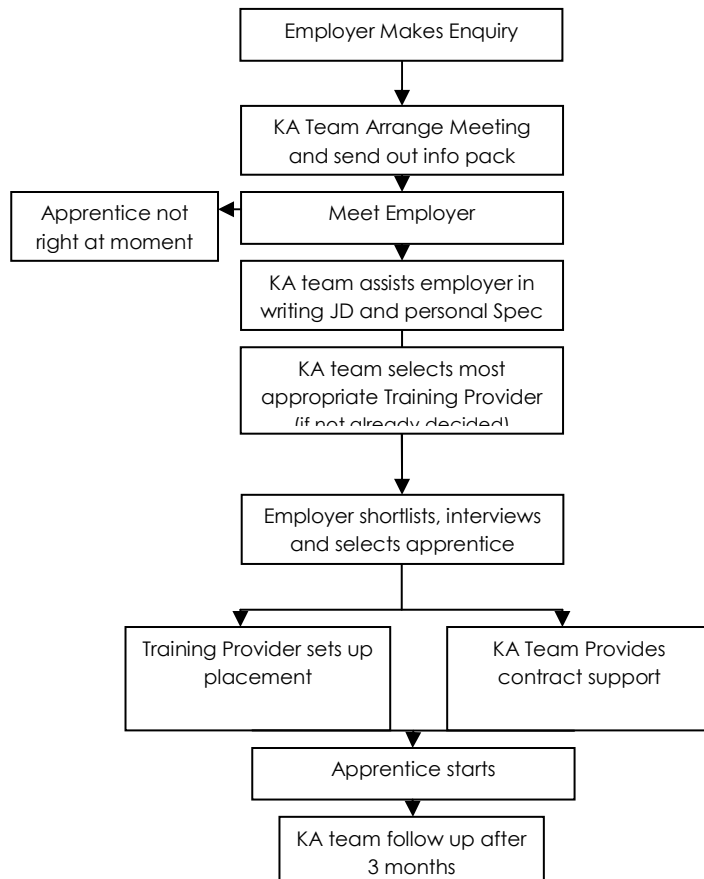
At present the National Apprenticeship Service has the responsibility for providing advice and support to the business community who may be interested in taking on a young person. However due to their limited resources they have decided to focus on employers with over 250 members of staff, as these are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

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

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 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. We will also work with employer to create and highlight career pathways for their Apprentices to enable them to progress with organisations.

2.2 Young People Engagement and Support

Currently the Apprenticeship landscape is very confusing for young people and those they turn to for advice. With the creation of the all age careers service, through this strategy, we will meet the challenge of ensuring that young people are able to access impartial information, advice and guidance regarding Apprenticeships.

To ensure young people understand the benefits and opportunities that apprenticeships offer we will work with schools, and other influencers to provide them with up to date and relevant information, including how to access further advice. We will put in place structures for young people that will support them to find an Apprenticeship.

We will work with employers to align their recruitment of Apprentices to the academic year. Young people do not currently have the option to apply for an Apprenticeship as they do for college or sixth form. This also means, in some cases, that there are limited opportunities for young people undertaking vocational courses aged 14-16 to progress into an Apprenticeship post 16. Aligning Apprenticeships recruitment with the academic year will ensure that they are seen as a real progression from school in September.

As mentioned previously, it is important that Apprenticeships are viewed as part of a career pathway; we will work with the Local Enterprise Partnership to identify key skills gaps for the region and particularly 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.

3. Growing Apprenticeships in Kent County Council and Wider Public Sector

3.1 Kent Success (KCC Apprenticeship Model)

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. Our target within Bold Steps for Kent is to deliver 350 apprentices over the next four years.

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 review the existing Kent Success programme, build on the model that has been developed and ensure that it is fit for purpose moving forward.

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

- Research & Intelligence

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 Public Sector

Currently there is limited engagement with Apprenticeships across the wider public sector. Those organisations that have taken on Apprentices have employed very low numbers. This is due to a number of reasons;

- Limited resources to manage apprentices
- Limited budgets
- Changing nature of public sector – move toward becoming commissioning bodies with lower staff numbers

We have worked closely with public sector colleagues to promote apprenticeships and now we would like 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.

A key area of focus will be the health economy which is a large employer in Kent. Working with the Hospital and Community Services NHS Trusts, we will identify areas where there are skills shortages, such as health visiting, and support the development of Apprenticeships in these areas.

3.3 Procurement

The public sector is a large procurer of services within the county and this will become increasingly important as the public sector moves to become commissioner rather than a deliverer of services.

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 offer to 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.

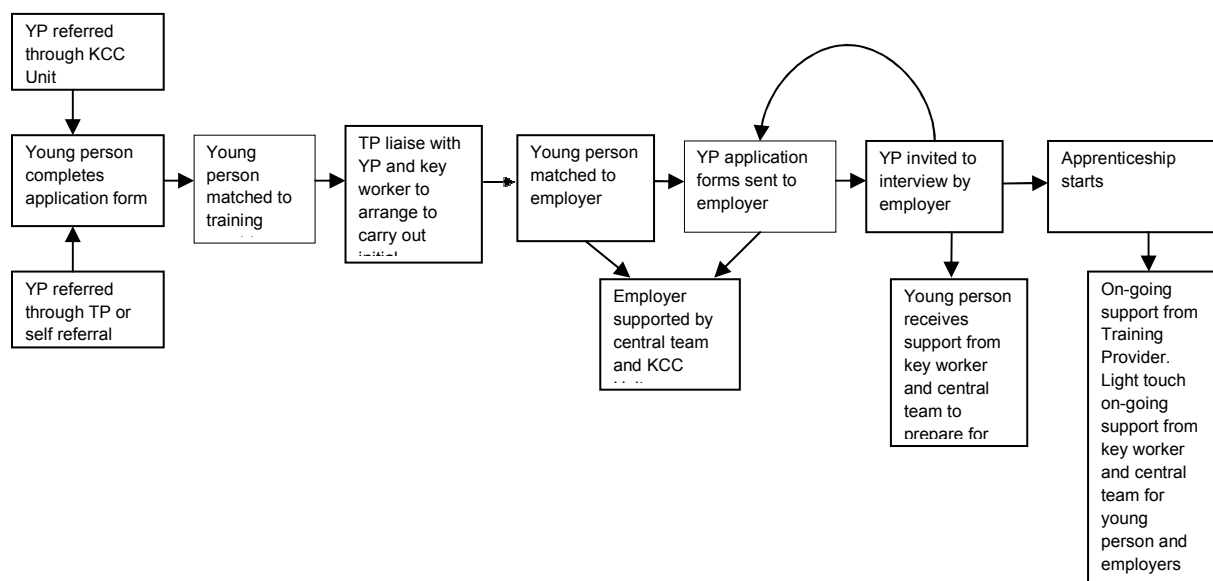
4. Specialist Delivery

Supporting Looked After Children leaving care, young offenders, young parents and young people with disabilities and mental health problems into Apprenticeships has been a key focus for KCC for the past year within our Vulnerable Learner project. Unemployment rates amongst these groups by far exceed national youth unemployment figures:

- Learning Disabilities – 94%
- Young Offenders – 60%
- Looked After Children leaving care – 33%
- Young Parents – 84%

The project to date has highlighted the intensive support that these groups of young people require to access Apprenticeships in the first instance and then the continued support they need once in their role. It has also identified that there is a gap in provision for most of these groups that moves them from preparing for employment and actually finding and moving into that employment.

We have worked extensively with units within KCC, training providers, colleges and employers to develop a model that makes the pathway into an Apprenticeship simple for young people and employers.



The project is being evaluated and we will use the learning to inform our specialist delivery in the future. We will learn from the challenges we have faced with each cohort, identify the key areas that would need to be maintained for continued success placing the young people into Apprenticeships and develop the model further, attracting external funding and realigning existing KCC and Apprenticeship funding where possible. By supporting these groups of young people into Apprenticeships we are potentially saving the public purse £56,301 – the average cost for a young person who is NEET aged 16 to 18.

5. Resources

What we have set out in the strategy above and the accompanying action plan is ambitious and reflects the growth of Apprenticeships we wish to achieve over the next three years. The strategy is deliverable within existing resources although it will require a reallocation of resources within the Supporting Independence Programme budget to ensure that targets are met and a high quality Apprenticeship offer to employers and young people is delivered.

As the specialist delivery element of the strategy develops we will work internally within KCC and with partners to secure the additional funding required.

6. Priority Areas and Outcomes

6.1 Employer Engagement and Support

- Employers are fully informed about Apprenticeships and the benefits they can bring to businesses
- An employer support service has been developed to ensure that the employment of an Apprentice is a simple and straightforward process for businesses.
- Recruitment of Apprentices is aligned with the academic year

6.2 Young People Engagement and Support

- Young people are fully informed about Apprenticeships and understand they are part of a career pathway
- The pathway from pre 16 vocational education into Apprenticeships is clear
- Young people are supported through the Apprenticeship application process

6.3 Kent County Council

- Kent Success Programme has delivered 350 Apprentices
- KCC career pathways are developed to meet skill shortages
- All appropriate contracts comply with the Apprenticeship procurement guidelines

6.4 Wider Public Sector

- Wider public sector have adopted the Kent Success Model and are employing larger number of Apprentices
- Career pathways are developed to meet skill shortages

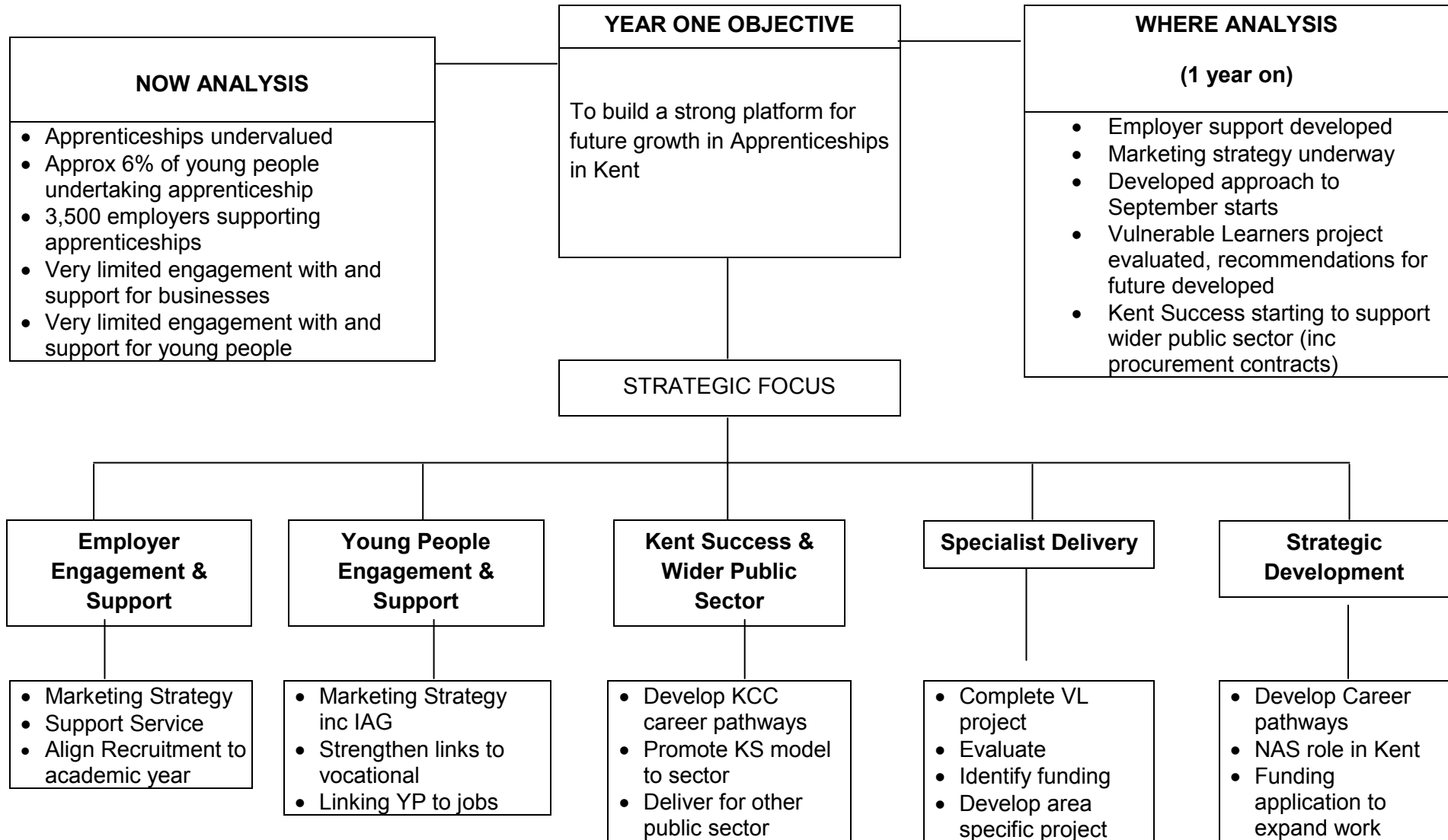
6.5 Specialist Delivery

- Vulnerable Learners Project has been evaluated and best practice model developed
- Area specific projects have been developed to support targeted groups
- External funding has been secured to support delivery

6.6 Outcome Measures

This strategy recognises the need to develop good indicators of its success and these can be seen in the supporting action plan in Appendix B. Outcome measures e.g. an increase in the number of young people undertaking Apprenticeships, the number of businesses accessing the Employer Engagement and Support Service, will be developed to enable the measurement of the impact of the strategy.

APPENDIX A - OVERVIEW OF APPRENTICESHIP STRATEGY



APPENDIX B - 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 annual 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 to develop processes	One pilot scheme implemented	Sept 2011

Project / Development		A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates
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
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

Project / Development		A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates
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
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 	Clear understanding of need and proposed model	May 2011

Project / Development		A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates
			supporting material <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify existing employer support 		
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	Ensuring employers: <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	Lucy Bett/Martin Blincow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish mechanism for advertising apprenticeship employment opportunities to enable young people to apply and support them through the process 	Young people applying for opportunities	Nov 2012

Project / Development		A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates
4.4	Support implementation of actions arising from Student Journey Select Committee	SIP Manager	As arising		March 2012
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

Project / Development		A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates
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
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

Project / Development		A/C Manager	Key Actions	Outcomes	Target Dates
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