

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 8

meeting date: WEDNESDAY, 15 JANUARY 2020
 title: LANCASHIRE APPRENTICESHIP ACTION PLAN
 submitted by: JANE PEARSON – DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
 principal author: MICHELLE SMITH – HEAD OF HR

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To update on our support for a Lancashire Apprenticeship Action Plan.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions:

- Community Objectives – support for the Lancashire Apprenticeship Action Plan will enable us to actively encourage apprenticeships and apprentice training in businesses across the borough and to support careers input in our local schools.
- Corporate Priorities – working with our local employers to encourage investment in the development of staff and the creation of new job training opportunities meets our priority to “sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley.”
- Other considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Over the last few years there have been changes and reforms to Apprenticeships. These changes have fundamentally changed which business are using Apprenticeship training to upskill their staff and what types of Apprenticeships they are using to do it.

The Government's reasons for changing the system was to improve the quality of Apprenticeships and to make Apprenticeship training more relevant, to meet the skills needs of employers. They also wanted to secure employer investment and sustainable funding for Apprenticeships to enable them to fund more Apprenticeships of a higher quality, to meet skills gaps and compete internationally.

The immediate impact of the changes, that took effect from Spring 2017, resulted in a dip in Apprenticeship numbers across the country, and from 2016/17 to 2017/18 Lancashire has experienced a percentage drop in the number of Apprenticeships of -32.5% compared to -24% nationally.

2.2 The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel have worked in partnership with the Lancashire Leaders Group to establish a task and finish group whose aim was to review the reduction in Apprenticeship starts in Lancashire, the impact of the Apprenticeship Reforms and establish examples of good practice in relation to use of the Apprenticeship Levy. The outcome was that the group produced an action plan focussed on actions that will have local impact and influence.

The Apprenticeship Action Group comprises a number of key representatives from the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub, the Lancashire Leaders, local colleges, local training providers, local authorities and organisations delivering European Social Fund projects aimed at upskilling employees. It was agreed that these members represented the appropriate people to design, develop, deliver and share a plan (the Apprenticeship Action Plan) that aimed to support the growth of Apprenticeships across the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership area.

2.3 The Apprenticeship Action Plan is Lancashire’s collective response to the impact of the Apprentice reforms. It aims to implement action where councils have local influence to facilitate an approach that maximises the benefits of Apprenticeship training. This in turn will mean that Apprenticeship training positively contributes to businesses having the skilled and productive workforce they require to thrive.

2.3 The Apprenticeship Action Plan is focussed on actions to grow a supply of high-quality Apprenticeship opportunities and simultaneously create demand for those opportunities. The fundamental aim is to ensure that businesses understand and value Apprenticeships and choose to offer Apprenticeship opportunities for new recruits and existing staff to develop the skilled workforce that their business requires.

The purpose of the plan is to:-

- Increase the number, range and quality of Apprenticeships and encourage greater levels of provision at higher and degree level, reaching more employers in sectors with high replacement demand and growth.
- Influence public sector organisations in relation to Apprenticeship take up.
- Address issues/barriers of local providers and employers to support Apprenticeship growth.

2.4 A copy of the Action Plan is attached at Appendix A.

3 ISSUES

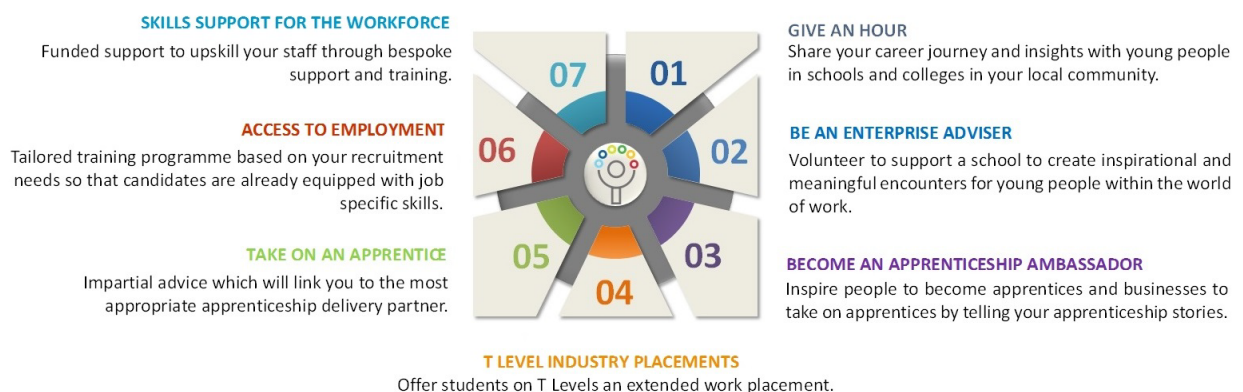
3.1 The Lancashire Leaders were asked to make nominations for officers to support the implementation of the Apprenticeship Action Plan. The Council Leader discussed this with the Chief Executive who asked me to act as the Council’s representative at any meetings pertaining to the plan.

3.2 I have subsequently attended two meetings since November 2019 to discuss implementation of the action plan.

3.3 One of the key actions that was encouraged at a December meeting was for organisations to sign up to the ‘Lancashire Skills Pledge’.

Signing up to the pledge is designed to give a business recognition for the things it does to upskill, recruit and inspire the people of Lancashire. Being a Pledge Member is widely recognised as a commitment to inspiring and developing the skills of people living and working in Lancashire.

The skills pledge areas are outlined below:



I have signed up to the pledge on behalf of the Council. Once you are signed up, you can then identify which specific areas within the pledge you are able to support. For this Council I have indicated that we will support:

- * take on an apprentice – we currently have 2 Apprentice posts within the Council.
- * skills support for the workforce – we currently use our Apprentice Levy funds to pay for training of apprentices and for developing our existing workforce
- * give an hour (share your career journey and insights with young people in schools, and colleges in your local community) – we currently attend careers fairs and take part in mock interview days in our local schools. We also support them with provision of work experience placements.

3.4 The Apprenticeship Action plan also encourages local authorities to raise the profile of apprenticeships within their local communities. Our Economic Development team currently work with schools and businesses in the borough to promote apprenticeships and support career opportunities/development.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- Resources: No implications identified.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal: No implications identified.
- Political: No implications identified.
- Reputation: No implications identified.
- Equality & Diversity – No implications identified.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Signing up to the Lancashire Skills Pledge and working with other authorities and partner organisations to implement the Apprenticeship Action plan shows our commitment to support the growth of Apprenticeships across the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership area and also supports the delivery of the 'People' strand of the Council's Economic Plan.

MICHELLE SMITH
HEAD OF HR

JANE PEARSON
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Michelle Smith,

Appendix A - Apprenticeship Action Plan Matrix

Identified issue and evidence to support	Recommendations			Next Steps (to be driven by LEAD)
	Lancashire Leaders (LL)	Lancashire Skills Hub (LSH)	Lancashire WBL Executive Forum (LWBLEF)	
<p>i. Levy payers in the majority of cases are not spending their full levy and do not plan to spend their full levy in the future, both locally and nationally.</p>	<p>Supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LL to engage with Levy Payers where their Local Authority has a relationship with them, to ensure that levy payers can communicate their issues, utilise resource and/or engage with events. 	<p>LEAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that any businesses interested in apprenticeships are fully informed and supported making the process as clear and straightforward as possible, using the Skills Pledge process where possible. • Communicate with Levy Payers to address the key issues identified in the evidence base and offer solutions. • Organise an event for Levy Payers and work with LWBLEF to monitor the impact of the referrals that occur off the back of the event. 	<p>Supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a smooth process of transition for levy payers to be supported by the LWBLEF, so that businesses can be efficiently handed over to the relevant providers to begin a detailed apprenticeship discussion. • Feedback loop to be created so that providers inform the LWBLEF of the result of those referrals which is then fed back to the LSH so that the impact can be tracked against performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and acknowledge local activity and established networking groups to ensure that any further activity adds value in the Lancashire setting. • Produce and distribute a Lancashire Employers' Apprenticeship Toolkit through partners and to intermediaries engaged with businesses to assist all employers.

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ii. Lancashire's Public Sector organisations in the majority of cases in 2017/18 did not spend their full levy and/or meet their 2.3% target (Lancashire Local Authority survey).	LEAD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lancashire Leaders to make a public pledge that the Local Authorities in the Lancashire LEP area commit to meet the 2.3% target, setting the example and influencing the broader public sector to follow suit. • Establish good practice in the transfer of levy funds in Lancashire to supply chain organisations. • Encourage all public sector organisations to become Lancashire Employer Ambassadors and allow their Apprentices to become Ambassadors and to contribute to the creation of Apprenticeship case studies. 	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and amplify the PR campaign to announce the Local Authority's commitment to the 2.3% target, through partners to achieve the maximum attention. • Support the delivery of a Public Sector Event. • Monitor the impact on additional Apprenticeship starts which can be tracked through the Government's published data. 	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a smooth process of transition for levy payers to be supported by the LWBLEF so that businesses can be efficiently handed over to the relevant providers to begin an Apprenticeship discussion. • Feedback loop to be created so that providers inform the LWBLEF of the result of those referrals which is then fed back to the LSH so that the impact can be tracked against performance. • Work with partners to support the Public Sector to join the Apprenticeship Ambassador network as Employer Ambassadors and encourage them to sign their Apprentices up to become Apprenticeship Ambassadors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a PR campaign to announce the Local Authority's commitment to the 2.3% target. • Organise an event for Lancashire Public Sector organisations using the influence the LL have with key public sector partners to bring them to the table. Invite well performing organisations which are diverse in size and nature to present at the event to share their best practise, South Ribble Council and Lancashire County Council have volunteered. • Use findings from the Lancashire wide Local Authority Apprenticeship survey (which was undertaken by the Action Group) to

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lancashire Public Sector organisations to continue to lobby, through the Local Government Association issues associated with the reforms, for example the delay in release of Apprenticeship Standards and confirmation of End Point Assessments, and calls to utilise locally levy underspend. 			<p>inform the event agenda to address key issues identified and offer solutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LWBLEF to produce case studies for those willing to contribute. LWBLEF to hold an Apprenticeship Ambassador networking event and invite public sector organisations to the meeting to find out more.
<p>iii. Analysis of the first cut of Bluesheep data has identified that there are employers who have bucked the overarching downward trend and grown their Apprenticeships in sectors that are a priority to Lancashire. If these 'Apprenticeship Champions' are not engaged in some way with promoting</p>	<p>Supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LL to communicate with champions where the Leaders have a relationship with them to encourage them be an Employer Ambassador and allow their Apprentices to be Ambassadors. 	<p>LEAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise LSH and partner's relationships with these employers where they exist, e.g. LAs, Chambers, and Growth Hub etc. and determine their current engagement with the skills and employment agenda. 	<p>Supported by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to support identified businesses to join the Ambassador network as Employer Ambassadors and encourage them to sign their Apprentices up to become Apprenticeship Ambassadors. Produce case studies for those willing to participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LSH to further mine the Bluesheep data to identify potential Apprenticeship Champions across all sectors. LWBLEF to produce case studies for those willing to contribute.

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Apprenticeships in Lancashire then we are missing a significant opportunity.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those not engaged with the Apprenticeship agenda approach them through the organisation that has the most positive relationship with them, with the aim of influencing them to be formal active Ambassadors – including speaking to other businesses at events, sharing best practice, case studies etc. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the South Ribble Council's Apprenticeship Factory as a pilot to facilitate a project group of the best performing public and private sector organisations to develop Ambassador roles and activities.
iv. Analysis of the first cut of Bluesheep data has identified that there are employers who were 'historical Apprenticeship Champions' (10 or more starts in a year) who now deliver fewer Apprenticeships or none at all.	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LL to communicate with historical champions where they have a relationship with them to encourage them to engage with relevant events, partners and/or resources. 	LEAD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise LSH and partner's relationships with these employers where they exist, e.g. LAs, Chambers, Growth Hub etc. and determine their current engagement with the skills and employment agenda. For those not engaged with the Apprenticeship 	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a smooth process of transition for 'historical Apprenticeship Champions' to be supported by the LWBLEF, so that discussions can take place with their existing and/or new provider to begin an Apprenticeship discussion. Feedback loop to be created so that providers inform the LWBLEF of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LSH to further mine the Bluesheep data to identify historical Apprenticeship Champions across all sectors. LWBLEF to work with LSH to produce tailored marketing and resources for this cohort of businesses, addressing any

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		agenda, approach them through the organisation that has the most positive relationship with them, with the aim of encouraging them to engage with relevant events, partners and/or resources.	result of discussions/ referrals which is then fed back to the LSH so that the impact can be tracked against performance.	particular needs and barriers. These would be developed through feedback with the businesses.
v. Analysis of the first cut of Bluesheep data has identified that overall Apprenticeship numbers between 16/17 and 17/18 have decreased in each of Lancashire's priority sectors.	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LL to embed Apprenticeships as a key priority in economic development events and activities, to promote Apprenticeships to businesses in their local economy. 	LEAD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to identify existing priority sector networks/groups and negotiate presenting a sector specific Apprenticeship input at these events. • At these sector events utilise appropriate Apprenticeships Champions, so that the inputs are business led and have greatest impact. 	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a smooth process of transition for businesses in priority sectors to be supported by the LWBLEF, so that discussions can take place with their existing and/or new provider to begin an Apprenticeship discussion. • Feedback loop to be created so that providers inform the LWBLEF of the result of discussions/referrals which is then fed back to the LSH so that the impact can be tracked against performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LWBLEF to work with LSH to produce tailored marketing and resources for this cohort of businesses, addressing any particular needs and barriers. These would be developed through feedback with the businesses.

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vi. Lancashire Providers, through the Eunoia research, have highlighted that there is a continuous sustained effort required to ensure comprehensive careers advice, improve Apprenticeship advocacy in schools, and support parental knowledge, understanding and to work with employers to develop attractive Apprenticeship vacancies.	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lancashire County Council's Apprenticeship team to support their looked after children and care leavers team, supporting young people into Apprenticeships. • Unitary Authorities to do similar. • Local Authorities to enable Apprentices to become Apprentice Ambassadors, who can talk in school and college about their story and experience to support the Enterprise Adviser Network and careers plans. 	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSH to continue to drive the Apprenticeship focus of the Careers and Enterprise Company and Inspira, through the Enterprise Adviser Network to embed Apprenticeships in school and college careers plans across Lancashire. • Review the Apprenticeship knowledge of those organisations delivering initiatives and projects that engage with the 'Inclusive Workforce'. 	LEAD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship Ambassador Network. • Apprenticeship Support & Knowledge for Schools Project (ASK Project). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LWBLEF to continue to recruit Employer Apprenticeship and Apprentice Ambassadors in both public and private sectors Currently 44 Apprenticeship Ambassadors and 30 Employer Apprenticeship Ambassadors, to increase by 10% by December 19 • LWBLEF to undertake refresh of current ambassadors network and target a minimum of 3 events for each to be engaged with. • LSH to work with schools through the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN) to ensure that quality activities

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				<p>advocating Apprenticeship are embedded in all school plans to meet the Gatsby benchmarks. To include use of Local Authority Apprentice Ambassadors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAN to support Enterprise Advisers to raise their knowledge regarding Apprenticeships to support their role. • If there is a need LSH to organise Apprenticeship advocacy events for organisations delivering initiatives and projects that engage with the 'Inclusive Workforce'. • LCC and Unitary Authorities to support their looked after children and care leavers teams to raise their knowledge

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				<p>regarding Apprenticeships to support their roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Ribble Council's Apprenticeship Factory to develop IAG sessions for Parents and Teachers (Myth Busting).
vii. Recommendations from Eunoia Research.			<p>LEAD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share impact of recommendations carried out with the action group. • Share plans going forward to support the LWBLEF members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LWBLEF to include recommendations from Eunoia report in the 19-20 LWBLEF business plan being updated June 2019. Feedback to action group on the plans put forward and the actions taken. • Actions to be taken forward by the LWBLEF Employer and Skills sub group. Next meeting 22nd May 2019.

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viii. Lancashire has dropped 5 places from 12 to 7 in the LEP rankings of apprenticeship starts as a % of the working age population.	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LL to work with the other Local Authorities to collectively lobby and share best practise. 	LEAD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSH to work with the other 38 LEPs through the LEP Skills Network to collectively lobby and share best practise. 	Supported by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LWBLEF to work with the other membership and representative organisations to collectively lobby and share best practise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate if the LEP areas with the best rankings have done anything specific to bolster Apprenticeship start numbers.