

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 18 November 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning & Skills

SUBJECT: Apprenticeships Update Report

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the new Skills & Apprenticeship Hub and the Apprenticeship Ambassador Programme launched in January 2019.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members note the updates in the report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

The Government introduced a series of reforms to apprenticeships in 2017 including: requiring all large employers to pay an apprentice levy, which could then be used for apprentice training; strengthening the requirement for apprentices to spend 20% of their time in off the job training; lowering the employer contribution for non-levy paying firms; and moving from qualification frameworks to sector determined standards.

This year, Government also reduced the amount of funding available to providers for non-levied employers. The introduction of these reforms has seen apprenticeship starts fall in the City Region as shown in the tables below.

LCR Apprenticeship Starts - All Level						
Age	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19 Q.3	
	Starts	%	Starts	%	Starts	%
16-18	3,720	20%	3,240	26%	2,340	24%
19-24	4,940	27%	3,250	27%	2,580	27%
25+	10,000	54%	5,750	47%	4,670	49%
Total	18,630		12,240		9,590	

LCR Apprenticeship Starts - All Age						
Level	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19 Q.3	
	Starts	%	Starts	%	Starts	%
L2	9,540	51%	5,300	43%	3,570	37%
L3	7,460	40%	5,210	43%	4,180	44%
L4+	1,630	9%	1,730	14%	1,820	19%
Total	18,630		12,240		9,570	

The proportion of 16-18 year olds apprenticeship starts has held up locally, compared to a fall nationally. There has been a shift from Level 2 apprenticeships to Higher and Degree Apprenticeships at Level 4+.

3.2 New Skills & Apprenticeship Hub

Following a recent successful funding application, the Combined Authority is bringing together the expertise of the existing Apprenticeship Hub managed by Halton Borough Council, the City Region’s Skills for Growth Service and the work the Combined Authority leads on around specific sectors and careers, under the umbrella of a new ‘Skills & Apprenticeship Hub’. The service will have 5 main functions:

- **Promotion of apprenticeships** to schools, young people, parents and broader communities, including facilitating the Apprentice Ambassador Network and supporting ‘Be More’ ;
- **Employer engagement and brokerage** on identifying skills needs, developing and implementing training plans, promoting apprenticeships and facilitating transfers of apprentice levy;
- **Management of a training fund**, ensuring alignment with local and national policy and with the devolved Adult Education Budget;
- Additional skills **support for specific sectors** and commissioning additional activity to support the narrowing of gaps around females, BAME and those with disabilities; and
- Overall **management and compliance** with funding requirements.

The new Skills & Apprenticeship Hub will be in place from 1st November 2019 and will be promoted under the overarching ‘Be More’ brand (<https://be-more.info/>). SIF Funding has been secured until March 2022 for this service.

The management and delivery arrangements for the Skills & Apprenticeship Hub will be as follows:



The Apprenticeship Hub team consisting of 5 members of staff, conducted a review in 2018 of many different Ambassador Programmes operating across school and businesses in the City Region and identified that whilst a small number of Apprentice Ambassadors were able to support events and champion the benefits of apprenticeships, not having any formal 'buy in' from their employers often affected their ability to support the programme fully. Extensive research into regional and national Apprenticeship Ambassador Programmes identified that the valuable support of apprentice employers was usually overlooked.

The Apprenticeship Hub launched a new programme in January 2019 that required employers to confirm commitment from both themselves and their apprentice(s) and has resulted in a more robust cohort of Apprenticeship Champions to promote apprenticeships in our City Region.

To date we have 24 committed organisations actively engaged on our programme. We have over 96 active Ambassadors supporting schools and events across the region. Halton organisations include: Science & Technologies Facilities Council (STFC), Emovis, Kids Planet, Alstom, Halton Borough Council and Whitfords, in addition to 5 further organisations in Halton going through the application process.

The impact this has made on our services within schools has been significant, as it inspires our future workforce with inspirational stories from local residents and employers. Recent activity included one of our Ambassadors attending the Heath School in Runcorn, as an ex-pupil at The Heath now working at STFC.

The future of the Ambassador programme will be developed further in partnership with the 'National Apprenticeship Service', after praising our programme and requesting we take responsibility for leading their current programme of Ambassadors (AAN) for the Liverpool City Region.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The activities undertaken since February 2017 have been delivered using external Education & Skills Funding Agency grant for the 'Apprenticeship Hub' until October 2019, followed by external funding from the Single Investment Fund until March 2022 for the new 'Skills & Apprenticeship Hub', as such there are no financial implications for the Council.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

None identified.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

The Skills & Apprenticeship Hub has 3 key priority stakeholder groups, namely Employers, Providers and Learners, which aim to promote the growth and type of apprenticeships in the City Region and therefore support employment, learning and skills.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The potential psychological benefits of apprenticeships include improving the participants' mental health and wellbeing.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None identified.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There is a risk that apprenticeship performance in the City Region continues to fall below national levels. This is being mitigated by local actions around levy transfers and investing in the Skills and Apprenticeship Hub, and through ongoing discussions with Government by the Combined Authority.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

The service is open and accessible to all Halton residents

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.