

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SRUTINY

21ST MARCH 2012

SUBJECT:	WIRRAL SUPPORT FOR THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION (LCR) APPRENTICESHIP STRATEGY
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on Wirral Council support for the key priorities identified in the Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Strategy, specifically in relation to the 16-18 year old cohort.
- 1.2 The report details work currently being undertaken by the Council Apprenticeship Strategy Working Group (SWG) to support the Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Strategy. Specific reference is made to approaches taken by the Council, through the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme and the Council's internal Apprenticeship programme.
- 1.3 Members will note that Cabinet adopted the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Apprenticeship Strategy on 23rd June 2011 and authorised officers to work with LCR colleagues, on behalf of Wirral Council, in the development of a local Apprenticeship Strategy Action Plan.
- 1.4 The LCR Apprenticeship Strategy details four key strategic priorities which include:-
 - I. To stimulate increased employer adoption of Apprenticeships.
 - II. To ensure that Apprenticeships meet the needs of the Liverpool City Region economy, including in the Transformational Sectors.
 - III. To promote Apprenticeships as a quality route to young people and to support the participation of young people in Apprenticeships.
 - IV. To ensure that Apprenticeships delivered in the Liverpool City Region are of the highest possible quality.
- 1.5 The report also details how Council Officers are supporting the corporate priority to improve access to employment and skills and tackle barriers to work.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Apprenticeship opportunities have historically always been sought after by Wirral young people. The level of penetration of Apprenticeships as a learning route for Wirral young people has always been high, particularly when compared to other Local Authority areas in the LCR.
- 2.2 The number of Wirral young people aged 16-18 that started an Apprenticeship in the 2010/11 academic year grew by 25 percent compared to 2009/10. Over the last three years the number of young people aged 16 to 18 starting an Apprenticeship has increased by 64.5 percent from 790 in 2008/09 to 1,300 Apprenticeship starters aged between 16 and 18 in 2010/11 (see table 1).

Table 1: The Number of Wirral and Liverpool City Region Young People Aged 16-18 that started an Apprenticeship by Academic Year

	Academic Year		
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Wirral	783	1,040	1,300
Liverpool City Region	4,149	5,233	4,670

(Source: The Data Service, February 2012)

- 2.3 During the 2010/11 academic year the number of Wirral young people participating in an Apprenticeship was 2,331. Participation is a measure of the number of young people starting an Apprenticeship in a given year plus the existing number of Apprentices continuing their learning from the previous academic year. Participation by Wirral young people in Apprenticeships grew in 2010/11 by 18 percent compared to 2009/10.
- 2.4 Growth in Apprenticeship participation by Wirral Young people aged 16 to 18 has been very much at the intermediate Apprenticeship level (the equivalent to a full level 2 or 5x GCSE's at grades A* to C). The number of young people starting an intermediate Apprenticeship in 2010/11 grew by 37.9 percent between 2009/10 and 2010/11. In the same period advanced Apprenticeship (the equivalent to a full level 3 or 4x AS qualifications) starts grew by 4.3 percent.
- 2.5 Early indications in this academic year (2011/12) are that the numbers of young people accessing Advanced Level Apprenticeships is significantly accelerating. Comparison of quarter one statistics illustrates an increase of 28.9% compared with quarter one in the 2010/11 academic year (The Data Service, February 2012).
- 2.6 The employment sectors with the highest levels of growth in Apprenticeship opportunities for Wirral young people (National Data Service, February 2012) include:-
- I. Business, administration and law (316 Apprentices)
 - II. Construction, planning and built environment (107 Apprentices)
 - III. Hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism (158 Apprentices)
 - IV. Retail and commercial enterprise (252 Apprentices)
 - V. Science, engineering and manufacturing technologies (301 Apprentices)

2.7 Paragraphs 2.7 to 2.20 detail Wirral Council's approach and support for the LCR Apprenticeship Strategy.

Driving up Apprenticeship opportunities and participation through significant investment - Wirral Apprenticeship Programme (WAP)

2.8 In 2009 Wirral recognised that the impact of the then economic downturn was starting to have on the availability of apprenticeship places in the borough. Whilst demand for places from young people continued to be high, it was found that employers were finding it increasingly difficult to support the business case for employing apprentices and have access to a growing available 'job ready' labour supply.

2.9 Based on this evidence, the Council developed The Wirral Apprentice which was initially funded by £1.7m of Working Neighbourhoods Funds for the creation of 100 apprenticeship places. The programme offered an 18 month wage subsidy from an expected minimum of a 2 year employment contract.

2.10 The Programme was designed around a number of driving principles:

- direct support to businesses in the recession
- engaging new businesses with the launch of the new National Apprenticeship Service

In return, the employer had to offer a minimum 2 year contract of employment to the Apprentice. The original Programme criteria targeted certain groups including young people aged 16-18 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and looked after children.

2.11 A second wave of 67 places was funded by additional Working Neighbourhood Funds (£807,000) for 50 places that were ring fenced to 16-18 year old NEET and a small amount of ESF funds (£275,000) for the other 17.

2.12 The most recent tranche of the WAP was launched in January 2011 with funding coming from a mixture of Council funds (£1,058,579) matched to £655,960 LCR ESF PEP (pathways enabling programme) funds to create an additional 146 Apprenticeship opportunities. In line with the funding requirements, the programme targets 16-19 year old NEET and unemployed adults at a ratio of 65:35% respectively. These Apprentices have been funded at the national minimum wage again for a period of 52 weeks rather than the previous 18 months.

2.13 To date a total of 198 Wirral employers have benefited from the financial investment through the WAP. In addition some 313 young people and unemployed adults have also been supported to start and Apprenticeship and gain employment.

2.14 Since 2009 the sectoral mix of employers engaging in the WAP has subtly changed. In 2009/10 the key sectors engaged in the WAP included engineering (including motor vehicle), construction and administration / customer services. During the last recruitment phase (2011) new sectors have emerged from the 'knowledge economy' including graphic design / web design / technical IT industries and environmental / green industries.

2.15 In addition to the employer wage subsidy through the WAP, further support for young people was also secured as part of the most recent WAP tranche. The support included two elements; the first being, Apprenticeship awareness raising in schools. This programme focused on raising awareness of apprenticeships as a progression option to all year 9 young people to help inform key Stage 4 decisions. This service was targeted at those schools with the highest levels of leavers to NEET as a priority.

2.16 The second element to the support included a mental toughness programme. This programme was offered to support those young people who were unsuccessful in gaining an apprenticeship through the last tranche, and those young people in an apprenticeship and those preparing to start an apprenticeship. The course provided young people with the necessary tools, tips and techniques to make them more resilient.

The Council Internal Apprenticeship Programme

2.17 Between 2010 and 2011 the Council has significantly increased the number of internal Apprenticeship places offered, achieved in part through promoting the Apprenticeship framework to existing employees. There are currently 81 existing employees who have converted onto the Apprenticeship programme and 26 Apprentices who have been recruited externally up to December 2011.

2.18 The table below summarises the recruitment so far and the status of employment for Apprentices (excluding conversions).

Cohort	Commenced	Number	Frameworks	Status of training	Status of employment
Cohort 1	September 2010	12 (includes 1 Apprentice plus)	Business Administration I.T. User	5 completed framework, 4 in progress and 1 suspended learning 1 completed framework and 1 in progress	5 secured a permanent contract 1 secured a temporary contract 5 contract ends in March 2012 1 leaver
Cohort 2	January 2011	1	Animal Care	In progress	Secured part time contract
Cohort 3	May - July 2011	6	Business Administration	In progress	
Cohort 4	November / December 2011	7	Business Administration / Customer Services	Commencing December 2011	

2.19 It is desired that future apprenticeship activity is structured in such a way that it responds to organisational requirements as well as aligning with the LCR Apprenticeship Strategy. Planned support for the LCR Apprenticeship Strategy during 2012 to include:-

- Ongoing promotion for conversions to the Apprentice framework for existing staff. This activity was undertaken during National Apprentice Week 6 - 10 February 2012. It is hoped that this be repeated on an annual basis.
- Celebrate Apprenticeship success during May 2012, as part of Learning at Work Week and then on an annual basis.
- Continued liaison with schools to publicise the benefits of Apprenticeships and attend relevant promotional events to raise awareness.
- Work with the Leaving Care Team and the 14-19 Team to specifically promote Apprenticeships to care leavers as part of the Council's corporate parenting duties.
- Frameworks aimed at Higher Apprentices, undertaking qualifications at level four are now becoming available. This may be suitable for Apprentice Conversions and is currently being investigated to identify if the approach aligns to the needs of the Council and should be incorporated into the internal Apprentice offer.

2.20 Further work is currently being undertaken internally to support Wirral young care leavers. This work commenced February 2012 and fifteen care leavers have committed to a programme that will assist in preparing them for employment and /or Apprenticeship.

2.21 This new initiative is being managed by the 14-19 Team. The care leavers are engaged in an eight week proprietary programme delivered by Brathay. This proprietary training includes a residential outward bound course and will prepare the young people to be better able to sell themselves, improve their confidence, promote a positive attitude to employment and raise aspirations.

2.22 The second phase of the programme will include the young people engaging in an internship opportunity with an employer also for a period of eight weeks. Council departments are being canvassed to take part in this element of the programme and interest has been high. There will also be external opportunities offered. It is hoped that the young people at the end of the programme will have developed useful skills and knowledge that will ensure they are in the best possible position for applying for future Council Apprenticeship opportunities or other opportunities outside of the Council.

Influencing opportunities for jobs and training through planning and procurement mechanisms

2.23 The Council has developed a construction employment integrator model in 2009, known as Build Wirral. Build Wirral uses tailored training, procurement

processes and planning conditions to ensure developers / contractors enable young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and workless adults to access employment with training (Apprenticeship).

- 2.24 Businesses and organisations that are procured to provide services or works on behalf of the authority now have to provide training and employment opportunities for local people, where possible. This is aimed at target groups such as unemployed, NEET and those living in disadvantaged areas.
- 2.25 Although initially set up for schemes involving large scale construction, the principle of this has also been applied successfully to other areas such as the boroughs free insulation programme.
- 2.26 To date, this has involved sixteen construction opportunities; this includes twelve apprenticeships, two work experience positions and two jobs. It also includes a further fifty four non-construction positions being created as part of procured contracts.
- 2.27 Wirral is in early discussions and working with the LCR local authorities to develop a targeted recruitment and training approach to procurement. The Regeneration, Housing and Planning department are currently evaluating how Targeted Recruitment and Training can be best developed to meet future needs.

Council 14-19 Team and Strategic Dialogue

- 2.28 As part of the Wirral 16-19 Strategic Overview process, as reported through the 14-19 Social & Economic Wellbeing Strategy Group, the 14-19 Team complete a twice yearly multi agency strategic dialogue meeting with the National Apprenticeship Service, Skills Funding Agency and Young Peoples Learning Agency. The meetings function to enable the Council to formally challenge share its priorities for Apprenticeships, and other opportunities, for young people with the key lead funding bodies.
- 2.29 On a sub regional basis the Children and Young Peoples Department Strategic Service Manager (14-19, Skills and Regeneration) chairs the 14-19 Employment and Skills Strategy Group. This local authority officers group has responsibility for ensuring strategies are in place to enable and facilitate young peoples successfully progression in to either, education, employment and / or training. The group also directly reports into the LCR Learn Together Partnership and LCR Employment and Skills Board through the DCS representative.
- 2.30 Locally the 14-19 Team Principal Manager is a member of the Wirral Learning Provider Network. Attendance at this network is important for the Council because it enables officers to directly challenge Apprenticeship delivery providers and work closely with them to share information and lead change.

Challenges Facing Future Wirral Growth in Apprenticeship Participation

2.31 Wirral faces a number of challenges if it is to further develop the holistic Apprenticeship offer for young people across the borough. The key challenges include:-

- i. Delivery in our top four most popular Apprenticeship frameworks equated to 36.8 percent of all our Apprenticeship starts. The National Apprenticeship Services reports that there are over 250 approved Apprenticeship frameworks supporting over 1,200 different job roles. The diversification of Apprenticeship frameworks is a key challenge for the Council moving forward. The skills demands from employers are changing; this is illustrated in the section on the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme.
- ii. Further increase the numbers of young people accessing advanced level (Level 3) Apprenticeship opportunities. Increasing Level 3 take up is recognised as a key driver of business competitiveness and growth and a valuable tool in raising the skills levels of our workforce.
- iii. Promote the take up of the new and developing higher level (level 4) Apprenticeship frameworks to local employers as they become available.
- iv. Ensure growth in Apprenticeships is targeted at the key transformational sectors identified in the Council's Investment Strategy.
- v. Secure sufficient Apprenticeship opportunities to meet the demand from Wirral young people.
- vi. Maximise opportunities for increasing Apprenticeship opportunities through Council led procurement processes.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from this report.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Not applicable.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 This report does not contain a proposal(s). The report is for information only.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

6.1 This report does not contain a proposal(s). The report is for information only.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

7.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 This report does not contain a proposal it is for information only.

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct carbon reduction implications arising from this report.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct planning or community safety implications arising from this report.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

12.1 The Council Apprenticeship Strategy Working Group (SWG) draws officer expertise from Children & Young People, Economic Development, Business Support, Human Resources and Procurement. The SWG continues to taking forward a holistic view of Apprenticeship engagement and participation in the borough. The SWG also continues to develop a local action plan to support the LCR Apprenticeship Strategy.

13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 Members to note the Council's support and contribution to the delivery of the LCR Apprenticeship Strategy.

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REFERENCE MATERIAL

Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Strategy –
(<http://www.liverpoolcitystrategyces.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/lcr-apprentice-brochure.pdf>)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – Wirral Apprentice Programme	23rd April 2009
Cabinet – Additional Allocation of Working Neighbourhood Funds	26th November 2009
Cabinet - Extension of Wirral Apprentice Programme	14th October 2010
Cabinet - Liverpool City Region European Funding Proposal	4th November 2010
Cabinet - Tackling worklessness and supporting apprenticeships in Wirral through the European Social	9th December 2010

<p>Cabinet - Tackling worklessness and supporting apprenticeships in Wirral through the European Social Economic and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Programme funding for the Wirral Apprentice Programme.</p> <p>Economic and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Level 3 Apprenticeship Promotion and delivery of Functional Skills.</p>	<p>3rd February 2011</p> <p>6th June 2011</p> <p>5th September 2011</p>
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