

Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Friday, 17 March 2017

Electoral Division affected:

Skills Development within Lancashire County Council – Apprenticeships, Graduates and Trainees

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

This report will provide information to the Scrutiny Committee on the new National Apprenticeship Levy which will be introduced by the Government on 1 April 2017 and the implications for this within Lancashire County Council.

The report will also highlight to the Committee, the work being undertaken by the Skills Learning and Development service in respect of 'Trailblazer' involvement, Graduates and Professional Trainees within the authority and the work to embed skills, learning and development into our services.

Recommendation

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on the report

Background and Advice

The Apprenticeship Levy

From April 2017, the Government is changing the way it provides funds for apprenticeships in England. Employers with a pay bill over £3million each year, will be required to invest in apprenticeships and will have 0.5% of their pay bill deducted by HMRC through PAYE schemes.

This national strategy of introducing a levy, moves the responsibility for the investment of this funding, previously allocated to the providers of apprenticeship training, into the hands of the employers.

As a large employer, Lancashire County Council will be subject to this Levy. The deductions will be taken monthly from LCC and placed by the Government into a digital account, established for Lancashire County Council. The money in this

account will fund apprenticeship training for LCC from April 2017, although the funds can only be accessed from May 2017 (due to April 2017 pay bill being the first month deducted). It should be noted that the Levy payment by LCC includes schools and they have received notification of this through the Schools Portal.

It is expected that the Levy will provide a variable amount of approximately £250k per month available for training within the digital account. The account will fund the apprenticeship training only, not salary or other costs, which must be met from within existing staff budgets.

The implementation of the Levy and the implications for the authority are complex and will develop over a number of months. This process is being co-ordinated by the Skills, Learning and Development service with the support of other services including, BTLs, Finance, Procurement and Legal. One significant area of development for the authority was to ensure that the current payroll systems could support the HMRC transactional process. This has been achieved and will enable the authority to meet its obligations with regards to payments in to the digital account from May 2017.

As part of this implementation process, a strategy is being developed to manage how the digital account will be utilised to fund apprenticeships in Schools and LCC. This is being informed through discussions with Heads of Service across the authority, identifying current and future critical need and skills gaps within service areas. Through these discussions, a number of apprenticeship opportunities have already been identified for existing employees. These will take advantage of the funding when the digital account opens in May 2017. In addition to this, there are some new recruit Apprenticeship opportunities which have been agreed:

- 12 Apprentice library assistants – Level 3 Customer services, based across the County and
- 9 Business Administration assistants – Level 3 Business administration.

Different types of apprenticeships take different amounts of time to complete, depending on the level, industry sector and employer. Typically, an apprenticeship would take between one and five years to complete. For the level 3 ones above, we have the considered opinion, with the service, that these can be completed in 2 years under a training contract.

20 % of any apprenticeship must be 'off job training' but it is not standard how this is applied. We are currently discussing how this will apply for the above.

There is also an expectation outside of the levy that the public sector will have regard for trying to ensure that the workforce is made up of 2.3% apprentices.

All apprenticeship training for LCC Services will be funded through the Levy. There are also 319 Schools who are eligible for accessing the levy funds. Of which, 299 are Community, County or Voluntary Controlled schools who buy their payroll Service from LCC. The remaining 20 are Community/ Voluntary Controlled schools who do not use LCC Payroll Service. All Schools who are eligible for training funds

from the Levy will be supported to do this by LCC's Skills, Learning & Development service.

The Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools do not contribute to the amount within the LCC Levy, however, where they have a pay bill over £3m, they are required to register with the Skills Funding Agency themselves and procure their own apprentice training. BTLS and the LCC Skills, Learning and Development service will support schools where appropriate and will advise them accordingly.

Apprenticeships and 'Trailblazers'

Apprenticeships, are intended to equip individuals with the skills needed for a successful career and be a genuine alternative to going to University or an opportunity to combine an apprenticeship with higher education. For Lancashire County Council (LCC) as employers, they can provide highly efficient and effective means of developing the skills needed within our workforce.

The Government has undertaken to grow the number of apprentices to 3 million by 2020. As part of this drive, key national changes have been introduced by the Government, including the Apprenticeship Levy, which aim to:

- **Put employers in the driving seat.** Apprenticeships will be based on standards designed by employers, making them more relevant and therefore more attractive to existing and new employers.
- **Increase the quality of apprenticeships.** An apprentice will need to demonstrate their competence through rigorous and holistic assessment. This will focus on the end of the apprenticeship to ensure that the apprentice is ready to progress.
- **Simplify the system.** The new employer-designed standards will be short and easy to understand. They will describe the knowledge, skills and behaviour that an individual needs to be fully competent in an occupation.
- **Give employers purchasing power.** Putting control of government funding for the external training of apprentices in the hands of employers, to empower businesses to act as customers, driving up the quality and relevance of such training. The Apprenticeship Levy is seen as the mechanism to achieve this objective.

The delivery of the top three bullet points has been taken forward through a 'Trailblazers' programme which has been underway since 2013. This programme aims to change current Apprenticeship Frameworks (largely determined by training providers) to more rigorous and assessed Apprenticeship Standards, agreed and set by employers; and to enable the development of Apprenticeship Standards for areas where none currently exist.

Lancashire County Council 'Trailblazer' Delivery

Over the last 18 months the Skills, Learning and Development service has had direct involvement in shaping two levels of Apprenticeship through the national Trailblazer initiative. These are for areas where LCC, and other bodies around the country felt there was a current gap and a need. These discussions have developed the following draft Apprenticeship Standards.

Children, Young People and Families Manager. Level 5 Vocational qualification
Children Young People and Families Practitioner. Level 4 Vocational qualification

There are existing qualifications and training pathways which concentrate on specific aspects of social care such as Older People or Early Years but none that cover the whole family areas listed above. This was identified as a potential skills gap. It was also considered that such apprenticeships could provide a stepping stone for further specialism within a number of different fields, whilst providing a wider overview of the factors and issues affecting the family as a whole. Working with Children, young people and families as a group, requires a high level of skill to engage and build the relationships necessary to enable the work that will lead to positive outcomes within the lives of those children, young people and families.

These specific Practitioner and Manager apprenticeships are the first of their kind that have been proposed and developed by employers specifically for the children, young people and families sector. The Core Group working on this Trailblazer includes LCC, other local authorities, private children's residential care providers and regional children's workforce groups including representation from the third sector; the group has been supported in this work by the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Local Government Association.

All of the detail; the competencies, behaviours, learning detail and final two part end point assessments (showcase portfolio and competence interview) have been addressed by the group. It has been agreed and signed off by The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulations (Ofqual) who regulate qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. They cover GCSE's; A Levels; AS Levels; and Vocational Qualifications. They are independent of governments and report directly into Parliament.

The two draft standards are now with the Secretary of State for review and sign off before they become live and able to be picked up and delivered by training providers.

Existing LCC Programmes - Professional Apprentices/Trainees

In addition to the above, the Skills Learning and Development service are actively engaged in supporting Professional Apprentice/trainees and Corporate Graduates into the authority. This not only supports critical skills gaps but enables growth through a managed programme which supports public service employment needs for the 21st Century.

The authority has developed a number of Professional Apprentices/Trainees in a range of posts across the authority. These cover areas where a specific specialist skills gap has been identified by the services.

This currently includes: Trainee Residential Childcare workers, Assistant Care Home managers, Graduate Civil Engineers, Graduate Structural Engineers, Graduate Quantity Surveyors, Graduate Planners, Transport Planner, Trainee Solicitor and Graduate Estates Surveyor.

All of the above are undertaking specific qualifications/training linked to their vocation. Trainees on this programme are appointed on training contracts linked to their programme of study ranging from 2-4 years to ensure they have sufficient time to learn and embed their learning through workplace practice. They are supported by the Skills, Learning and Development service and linked to external professional training programmes.

Existing LCC Programmes - Graduate Development programme

In January 2017, 15 Corporate Graduates commenced a two year programme linked to a training contract, working across the authority within clusters of related services. The Graduates are supporting Heads of Service on a range of projects, examples of which are: Quality Assurance linked to Core Systems, 0-19 Public Health integrated redesign, Adults Passport to Independence and the Property Rationalisation programme. The graduates report to the Head of the Service and will move around a cluster of related services on placements lasting approximately 9 months. They are mentored by a Director who will remain as their mentor throughout their contract.

The Graduates are undertaking a planned programme of training internally to support their knowledge and education and in their second year they will be undertaking a bespoke accredited Level 7 Postgraduate Certificate – 'The Public Sector Professional' - gaining knowledge and skills to become 21st public servants (as discussed in 'Securing our Health and Well Being' Director of Public Health and Wellbeing Annual Report, 2016) and understand the contemporary issues facing the public sector. UCLAN are delivering this programme and the Skills, Learning and Development service are actively involved in contributing to this and ensuring that the curriculum and assignments link back to work related issues. The qualification will also be developed to include key speakers from the authority to discuss the issues that Lancashire faces alongside other public sector partners such as the Health Service and the Police.

Supporting our existing employees/services

The on-going development of staff both corporately and service specifically is a key priority of the authority. The Skills Learning and Development service works across the authority to deliver this. This includes the development of staff at all levels throughout the organisation from front facing staff through to managers and leaders. An essential outcome from this is the assurance that all staff have the necessary skills to deliver their role, are competent and that the training delivered enables LCC to deliver all its statutory obligations and critical business needs, both currently and for the future. One example of this is the current work taking place on the Transforming Social Care implementation plan.

The Skills, Learning and Development service chair the Greater Lancashire Social Work Education and Training Network (SWETN). This network includes Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Blackpool Borough Council, UCLan, Lancaster University, Edge Hill University, the Open University, the Private and Voluntary Sector and Independent Practice Educators. This long standing, well established partnership group works effectively in identifying current social work recruitment and retention issues, social work career progression and CPD opportunities, workforce

development and planning, and embedding national standards into the profession – e.g. Professional Capability Framework, The Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Practitioners and will work collaboratively on the new National Assessment and Accreditation Scheme. It also supports the pre and post qualifying programmes at local Universities including the provision of high quality statutory social work placements for students along with training and support for Practice Educators.

As Lead partner on this network, it places LCC (on behalf of the partnership) in a strong position in which to apply for Government funding to support national social work programmes which include Step Up to Social Work – a fast track post graduate route into social work for high calibre entrants to the social work profession. The partnership has been successful in securing this funding for the last 3 cohort programmes which supports 'grow your own' initiatives, workforce planning and supports recruitment and retention across children's services.

Skills, Learning and Development also work closely with Senior Managers across the full range of adult and children's services – developing service specific workforce plans to support the ongoing development of its staff, linked to statutory legislation, service requirements, transformation and professional registration with the Health and Care Professions Council. The service also supports a range of accredited programmes of development to increase the skills and knowledge of the social care workforce.

The service is also responsible for the ongoing professional development of employees within the Lancashire Highways Service – providing statutory and mandatory service specific learning and development to a range of highways operatives and managers, ensuring staff have the necessary skills to undertake their role in a safe and legally compliant manner.

During this on-going period of transformation, LCC have continued to offer staff a number of blended development opportunities to develop new skills as part of our structured approach to the transformation. This includes the development of 'Supporting Your Future' as a brand within the Intranet. This enables staff who may be part of the transformation process to access e-learning, web based or face to face development which will equip them with the skills they require to make better decisions about their future, and enable them to consider a wider range of options and opportunities.

Conclusion

The ongoing development of skills through the provision of appropriate training and development opportunities continues to be core to the County Council. This enables new and existing staff to develop the skills necessary to continue to deliver services effectively, efficiently and competently in a changing and transforming environment.

The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy will be a key element in the delivery of this skills agenda for the authority and will be developed and embedded over the next few months and years to maximise the benefits. This will include the investigation and development of options and opportunities to support the County

Council in the development of the existing workforce, support changes in the future, develop the next generation of public sector workers into our services and contribute to the regional and national agenda.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The Authority has a statutory obligation to pay the Apprenticeship Levy.

The ongoing development of skills enables new and existing staff to develop the skills necessary to continue to deliver services effectively, efficiently and competently in a changing and transforming environment.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
n/a	n/a	n/a

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A