

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting:	2 December 2021
Report Title:	Apprenticeship Programme Update
Report of:	Jane Burns - Executive Director, Corporate Services
Report Reference No:	CP/54/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	ALL

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the work carried out on the apprenticeship programme at Cheshire East Council and the plans in place to ensure it continues to support the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan.
- 1.2. The delivery of an effective apprenticeship programme supports the Council's priority to develop a confident, motivated, innovative, and resilient and empowered workforce. As part of this programme, the delivery of an apprenticeship levy transfer scheme, aligned to Cheshire East's recognised skills gaps, also supports the Council's priority to have thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Committee note the position in relation to Apprenticeships and the further improvements set out in the action plan.

3. Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1. Apprenticeships form part of our Workforce Strategy and play a key role in workforce planning, ensuring the Council has in place the right skills to deliver the priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. An apprenticeship programme and action plan is required to support the achievement of the Council's statutory target as detailed in paragraph 5.2.

5. Background

- 5.1.** From April 2017, the Finance Bill (2016) introduced a funding mechanism for apprenticeships, an 'apprenticeship levy'. The levy is paid by employers (including the public sector) with a pay bill of more than £3 million, through the PAYE process. The levy payment made by Cheshire East Council is made available to the Council through an Apprenticeship Service account that is managed by Human Resources. Funds expire 24 months after they appear in the digital account. Apprenticeships are available to existing members of staff as well as new start employees that are typically recruited on an apprenticeship fixed term employment contract.
- 5.2.** More wide-reaching reforms, introduced by the government at the same time, included a statutory target for the public sector for 2.3% of the workforce to be made up of apprentices.
- 5.3.** The apprentice levy is set at 0.5% of total payroll that is subject to National Insurance. The anticipated annual cost is around £743,000. The Government deducts a portion of this figure (approximately £20,000) to reflect employees who live outside England and then tops up the remainder by 10%. Based on figures to date, the anticipated total annual amount available to spend will be around £810,000. This figure has reduced, and will continue to do so, as schools have left/leave the Council to become academies.

6. Apprenticeship Programme Delivery

- 6.1.** Our apprenticeship programme provides opportunities for apprentices to gain a recognised qualification whilst receiving training to support their personal development. The range of apprenticeships standards offered at the Council is wide, from level 2 (GCSE standard) to level 7 (post-graduate) across a whole spectrum of subject areas. A table at appendix one shows the range of subjects delivered through apprenticeships since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in 2017.
- 6.2.** There is no centrally held budget for the salary costs of new start apprentices. These costs are met by the staffing budgets of the relevant service areas. An exception to this, as part of the Council's corporate parenting responsibility, is a centrally held budget for the salary costs of apprentices that are cared for children or care leavers.
- 6.3.** The Workforce Development Team co-ordinates the recruitment, on-boarding, and induction of all apprentices across the Council and its schools and ASDVs. The team then supports all apprentices to progress through their apprenticeship training and addresses any issues identified with their training providers. All training providers are required to submit regular monitoring updates to the Workforce Development Team and any poor feedback received from apprentices in relation to the delivery of their training is dealt with robustly. A mentoring and coaching programme is also in place for any 'new start' apprentices alongside a learning and development programme to enhance their apprenticeship training.

- 6.4.** From April 2019, the Government allowed levy-paying employers to transfer a maximum amount of 25% of their annual funds to other employers to fund apprenticeship training. Transferred funds can be used to pay for the training and assessment cost of the apprenticeships agreed with the receiving employer. Cheshire East Council launched an apprenticeship levy transfer fund in 2020, aligned to Cheshire East's Economic Strategy. To gain maximum benefit from the levy funds, bids are prioritised using the following criteria:
- Priority 1: A non-levy payer who can only access apprenticeship funds via a transfer of funds, in particular community, charitable and voluntary sector organisations.
 - Priority 2: Creating apprenticeship opportunities for disadvantaged groups who live in Cheshire East (e.g. care leavers; NEETs; those with disabilities/ health conditions; long term unemployed and women returning to work).
 - Priority 3: Apprenticeships from key employment sectors such as health and social care and science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)
- 6.5.** Further details on funds transferred to date are set out in paragraph 7.5.
- 6.6.** Apprenticeship opportunities are promoted internally, with case studies, profiles, and regular communications through Team Voice to promote new financial incentives and new apprenticeship standards for existing members of staff as well as new employees. Focused sessions are also given at different forums such as the Manager Share and Support Session to promote take-up.
- 6.7.** In addition to this and as part of the workforce planning cycle and development of training plans for each service area, discussions are held with each team to identify apprenticeship opportunities that might be appropriate, paying close attention to skills gaps and succession planning and building future resilience. The CPD process is also monitored to ensure apprenticeships are maximised for any training and development identified for members of staff.
- 6.8.** Working with areas where specific recruitment and retention issues have been identified, proactive work is undertaken to develop apprenticeship programmes to address the relevant issues. Recent examples of this have been the introduction of degree apprenticeships in IT, social work, planning and occupational therapy.
- 6.9.** Targeted communications to maintained schools, including attendance at school forums, dedicated workshops, 'marketplace' events and briefings within the Directors Report are all undertaken to encourage the take up of apprenticeships in Cheshire East Council schools.

7. Progress to Date

- 7.1.** From the outset of the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, the Council has applied a disaggregation of the target to monitor performance as illustrated in the table in appendix two. Performance is measured within the Corporate Scorecard.
- 7.2.** To date, due largely to the lack of take-up of apprenticeships in maintained schools, a surplus of levy funding has been available. Feedback from head teachers suggests that the barriers to apprenticeship take-up are the associated salary costs, a previous lack of relevant apprenticeship standards and the requirement for apprentices to be allowed 20% of their time for off the job training.
- 7.3.** To address this and an existing identified leadership skills gaps in schools, the Workforce Development Team has worked in partnership with colleagues in Education and Head Teachers across Cheshire East and Cheshire West to develop the first cohort of school leaders for a level 7 Senior Leadership Programme in Education. This commenced in September 2021 and is funded via the Council's apprenticeship levy, with 7 staff from Cheshire East schools.
- 7.4.** 2020-2021 saw a reduction in the number of apprenticeship new starts at the Council, due mainly to the Covid-19 pandemic and the change to the way of working. This is reflected nationally. As a response to this, the Government has been offering temporary additional financial incentives of £3,000 for any new start apprentices, who has an employment start date between April 2021 to 30 September 2021. This has just been extended by the Government until the end of January 2022. These have been widely promoted internally and resulted in 19 new start apprentices being recruited in the last two months. Communications to promote the extension of the financial incentives has been undertaken and this has already seen further new apprenticeship posts being advertised.
- 7.5.** To ensure any remaining unspent apprenticeship levy funds remain within the borough of Cheshire East wherever possible, the apprenticeship levy transfer fund is promoted. To date, £147,000 of apprenticeship levy funding has been committed to be transferred to employers in Cheshire East to fund apprenticeship training. A recent application has been made by a local company in the care sector, supporting other work carried out to recruit and retain to a skills shortage area.
- 7.6.** Take-up of the centrally held salary budget for apprentices with a cared for background is typically low. Experience suggests that this may in part be due to the nature of the work experience that the Council offers not being in line with the expectations of candidates. To resolve this, a Care Leaver Apprenticeship Review Action Plan has been developed through a partnership with colleagues in Children's Services. An apprenticeship Co-ordinator for Cared for Children and Care Leavers has been appointed. This has resulted in five new apprenticeship starts across the Council since April 2021 for those with a cared for background. The apprentices will receive

additional financial support through the Government's financial incentives for those with a cared for background and will also receive additional practical support through their apprenticeship from colleagues in Children's Services and the Workforce Development Team.

8. Apprenticeship Action Plan 2021-2023 Vision and Aims

- 8.1.** The value of apprenticeships to enable the Council to meet its current and future skills needs is recognised, whether that be young people starting out on their career path or existing staff wishing to develop new skills. Apprenticeships play a key role in service workforce plans to ensure we have the right people with the right skills for our future needs.
- 8.2.** The key strategic aims of the Apprenticeship Action Plan for 2021-2023 are set out below:
1. To embed apprenticeships across the Council, utilising them to develop skills and future-proof our workforce, growing the number of apprenticeships and maximising the use of the levy;
 2. To improve the quality of apprenticeship programmes;
 3. To promote, equality, diversity, and inclusion amongst the apprenticeship programme;
 4. To act as an ambassador for apprenticeships across Cheshire East.

9. Implications

9.1. Legal

- 9.1.1.** The payment of the apprenticeship levy is an obligation of the local authority. Therefore, from May 2017, Cheshire East Council has had a statutory duty to pay the apprenticeship levy and to pay 'due regard' to the target set for the number of apprentices within the organisation.
- 9.1.2.** The mechanism introduced for the payment of apprenticeship training providers only allows the procurement of government approved suppliers which are detailed on a national Register of Approved Training Providers (RoATP). Only those on the Register will be eligible for funding for Cheshire East Council's apprenticeship levy fund.

9.2. Finance

- 9.2.1.** The apprentice levy is set at 0.5% of total payroll that is subject to National Insurance. The anticipated annual cost is around £743,000. The Government deducts a portion of this figure (approximately £20,000) to reflect employees who live outside England and then tops up the remainder by 10%. Based on figures to date, the anticipated total annual amount available to spend will be around £810,000. This figure has reduced, and will continue to do so, as schools have left/leave the Council

to become academies. Apprenticeship Levy funds expire after a period of two years if they remain unspent.

9.3. Policy

- 9.3.1. This supports the Workforce Strategy and the Corporate Plan priorities relating to the workforce.

9.4. Equality

- 9.4.1. The continued offer of new apprenticeships at the Council attracts and retains young people within our workforce

9.4.2. Human Resources

- 9.4.3. The continued offer of apprenticeships supports the development of our workforce through succession planning and talent management and addresses identified skills.

- 9.4.4. Human Resources holds apprenticeship levy funding for the Council and is responsible for the administration, procurement and tracking of this funding alongside the contract management of all apprenticeship training provision and the performance and support to all apprentices.

9.5. Risk Management

- 9.5.1. A clear process is in place with colleagues in Legal and Procurement Services for the timetable for the awarding of contracts to training providers.

9.6. Rural Communities

- 9.6.1. There are no implications.

9.7. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 9.7.1. This report details the work that has begun on how the increase in apprenticeship opportunities at the Council can form part of a Cared for Children Strategy.

9.8. Public Health

- 9.8.1. There are no public health implications.

9.9. Climate Change

- 9.9.1. There are none.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	Appendix One – Apprenticeship Standards at Cheshire East Council. Appendix Two – Apprenticeship Data 2017-2021 Appendix Three – Apprenticeship Action Plan – 2021-2023.
Background Papers:	None

Appendix 1 – Apprenticeship Standards Delivered to Date (Sept 2021)

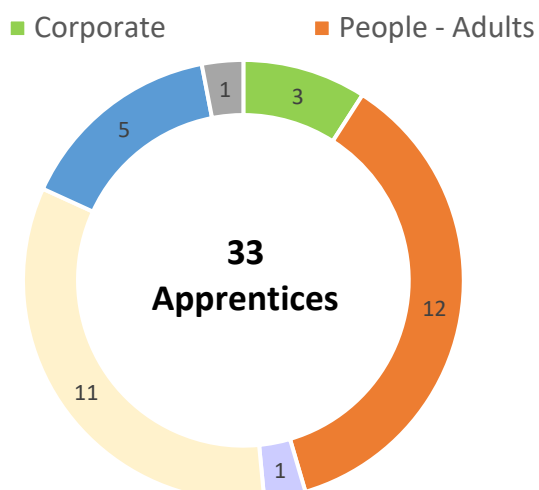
Name	Route	Level
Accountancy or taxation professional	Legal, finance and accounting	7
Adult care worker	Care services	2
Agriculture	Agriculture, environmental and animal care	3
Animal care and welfare assistant	Agriculture, environmental and animal care	2
Assistant accountant	Legal, finance and accounting	3
Associate project manager	Business and administration	4
Building control surveyor (integrated degree)	Construction	6
Higher Business administration	Business and administration	4
Business administration	Business and administration	3
Chartered legal executive	Legal, finance and accounting	6
Chartered manager (degree) - Health and Social Care	Business and administration	6
Chartered surveyor (degree)	Construction	6
Chartered town planner (degree)	Construction	7
Children and Young Person Workforce	Care services	2
Commercial procurement and supply	Sales, marketing, and procurement	4
Commis chef	Catering and hospitality	2
Customer service specialist	Sales, marketing, and procurement	3
Data analyst	Digital	4
Data technician	Digital	3
Digital and technology solutions professional (degree)	Digital	6
Early years educator	Education and childcare	3
Early years lead practitioner	Education and childcare	2
Heavy vehicle service and maintenance technician	Engineering and manufacturing	3
HR consultant partner	Business and administration	5
HR support	Business and administration	3
Infrastructure technician	Digital	3
Insurance practitioner	Legal, finance and accounting	3
IT Application Specialist	Digital	3
Junior energy manager	Construction	3
Lead adult care worker	Care services	3
Lead practitioner in adult care	Care services	4
Leader in adult care	Care services	5
Marketing Diploma	Sales, marketing, and procurement	3
Multi-trade	Engineering and manufacturing	2
Network engineer	Digital	4
Occupational therapist (integrated degree)	Health and science	6
Operations or departmental manager	Business and administration	5
Paralegal	Legal, finance and accounting	3
Professional accounting or taxation technician	Legal, finance and accounting	4
Project manager (integrated degree)	Business and administration	6
Property maintenance operative	Construction	2
Regulatory compliance officer	Business and administration	4
Revenues and welfare benefits practitioner	Business and administration	4
School business professional	Business and administration	4
Senior leader masters	Business and administration	7
Social worker (integrated degree)	Care services	6
Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools	Education and childcare	2
Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools	Education and childcare	3
Team leader or supervisor	Business and administration	3
Teaching Assistant	Education and childcare	3

Appendix 2 - Apprenticeship Data 2017-2021

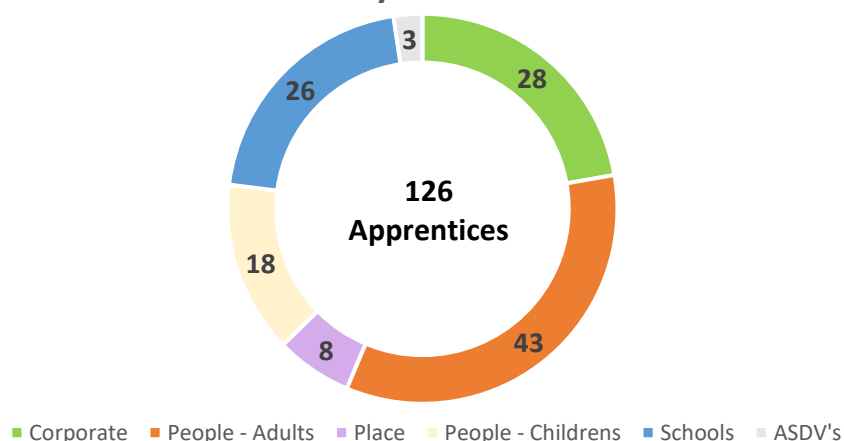
Headcount and Target (2.3%)

Year	CEC Headcount	People	Corporate	Place	Schools Headcount	ASDV's Headcount
2019-2020	3595	2168	653	772	3066	537
Target	83	50	15	18	71	12
2020-2021	3596	2169	653	772	3064	538
Target	83	50	15	18	70	12

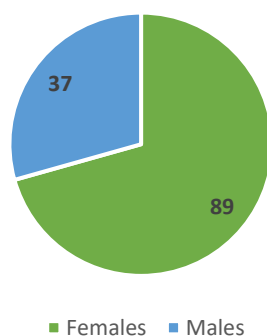
Number of Apprentice Starts since April 2021



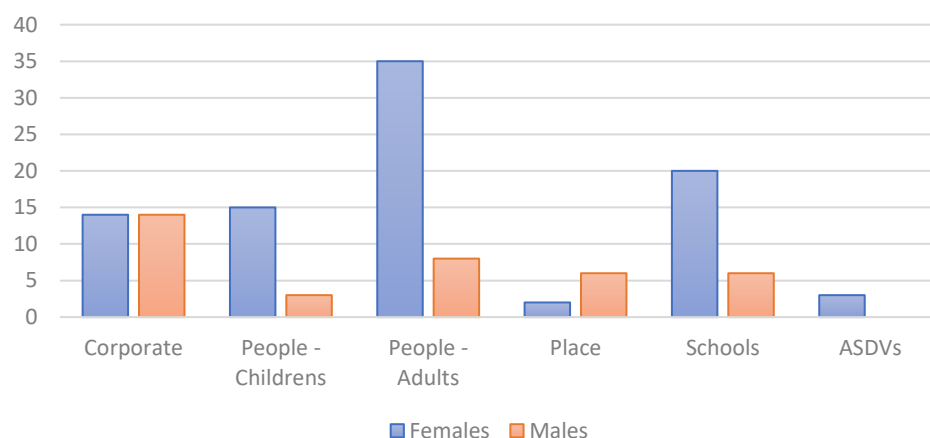
Apprentices on programme as of September 2021 by directorate



Apprentices on programme as of September 2021 by gender



Number of apprentices on programme at September 2021 by gender



Service	Females	Males
Corporate	14	14
People - Childrens	15	3
People - Adults	35	8
Place	2	6
Schools	20	6
ASDVs	3	0
Total	89	37

Appendix 3 – Apprenticeship Action Plan 2021-23

Action	Responsibility	Measure	Timescale
1. To embed apprenticeships across the Council, utilising them to develop skills and future-proof our workforce, growing the number of apprenticeships and maximising the use of the levy			
1.1 Engage with training providers to ensure the training meets the skills gaps identified within the Council and its Service Workforce Plans, offering a range of qualifications at all levels.	WFD & Senior HROs	Number of apprenticeship qualifications gained and offered across the Council.	Ongoing on a quarterly basis
1.2 Ensure that new standards made available through the levy are considered and promoted across the organisation, paying close attention to those areas of the Council where workforce shortages are present.	WFD	Number of apprenticeship qualifications gained and offered across the Council.	Ongoing on a quarterly basis
1.3 Engage with each service area to map and create career pathways aligned to workforce shortages and apprenticeship standards.	WFD	Number of career pathways in place.	Ongoing on a quarterly basis
1.4 Ensure that all vacancies at the appropriate level and where a relevant standard can be applied are considered for an apprenticeship.	WFD, HR Delivery & ESC	Number of apprenticeships advertised.	Sept 2022
1.5 Create clear development roles for apprentices from the recruitment stage.	WFD	Work with apprentices and service areas to ensure permanent employment for at least 50% of new start apprentices at the end of their training. Number of apprentices progressing onto grade 4, 5 and 6 roles.	Sept 2022
1.6 Draw up an annual calendar of events and activities and a communications plan to promote apprenticeships including: DMTs, National Apprenticeship Week, Team Voice, Manage Share & Support School heads meetings/School forums, recruitment fairs and marketplace events.	WFD, Comms Team	Tracking of applicants.	Sept 2022
1.7 Work with councillors to promote the apprenticeship programme across the Council.	Head of HR/WFD	Number of applicants	Sept 2022
1.8 Embed apprenticeship qualifications within the PDR process	WFD/OD	Number of apprenticeships identified as part of the PDR process	Sept 2022
1.9 Create apprenticeship ambassadors across the Council	HR Apprentices	Number of ambassadors	March 2022

Action	Responsibility	Measure	Timescale
1.10 Support schools in understanding the wider range of apprenticeships available	WFD/HR Schools	Number of apprentices in maintained schools	April 2022
2. To improve the quality of apprenticeship programmes			
2.1 Further engage with training providers to agree quarterly monitoring of all apprentices.	WFD	Number of providers reporting on a quarterly basis	April 2022
2.2 Establish tracking system to monitor retention and recruitment.	WFD	Recruitment and retention figures	Dec 2021
2.3 Produce annual apprenticeship report	WFD	Report	Mar 2022
2.4 Conduct exit interviews for apprentices leaving the organisation.	WFD	Number of exit interviews held	Dec 2021
2.5 Continue to provide training, guidance and mentoring to placement managers.	WFD	Feedback from placement managers	Ongoing
2.6 Review apprenticeship learning and development programme	WFD	Apprentice survey report	Ongoing
2.7 Produce apprenticeship guidance for staff	WFD	Guidance	April 2022
3. To promote, equality, diversity, and inclusion amongst the apprenticeship programmes			
3.1 Work with Children's Services and other internal and external partner agencies to target underrepresented groups of young people such as looked-after young people and BAME young people and young people with SEND.	WFD/Children's Services	Delivery of Apprenticeship Action Plan for Looked After Young People.	Sept 2022
3.2 Monitor the diversity of apprenticeship starts, to enable a more inclusive workforce and social mobility throughout the Council.	WFD	Improved apprenticeship data and reporting	April 2021
3.3 Work with colleagues in Adults, Health & Integration to support the delivery of the Kickstart programme and ensure progression where appropriate.	WFD	Number of apprentices progressed from the Kickstart programme	Ongoing
4. To act as an ambassador for apprenticeships across Cheshire East			
4.1 Work with the Council's Economic Development Team and education settings to ensure increased awareness of apprenticeships and their value.	WFD/Economic Development	Number of apprenticeships across Cheshire East.	Sept 2022

4.2 To promote the Council's apprenticeship levy transfer fund to local businesses to support SMEs and improve apprenticeship take up.	WFD/Economic Development/Comms	Number of apprenticeship levy transfer fund applications.	Sept 2022
4.3 To promote apprenticeships and the Council's apprenticeship levy transfer fund to targeted sectors with identified skills shortages, such as the care sector.	WFD/Adults Commissioning/Economic Development	Number of apprenticeship levy fund transfer applications from targeted sectors.	Sept 2022