



**Partnership & Place Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**
20th November 2013

**Report from Cara Davani
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Resources**

Wards Affected:
ALL

Brent Council's New Apprenticeship Programme

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides the background to, and an overview of Brent Council's exciting and ambitious new Apprenticeship Programme which aims to recruit 100 apprentices to the council over the next 3 years, starting with a new cohort of at least 30 new apprentices in January 2014.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the background to and features of Brent's new Apprenticeship Programme.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The government sees 16-18 apprenticeships as a key component in achieving its aspiration of raising participation age to 18 by 2015 and Brent Council supports this approach. The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) was established in 2009 with the aim of bringing about significant growth in the number of young people participating in apprenticeships and the number of employers offering workplace apprenticeship. NAS has a target of 1 in 5 16-19 year olds undertaking an apprenticeship by the year 2019/20. The Council has a key leadership role to champion the interests of young people to improve their employability and economic wellbeing.
- 3.2 Despite its many strengths, Brent is ranked amongst the top 15% most-deprived areas of the country. This deprivation is characterised by high levels of long-term unemployment and low average incomes. Children and young people are particularly affected with a third of children living in low income households and a fifth in single-adult households. The

proportion of young people living in acute deprivation is rising. There is also evidence of rising unemployment. The Census results of 2011 reveal that unemployment in the borough has increased by 35%. The number of 18-24 year olds on Job Seekers Allowance has gone up 16.5% between January 2011 and January 2012. The skills and qualifications profile among the residents of Brent is lower comparative to its neighbouring boroughs. In eight out of 21 wards, over 1/5 of residents have no qualifications and in wards such as Stonebridge over 1/4 have no qualifications.

- 3.3 The Council's Workforce strategy (2013) highlights the importance of meeting the Council's future workforce needs by recruiting from the local population. As a major employer, the Council is leading the way in developing an internal apprenticeship programme for the recruitment, training and employment of in-house apprentices. Therefore, the provision of apprenticeship career pathways will, over time, contribute to raising skills levels and deliver higher income levels associated with higher level skills and qualifications. This can be achieved by working with directorates to identify entry-level posts and converting these to apprenticeships, enabling an individual to gain a qualification and be better prepared for a career in local government.

4.0 Brent's New Apprenticeship Programme

- 4.1 Brent Council recently launched its new Apprentice Programme, embarking on an ambitious initiative to improve the employment prospects for young people through a major expansion of apprenticeship jobs within the Council. Over the next 3 years the Council will employ 100 apprentices in a variety of roles across the Council, starting with a new cohort of at least 30 apprentices in January 2014.

Brent's new apprenticeship programme will have the following features

- Job positions created across a wide selection of service areas; i.e. all departments have offered at least one entry-level position
- Apprenticeships available at levels 2 and 3 in Customer Service, Business Administration, Accounting and Finance, Health and Social Care, Housing Support and Transport
- Apprentice offered a minimum 12-month fixed-term contract during which they will learn on-the-job and complete a number of vocational qualifications including an NVQ as well as Functional Skills qualification in Maths, English and ICT.
- Apprentice starting salary of £8,500-£9,500
- Thorough induction process
- Recruitment and training of workplace mentors to provide additional support
- Development Programme for Managers to ensure that effective support is provided for Apprentices
- Celebration event to raise the profile across the Council and the wider community

Brent's apprenticeship programme will offer high quality learning and development to a wide cross section of the community, enabling the Council and the community to benefit from a more skilled, motivated and flexible workforce. The apprenticeship programme contributes to fulfilling a number of Council priorities:

- The Borough Plan priority of promoting jobs, growth and fair play to achieve the outcome of more local people in more local jobs; more local people supported into work.
- A priority in Brent's Children & Young People's plan is to ensure young people have the skills they need to achieve economic wellbeing in adulthood.
- The People Strategy to reduce staffing costs and raise the productivity of the workforce; attract, retain and develop highly motivated, diverse and talented staff.

4.2 The objectives for the Council's apprenticeship programme are to:

- Raise the quality and number of apprenticeships so that apprentices are better skilled and competent.
- Improve the range of apprenticeship opportunities on offer across each directorate.
- Work with the respective directorate to create apprenticeship offers in areas of skills shortages (e.g. social care) and areas that are attractive to young people (e.g. leisure sector).
- Work strategically with Regeneration and Growth to target apprenticeship opportunities in wards where youth unemployment is highest; thereby reducing unemployment, worklessness and improving income levels.
- Provide looked after children, who have disproportionately poorer educational outcomes and weaker job prospects than other young people, with the opportunity to gain an apprenticeship place by working with stakeholders in C&F to promote the benefits of apprenticeships to young people leaving care.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The cost of an apprentice varies according to the age of the individual. The apprentices' starting salary of £8500 - £9500 is funded by service areas. The training provider who delivers the vocational qualifications will draw government funding for the cost of the qualification for each apprentice.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 The Council has a duty to appoint employees on merit. The Council is committed to providing further employment opportunities to local people given unemployment rates and the Council is legally able to encourage local residents to apply for vacancies however final recruitment decisions must be based on merit not geography.

7.0 Diversity Implications

- 7.1 The Council demonstrates its commitment to diversity by permitting entry-level posts to be converted to apprenticeship opportunities thereby increasing the profile of its younger workforce. The Council has improved its diversity of apprenticeships by offering a wider range of disciplines including Finance, Social Care, and Leisure. Support will also be given to apprentices to identify suitable employment opportunities in advance of their apprenticeship being completed. The apprenticeship programme lead will work closely with the recruitment service to facilitate the smooth transition of apprentices into permanent employment.
- 7.2 It is important that young people who experience greater disadvantage in the labour market gain access to the Council's apprenticeship programme. To ensure access is offered to 'hard to reach' young people, the delivery team will work with various partners to promote and engage young people. Additional support provided by trained mentors will help with the retention of apprentices.

Background Papers

N/A

Contact Officers

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