

Corporate & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Panel 11th March 2021

Apprenticeships update

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Overview

- New Apprenticeship Strategy agreed February 2020
- Embedding a strategic approach to how we attract, retain and develop our workforce to meet our communities' needs, both now and in the future, is a vital aspect of our future workforce strategy.
- Apprenticeships are an integral part of this and can make a positive contribution by creating opportunities for people to develop, and by providing a framework for the workforce, of all ages, to undertake relevant qualifications, helping to raise skills, performance and aspirations.
- Worcestershire County Council, along with other public-sector organisations, has a responsibility in helping to create these opportunities both as an employer and as a strategic leader.
- Our strategy includes Apprenticeships and Traineeships

What is an Apprenticeship

- The Apprenticeships & Vocational Qualifications team is responsible for creating and embedding apprenticeships in Worcestershire.
- Apprenticeships are available to anyone wishing to train in a specific job role.
- Apprenticeship learners need to be in paid employment to be eligible for the programme and will be required to stay on the programme and in employment for at least 12 months.
- Apprentices spend 80% of their time in the work setting and 20% of their time as “off the job” learning.

Apprenticeships provide for:

- Professional Qualifications available to all employees at all levels of the organisation
- Learning on the job
- Centrally funded programmes via the levy
- New talent entrance pathway to the organisation
- Programmes relevant to the work the employee undertakes
- Greater opportunities to upskill our workforce as part of a clear career pathway

What is a Traineeship

- The 16-19 NEET prevention Team is responsible for creating and embedding traineeships in Worcestershire.
- Traineeships are education and training programmes with work experience for young people whose preference is to find a job or apprenticeship but who lack the skills, experience and behaviours sought by employers.
- Unlike an apprenticeship, a traineeship is a programme of learning and skills development aimed at developing employability skills. It is not a job.
- Traineeships are suitable for:
 - anyone not currently in employment and have little work experience, but who are focused on work or the prospect of it.
 - are age 16 to 24 and qualified up to and including a full Level 3
 - individuals who providers and employers believe they have a reasonable chance of being ready for an apprenticeship or other employment within 6 months of completing a traineeship

Capacity

- There are two schemes for training and supporting our apprentices:
 - Employer provider status
 - External provider status
- For Employer Provider status, we train, support and assess the apprentices and it means we can tailor the programme and course content to make it more WCC/WCF relevant.
- The levy can be used to pay for assessors and therefore there is no cost for recruiting additional staff.
- Where we are not able to deliver the apprenticeship ourselves, we use approved external apprenticeship providers. In these cases, we pass the levy directly to outsourced training providers.

Enhanced Activity since 2020

- New Apprenticeship Strategy approved by SLT in February 2020
- Main focus in 2020 was to:
 - Commence reducing levy underspend (at the time c.£70,000/month)
 - Increase organisational awareness and appetite for apprenticeships and traineeships through 3 week communication campaign
 - Support managers to understand the benefits and responsibilities for apprenticeships & traineeships
 - Introduce Levy transfer policy to help boost local economy through apprenticeships
 - Care Leavers:
 - Developed Social Value policy to encourage businesses in our supply chain to take on Care Leavers as apprentices or undertaking traineeships
 - Created internal task force with sole focus of supporting Care Leavers into work or skills programmes via apprenticeships or traineeships
 - Ensured our Levy transfer policy criteria requires businesses to create apprenticeship opportunities with added social value for disadvantaged groups. For example, Care leavers; young people Not in Education, Employment of Training (NEET); individuals with disabilities; long term unemployed

Care Leavers Support

Work Experience

- Recruitment team created the work experience placements programme for Care Leavers. Working with the Care Leavers Team, the team seek opportunities internally and externally.
- Resulted in 28 placements, ranging from 1 hour taster sessions to six week long placements.
- The team also created two “takeover days” for care leavers (via “who cares we care” & “Speak out”) seeking out Care Leavers’ views on subject topics. IT was the preferred route and so coding exercises were undertaken within the business, as well as a CV & interview skills day.

Other activity

- All current vacancies within WCC and WCF are now shared with the WCF care leavers team for onward discussions with Care Leavers. Any care leaver who applies and meets the minimum criteria are offered an interview.
- Regular attendance at The Skills Show in order to promote careers within local government and apprenticeship opportunities for Care Leavers and all young people.
- References provided for future employment for Care Leavers based on their time representing the young peoples panel

Challenges – New Recruits

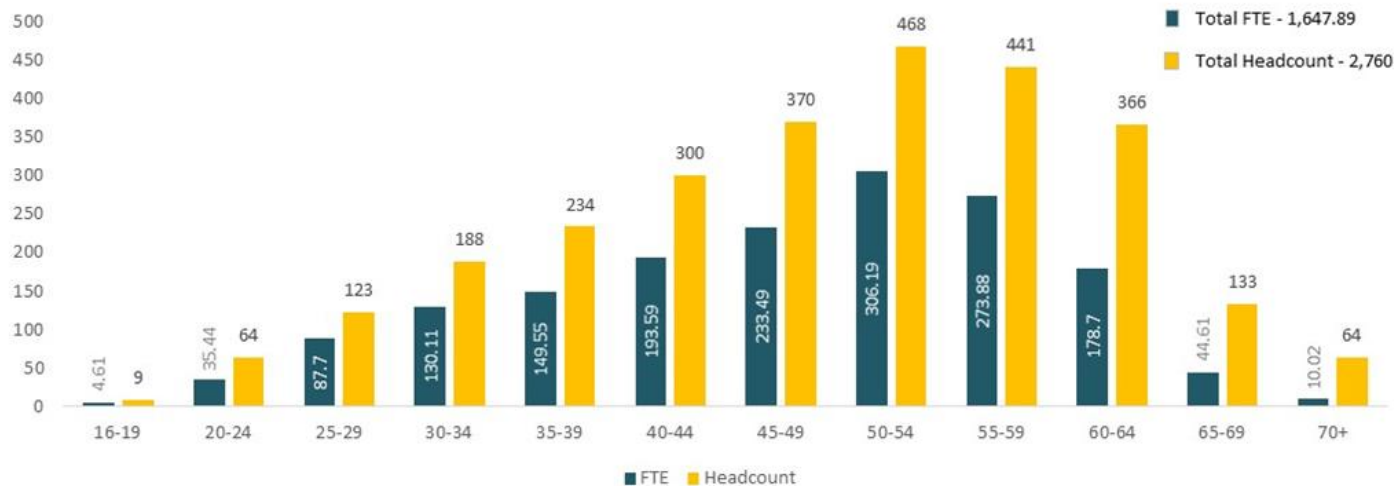
New Recruits

- Activity in 2020 was centred around increasing awareness and appetite for apprenticeships across WCC and WCF, increasing development, increasing levy spend resulting in a 40% reduction in the monthly levy being returned to central government.
- Whilst we are delighted to have recruited 25 brand new entrants into apprenticeship programmes, this is now our area of biggest challenge.

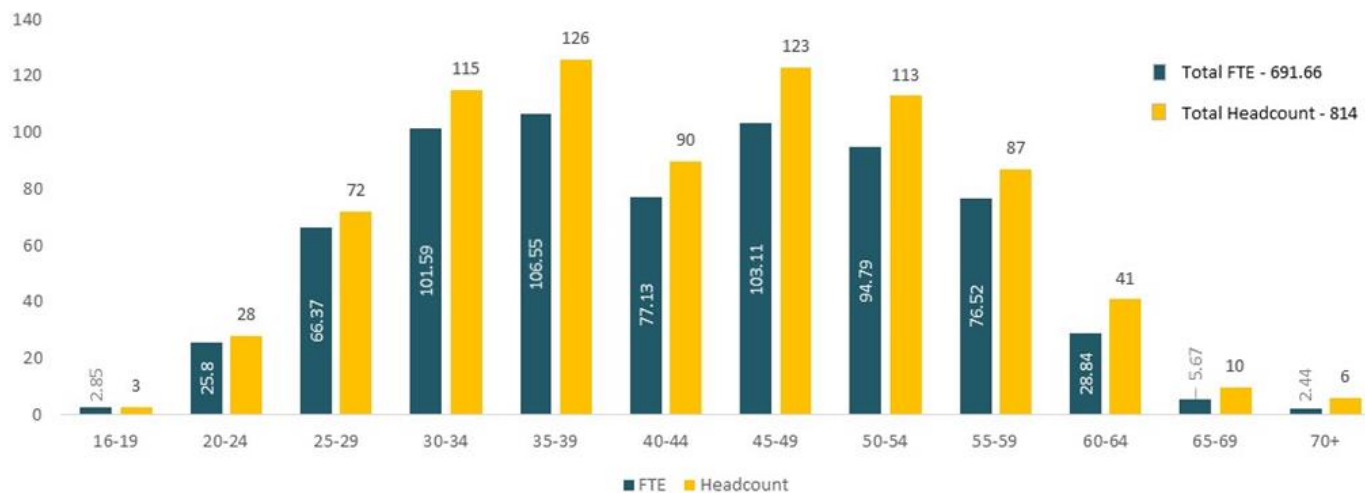
Workforce Succession Planning

- The next slide shows the age profile of both WCC and WCF.
- 48% of staff today are aged 50+
- 8% of staff today are less than 30 years old
- 36% of people in WCC (18% for WCF) could, in theory, choose to retire at any moment (aged 55 or over).
- Apprenticeships for people leaving full time education, at either 16, 18 or 21, will be an invaluable source talent and future pipeline. We need the organisation to embrace taking on more people at these levels and training and developing them through Apprenticeship Programmes, rather than solely relying on established or experienced staff.

Worcestershire County Council - Age Bands
(Excluding WCF)



WCF - Age Bands



Attracting New Apprentices

- The Apprenticeships Team, under normal circumstances, attend the Annual Skills Show which is attended by over 7,000 young people each year.
- We have direct links with the 16-18 NEET Prevention service, who work directly with young people and those on traineeships.
- We are able to upload job vacancies directly on to the “Recruit an Apprenticeship website, which is actively promoted in schools and colleges, and nationally by the ESFA and central government.
- As part of our consultancy and support offered to managers thinking about recruiting, we discuss the benefits of recruiting an apprentice instead of a person with existing skills and qualifications.
- We also discuss the benefits of apprenticeships generally, including the value of recruiting a young person/care leaver.

New Hire Incentive

- New incentive launched on 1st August 2020 with the aim of encouraging businesses to hire new apprenticeships. This is a temporary incentive, running until 31 March 2021.
- This is for new employees only. Money is separate from the levy and can be used in any number of ways to support the recruitment, for example offsetting salary costs and funding travel passes/rail cards etc.

There are 2 brackets for newly recruited apprentices:

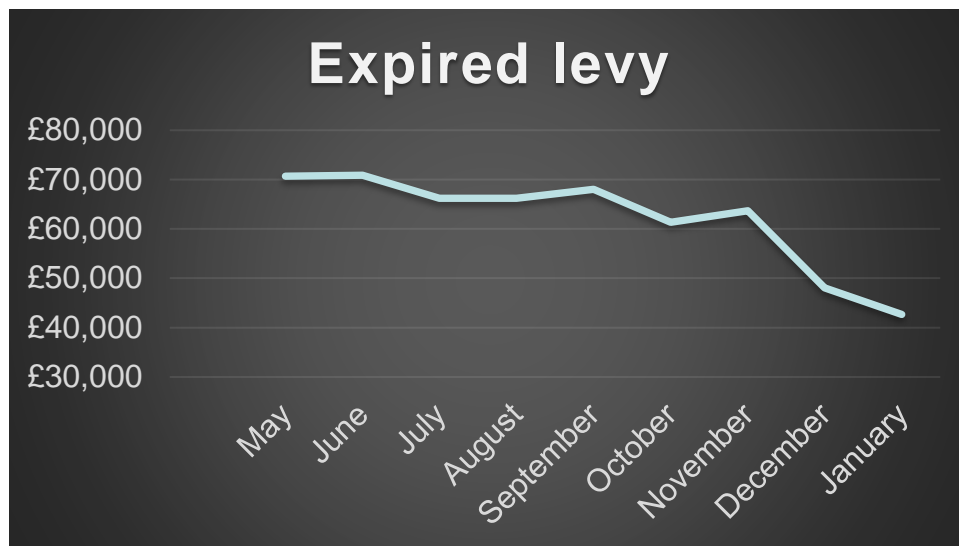
- For those aged 16 to 24 we can claim £2,000
- For those aged 25 and over, we can claim £1,500
- The payment is made in 2 equal instalments for each apprentice. (90 days and 365 days)
- We have been having conversations with business managers around this incentive to assist and encourage take up. We have so far claimed for 6 payments under this scheme and are awaiting apprentice details to be confirmed for other new recruits which we will then be eligible to claim for.

Current Position

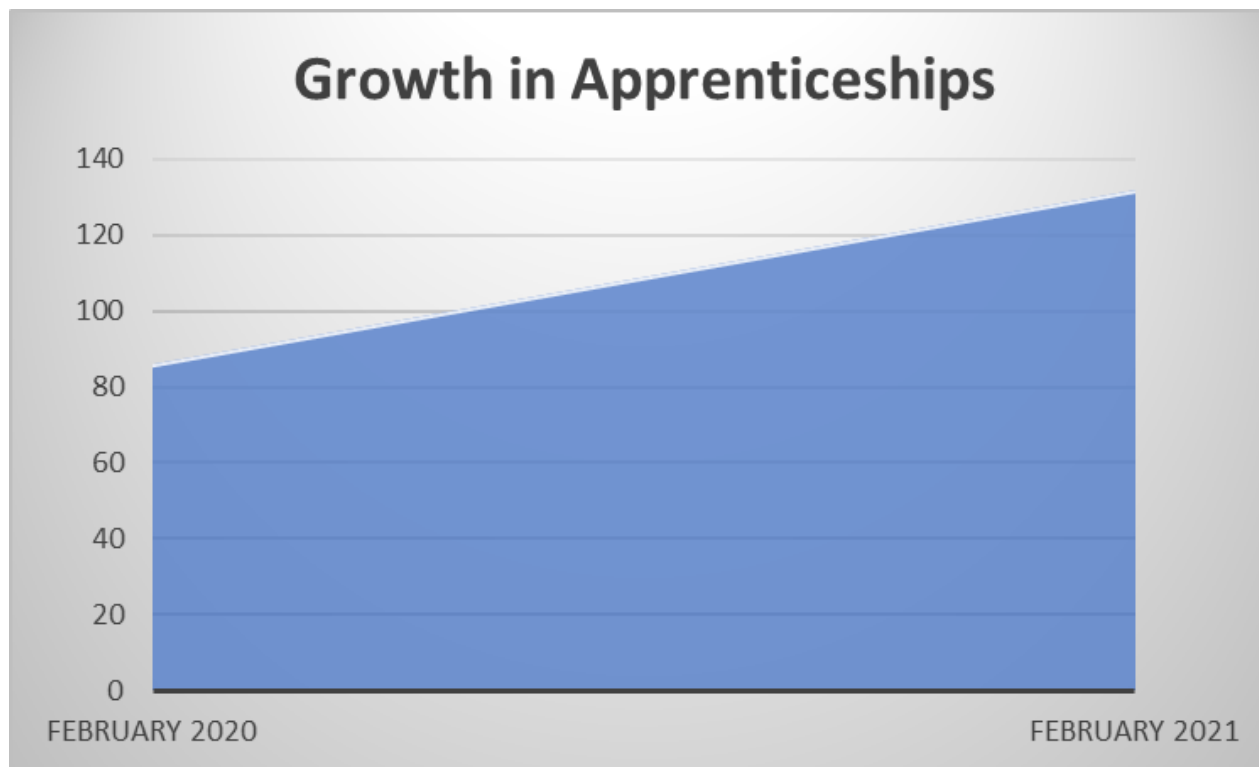
- We currently have 146 apprenticeships on programme throughout WCF & WCC:
 - 98 in our core business areas
 - 48 within schools
- As a result of our summer communications campaign, we have seen the following take up of traineeships and apprenticeships
 - 5 new traineeships commenced in September 2020. Whilst none are care leavers, all were at risk of becoming NEET
 - 35 new apprenticeships (internal and external) signed up and starting throughout 2021
 - Schools new sign ups are slower this academic year as their focus has been gearing up for return of children and remote learning however there are still several lines of enquiry

Apprenticeship Levy

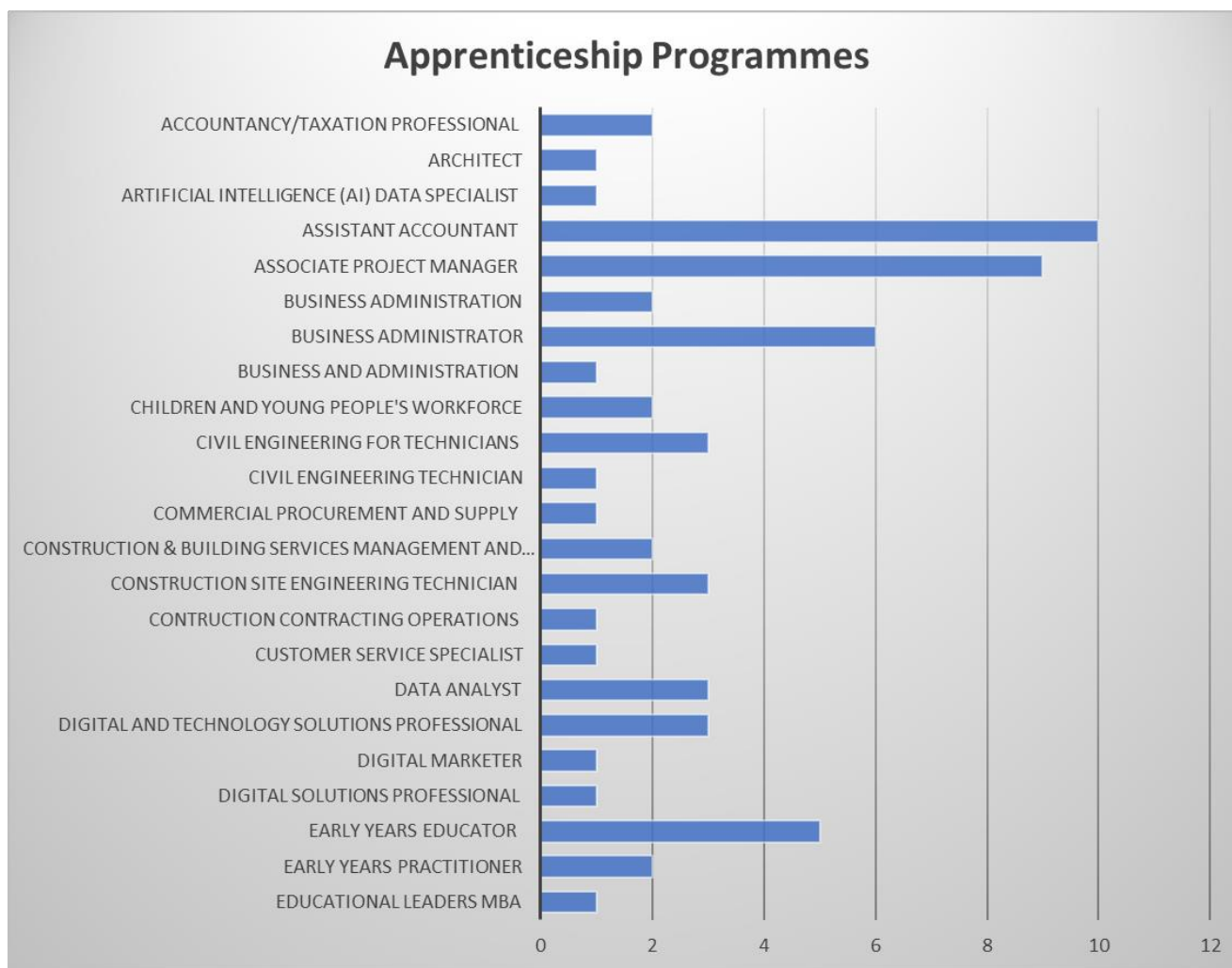
- The Levy can only be spent on the apprenticeship training programme itself. It cannot be used to fund or part fund salaries, travel expenses, meals whilst learning or any other costs.
- Our current levy fund balance is £1,692,300. We have two years to spend the contributions apportioned to the fund before they expire and are returned to central government.
- Expenditure against the fund occurs monthly and our current spend is ~£41,000pm.
- Since we introduced our Apprenticeship Strategy and ran our communication campaign last summer, we have reduced the amount of levy sent back to Central Government by 40%.



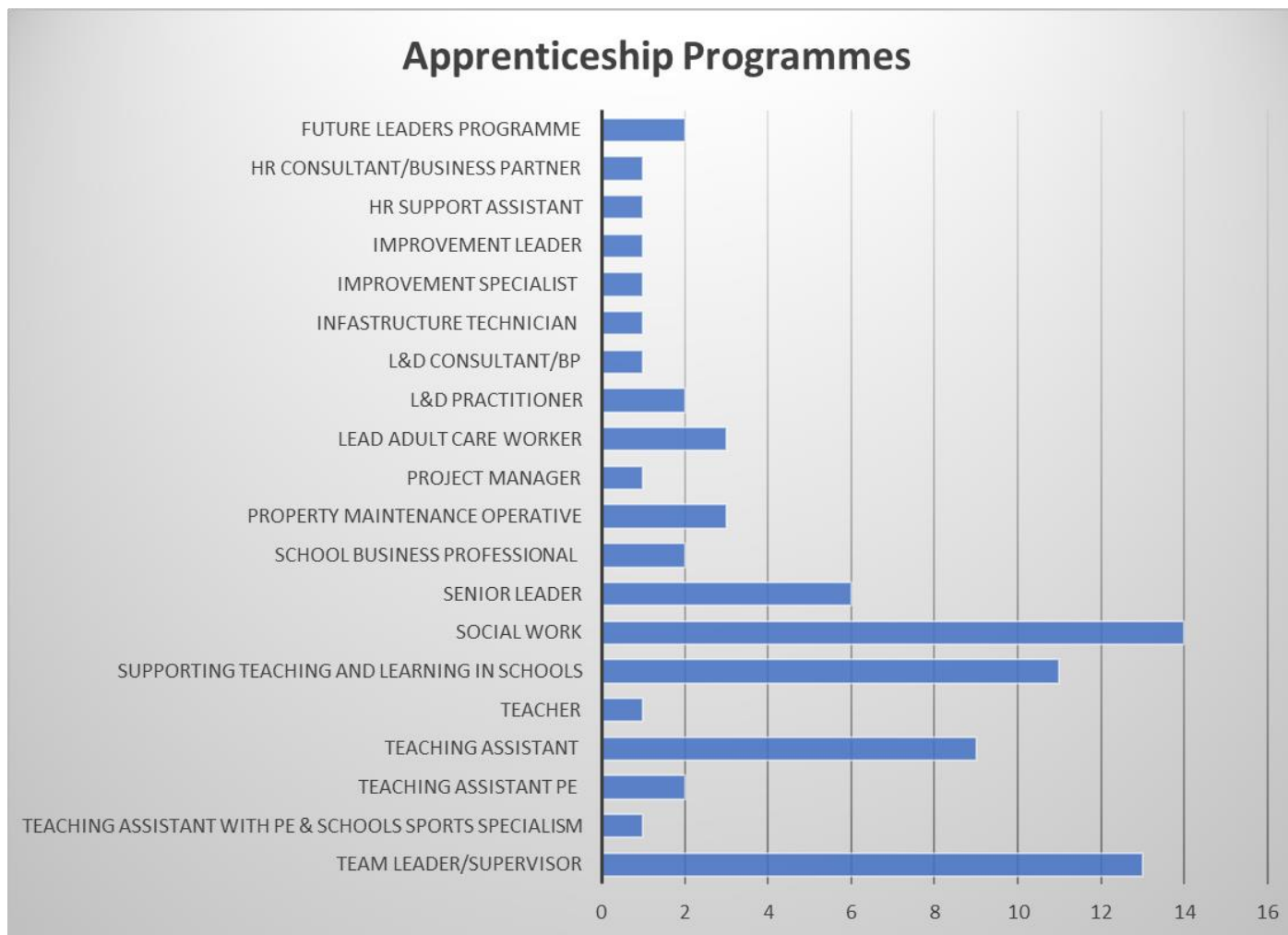
Current Cohort data



Current Cohort data cont...

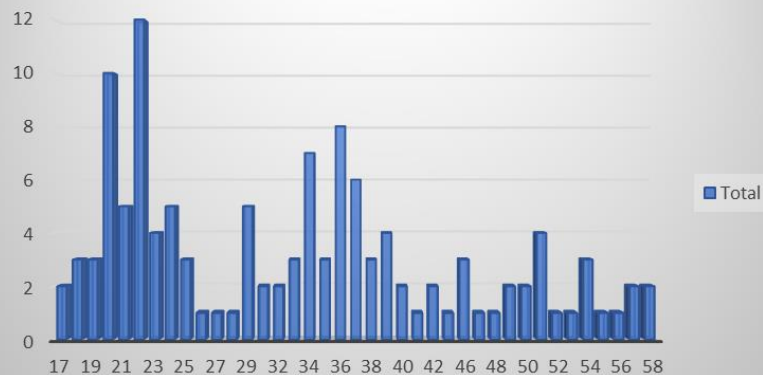


Current Cohort data cont...

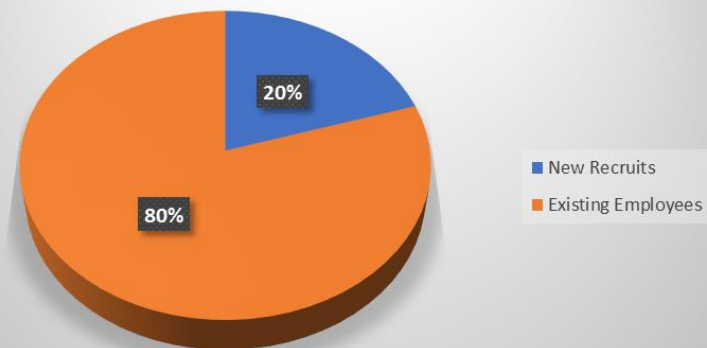


Current Cohort data

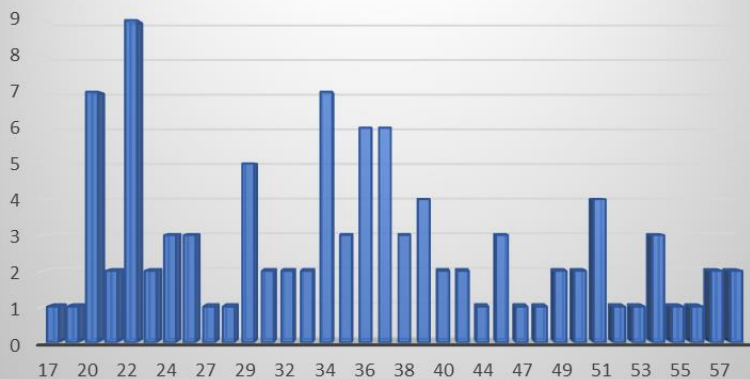
Age Range - Current Apprentices



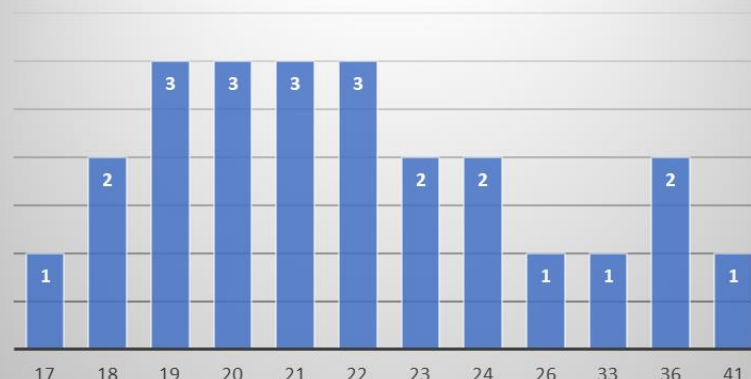
New vs Existing Employees



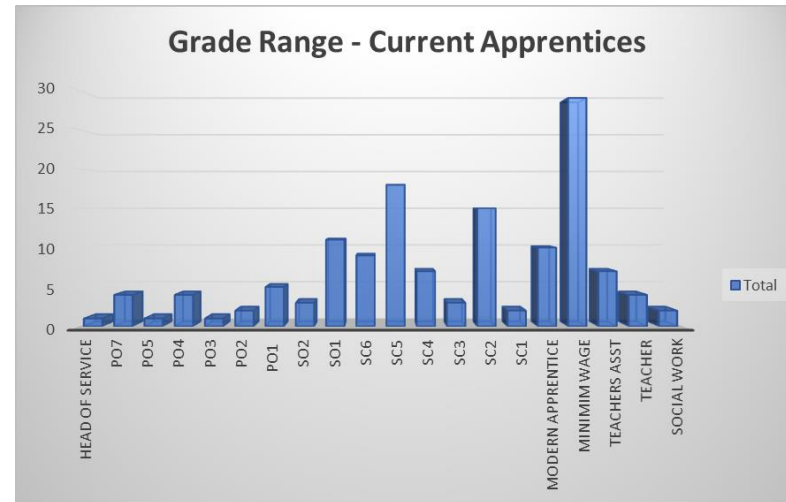
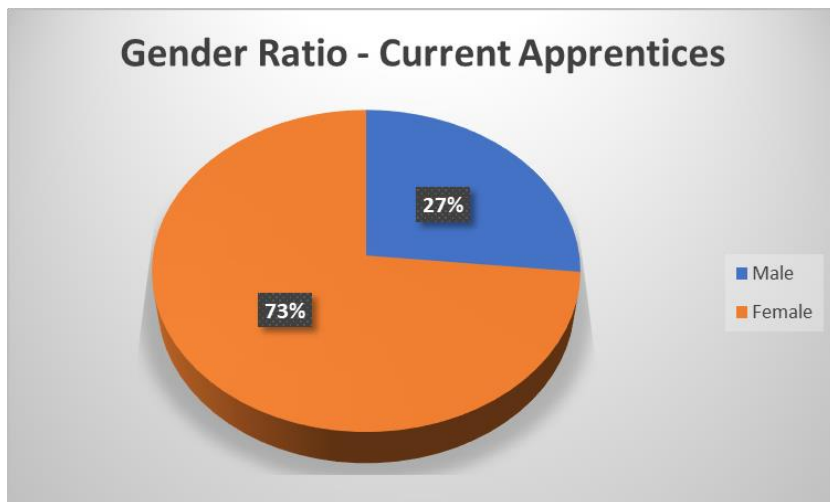
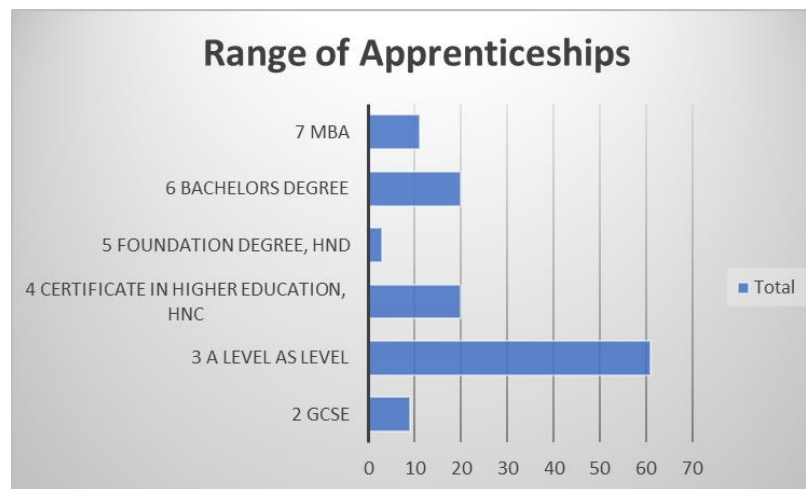
Age Range - Existing Employees



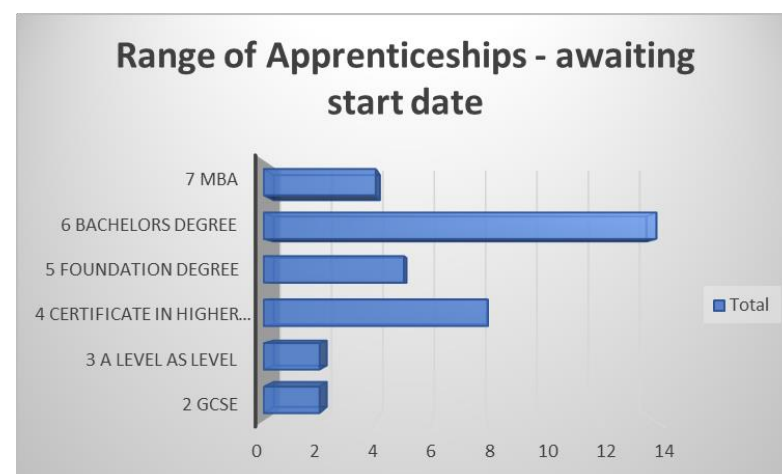
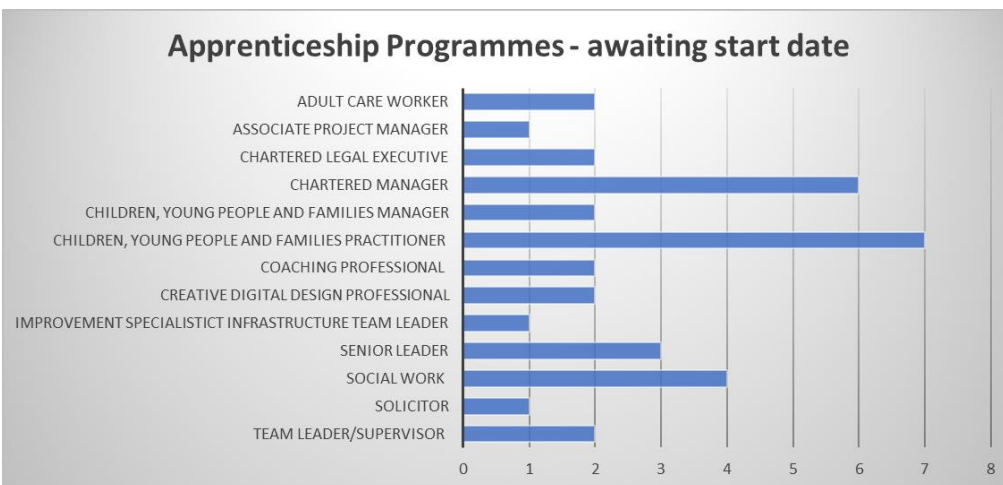
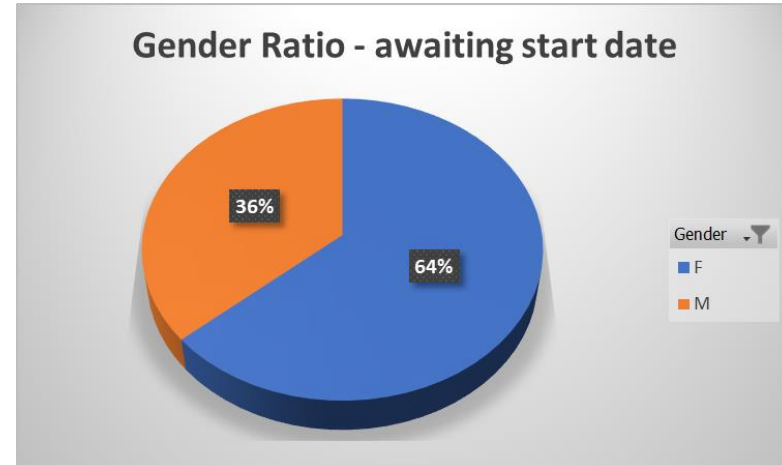
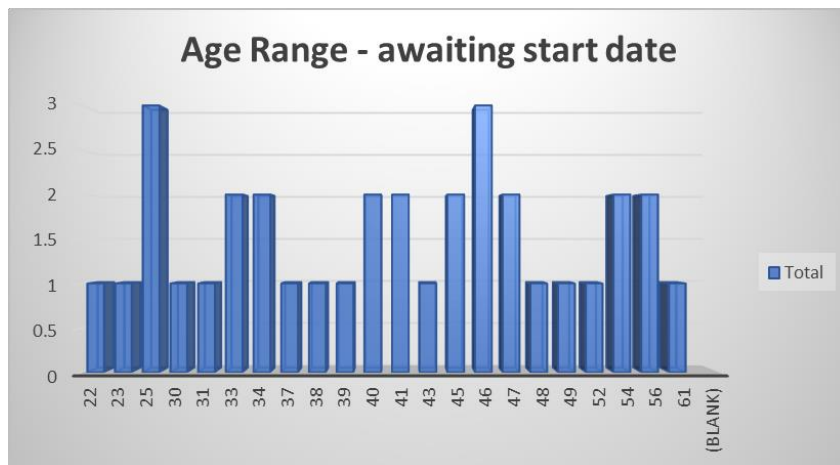
Age Range of New Apprentices



Current Cohort data



Future cohort data (awaiting start date)



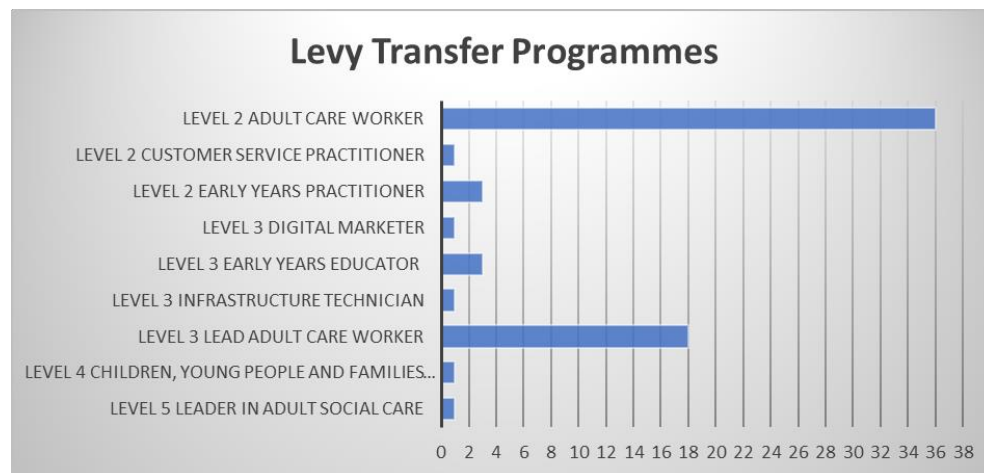
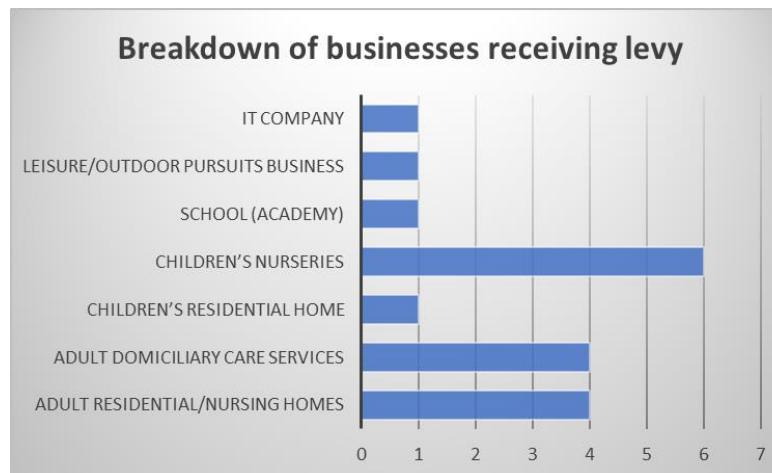
Helping the local economy

Towards the end of 2020, we instigated a local levy transfer policy, making the most of the allowable transfer of up to 25% of our levy. Our self imposed rules stipulate receiving employers should be:

- Organisations based in Worcestershire serving Worcestershire residents
- Paying Worcestershire Council Tax
- Voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations in Worcestershire serving Worcestershire residents
- Organisations whose application aligns and supports Worcestershire's Growth agenda, as per the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan
- Using a Worcestershire Based Training Provider when delivering the apprenticeship programme


To date, this financial year, **we have transferred £204,500 to 18 local businesses to fund 65 apprenticeships** to support local businesses and the local economy

Helping the local economy



Helping the local economy

<https://bromsgrovestandard.co.uk/news/more-than-140k-handed-to-local-businesses-by-worcestershire-county-council-during-the-pandemic-27924/>



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More than £140k handed to local businesses by Worcestershire County Council during the pandemic





THE CEDARS

NURSING HOME

Original Management Team Return to The Cedars

This month, the Cedars Nursing Home has changed its management team and will be returning to the ethos that so many Redditch residents have experience over the years. Compassion, care community.

It is a worrying time to find a residential home but The Cedars offers the highest standards of nursing and emotional care for out residents and their families.

At the moment our priority is to keep

Future Action

- Given the aforementioned 2020 activity, we feel we have now created a stronger and more receptive learning environment within WCC and WCF and as such the business will be more ready to provide a positive learning experience for new entrant Apprentices.
- Done this way, our Apprentices will be best placed to have the greatest support and opportunities to succeed.
- Support will be provided for managers who manage apprentices.
- All request to recruit forms (with the exception of social workers) will be diverted to the Apprenticeship team to see if we can support apprenticeships and/or care leavers before being allowed to continue with the recruitment process
- The Apprenticeship Strategy will be a major part of our future Workforce Strategy (Scheduled for launch April 2021).

Future areas of consideration

- Barriers are continuing to be removed to allow and encourage education leavers into WCF & WCC, however we cannot create the opportunities. This needs to be done by managers/services.
- We need continued focus from the Care Leaver team to encourage more Care Leavers to apply for available apprenticeships.
- We need the support from the businesses (WCF and WCC) to make positions available for education leavers moving into Apprenticeships.
- As an organisation we could consider having a proportionate number of apprentices in each directorate based on headcount and therefore the percentage of levy they contribute and attract.
- Create Apprentice champions - Each business should be encouraged to nominate Apprentice Champions, who would work in conjunction with the central apprenticeship team to resolve any concerns/issues and help promote the benefits of apprentices with recruiting managers in the business.

QUESTIONS

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Supporting Slides

Contents:

- 1) Myth versus Fact
- 2) Testimonials

Myth vs Fact

The EFSA (Education Skills Funding Agency), the government department responsible for apprenticeships (part of the DfE), produced some common myths and answers, see below.

“My apprentice will spend a lot of time away from the workplace”

- Apprenticeships are about upskilling an individual. Reaching occupational competency takes time. Many employers and apprentices have praised the positive effect off-the-job training has on their productivity and apprentices feel valued by the significant investment in their training.
- Off-the-job training must be away from the apprentice’s normal working duties and must teach new knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to their specific apprenticeship.
- It can be delivered flexibly, for example, as a part of each day, one day per week, one week out of five or as block release.
- You may already have existing training programmes or materials you can use to deliver elements of the apprentice’s off-the-job training.

“Off-the-job training must be delivered by a provider in a classroom, at an external location”

- This is not true. Off-the-job training can be delivered in a flexible way. This can be at the apprentice’s usual place of work, or at an external location. It can include for example, the teaching of theory, practical training and writing assignments.
- Providers have developed a range of delivery styles to suit employer and apprentice needs. Employers should work with them to decide when and where off-the-job training should take place and who is best placed to deliver it.

“I need to document all of the apprentice’s off-the-job training”

- A commitment statement must be in place from the beginning of the apprenticeship, setting out the training content an apprentice will receive, and which elements count towards the off-the-job training. The apprentice’s evidence pack needs to demonstrate what training has been delivered against the commitment statement.

Myth vs Fact cont...

EFSA (Education Skills Funding Agency). They are the government department responsible for apprenticeships (part of the DfE) produced some common myths and answers, see below

“English and maths counts towards the 20% requirement for off-the-job training”

- This is not true: English and maths does not count towards the 20% off-the-job training.
- Apprenticeships are about developing occupational competency and they are designed on the basis that the apprentice already has the required level (level 2) of English and maths. Training for English and maths must be on top of the 20% off-the-job training requirement.

“Off-the-job training can be done in the apprentice’s own time”

- An apprenticeship is a work-based programme so all off-the-job training must take place within the apprentice’s paid contracted hours. If planned off-the-job training is unable to take place, it must be rearranged. Apprentices may choose to spend additional time training outside paid hours, but this must not be required to complete the apprenticeship.

“Apprenticeships are for those who didn’t get good exam results”

- Apprenticeship opportunities can be very competitive so employers will be looking to employ the best candidates. In addition, individuals choosing to study an apprenticeship are expected to manage both working and studying a qualification so need to be ambitious and have the desire to develop the skills to succeed.

“You can’t go to university if you study an Apprenticeship”

- Similarly to GCSEs and A-Levels, apprenticeship qualifications attract UCAS points that can be used to access various university level programmes. You can also progress through the apprenticeship route with higher and degree level apprenticeships available.

Myth vs Fact cont...

EFSA (Education Skills Funding Agency). They are the government department responsible for apprenticeships (part of the DfE) produced some common myths and answers, see below

“Apprentices have few career progression opportunities”

- The majority of apprentices in work felt that their apprenticeship had had a positive impact on their career and 36% of higher apprentices report getting a promotion after completing their apprenticeship.

“Apprenticeships are only for young people”

- Apprenticeships are open to anyone over the age of 16. There is no upper age limit.

“An Apprenticeship won't pay me enough”

- There is a minimum apprenticeship wage that all employers must pay apprentices. However, Worcestershire County Council aims to pay Age-Related National Minimum Wage, for newly recruited apprentices. Existing employees retain their current terms and conditions.

Testimonials

My Apprenticeship Journey- Case Study 1

I started out applying for apprenticeships after completing my higher certificate in Equine and being unable to find an appropriate job for my lifestyle. I first found an apprenticeship in Business administration as I found this would be a good starting point for me to go into a new area of work for me. While doing my level 3 in administrative operations with the council I spent my first year working in education commissioning, and, my second year working within the children missing education team which is data driven. These two roles gave me a breadth of understanding within the Childrens sector and allowed me to find what I wanted to do going forward.

On passing my apprenticeship with distinction grades I was offered another position in the council in the area I had interest after being given some opportunity as an administrator to provide support in projects. After interview I was given the role as an associate project manager for in the transformation and change team, alongside this I will be doing my level 4 project manager apprenticeship qualification with HOW college and my APM Qualifications.

I have been in the role for 6 months now based with the Worcestershire Children First buy back team due to my understanding of children's, gained in my two years in my previous apprenticeship, I offer project support and project management to the projects within the SEND programme of work. In addition to this I have completed my foundation certification in Prince2 through the council which is an industry recognised project management qualification.

Overall, my experience with apprenticeships has been great. I don't believe I would be on the track to the career I want by now if it wasn't for the opportunity of an apprenticeship. I spent months after coming out of higher education not being able to find jobs as I didn't have the experience, and, the apprenticeship programme has allowed me to gain that experience and professional qualifications that will help me get better positions in the future.

I would recommend apprenticeships to anyone that needs help getting the job they want, even if you don't start out where you want to be, by the end you could have gained a lot of knowledge of the areas you want to be in and develop your skills and C.V while doing so.

Testimonials

Case Study 2

Worcestershire County Council offered me the opportunity to start an apprenticeship in business administration two years ago. Since then I have moved into the finance department to begin an accounting career. The apprenticeship enabled me to identify my strengths, interests and develop my professional self.

I believe apprenticeships are by far the best investment a young person can make today – all training is paid for by your employer and you get paid whilst you learn. This combination enables you to progress yourself as a professional without going into any debt or feeling that you have not received relevant experience alongside your academic work.

I was placed in a job role that enabled me to have access to a wide range of duties. Being able to try everything from finance to marketing let me hone an idea for my future career so that I was ready to make that second step. Business administration is so varied it offers great pathways to many different professions and on top of this it enables you to see how organisations operate from the ground up.

Worcestershire County Council as an employer has a highly structured apprenticeship scheme. Access to online learning, college teaching, qualifications and a supportive in-house apprenticeship team mean you can be assured of your support throughout the process. I've always felt supported as there is an active approach to helping you progress your career internally after your apprenticeship comes to an end and you will be guided through the next pathway to your future career.

During my time at Worcestershire County Council I was working alongside other apprentices in similar roles which enabled us to support each other and share experiences. The Council encourages co-operation between apprentices, and it is excellent in that it has multiple apprentices on each intake which enables a group bond and further enhances your support network. The Council also offered a mentor in my roles to get help and guidance from a more senior position in the department you are placed within.

I'm delighted that they took me on as it has suited my learning style because I enjoy combining academic work with practical experience which has given me clear vision for the future, and I look forward to success within Worcestershire County Council.

Testimonials

Case Study 3

I joined Worcestershire County Council in September 2018 as a Business Administration Apprentice. As I was coming to the end of the apprenticeship, there was a time of uncertainty about the future. I expressed an interest in learning and development and I was then lucky enough to be offered an amazing opportunity to work in the Learning and Development (L&D) Team and carry out an L&D Practitioner Apprenticeship.

I cannot be more grateful for this opportunity; I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment and I am gaining knowledge and skills and learning new things every day. I also have an amazing and approachable manager who is a great role model. She is really supportive in helping me develop and provides me with as many opportunities as possible.

I have also been lucky enough to have a great mentor with a wealth of experience and skills who has given me lots of knowledge to aid my personal development. He has given me the confidence to do things which are out of my comfort zone which has helped me to grow as a person.

I am really optimistic for my future and looking forward to continuing to learn and grow. I couldn't recommend apprenticeships at Worcestershire County Council highly enough.

Testimonials

Case Study 4

I originally joined Worcestershire County Council as a Business Administration Apprentice in September 2018. I previously studied at Worcester Sixth Form College, completing a BTEC Level three Diploma in Business Studies, I quickly identified that working for a public facing organisation was a route that greatly interested me.

I had a very successful two years in my Business Administration role, working closely with the team to deliver high quality careers advice and guidance to our young people of Worcestershire. I also got involved in organising large events such as the Worcestershire Skills Show and the annual Apprenticeship Awards. I was awarded a Distinction grade in my Apprenticeship. Unfortunately, on completion I discovered my job role was coming to an end.

The Apprenticeship / Human Resource team identified the possibility of a job opportunity. After telephone interviews and further conversations with the Head of Human Resources, they assured me that with my current skills set I could take on an entirely new career in a different direction to what I had originally planned.

I have now progressed onto becoming a Trainee Instructional Designer working in the IT and Digital, Learning and Development Team at Worcestershire County Council. As part of my current job role, I am involved in a variety of different work projects, which include designing, creating and implementing different training materials and resources that will be beneficial to colleagues within the organisation. An example of this being the creation of various instructional guides, which support a variety of processes within Microsoft Teams that can be used to benefit the organisation on a large scale. I have also supported a colleague to deliver a staff briefing held by the Chief Executive, which was broadcasted using Microsoft Teams Live Events to update the entire workforce on important updates.

I have an excellent mentor, who is supporting me to grow my potential and to develop skills which will enable me to climb and progress further up the career ladder.

I am proud to be part of an organisation that sees the importance of visions and values and the collaborative approach which inspires you to reach your full potential. I am also thankful to the HR team for taking the time to invest in me and making me feel so positive and enthused about my experience to date. I am excited to continue my council journey and seeing what the future holds!