



Dover District Council Apprenticeship Strategy 2017 - 2021

Foreword by the Chief Executive

Apprenticeships have always been an integral part of our team at Dover and they will continue to play an important role in enabling us to maintain a robust, resilient workforce in years to come as we work with and for our community in an ever changing environment.

The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017 and the focus placed upon apprenticeships by the Government, provides us with an ideal opportunity to review and refresh our approach to apprenticeships to ensure that we are maximising the potential that apprentices can offer to us as an organisation and that we can offer to them as members of our community.

This apprenticeship strategy identifies how we will offer ways into the organisation for new talent as well as identifying potential opportunities for the development of our existing staff, all aimed at addressing the current and future skills needs of our organisation.

Nadeem Aziz

Chief Executive, Dover District Council

1. Introduction

As an organisation, we have actively encouraged the use of career development programmes including apprenticeships, graduate and work experience placements and trainee professional posts for many years. For the most part, with great success for both the Council and the individuals involved, however, our apprenticeships have tended to be Business Administration focused which whilst useful, do not always address our particular business needs. Additionally, trainee positions have tended to be filled on an ad-hoc basis as they are funded from departmental budgets, rather than as a result of a corporate strategy.

This document sets out the Apprenticeship Strategy for Dover District Council as an employer and the positive action that we will take in our approach to apprenticeships as part of our people strategy.

The strategy spans the period 2017-2021 and will be reviewed alongside the Council's new Corporate Plan in 2019 to reflect changes at both a local and national level. It will be overseen by the Employment Management Group in conjunction with CMT.

The strategy will be used to inform business plans to help identify the actions that service areas will take in support of the strategy and in meeting the specific skills challenges that they face. The Apprenticeship Strategy also supports and works alongside other talent and entry to work initiatives such as work experience, traineeships, graduate programmes and internships as part of our wider talent approach and supports the objectives of the Corporate Plan.

2. Vision

“Apprenticeships are a valued and integral part of the Councils workforce, providing opportunities for entry into work for our local community and for development for existing staff, helping the Council to meet its current and future skills needs.”

The Council continues to face a number of challenges which can only be overcome with the right people, with the right skills, at the right time to meet demands. Apprenticeships need to form an integral part of our workforce strategy to support talent management and succession planning to address our current and future skills needs.

3. Context

i. Meeting current and future skills needs

Our geographical location combined with the fact that we operate in an environment where there is competition for highly skilled staff from both our neighbouring authorities and the private sector has meant that some of our core services have struggled to attract and retain staff, particularly in professional posts, in recent years. We also have an ageing workforce and so adopting a more strategic approach to 'growing our own' talent has become increasingly important and apprenticeships will form a key part of that strategy to enable us to meet our corporate objectives both now and in the future.

In order to 'grow our own' we also need to invest in the development of our existing staff to ensure that we have the capacity and capabilities we need. Providing opportunities for existing staff to utilise particularly higher level apprenticeships, to gain skills and progress their careers will further help to support talent management and succession planning.

ii. Government reforms

The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and the Government objective to have three million new apprenticeships in place by 2020 has resulted in around £35,000 of the Council's funds being earmarked for apprenticeships and 'topped up' by a further £15,000 by the Government. Our Government target is for 2.3% of our workforce to be apprentices by 2020. This means that over the next three years, the Council will need to have at least 18 apprentices in order to meet the target set by the Government and it is vital that these apprenticeships are utilised effectively to contribute towards our current and future skills gaps.

iii. Supporting Dover District Council's strategic ambitions

The Dover District has low skill and educational attainment levels compared with county, regional and national averages with only 28.6% of the population being educated to NVQ4 and above and 7.7% having no qualifications at all.¹ Additionally, only 3% of our staff are aged between 18-24 compared with 13% of the local community.

Apprenticeships offer the opportunity for the Council to become more representative of the community that it serves and to offer opportunities to people in our community to develop their skills and gain valuable work experience. This will put them in the best position possible to gain long term sustainable employment to support themselves and their families and to reinvest in the Dover District. This supports a key aim of our Corporate Plan, which is to have a District where people are engaged and empowered to achieve their own potential.

¹ According to the State of the District Report 2015

4. Aims

Taking into consideration all of these factors, it is important that the Council is able to attract and retain apprentices and that we develop an apprenticeship programme that:

- Supports our current and future skills needs
- Supports the Council's Corporate Plan
- Addresses the targets set out in the Government's apprenticeship reforms

With all of this in mind, our apprenticeship strategy aims to:

Identify apprenticeship opportunities through talent management and workforce planning activities to support current and future skills needs

Maximising the use of apprenticeships, particularly in areas where we struggle to recruit and retain staff is essential to ensure that we have people with the skills that we need both now and in the future. We will continue to work with service managers to identify opportunities for apprenticeships for both new and current employees, enabling them to mitigate potential skills shortages and develop the skills needed for future service delivery.

We will also continue to pay our entry level apprenticeships at one and a half times the national apprenticeship minimum wage rate for their first year and at the National Minimum Wage rate for their ages for any subsequent periods if the apprenticeship runs beyond twelve months. This will help to ensure that we are able to offer a competitive package in order to make our apprenticeship opportunities an attractive alternative to other training routes or organisations offering similar apprenticeships.

Actively promote apprenticeships within the Council as valuable recruitment and career development opportunities and further develop the pro-apprenticeship culture amongst managers and staff

With the introduction of the levy and the broadening of the apprenticeship standards, we have the opportunity to take a more strategic approach to how we invest in recruitment and development. Therefore, a key aim of this strategy will be to encourage managers and staff to challenge traditional approaches to recruitment, development and succession planning and to further develop support for apprenticeship programmes across the organisation.

Since it is likely that our entry level apprenticeships will provide opportunities for those starting out in their working lives or for those seeking a route back into work after a break, there may be a need to provide some additional support to enable these apprenticeships to succeed. As a result, we will provide development and support for our managers and staff to enable them to manage and support our entry level apprentices to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

Develop work experience and internship opportunities that support our apprenticeship programme, providing a route into the workplace for those who need it and helping to ensure that our team is more reflective of the community that we serve

Our community faces challenges that are unique to us based upon our geographical location and our extensive social and economic history. Whilst we cannot provide apprenticeship opportunities for everyone who needs or wants them, by offering a more extensive, structured work experience and internship programme, we can provide people who are new to the workplace or who have been absent for an extended period, a route back in through development of their skills and experience that can be used to help them to take advantage of opportunities elsewhere in the local area.

That being said, some of these work experience and internship opportunities will undoubtedly create a route into our own apprenticeship programme and will enable us to begin to create a workforce that is more reflective of the diversity of our community.

Achieve at least 18 apprenticeship starts by 2020 by increasing the opportunities for new entrants and increasing the number of existing employees undertaking an apprenticeship to develop their skills and career paths

By using apprenticeship programmes as both entry level positions into the organisation for those starting out in their careers and also as an opportunity for staff to continue their professional development, employees, managers and potential new recruits will be able to see the clear, structured career paths through the organisation, should they want to follow them.

Develop partnerships with training providers and other local Authorities to identify existing and new apprenticeship standards that support the Council's occupational skills needs

Through the development of our relationships with training providers and other local authorities we aim to identify current apprenticeship standards that will provide our employees with the skills to develop their careers and support the Council in achieving its strategic goals. Where no apprenticeship standards currently exist, we aim to work in partnership with these organisations to develop apprenticeships which support our strategic needs.

5. How will we achieve this?

Appendix 1 sets out the actions needed in the short, medium and long term to achieve the aims of our apprenticeship strategy.

Whilst this action plan identifies leads for each stream, it is anticipated that apprenticeships and the apprenticeship strategy will become a core area of our business and as such, everyone is responsible for their success.

6. Performance Monitoring

The strategy and the progress of its aims will be reviewed regularly by CMT with support from EKHR. The action plan will be updated annually in line with the Council's strategy and any local or national influences.

In accordance with our Public Sector Duty Requirement, we will also publish annually data relating to the Council's progress in meeting the 2.3% apprenticeship target set by the Government.

Appendix 1 – Apprenticeship Strategy Action Plan

Identify apprenticeship opportunities through talent management and workforce planning activities to support current and future skills needs

Actively promote apprenticeships within the Council as valuable recruitment and career development opportunities and further develop the pro-apprenticeship culture amongst managers and staff

Actions	Responsibility	Timescale	Desired Outcome
Develop a succession planning strategy and embed the use of apprenticeships within it.	HRBP	August 2018 for roll out in December 2018	Apprenticeships are used to address skills shortages and recruitment issues across all services
Work with Heads of Service to identify apprenticeship opportunities as part of workforce planning and a 'grow our own' approach to addressing skills shortages/difficult to recruit areas	Director of Governance & HRBP	Ongoing	
Develop an apprenticeship policy that supports the strategy and guidance notes and development and support for managers in implementing them both.	EKHR	August 2017	
Continue to work with Heads of Service to identify where apprenticeships and higher level apprenticeships can be used to aid succession planning and address skills shortages	HRBP/EKHR	Ongoing	
Identify opportunities to maximise the use of the levy funding in supporting the Council's succession planning strategy and employee continuous professional development (CPD)	HRBP	Spring/Summer 2018	
Identify opportunities to use relevant supervisory and management apprenticeship frameworks to support aspiring and developing managers	HRBP	Spring/Summer 2018	Development of existing staff to support organisational needs and individual career pathways

<p>Increase promotional activity focusing on the different types, levels and benefits of apprenticeships to staff and managers</p> <p>Share apprenticeship success stories and developments through a variety of communication channels with all staff and managers</p> <p>Provide updates for managers at Managers Forums throughout the year</p>	HRBP	Ongoing	Increased uptake and awareness of apprenticeships
<p>Develop work experience and internship opportunities that support our apprenticeship programme providing a route into the workplace for those who need it and helping to ensure that our team is more reflective of the community that we serve</p>			
<p>Develop a work experience and internship policy and programme that supports the apprenticeship programme and provides a broad range of opportunities for people in the local area</p>	EKHR with support from the Director of Governance	Spring 2018	Increased opportunities for young people entering the labour market and those returning to it after a significant break to build on their skills and experience.
<p>Develop relationships with schools, colleges and KCC youth and unemployment services to promote the opportunities available and to tailor the offer to the needs of people in the local area</p>	Community development team with support from HRBP	Ongoing	Opportunities are taken up and fit the needs of both the community and the Council
<p>Achieve at least 18 apprenticeship starts by 2020 by increasing the opportunities for new entrants and increasing the number of existing employees undertaking an apprenticeship to develop their skills and career paths</p>			

<p>Implement pay rates that are competitive in the labour market to recruit and retain apprentices to meet organisational needs</p> <p>Ensure rates of pay are cost effective and sustainable, especially in consideration of the organisation's own financial position and service budgets</p>	CMT supported by HRBP	From April 2018	Earnings and progression of lower paid staff improved
<p>Adopt a more pro-active approach to identifying apprenticeship opportunities for new entrants by amending the employment management group (EMG) application form to ensure that recruiting managers and EMG consider the use of apprenticeships</p>	EMG	From August 2017	Pro-apprenticeship culture developed
<p>Provide apprenticeship opportunities for existing employees aligned to skills development requirements across the organisation. Raise awareness of apprenticeships as a route to progression for all employees.</p> <p>Integrate apprenticeship opportunities within the Council's core learning and development offer for employees</p>	<p>CMT in conjunction with Heads of Service and with the support of the HRBP</p> <p>Director of Governance and HRBP</p>	From August 2017	<p>Career development opportunities provided</p> <p>Use of levy funding maximised</p>
<p>Develop partnerships with training providers and other local Authorities to identify existing and new apprenticeship standards that support the Council's occupational skills needs</p>			
Actions	Responsibility	Timescale	Desired Outcome
<p>Work with providers to identify and develop new training routes available through the new apprenticeship funding</p> <p>Identify priority areas for development based on skills needs and gaps</p>	<p>HRBP team</p> <p>HRBP</p>	<p>From August 2017</p> <p>From Autumn 2017</p>	<p>Future skills requirements are built into the delivery content of apprenticeships.</p>
<p>Contribute to the identification of common core skills needs across the East Kent partners and other Kent authorities</p> <p>Review existing apprenticeship standards and identify those that meet our joint requirements; join up to leverage best provision from learning providers</p>	<p>HRBP team in conjunction with internal and external partners</p>	<p>From Spring 2018</p>	<p>Future skills requirements are built into the delivery content of apprenticeships</p> <p>Supply of skills meets the needs of employers</p>

