

**West Lancashire Borough Council**

**Policy Statement on Apprenticeships**

**Introduction**

The Council is committed to promoting apprenticeships and will aim to meet the new Government target of an average of 2.3% apprenticeship starts per year over the four year period 2017/18 to 2020/21. This target works out to an average of just over 12 apprenticeship starts per year, and progress against this target will be monitored through the corporate performance management suite of indicators.

**Definition**

An apprenticeship is a way for young people and adult learners to earn while they learn in a real job, gaining a real qualification and skills for the future. Depending on the sector and job role, an apprenticeship can take anything between one and five years to complete. It is a package of training and qualifications. Key features include:

- Must be employed in a real job - they may be an existing employee or a new hire
- Must work towards an approved apprenticeship standard
- Training must last at least 12 months, but any contract needs to be at least a year and a day.
- Must spend at least 20% of time on off the job training

**Apprenticeship Levy and Funding**

From April 2017 government regulations will require the Council to pay an apprenticeship levy based on a percentage of our total pay bill. This levy will cost around £55,000 per year and has been built into the budgets for 2017-18. This levy can be used to pay for the training costs for apprenticeships, and this funding will be managed corporately by Human Resources.

The Service employing the apprentice will be responsible for funding their pay costs, and there will be no additional budgets available for apprentice pay costs. Consequently any new apprenticeship posts that are created will need to be funded through service restructuring or external funding.

**Recruitment to new Apprenticeship Posts and Pay Rates**

Heads of Service in conjunction with the appropriate manager will assess whether any vacancies that arise are suitable to be converted into an apprenticeship. The results of this review and the decision will be recorded on vacancy clearance forms.

The Council will seek to attract and appoint applicants who demonstrate qualities that reflect the Council's vision and values. In return the apprentice will receive quality training that will enable them to become proficient in the standard.

The pay rate of a new apprenticeship post will vary depending on the skills and knowledge that the apprentice may be expected to already have, for example this may be a particular requirement in professional services such as an apprenticeship for a Solicitor post. However, in line with most neighbouring authorities the minimum pay rate for a new apprenticeship post will be the National Minimum wage (which is updated in April each year):

- Under 18s receive £4.05 per hour
- Ages 18-20 receive £5.60 per hour
- Ages 21 to 24 receive £7.05
- Ages 25 and over receive £7.50 (This is known as the National Living wage)

Advice should be sought from Human Resources on the pay rates to be applied.

### **Career Development of Existing Staff**

If an apprenticeship standard is identified as being beneficial to the business needs of the service, then eligible employees will be given the opportunity to be considered for this training. Employees may also specify an interest in an appropriate apprenticeship standard via the development appraisal process, and such requests will be considered in accordance with the business needs of the service and the funding available.

Existing employees will be paid at the normal rate for their job while undertaking apprenticeship training.

### **Selection of Training Providers**

Services will take the lead role in selecting and managing relationships with registered training providers, supported by HR and will use the digital apprenticeship service (DAS) to choose and pay for apprenticeship training. The Council will comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in this selection process and managers will select training providers who represent best value for money, based on a range of factors including quality, cost and location. Due regard will be paid to Government funding guidelines.

### **Evaluation**

Apprenticeships will be evaluated on quality, cost and relevance to the job and this will help to inform future strategy. HR will periodically review progress to ensure the Council is meeting its target and publish information on progress towards the target in accordance with Government requirements.

