

## **LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM**

**Date of meeting 18 March 2021**

### **Item No 10**

**Title: Recommendations of the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group**

#### **Executive Summary**

On 8 February 2021, Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group considered a number of reports, including:

- Urgent Business Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Protocol
- School Apprenticeship Levy Update

A summary of the information presented and the Steering Group's recommendations are provided in this report.

#### **Recommendations**

**The Forum is asked to:**

- a) Note the report from the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group held on 8 February 2021;**
- b) Ratify the Working Group's recommendations.**

## **Background**

On 8 February 2021, the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group considered a number of reports. A summary of the information presented and the Steering Group's recommendations are provided below:

### **1. Urgent Business Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Protocol**

It was noted that responses were obtained from the Steering Group in February 2020 using the urgent business procedure, in connection with the protocol to be used to in connection with the transfer of 'schools' monies, to non-levy paying settings rather than returning funding to central government.

Members responded to the proposals and having reviewed the responses, the Apprenticeship Levy Team proceeded with the schools levy transfer arrangements, but due to the uncertainties expressed, did not include 'Organisations providing support to schools' in the eligible categories. This group remained eligible for support from transfers from the LCC levy.

The agreed proposals were:

Categories eligible for 'Schools' Apprenticeship Levy Transfer:

- Aided schools situated with the LCC footprint (where possible as limited number due to PAYE issue)
- Academies situated with the LCC footprint
- Aided schools and academies in Unitary authorities (Blackpool and Blackburn)
- Independent Nurseries/Early years settings

Process:

- Allow the Apprenticeship Levy Team to identify, arrange and authorise unspent levy transfers to be made to the above categories.

### **The Working Group:**

- a) Noted the report.**

### **2. School Apprenticeship Levy Update**

Colleagues from the Apprenticeship Levy team delivered a presentation to members providing an update on the latest school related developments.

#### *Overview*

107 new Requests for Funding had been received and approved since May 2020, with a total value for this window of opportunity of approx. £839,240 over the duration of the apprenticeships.

There are currently 224 on-going apprentices, 33 awaiting enrolment, and 167 have completed, since April 2017.

#### *Schools Engagement*

Covid-19 and the lockdown has meant schools visits have been replaced with video calls and discussion via phone. Schools have welcomed this approach with many heads engaging in

discussions. The schools portal has also proved an excellent way to communicate important information and keep schools updated with new developments.

On-line learning is underway across our schools for all our apprentices with all our providers continuing to sign up, deliver and maintain contact.

Recruitment has been effected by lockdown and is likely to remain so until schools return to normality. Schools have taken advantage of the new employment incentives with 43 potential new apprentices having been recruited who are eligible for up to £3000.

27 Apprentices are on a current Break in Learning, 12 due to Covid-19.

Apprenticeship Reviews are underway where the team will be speaking to each one of our apprentices in person to get their feedback on their experiences. To date 55 % of the reviews have been completed.

8th-12th February 2021 is National Apprenticeship Week and several communications will be issued on the portal raising awareness and celebrating success.

#### *Recruitment Process*

Vacancies are now uploaded to the National Apprenticeship Service website (NAS) and LCC website, schools recruitment site and Indeed. The team are in regular contact with the schools helping them with the documentation and process.

All new documents have been uploaded to the schools portal A-Z for schools to download including our new schools training menu for 20/21. Job support packs have also been developed to aid schools in completing their adverts

#### *Apprenticeships*

A total of 430 apprenticeships have been undertaken in Lancashire schools since 2017/18. Whilst the level of take up in 2020/21 has reduced due to covid, the number of apprenticeships in schools has not fallen to the same extent as for LCC.

Further details of the apprenticeships being undertaken and a breakdown by district were provided for the group.

Members noted that a number of the previous apprenticeship frameworks had been turned off by the government and new apprenticeship standards had been introduced. The team were working on developing further relevant standard for schools and recent additions included:

- Outdoor Activity Instructor L3
- Teacher L6
- Career Development Professional L6

Further details on each of the new standards were provided for the group.

#### *Financial Position*

An update on the financial position of the schools levy fund was provided:

Annual Schools Levy fund approx.	<b>£1.5 million</b>
Spend across Levy schools in 2017/18	<b>£28,098</b>
Spend across Levy schools in 2018/19	<b>£319,075</b>
Spend across Levy schools in 2019/20	<b>£565,245</b>
Spend so far this year 2020/2021	<b>£368,469</b>
Forecast spend this year approx.	<b>£782,150</b>
Total spend to date	<b>£1,271,173</b>

#### *Update on Levy Transfer*

The Annual Levy Transfer pot is approx. £373,910. 23 Transfer requests going ahead, with 5 still awaiting enrolment in the first window.

11 schools, academies and early years settings will have been supported when all are enrolled.

The significant barrier still exists to utilising the transfer where eligible schools using LCC payroll, and therefore on the same PAYE number cannot be supported. However, the team have recently got some assurances from the ESFA that a solution to the pooled payroll issue will be resolved for April 2021.

The possibility of promoting the transfer opportunity for early years providers via the weekly newsletter was suggested.

It was noted that circa £1m had been returned to the ESFA to date from Lancashire levy funding, both schools and LCC, but it was hoped that the level of return would reduce in future if levy support increased and the options for transfer were made resolved.

#### *Looking Forward*

The key issue for the team in the near future will be the large Procurement exercise that will provide the opportunity to look at the offer to support schools and engage with potential new programmes (become a trailblazer) and providers.

The team are also proposing a newsletter to introduce the new team supporting schools apprenticeships.

#### **The Working Group:**

- a) **Noted the information.**
- b) **Requested that the transfer opportunity be promoted with early years providers.**
- c) **Welcomed the possibility of pooled payroll issue being resolved for April 2021.**
- d) **Thanked the Apprenticeship Levy Team for their continued hard work and dedication during difficult circumstances.**