

LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Date of meeting 16 March 2023

Item No 15

Title: Recommendations of the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group

Executive Summary

On 10 February 2023, the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group considered a topic:

- School Apprenticeship Levy Update

A summary of the information presented, and the Working 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 10 February 2023;**
- b) Ratify the Steering Group's recommendations.**

Background

On 10 February 2023, the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group considered a number of reports. A summary of the information presented, and the Working Group's recommendations are provided below:

1. Apprenticeship Levy School Finance Update

James Beardwood (Apprenticeship Team Schools Lead) delivered a presentation to members providing an update on the latest information about Apprenticeship Levy.

In order to maximize investment and to communicate the message within cluster groups and forums, the group was reformed as he had a need to communicate regularly with schools. It was necessary to refocus the previous group since it contained members who did not participate in Levy or did not attend it, for a long period of time.

Currently, schools are not spending their share of Apprenticeship Levy. In his statement to the group, James advised them that his aim was to engage the school with the intention of increasing their use of Levy in Lancashire.

James has stated that schools should not contact providers directly, since training is arranged by the LCC and delivered on their behalf. There is a contract signed between the team and the trainer.

Levy Finance

From 1st August 2022 to 1st January 2023, 81 new Apprenticeship Training requests were received from schools and approved by the team for referral to the providers.

There are currently 244 apprentices ongoing, 33 awaiting enrolment, and 351 who have completed their apprenticeships.

Approximately £559,033 has been requested in apprenticeship requests during this window of opportunity.

The private companies such as care homes, etc., may also request transfers to meet their specific needs. To date, LEVY has supported 32 Transfer requests totalling £365,000 - and 2 more are pending. LEVY is also supporting five additional apprentices in their pursuit of post-school academisation apprenticeships.

The team is continuously forecasting their position on where they are today and will be in future, to make sure that they are financially responsible, to cover what is promised. It was noted that the forecasting will differ in Jan – July to Aug – Jan as with start of a school year. But currently forecast to fund £1.3 million.

Update on activity

114 schools have taken advantage of the apprenticeship incentive which provides an additional £1000 to support 16–18-year-old apprentices. Another 43 claims were submitted for the 'Employer New Hire Incentive' program. A further £1000 may be provided to apprentices aged 19-25 in the care system. During COVID, additional funds of £3000 were available to encourage people to return to work after a period of furlough.

There were 146 apprentices enrolled in 2021-2022, with a total apprenticeship funding cost of £1,437,686. In 2022-2023, the team has received requests for 69 apprentices, with a total cost of apprenticeship funding of £493,033. To maintain our spending levels and to avoid clawbacks, we must focus on apprenticeship funding in the schools.

A break in learning is offered by the team and there are currently 16 Apprentices on a break in learning

As part of the "Out of Funding " (OOFs) process, the team needs to contact providers to ensure deadlines are met for fixed-term contracts - at present, 53 school-based apprentices are "Out of Funding ". Generally, this occurs when a training programme takes too long to provide, which has an adverse effect on participants.

Current Apprenticeship offered;

- Assistant Accountant (L3)
- Associate Project Manager (L4)
- Business & Administration (L3)
- Business Administrator (L3)
- Career Development Professional (L6)
- Chartered Manager (L6)
- Children, Young People & Families Practitioner - Residential Childcare (L4)
- Coaching Professional (L5)
- Customer Service Practitioner (L2)
- Cyber Security Technologist (L4)
- Data Analyst (L4)
- Digital & Technology Solutions Professional (L6)
- Digital Support Technician (L3)
- Early Year Practitioner (L2)
- Early Years Educator (L3)
- Facilities Services Operative (L2)
- HR Consultant Partner (L5)
- HR Support (L3)
- Infrastructure Technician (L3)
- Operations/Departmental Manager (L5)
- Outdoor Activity Instructor (L3)
- Play Therapist (L7)
- Schools Business Professional (L4)
- Senior Leader (L7)
- Sports Coach (L4)
- Teacher (L6)
- Teaching Assistant (L3)
- Teaching Assistant with PE & Sport (L3)
- Team Leader/Supervisor (L3)
- Children, Young People & Families Manager - Community (L5)

Members discussed how the investment in Levy can really make a difference in the school and that they actually save money by training and employing younger staff. It was noted that Levy will be offering Playworker L2, which was welcomed by members as some may struggle to get on L3.

The advertising apprenticeship vacancies can be done by the team on Oracle Fusion, Indeed and by National Apprenticeship website by the team, but they also encourage schools to advertise on their social media and website.

Unfortunately, the VA school cannot access the Levy due to payroll number issues and government does not provide an option to resolve this. The authority would have to spent £2.3 million and employ 30 staff to manage 270 VA schools. This frustration is felt across whole country and not only in Lancashire. Additionally, there is a British Airways provider that is facing the same difficulties with having different sites.

New Application

A new application form has been developed by the team and has replaced the Request for Funding form. It is now accessible through the schools portal. The Apprenticeship Guide will be updated along with a new vacancy request form. A recent issue relating to GDPR arose when individuals were added to the training without their consent, intent, or interest.

Members asked why businesses and schools are required to contribute to the Levy. James explained that traditionally, local governments did not charge employers, which resulted in debt. Therefore, large employers should contribute to the development of their employees. This makes it more likely that employers will use it, as it motivates them to do so.

Further discussion was also conducted regarding the fact that as an employer, if your annual pay bill is greater than £3 million, you are required to pay the Apprenticeship Levy each month.

The Group:

- a) Noted the information;**
- b) Expressed frustration at the continued difficulties caused by school pooled payroll issues;**
- c) Thanked the Apprenticeship Levy Team for their continued hard work.**