Apprenticeships and the public sector

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Background and introduction

1 As stated within World-class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All. The expansion of Apprenticeships within the public sector is a high priority for the Government and a key element of the plans to expand Apprenticeships overall. We have committed to working with DIUS and DCSF on a public sector Apprenticeship Summit in October. The plans in this paper set out our commitment to delivering progress by that date, and our priority for the year ahead.

Purpose

2 The purpose of this paper is to seek Council’s views and endorsement to the programme of work planned in the short term to help kick start the process of accelerating the expansion of Apprenticeships within the public sector.

Recommendation

3 Council is asked to comment on, and endorse, the proposed programme of work which can be summarised as follows:

- Initial priority focus on four public service sectors:
  - Central Government
  - Local Government
  - Health
  - Education

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• Initial focus on four strands of work:
  i) **Research / best practice** – including the development of a plan that LSC regions could implement consistently.
  ii) **Targets / measurement** – involving the modelling of an appropriate Key Performance Indicator and measurement.
  iii) **Employer / stakeholder engagement** - including appropriate marketing materials and a concerted programme of stakeholder management.
  iv) **Sector focus**: engagement with public service sector skills Councils, involving discussion about how we can develop new and existing plans to promote and accelerate Apprenticeship growth within the public sector.

• Members should also note that there is a proposal for a public sector Summit, involving Ministers, public sector leaders and practitioners planned for mid – October.

**Key points/issues**

4 One in five people work in the public sector but less than 10% of all apprenticeships are identifiable as being public sector employees. The potential for expansion is therefore significant although it should be noted that we do not currently capture public sector employment as a category in our data collection. The take up of Apprenticeship across the public sector varies enormously: the armed forces take a leading position in using the programme; central government departments make little or no use of it; and there is mixed take up in the NHS and local government. This paper sets out the key areas we are focussing on in order to address the unequal take-up.

**Proposed approach**

5 There are pockets of good examples of activity across sectors and within organisations in the public sector. Following the renewed momentum behind expanding the Apprenticeships programme, there have also been various commitments from public sector bodies to expand the number of Apprenticeships they recruit, for example the Greater London Authority Group have committed to delivering more than 1000 Apprentices places a year over the next few years, including the delivery of London 2012 and Crossrail.

6 As a result of the activity that has happened so far, and the sectors that we know are ripe for expansion, we are now proposing a consolidated programme of work to bring renewed impetus and focus to the growth of apprenticeships in the public sector, building on best practice and focusing on the following areas:
i) Research and best practice

- The LSC has commissioned research into Apprenticeships which will make recommendations to help increase Apprenticeship growth in the public sector. It will provide us with information about how to encourage existing apprenticeship employers to take on more; how to encourage those who do not have apprentices to do so and; to provide exemplars of best practice across the public sector.

- The research is due to be published in September and will help us refine our approach nationally and by sector. However we know that existing anecdotal evidence tells us that the barriers include:
  
  o Bureaucracy, both real and perceived. For example, the various elements that make up an Apprenticeship might seem excessive to a particular profession (this is the case with the Police and Key Skills); the amount of paperwork employers think may be required to administer the scheme; large employers don’t know who to talk to / find it difficult to engage.
  
  o Age: the age demographic of the public sector seems to preclude young people.
  
  o Linked to the above, lack of awareness from individuals and employers about the availability of Adult Apprenticeships now; and lack of suitable apprenticeship frameworks for adults.
  
  o Frameworks are generally not considered fit for purpose.
  
  o Cost involved.
  
  o Work patterns don’t fit with Apprentice frameworks (a reason cited in the Youth Workforce)

- In terms of best practice, there is already great deal around LSC regions, across sectors and within organisations. For example, within the LSC, some regions are using their Regional Minister and holding Regional Summits to pioneer a drive on Apprenticeships in the public sector.

Proposed actions

Given the above, we therefore intend to:

a: Use the research to refine our approach and identify potential solutions to barriers identified with the relevant SSCs / and public sector organisations and also use promotional materials with public sector employers to dispel myths.

b: Pull together the very best practice from the regions and sectors in one place, with a particular focus on Central Government, Health, Local Authorities and Education. This would support our work with the SSCs and also help form a short action plan that all the LSC regions could implement. This would support and expand on the
actions already identified in the “National Framework for Driving up Demand” (which Council considered at its last meeting).

ii) Targets and measurement

- As part of the strategy for World Class Apprenticeships, Ministers committed to reducing inconsistencies within the public sector and to formulate targets for each part of the public sector to reflect its particular circumstances.
- The proposal that has been put forward as part of the delivery plan is that the percentage of public sector employers offering apprenticeships matches that of the private sector by 2013.
- We are now in the process of modelling this key performance indicator with DIUS / DCSF and will need to consider how it sits alongside sector plans and how we might measure progress in this area. Ministers are keen to announce their aspirations for the public sector at the Summit in October.
- The inclusion of targets for Apprenticeships included in Local / Multi-Area Agreements is also being explored.

iii) Employer / stakeholder engagement (including marketing materials for employers)

- There already many groups and “champions” who have an interest in this area, for example, the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network (ANN) have appointed Ian Watmore as a public sector Champion for Central Government, and there are other members on the ANN who have a public sector remit. There is the Learning and Skills Task Group, chaired by Frances O’Grady (reporting to the Cross-Cabinet Public Services Forum), Unions and of course Sector Skills Councils and other Sector Skills Bodies which have a remit for the public service sectors, such as the Improvement Agency (IDeA) for Local Government and the Training and Development Agency for Schools.
- In terms of promotional materials, whilst there are generic materials on Apprenticeships for employers and individuals, there is a lack of information on Apprenticeships specifically aimed at the public sector.

Proposed actions

Given the above, we therefore intend to:

- put in place a coordinated and concerted programme of public sector employer engagement with key individuals from Local Government, the AAN, the Learning and Skills Task Group, Unions, the Education sector (school, colleges and Universities) and the public service SSCs to promote
Apprenticeships, and discuss barriers and opportunities for further take up.

b: produce a set of materials aimed at public sector employers and potential learners which promotes the benefits, dispels myths and sets out how to recruit Apprentices. This will be a useful “selling tool” for the LSC (and then the NAS) and SSCs to use in discussion with public sector employers.

iv) Sector focus

- Over half of the network of SSCs have an interest in the public service sectors and there are five SSCs with a significant proportion of the workforce, these are:
  - Government Skills
  - Skills for Health
  - Lifelong Learning UK
  - Skills for Justice
  - Skills for Care and Development (including Children's Workforce Development Council)

- There has been some progress with these sectors; for example Government Skills are launching a pathfinder for central government departments with an initial commitment to take on 500 + Apprentices and the final number is likely to be much higher. Skills for Justice have committed to take on 700 Apprentices. Skills for Health and the LSC has a Joint Investment Framework for skills, however Apprenticeships activity is variable.

- For Local Authorities, whilst there are examples of good activity (for example, Barking and Dagenham Council have a significant commitment to apprenticeships and have included apprenticeships in their Local Area Agreement) one of the barriers to recruitment here is that there is no single SSC or Apprenticeship Framework for local government.

- The scope within the Education workforce is also huge. For Schools, a new framework has been developed for Teaching Assistants and the possibility of a pathfinder approach including Adults is being explored, but we are keen to accelerate activity where possible and do the same within the College and Universities workforce.

Proposed actions

Given the above we therefore intend to:

a: work with the relevant SSCs to look at opportunities to speed up or expand upon plans so far to recruit apprentices to public sector organisations. This will include looking at the appropriateness of frameworks, identifying gaps and what more can be done within the sector compacts. We also want to develop a plan with Local
Government and bring together all the relevant SSCs and frameworks into one place.

Public sector summit

Members should also be aware that Ministers intend to hold a summit, likely to be mid – October as a call to action for the public sector and asking leaders within the public sector to commit to recruiting greater numbers of apprenticeships.

Longer term issues

There are also a number of longer term issues that are being looked at by the LSC/ DIUS over the longer term. These include: accreditation of in house training; reviewing timescales for sector compacts; identifying funding for pathfinders / development work; using procurement / commissioning to encourage “supply chain” to recruit; developing source(s) of advice for employers / employees– specialist brokerage, field force, union learning reps; and developing capacity / capability of provider network.

Clearance

This paper has been cleared by David Way, National Director of Apprenticeships.

Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising from this paper.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications to be drawn from this paper.

Risk management

There are no immediate risks associated with the content of this paper. The risks associated with this area of work will be managed within the context of managing the delivery plan for World Class Apprenticeships.

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