Apprenticeships Update

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Summary

1. Work towards delivering commitments in World Class Apprenticeships continues. We are on track to deliver the first major public part of the programme through the introduction of the National Vacancy Matching Service which will be available to employers and providers to upload vacancies from 8 December and available publicly in the New Year.

2. The Programme has just undergone an OGC review which rates the overall programme as “Amber” - defined as “successful delivery appears feasible but significant issues already exist requiring management attention. These appear resolvable at this stage and if addressed promptly, should not preset a cost/schedule overrun”. We believe that this is a fair assessment of the programme given its profile, the IT-enabled National Vacancy Matching Service and the interaction with the wider Machinery of Government changes.

Key Developments

3. The delivery of the National Vacancy Matching Service at the end of the year will be the first major high profile delivery commitment on Apprenticeships. All regions will be in a position to support employers (and training providers on their behalf) to upload vacancies on to the system. From early January, people interested in Apprenticeships will be able to search the on-line vacancy matching system and apply for vacancies. There will also be a customer relationship management system that will be available to support the contact with employers, training providers and young people.
4. All nine regions will have Apprenticeship teams, staffed from LSC staff on a project basis, to support the delivery of the National Vacancy Matching Service. Regions have been training regional employers and training providers on the system and there has been positive feedback as a result. Each region is developing an employer engagement strategy to identify the key employers (public and private sector) to grow the Apprenticeship numbers.

5. A broader stakeholder engagement strategy is also being implemented to ensure that our wide range of stakeholders are aware of the Vacancy Matching Service and our progress more generally towards the National Apprenticeship Service. For example, we are close to finalising a joint narrative with both the LGA and the ADCS on Apprenticeships as part of our stakeholder strategy. This is the first set of communications with Local Authorities on Apprenticeships as we prepare for wider changes in the development of the Young People’s Learning Agency. We are also in discussion with Connexions Services to agree a way of working in both raising awareness of Apprenticeships generally, but also to ensure that vacancy opportunities are young people’s readiness for Apprenticeships are fully discussed with them. This will progress to schools careers advisors and other forms of Information, Advice and Guidance.

6. The marketing campaign on Apprenticeships has been postponed until after the New Year. We are in the process of updating the apprenticeship.org website which will be refreshed by mid November with updated content on the different Apprenticeship frameworks, more material aimed at parents and young people about apprenticeships and video footage of Apprentices. We are also looking at the branding of Apprenticeships and the National Apprenticeship Service to ensure that it will have resonance with the wide range of employers and individuals who will be using the service.

7. The LSC co-supported the Public Sector Summit on Apprenticeships, held on 26 October. We prepared a summary of the public sector research into Apprenticeships, commissioned by the LSC which identified both areas cited as barriers to public sector organisations taking up Apprenticeships, but also provided case studies of organisations that had overcome the barriers, many of which were perceived rather than actual, in order to offer Apprenticeship opportunities. For example, of the 750 employers who were interviewed, 2/3 only offered one Apprenticeship Framework, despite the average size being 3,800 employees. This shows the potential for growth in Apprenticeships if those organisations offered more of the 180 Frameworks on offer. As the economic situation continues to affect Apprenticeship numbers, the public sector, and public procurement, will become an even more important part of our overall strategy.

8. Finally, the NAS Delivery Programme has just undergone an Office of Government Commerce Gateway Zero Review – a strategic assessment of the programme and its likelihood to deliver against its commitments. The Review team interviewed over 35 different people ranging from staff working on delivery of the programme to external stakeholders such as the CBI, Skillsmart, and a number of employers and training providers. The general views of these
stakeholders was very positive of the ambition of the programme and the review team's assessment of the overall programme was that it was amber. The team identified a number of actions that would need to be delivered and we will develop an action plan to address those issues.

Legal implications

9. There are no legal implications in this paper.

Financial implications

10. There are no new financial implications arising from this paper.

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