

An Apprenticeship Plan for Lincolnshire

December 2013

Introduction

The National Apprenticeship Service has asked the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) to develop 'Implementation Plans for Apprenticeships' with the Work Based Academy as part of a wider skills strategy. Guidance asks that plans complement, rather than duplicate, nationally funded activities and have particular focus on the 16-24 age range.

This plan for Lincolnshire has been produced in tandem with the Greater Lincolnshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and Structural and Investment Fund plan (SIF) so that priorities are aligned. It will form part of the drive to accelerate growth in the sectors identified as most important to the LEP and our local economy.

The plan highlights Lincolnshire's existing priorities, set two years ago and which have not changed, our activity against these, and the areas for focus over the coming year that will complement these.

Background and Context

Lincolnshire has been actively following a set of strategic priorities around Apprenticeships for a number of years, led by the Lincolnshire & Rutland Employment and Skills Board (ESB), currently the strategic advisory body to the LEP on skills.

Prior to the creation of the Greater Lincolnshire LEP (GLLEP), a Skills Plan was produced by the ESB and its partners.

The plan, "Towards a better place to work and learn", identified the importance of preparing young people better for the opportunities and challenges of our local economy through high status vocational pathways. It also highlighted the need to improve residents' employability and increase the participation, retention and achievement of young people in education and work-based learning.

The themes of the 2010 plan remain relevant and it is available at

<http://www.lincsrutlandesb.com/documents/publications/118-employment-and-skills-plan-summary-july-2010>

Apprenticeship Evidence Base

Following the production of the Skills Plan, Lincolnshire County Council worked with the ESB to commission a piece of research to understand the take-up of Apprenticeships within the Lincolnshire area. This provided a snapshot of the frameworks being followed at that time and a subsequent 'gap-analysis' in local availability of Apprenticeship provision.

The gap analysis was particularly important for a rural county like Lincolnshire where access to provision can be a barrier.

The full report can be found at

<http://www.lincsrutland.esb.com/documents/publications/162-lincolnshire-apprenticeship-framework-analysis>

It was an important report because this level of data had not been made available previously and it is worth highlighting some points here:.

Based on 2009-2010 data:

- There were 158 training providers delivering Apprenticeships in the study area that comprised of Lincolnshire, North and North East Lincolnshire and closest neighbouring towns.
- The total number of Lincolnshire residents undertaking an Apprenticeship was 6,935.
4,386 were adults (19+)
2,549 were aged 16-18.
- 15 Lincolnshire residents were pursuing a higher framework
2,548 residents were pursuing an advanced framework
4,372 were pursuing an intermediate framework
- The distribution and volume of frameworks across the area appeared to mirror national trends e.g. a predominance of frameworks in sectors such as customer service, business administration, retail and hospitality.
- The range of frameworks being taken-up by Lincolnshire residents was quite broad with frameworks being followed across a host of sectors.

Whilst the report showed that Lincolnshire's apprenticeship take-up was not as high as surrounding areas, numbers were higher than in the previous years. NAS statistics showed:

- 10% growth in 16-18 starts (but less than both national and regional averages)
- 38% growth in 19-24 starts (higher than both regional and national averages)

- Health and Care, Agriculture and Engineering recorded above average growth in starts (all ages combined).

The report made a number of conclusions including:

- Far more (almost double) 16-18 year olds would need to take up an Apprenticeship role if the Government's ambition (at the time) of 1 in 5 was to be achieved.
- To make the area a more 'high skilled' environment the profile of the local Apprenticeship offer would need to shift significantly.
- There were spatial gaps between the location of some framework training opportunities and employment clusters.

It recommended that the ESB and LCC take on a number of key roles around market intelligence, market making, co-ordinating, directing and championing, in effect driving employer demand, and learner demand, for Apprenticeships.

Our Apprenticeship Priorities and Activity, 2011-2015

The ESB held two special panels to discuss Apprenticeship priorities and by February 2011 had agreed three, with actions against each. **These three statements remain the focus of our priorities.**

Priorities
Ensure the best possible alignment between the local Apprenticeship offer and the local economy, sector and employer demand.
Raise the profile of Apprenticeships to all parties, including: employers (especially SMEs), career advisers, schools and parents.
Increase the participation of smaller businesses in Apprenticeships

A number of activities and initiatives were developed following the introduction of these priorities. They are described below. **Many of these are on-going and we expect them to be the basis of the work that we continue in 2014 and 2015.**

Apprentice Champions

Lincolnshire County Council provided funding to the Work Based Academy (now the Work Based Learning Alliance) to employ two Apprentice Champions for a period of 18 months. Their primary focus was to work with schools, employers and training providers to raise awareness of Apprenticeships as an effective route to employment upon leaving full-time education.

Local evidence showed that the vocational route was still seen as the poor relation of academic success, despite national focus and marketing, and the Apprentice Champion role was devised to challenge misconceptions as well as work with employers to encourage them to engage with the Apprentice agenda.

The model has been extremely successful particularly in terms of face to face engagement, which would otherwise not exist. Face to face support is provided by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), but only to businesses with over 250 employees.

The model has been followed by Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire who have since recruited Champions of their own.

Additional funding streams enabled the roles to be continued to November 2013 (including support from NAS) and recently LCC has extended funds to July 2015.

To October 2013 the Apprentice Champion roles have carried out a range of activities, engaging with thousands of young people and parents at various events across the county.

Just some specific activities are listed below:

- Engaged with 58 of our 63 mainstream schools and academies, and 9 of 21 special schools
- Supported 24 external careers events and delivered 5 teacher training events, hosted at employers premises
- Delivered 8 DWP apprenticeship training events raising awareness of over 75 JCP advisers
- Supported 25 LLDD events or meetings with 536 learners accessing apprenticeship information
- 247 employers (mainly SMEs) directly engaged generating 346 apprenticeship opportunities

The impartial and focused role of an 'Apprentice Champion' has benefits beyond the realm of raising awareness and can be used to bring together, or co-ordinate activity across the whole county that perhaps individual organisations or training providers would not be able to. For example, collating unfilled demand for Apprentice provision across different parts of the county.

Lincolnshire & Rutland Skills Awards

This annual event has been hosted and organised by the Employment and Skills Board and a range of volunteers for a number of years, because it is one of the ways in which the profile can be raised of Apprenticeships.

The competition, and Grande Finale Awards evening, is used to showcase excellence in Apprenticeships, and those who attend (not just apprentices and parents, but those who are not aware of what a 'modern' apprenticeship really is) get a flavour of the depth and breadth of experience and knowledge that the vocational route provides.

Aspirations

This quarterly publication was devised to fill the gap between what schools, young people and parents think about local industry, and what is actually taking place. There are many stereotypes about some of Lincolnshire's strongest sectors and are outdated and untrue. Great technological advances over the last few decades mean that a greater number of higher skilled jobs are required locally than was traditionally the case.

'Aspirations' is one method of transferring knowledge and expertise about the local economy to a wider audience. It is an important piece of the jigsaw in raising the demand of young people for jobs and Apprenticeships within some of our strongest and growing sectors.

It is currently supplied in hard copy to every school and College and local employers are asked to provide content.

All editions of Aspirations are available at:

<http://microsites.lincolnshire.gov.uk/teeninfo/lincs/world-of-work/aspirations/>

Have-A-Go skills events and Skills Show Experiences

A number of skills events have been taking place across the county. These events give people an opportunity to 'Have-A-Go' at something they might not otherwise experience. They are about creating opportunities for young people and adults to try their hand at a variety of skills activities with the aim of dispelling a few myths and encouraging a desire to follow a vocational route to success.

Some of the local events are specifically designed to mirror the national flagship Skills Show - <http://www.theskillsshow.com/> - and to benefit from the legacy created by the World Skills initiative - cascading the impact of elite competitions across the widest range of Apprenticeship and other vocational learning opportunities.

An employer-led Construction skills event has taken place annually for a number of years. It is held over three days, and involves over 800 pupils who are invited to take part in construction and related activities (e.g. financial planning, estate management etc.) Working in partnership with the ESB and others, the Work Based Learning Alliance has successfully bid to run a number of events, and with the Apprentice Champions, have delivered:

- June 2012 - Boston Construction Skills - 200 attendees
- July 2012 - Waddington Air Show - Youth Hangar - 70,000 visitors to the Air Show with several hundred visiting the 'Have-A-Go' stand
- March 2013 - Springfields 'Have a Go' event - 420 year 9/10/11/12 + NEET
- May 2013 - Skills Competition event for level 1 learners from Foundation Learning provision at Lincoln Heritage Centre - 35 learners engaged
- May 2013 - second Skills Competition at Build a Future - 30 learners involved
- June 2013 - Boston Construction Skills - 170 year 10/11
- July 2013 - Waddington Air Show - Youth Hangar - 74,000 visitors to the Air Show with several hundred visiting the stand, local radio interviews
- October 2013 - Stamford Construction Skills - 94 year 10/11
- October 2013 - Lincoln Construction Skills - 427 year 10/11
- November 2013 - Walton Girls School - 150 year 11/12

More recently, The WBLA has been successful in securing a partnership agreement with EMFEC for continued events and Skills Show Experiences funding through to December 2014. Added to those already in place, the following will be delivered:

- February (or June) 2014 - Wolds Skills Experience (small) - target of 350
- March 2014 (apprenticeship week) - Springfields Skills Show - target 1000+
- June 2014 - Lincolnshire Show - joint activity with the UTC
- July 2014 - Waddington Air Show
- November 2014 - Priory Ruskin Academy - whole school event
- November 2014 - East Coast Skills Show - hosted by Butlins - Target 1000+

Larger events offer the opportunity to match local industry and employment opportunities.

For example, the Springfields event in March 2014 will have an emphasis on the Agrifood sector and the event at Butlins in November will focus on the visitor economy and care.

Other events that have take place include an employer-led engineering event at Lincoln Cathedral and a 'Big Bang' event at Stamford College.

Apprenticeship Week

February/March each year sees a week designated as Apprenticeship Week with high profile National publicity and celebrity involvement. Local areas are encouraged to take advantage of the national drive and Lincolnshire's Colleges, training providers and employers all take part in, or host activity.

Employer-facing Information Portal

Small employers tell us that they find it difficult to find good quality local information so Lincolnshire County Council has led an initiative, the www.businesslincolnshire.com website, developed in partnership with public and private sector, aimed at filling an information gap since the Business Link face to face service ceased. The face to face service was particularly helpful to smaller and often rurally isolated businesses, who relied on the knowledge of local advisors to understand the local picture. The website aims to capture that local knowledge. It also bridges the somewhat artificial gap between traditional business support and the skills and training sector. Apprenticeships are one produce that cuts across both. This business support website provides a link to our local providers and Apprentice Champions, so that awareness continues to be raised.

We would like to ensure that links between business support and skills of the workforce continue to strengthen.

Other

A range of other activity has taken place that has not been covered here – a pilot ATA aimed specifically at those who have never taken on an Apprentice before, a specific programme for those in Care, work to understand progression routes within particular sectors, and supporting organisations to explore and develop new Higher Level frameworks - to name a few.

Current Picture

The Greater Lincolnshire LEP has identified three important sectors for Greater Lincolnshire, and three important emerging sectors. Over the next 30 years over 13,000 new jobs are expected to be created across the area. This will provide significant opportunities for residents, and for our young people, if they are well prepared.

A range of skills 'gaps' have already been described and are available on the National Career Service website at

https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/planning/LMI/Pages/LEP_GreaterLincolnshire.aspx

We know that:

- there are current job and Apprenticeship vacancies that our employers are unable to fill
- there are still too many misconceptions and stereotypes about vocational learning and about our largest and growing sectors.
- youth unemployment in the area is too high

We also know that:

- There are around 41,000 businesses in the Greater Lincolnshire area
- The vast majority (97%) employ fewer than 50 people, and a huge proportion of them employ fewer than 10.
- Government support tends to focus on larger business, and smaller businesses can find themselves lagging behind when it comes to information and advice.

Statistics show that in the 12-month period from September 2012 to August 2013, of the 255 businesses that called the National Apprenticeship Service telephone helpline from the Greater Lincolnshire area, 173 of them employed fewer than 10 employees.

Current numbers of Apprentices

Lincolnshire County Council receives information each quarter about the number of Lincolnshire residents who are currently in an apprenticeship job. The latest information, provided in November, shows numbers to the end of academic year July 2013. An overview is provided below:

- The number of young people aged 16-18 starting an apprenticeship is up by 5.1% (from 1657 to 1742). This percentage increase is higher than regional and national averages.
- The number of people aged 19-24 starting an apprenticeship is up by 2.9% (from 2170 – 2233).
- The number of people aged 25+ starting an apprenticeship is up by 11.4% (from 2,874 to 3,202). This percentage increase is very much higher than the national average increase of 1.1%.

The data shows that Lincolnshire is maintaining the numbers of Apprentices on first level (intermediate) apprenticeships as well as increasing those at Advanced and Higher levels. Other locations have falling numbers at the intermediate level. Some Apprenticeship roles take longer than 1 year to complete so another useful measure is a count of those participating in an Apprenticeship at any one time. Current Apprenticeship participation numbers are as follows:

Age	Number Apprentices Participating 12/13
16-18	2,659
19-24	4,109
25+	5,527
Total	12,295

As described at the start of this report, the total number of Lincolnshire residents undertaking an Apprenticeship in 2009-10 was **6,935**.

Challenges to Increasing number of Apprentices

Employers

Our feedback from our business support enquiries, from our Apprentice Champions, and from colleagues and partners involved in other types of employer engagement, is that there are still many employers who do not understand what a 'modern' apprenticeship is and how to go about finding one.

Small employers are not always in a position to offer the breadth of experience required to fulfil the Apprentice need.

Employers also tell us that a proportion of young people are not well prepared for work.

Confusion about cost – too many providers with different offers.

There is also a level of paperwork and bureaucracy that the micro employer is just not able to take on. The current proposals through the Richards Review to give employers more control of Apprenticeship provision are welcomed, but small businesses are unlikely to be able to take on the extra work that this will involve and it will impact on numbers.

Individuals

Levels of minimum Apprenticeship pay is seen by some parents and young people themselves as a barrier to involvement. Particularly for 16-19 year olds when combined with the cost of travel.

Lack of real independent and impartial guidance and direction at school

Work some parts of the visitor economy (Coastal) and some agricultural businesses are unable to offer an Apprenticeship because of seasonal working/contracted hours

Some organisations using with zero rated contracts, so rules do not allow an Apprentice to be taken on.

Greater innovation around delivery methods and models required

Training providers

Funding models make providers risk averse and discourage true cooperation.

Review of Apprenticeships will rock the boat of a number of smaller providers and may compound the funding point above

Tendency to award massive contracts to large National providers compromises local flexibility and quality of delivery and does not fit with a localism agenda.

Plethora of funding streams compromises mainstream delivery at times adding confusion to an already complex environment

Ensuring that employers will pay what they are expected to

Next Steps

There are a number of activities that we will continue, already set out above and others that we wish to implement or explore further:

- Increase employer engagement: our experiences show that face to face engagement gives our smaller employer more confidence to recruit an Apprentice; this could be via Apprentice Champions or other mechanisms;
- Increase the number of 'Have-A-Go' events across a larger area and for all ages, not just young people;
- Work with Sector Skills Councils to understand why they are not all as active in the Lincolnshire area as they are in other areas and how to encourage their work with local businesses;
- Ensure that the data we can access will assist us in analysing where things are working well and where there is a need to intervene.
- Explore the Shared Apprenticeship Model – for example in farming (Edge Apprenticeships);
- Better understand the barriers that have been raised by young people and others in relation to participating in an Apprenticeship (e.g. accessibility, transport, low pay);
- Explore the idea & need for an Apprenticeship 'hub' as developed by NAS in areas such as Nottingham City;
- Re-visit the sector gateway approach, or a flexible Sector Based Skills Academy, to increase Apprenticeship numbers in particular sectors;