

Apprenticeship Growth in Wiltshire

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the committee about the delivery of apprenticeships in Wiltshire and seek comments on the Wiltshire Apprenticeship Action Plan.

Background

2. Apprenticeship growth is a key priority both nationally and locally. The Government is committed to delivering three million apprenticeships by 2020 and to continuing to drive forward reforms to put employers in the driving seat of designing and delivering apprenticeships. A key objective of the Council's new business plan is to grow the skills of the local workforce so that we attract and retain high value businesses in Wiltshire. A specific goal of the business plan is to provide 'more apprentices and improve access to further and higher education'.
3. In March 2017 the government set out its ambition to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships through a transformational programme of change known as Apprenticeship Reforms. The reforms create significant change in many aspects of the system such as different financial incentives, new standards, changes in the provider base, development of the assessment organisation market, new employers offering apprenticeships. The change in dynamics has been recognised within the Wiltshire Apprenticeship Action plan determining that the key objectives are high level and overarching, complemented with an ever changing menu of actions, to keep pace with the changing landscape.

A summary of the apprenticeship reforms is set out in **Appendix 1**.

Apprenticeships can be carried out at various levels as follows:

Name	Level	Equivalent educational level
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes
Advanced	3	2 A level passes
Higher	4, 5, 6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or Master's degree

Main Considerations for the Council

4. Wiltshire has a target of supporting the delivery of 31,500 apprenticeship starts for the academic years 2014 to 2020.
5. There are a number of plans at different levels which all contribute to achieving this target. The **Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Apprenticeship Growth Plan** is a high level plan providing the overarching framework for all apprenticeship activity in the LEP area. This plan is currently in draft and is due to be considered by the LEP Skills and Talent sub group at its next meeting.
6. The **Wiltshire Apprenticeship Action Plan** translates the LEP plan into actions at a local level, to encourage growth in apprenticeship numbers across Wiltshire specifically.
7. Within this, the [Higher Futures](#) programme focuses on growing higher and degree apprenticeships specifically, as the county needs to grow its higher level skills to address an increasing skills gap. Higher Futures has a target of 2,000 learners embarking on level 4+ programmes through Higher Futures by 2020, including doubling the number of learners embarking on higher or degree apprenticeships across the LEP area between the 2015/16 and 2019/20 academic years.
8. Furthermore, **Wiltshire Council** as a major employer is planning to maximise use of the apprenticeship levy within the Council, which contributes to the overall figures for Wiltshire. The Council receives £70k into the levy pot every month, with just under half coming from maintained schools. The Council is therefore arranging to speak at school clusters to support them with the creation of apprenticeships and a schools apprenticeship policy, guidance and FAQs have been developed for maintained schools. All Council vacancies are also scrutinised before being advertised to ascertain whether they could be filled through an apprenticeship instead.

Wiltshire Apprenticeship Action Plan

9. In order to deliver against the SWLEP Apprenticeship Growth targets the Council has developed an apprenticeship action plan (**Appendix 2**) which sets out how we will:
 - Increase the number of people taking up apprenticeships and traineeships including the development of pathways for care leavers and those furthest away from the world of work.
 - Increase the number of businesses employing apprentices in Wiltshire
 - Support employers and providers to work effectively together to double the number of higher and degree apprenticeships between 2016 and 2020 to meet local skills needs in our priority sectors.

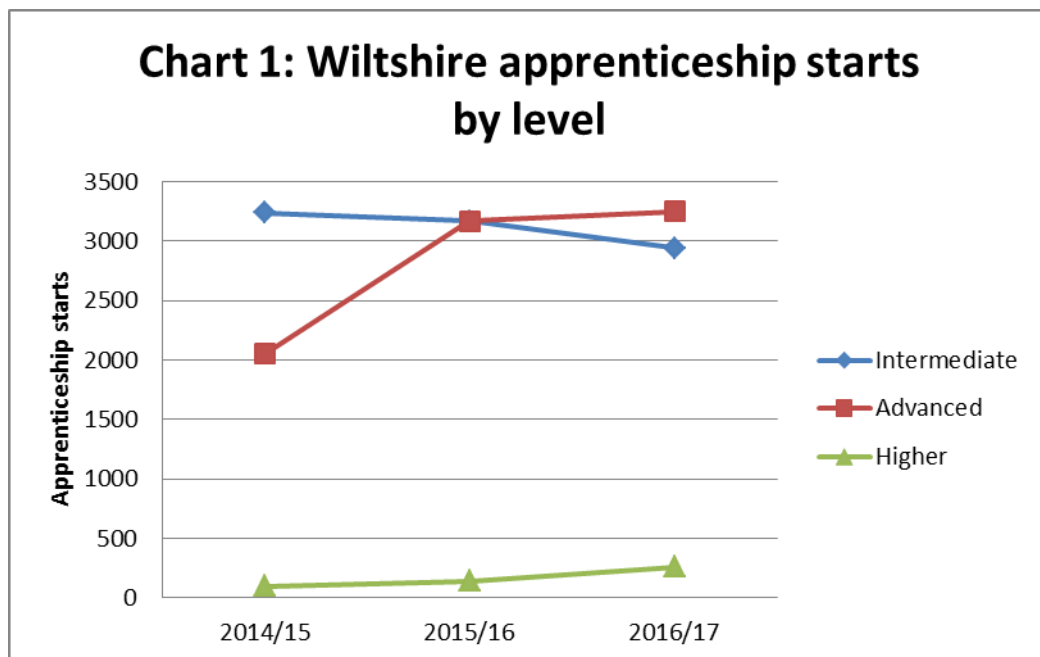
Targets and progress

10. The targets and actual performance are set out below. The analysis has been done using provisional 2016/17 data only as final data is not yet available.
11. Table 1 shows that Wiltshire's apprenticeship targets have been exceeded for the past two years. The provisional figures for 2016/17 show a very slight reduction compared with 2015/16 due to a 40% drop in apprenticeships starts in the final quarter following implementation of the reforms. This much better than the national picture, where there was a 61% reduction in apprenticeship starts for the period May-July 2017 compared with the same quarter in 2016. However, anecdotal evidence from Wiltshire College suggests that their starts are back on track for August-October 2017 now that employers have adjusted to the changes, so this is likely to be a short term dip in numbers.

Table 1: Apprenticeship starts in Wiltshire by year

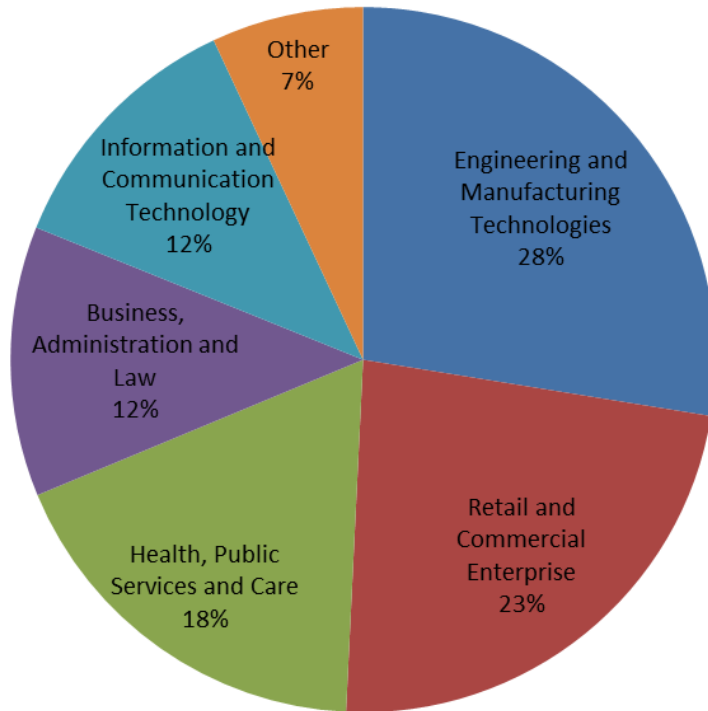
Academic Year	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Target starts for Wiltshire	5,600	5,950	6,300	6,650	7,000
Actual starts	6,480	6,460 (provisional)			

12. Chart 1 below shows that advanced and higher apprenticeships have grown year on year since 2014/15, while intermediate apprenticeship numbers fell slightly last year. Given the county's higher level skills gap, it is good news that the take up of advanced and higher apprenticeships is growing.



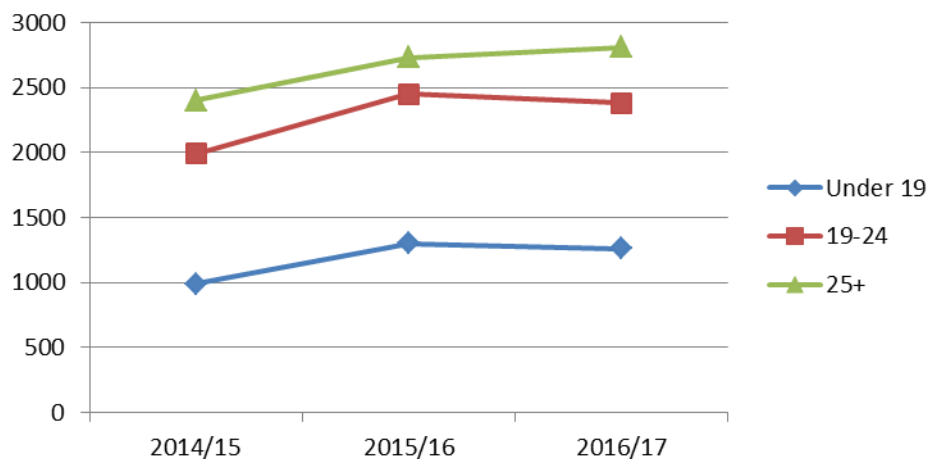
13. Chart 2 overleaf shows that the three subject areas of Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies; Retail and Commercial Enterprise; and Health, Public Services and Care make up more than two thirds of apprenticeship starts between them in Wiltshire. We know that the army are a major employer of engineering apprentices at Lyneham.

Chart 2: Wiltshire apprenticeship starts by subject 2016/17



14. Chart 3 below shows a steady growth in apprentices aged 25 years and over for the past 3 years, but a slight dip last year in apprenticeships starts for those aged under 19 and 19-24.

Chart 3: Wiltshire apprenticeship starts by age



15. The Council's Employment and Skills service works with schools, training providers and employers in a three-pronged approach to encouraging the take-up of apprenticeships.

Schools

16. We work closely with careers leads in schools to support careers fairs, careers information, advice and guidance days via [the Swindon and Wiltshire Enterprise Adviser Network](#) (SWEAN). This network links Enterprise Advisers (EAs) drawn from local businesses to work with school leadership teams to develop effective employer engagement plans and promote apprenticeships. The SWEAN works with approximately 28,000 young people from Year 7-13 across Wiltshire.
17. We have attended careers days and delivered presentations in schools to students raising the profile of apprenticeships and the levels of qualifications that can be achieved. There are further events planned covering a diverse audience to include:
 - Child poverty summit on 21 November 2017 at Devizes School to support disadvantaged young people to do apprenticeships as a route to accessing Further and Higher Education and raise aspirations.
 - Your Choice Theatre Tour to Year 8 students across 20 Wiltshire Schools raising awareness of key option choices including apprenticeships.
 - Mentoring in Schools programme designed to raise the aspirations of 501 11-15 year olds in schools by pairing them with mentors from business.
18. We work closely with the national Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge for Schools project (ASK), adding value to events they run and providing the Wiltshire context. See **Appendix 3** for more detail.

Training Providers

19. There are currently 106 training providers delivering apprenticeship training in Wiltshire. Sixty percent of the training is delivered by five large providers, with the Army delivering more than 40% of all of Wiltshire's apprenticeship training in 2015/16 (see Table 2). The next largest provider is Wiltshire College. Its percentage share is likely to increase over time as it has recently been awarded the contract to provide apprenticeship training for five local NHS trusts.

Table 2: Wiltshire's largest apprenticeship providers by volume

Name of provider	% of all Apprenticeship Programme starts 2015/16
British Army	42.86
Wiltshire College	5.31
Learn Direct limited	5.17
Babcock training limited	4.15
Lifetime training group limited	3.54

20. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) issue weekly reports showing the local apprenticeship vacancies, the sector they relate to and the appointed training provider. The report also identifies those vacancies with no applications and the Council contacts the relevant training provider to determine, where possible, reasons for the lack of interest and use social media and networks to raise the vacancy profile. This is a recent innovation therefore too early to determine the success of this approach.
21. The Council works closely with the Gloucestershire and Wiltshire training provider network to maintain effective links with training providers and keep up to date with developments within the sector.

Employers

22. The Council's recently relaunched [Work Wiltshire](#) website has a very comprehensive 'information for employers' section which includes a wealth of resources and advice for employers wanting to set up apprenticeships. Since its launch in July 2017, this has proven to be the most popular part of the website.
23. The Council uses its social media platforms and established networks to reach out to the particularly large numbers of small and medium-sized enterprises within the county, many of whom are unsure about where to start in taking on an apprentice. The Council supports businesses with recruitment and signposts to training providers as well as providing resources to support understanding of the apprenticeship reforms.
24. The following upcoming events are designed to support employers looking to recruit apprentices:
 - EmployAbility Fair in County Hall on 7 November: focusing on employment for those with health conditions and disabilities.
 - Workshops to support the childcare sector.

Safeguarding Considerations

25. Safeguarding is fundamental to all work done with young people across the county. All relevant staff have Disclosure and Barring checks.

Public Health Implications

26. There are no specific implications arising from this work.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

27. There are no specific implications arising from this work..

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

28. Reducing barriers, improving inclusion, life chances and social mobility for children, young people and vulnerable groups within Wiltshire is at the heart of all the work we do.
There is no proposal in this paper with a negative equalities impact.

Risk Assessment

29. Apprenticeship Growth is one of the key pillars of the Business Plan. There is a risk that growth will slow during the first quarter of the new academic year due to the uncertainty caused by the Apprenticeship reforms and introduction of the Apprenticeship levy.

Legal Implications

30. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Conclusions

31. Apprenticeship growth within Wiltshire is on track to meet the targets set by SWLEP as set out in Table 1.
32. There is currently some uncertainty within the apprenticeship field about the pattern of future growth because the full impacts of apprenticeship reforms and the introduction of the apprenticeship levy are still unknown. There is a time lag in data becoming available which means that data has only recently become available up to the end of the 2016/17 academic year. An update report will be brought back to the committee once impacts of the reforms are clearer.

Proposal

33. The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and provide comments on the Wiltshire Apprenticeship Action Plan.

Tim Martiensen

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of Apprenticeship Reforms

Appendix 2: Wiltshire Apprenticeship Action Plan

Appendix 3: The Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge for schools project