**Social work apprenticeships. Session for HEIs to hear what London social work employers want.** Feb 27th 2019

Attendees:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Employer reps** | **HEI reps** |
| 1. Aleister Griffin - Hackney 2. Carol Stewart - Tower Hamlets 3. Maria Ahmed - Bexley 4. Heidi Rossetter - Islington 5. Charli Robson - Achieving for Children 6. Pete Moorcock - Achieving for Children 7. Gerne Pieterse - Hounslow 8. Linnett Whittaker - Barking & Dagenham 9. Donna Kaufman - Hestia 10. Rosie Kavanagh - Hestia 11. Heather Gardiner - Enfield 12. Lorna Fraser - Southwark | 1. Joanna Rawles - Open University 2. Ann Flynn - Open University 3. Holly Nelson-Becker - Brunel 4. Penny Bernstock - West London 5. Michael McGrath-Brookes - LSBU 6. Iain Campbell- King - LSBU 7. Dermot Brady - Kingston 8. Brenda Vickery - Bromley College 9. Sarah Lewis-Brooke - Middlesex |

Supported by Ali Rusbridge Skills for Care (facilitator and note taker) & Spike van der Vliet-Firth London Councils

Apologies sent: London Met, Greenwich and Herts Uni, Tricia Pereira London ADASS PSW network

**Employers interest in the apprenticeship**

Each employer rep gave a summary of what the opportunity of offering an apprenticeship means to their organisation /partnership. Points raised included:

* We want to see it as a way of targeting some groups like care leavers, local residents and those who can’t usually access traditional routes, to reach excluded groups to get quality local social workers.
* To develop a career pathway for unqualified workers and opportunity to upskill and grow our own which will help with retention.
* It’s a fantastic opportunity to develop a career pathway internally for experienced unqualified staff. We had employer based routes before which really improved retention but we could no longer do them – this allows us again to grow our own social workers from those with experience and skills.
* It gives us the opportunity to grow our own social workers, recruited locally, from people who know the community and are passionate about supporting it. As an employer led programme it also allows us an exciting opportunity to shape the content and quality assure the assessment to ensure best practice.
* This is an ideal opportunity to invest in our current workforce by supporting staff to complete a programme that we have helped to shape and which will produce a high calibre of social worker who will continue to work for us and to serve our local community. It is hoped that it will also serve to strengthen our recruitment & retention strategy.
* We welcome the introduction of the Social Work Apprenticeship and the opportunity to be part of developing this exciting new programme. As an employer it will offer us the opportunity to provide a route to professional qualification for staff in social care posts and progression for those who have successfully completed different social care certificates. Providing apprenticeships for local people is at the heart of our Social Mobility Strategy and we are passionate about growing our own social workers by drawing on local talent.
* There’s a good appetite in the voluntary sector around working alongside LA partners to expand learning opportunities together. The apprenticeship offers the opportunity to raise the skills level and progression options for staff and the opportunity for staff and service users to influence the programme.
* We are committed to investing in staff and when previous funding dried up staff were desperate to train. We want to ensure we have a diverse workforce that meet the needs of residents in the region, and having a workforce that is reflective of the local population. We see the Social Work Apprenticeships as an opportunity to invest and grow our own staff as part of career progression. We are committed to working in partnership as neighbouring boroughs to develop the social work apprenticeship programme to enable us to build on best practice. This is such a good way of spending the Levy.
* We want to do more to grow our own and encourage retention as well as having an appetite to get new local people in.

Employer reps talked through the type of programme they would like as detailed in the presentation

See



Following the presentation there was a discussion about the questions raised

**Discussion summary**

1. HEIs expressed interest in numbers. A mapping of likely numbers for a three year period is currently being undertaken. Working on the basis of a cohort size of 30 being cost effective for delivery of a high quality programme, previous mapping (for 1st year) indicated there would be enough for at least 3 cohorts – i.e. there is enough interest to progress. HEIs would want to know if going to have a 5 year programme as would have to commit a lot of investment at the start.
2. HCPC approval timescales was raised. Some HEIs are currently in the process of going through this. Reassurances were given that they had capacity to change things as things are developing and they want the flexibility to respond. HCPC approval is apparently quite open and they can go back and say this won’t work and make changes following feedback. Some HEIs present confirmed they would be in a position to offer programmes from the autumn.
3. Entry requirements was discussed. The trailblazer group were discussing this and whether English and Maths should be required up front. All agreed don’t want to take people on programme setting them up to fail, but want to widen access. HEIs want to be flexible going for the minimum set requirements but relying on selection process negotiated with employers. Some written element to that would be essential. Some employers are looking at addressing gaps in advance and upskilling before people apply to avoid pressure of doing Maths and English alongside pressure of apprenticeship. Many LAs are using funded programmes through their adult education or other apprenticeships at level 3 or 4 as preparation. Employers are interested in preparation pathway routes and programmes. In addition to the initial assessment, because apprentices may have been out of education for some time, some HEIs are recognising the need to have alongside the core programme, skills modules to help them (not assessed) and also building in professional writing modules to the programme. All HEIs can offer extra support services and expertise of widening participation programmes. A key point for employers is that at the end point when they are qualified they will be expected to write to a very high standard – can’t afford the apprenticeship to be seen as producing lower standards. Also some apprentices will come with level 4 qualifications already so then APL will be needed. Request made for some clarity from HEIs on what minimum expectations would be.
4. The viability of bespoke programmes meeting the things outlined in the presentation was discussed. Points raised included:
   * In general viable - problems maybe when drill down further and then that’s the negotiation. There are lots of different aspects to it – would have to look at them all and as it’s still a degree the required elements would be similar.
   * Many aspects are obvious to change such as readiness to practice that can be employer driven.
   * Time needed for initial assessment is flexible as both sides will need to be involved. HEIs would rely heavily on employer expertise.
   * The minimum number of teaching days is negotiable.
   * Front loading and blocks should be possible.
   * Several HEIs have experience of offering a range of other apprenticeships and can draw on that for developing a bespoke programme and potentially crossovers /shared learning with other relevant apprenticeship programmes would be possible.
   * The strength of running in parallel to degree (apart from the end point assessment) is it will ensure parity if people are studying alongside students.
5. The cost of work placed assessment and possible transfer of funding to the employer was discussed. Money is tight for HEIs (£23k rather than £27k) and the End Point assessment cost needs to be taken out. Employers stated that this has to be looked at if assessment responsibility goes to employer without any funding it wouldn’t be affordable –PEs who are paid for students wouldn’t agree to work with apprentices and not all line managers are PEs – it can’t just be subsumed into existing roles. Discussions and negotiations will be what dictate what is possible.
6. What the assessment process would look like was discussed. Assume it would be more continuous drawing from learning from work, e-portfolio and gathering evidence. Envisaging would need practice assessor role also practice tutor role. Mentor from employer (could be a mentor across partnerships.) Issues as to whether the same person would see the person through the 3 years – pros and cons were identified. May need to be employer manager so more like ASYE? How the requirement for 200 assessed practice days for degree qualification relates to the apprenticeship needs clarification as does contrasting learning requirement. Although it is in the standards and regulator expectations, it is not quantified and no clarity about e.g. how different it needs to be. HEIs would need to consider on case by case basis? Real opportunities for partnerships adults –children’s and LAs and PVIs – however issues raised about them being employees on different contracts if went to another organisation how would this work? Working across partnerships could be crucial for this to succeed.

**Next Steps**

Spike highlighted that to get every London borough to have fed into the process and agree a set of principles has shown a high level of collaboration and been innovative. The challenge of each employer working individually is not cost effective – the aim is to ensure cohorts and the sustainability for a programme which is viable for the HEI provider and delivering on needs of London local government. The London LA spend on agency workers in social care runs into millions so this is an opportunity for a sustainable workforce solution.

Directors are being asked for their commitment and estimated numbers over a 3 year period (these will be estimates but accurate for year 1 and will indicate likely direction of travel) Decision makers in each borough will be involved to give the HEIs security in commitments made.

100 officers have been involved in getting to where now and the steering group being established will represent each London region and be across adults and children and will oversee the content of a tender for procurement

Today was an opportunity to hear about the employer requirements and sense check. Procurement processes and numbers are yet to be finalised but looking at a period of weeks not months to have this confirmed.

The process will be a fair and transparent process and all information will be publically available on the London councils and ADASS website.

Everyone was thanked for their involvement and attendance.