

Young People's Education and Skills: Apprenticeship Sub-Group

AGENDA

Chair:	Rebecca Davey	Title:	Assistant Director – Employment, Business and Skills, London Borough of Waltham Forest
Date:	16 June 2022	Time:	10.00 – 11.30 hybrid meeting room 5 and via Teams
Officer:	Amin Aboushagor	Email:	Amin.aboushagor@londoncouncils.gov.uk

Item 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies	Rebecca Davey Chair (5 mins)
Item 2. Notes of the last meeting and matters arising	Rebecca Davey Chair (5 mins)
Item 3. Procurement and apprenticeships	Borough speakers (15 mins)
1. Libby Dunstan – LB Southwark	
Item 4. Inclusive apprenticeships	Borough speakers (20 mins)
1. Hassan Amjad and Anne McLoughlin – LB Brent & Dynamic Training	
2. Terrence McKnight – Westminster City Council	
3. Jack Biggs and Lucy Robinson - LB Hammersmith and Fulham	
Item 5. Apprenticeships for young people	Borough speakers (20 mins)
1. Sarah-Jane Marcello – LB Hackney	
2. Anthony Hartigan – LB Redbridge	
3. Rachel Melvin – LB Southwark	
Item 6. Updates and Discussion:	
• Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)	Andy Lunn ESFA (5 mins)
• Local Government Association (LGA)	Jamie Saddler LGA (5 mins)
• ASG members	All (10 mins)
Item 7. AOB, close and next meeting	Rebecca Davey Chair (5 mins)
Date of next meeting: 15th September 2022, 10.00am – 11.30am	

Young People's Education and Skills (YPES)

Apprenticeship Sub-Group

Date 24 March 2022 **Venue** Via Teams

Meeting Chair Rebecca Davey, Head of Business Growth, Employment, London Borough of Waltham Forest

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Attendance:

Members

Alan Galloway	London Borough of Hillingdon
Amadea Afful	London Borough of Islington
Andile Artino	London Borough of Hackney
Anna-Maria Dixon	London Borough of Bromley
Anthony Hartigan	London Borough of Redbridge
Antoinette Thorne	London Borough of Bromley
Brianne Lindsay	London Borough of Bromley
Bridget Arnold	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Carol Stewart	London Borough of Lewisham
Caroline Odogwu	City of Westminster
Cheryl Jones	London Borough of Bexley
Darshna Dhokia	London Borough of Islington
Deborah Harrington	Royal Borough of Kingston
Huma Hadi	London Borough of Lewisham
Ishma Lakhwani-Coalo	London Borough of Hounslow
Ivan Mcdougall	City of London
Jack Biggs	London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
James Pierce	London Borough of Merton
Jan Elkin	London Boroughs of Richmond and Wandsworth
Jo Robertson	London Borough of Hounslow
Fabiola Palermo	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Lorraine Pearce	London Borough of Haringey
Madu Ramnauth	London Borough of Barnet

Michelle Fitzgerald	London Borough of Brent
Rachel Melvin	London Borough of Southwark
Rebecca Davey (Chair)	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Sarah-Jane Marcello	London Borough of Hackney
Vanita Nicholls	London Borough of Ealing

In attendance

Fay Edwards	South West Councils
Jamie Saddler	Local Government Association

Officers

Amin Aboushagor	London Councils
Anna-Maria Volpicelli	London Councils
Dianna Neal	London Councils

Apologies

Alexandra Kelly	Royal Borough of Kingston
Amanda Buchanan	London Borough of Barnet
David Pack	London Borough of Ealing
Karen Taylor	London Borough of Enfield
Melody Thornton	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Michael Marshall	London Borough of Camden
Rebecca Heptinstall	London Borough of Islington
Ronke Ajayi	London Borough of Hackney
Shakeela Shourie	London Borough of Bromley
Steve Whitehead	London Borough of Hounslow
Sue Pearce	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Varsha Mistry-Hand	London Borough of Havering

1 Welcome, introductions, and apologies

- 1.1 Rebecca Davey, Chair, welcomed members to the meeting and invited new members to introduce themselves.

2 Notes of the last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The notes of the last meeting were agreed with items on the agenda as noted from meeting actions.

3 Reduction in borough apprenticeships for young people

- 3.1 Dianna Neal presented on the persistent trend in the decline of apprenticeships offered to young people. In 2017-2018, there was a drop of 72% for 16-18 year olds with a 45% drop for 19-24-year-olds. Whilst there has been a drop in young people's apprenticeships, there has been a big increase in the 25+ age group. London has the highest youth unemployment figures of any region nationally, and there has been a decrease in lower level apprenticeships (L2). However, L2 and L3 pay has increased in recent years.
- 3.2 Responding to questions in Dianna's last slide, Rebecca asked whether this reflects in other sectors and nationally, to which Dianna responded that it does. Cheryl Jones (Bexley) said this was in part due to the withdrawal of L2 Administration apprenticeship. Cheryl noted that she sits on the Level 2 and 3 Trailblazer Group, which recognises that the levy is being used more for staff development, and there needs to be more incentives for employers to take on apprentices. Dianna advised that there was an announcement in the Spring Statement of a review of the Apprenticeship Levy, as part of wider work to encourage more employers to invest in training.. London Councils will continue to engage with the GLA, sub-regions and business groups on joint lobbying around reforms to the apprenticeship levy.
- 3.3 The discussion subsequently moved onto the lack of promotion of apprenticeships in schools. Madu Ramnauth (Barnet) said they find it very hard to get into schools to talk about apprenticeships as an option and asked if any colleagues had any strategies for doing so. Alan Galloway (Hillingdon) said that many schools are poor at promoting apprenticeships to students. Having attended many school careers fairs, he was surprised at the lack of knowledge around apprenticeships by both parents and young people. Andile Artino (Hackney) said managers want people with experience, and posts are remaining vacant due to financial pressures on local authorities. Rebecca added that both Kickstart and 'T' Levels have also had an impact. Brianne Lindsay (Bromley) stated that they engage with local businesses, but as there have been no job fairs in the last two years, and with councils under pressure financially, it has been very difficult. L2 apprenticeships have also been impacted by the government's Kickstart programme, and there are too many barriers towards making the best use of them, such as being unable to use the levy on salaries.

- 3.4 Members voiced the need for the return of, and more, government incentives. Jamie Saddler (LGA) advised that there was an ESFA survey around incentives, and this was included in the most recent LGA Newsletter. Jamie urged members that had not already done so to complete the survey as the more positive feedback the ESFA receives, the more likely that some form of incentive would be re-introduced.
- 3.5 Both Rebecca and Dianna agreed that a different approach to lobbying was necessary, and Rebecca asked Dianna to raise this with both Leaders and senior partners as it requires a push both internally and externally. Dianna noted several good points, and asked colleagues to share any examples of good practice. Rebecca added that it would be great if anyone had any examples specifically around care leavers.

Action: Re-circulate link to the [ESFA survey on Apprenticeship Incentives](#).

Action: London Councils to collect examples of good practice around encouraging more apprenticeships for young people and bring back the results to the June meeting

4 Proposals for Apprenticeship Awards 2022

- 4.1 Amin Aboushagor presented a review of the London Borough Apprenticeship Awards following feedback from the last meeting in December. The comments then had been to align more closely with categories of the National Apprenticeship Awards (NAA), lengthen the time allocated for submission of applications, and split the schools and supply chain award into two separate categories.
- 4.2 London Councils currently has six award categories compared to NAA's nine, but as the latter is a national competition, some of the awards do not relate to local government. Consequently, Amin confirmed that we are proposing not to take forward any NAA categories, to separate the best apprentice working in schools/supply chain into an award for each, and to lengthen the nomination submission window from one to two months, with regular communications throughout this window to act as timely reminders.
- 4.3 Amin advised that digitalisation of the nomination process has been discussed internally but would not be ready in time for this year's awards; however, this will be reviewed for the 2023 awards. The proposed timescale with dates was presented, with nominations open for submissions from Tuesday 5 April until

Tuesday 31 May, with reminder emails to colleagues during this time. The awards shortlist will be announced mid-July, and invitations to the ceremony will be sent late July for the awards ceremony in September.

- 4.4 Due to the pandemic, the last two ceremonies have been held in a virtual format, but this year planning is already taking place for an in-person event; should this change, colleagues will be notified.
- 4.5 Rebecca advised that most nominations are submitted by inner London boroughs, and encouraged members from the outer boroughs to think about submitting nominations. As part of the judging panel, Rebecca advised that the best submissions were those written by the apprentice themselves, and suggested boroughs could offer workshops as a 'development' opportunity. If there were any specific barriers to participation, colleagues should let London Councils know. There were no further questions, and the proposals were accepted.

5 Annual data collection – proposed changes

- 5.1 At the last meeting in December, it had been discussed and agreed to combine the two London Councils surveys carried out each year on apprentice headcount/levy spend and pay scales. It had also been proposed to co-ordinate this to follow the deadline for DfE reporting so that completion would be a matter of using some data already collated for this purpose, and thus minimising time and effort for colleagues.
- 5.2 Amin presented a proposed timescale with the survey being issued to boroughs on 3 October for completion by 31 October. London Councils will send reminders to colleagues as any borough missing the deadline might be in danger of not having their data recorded in the final report, which traditionally is circulated to Chief Executives. Analysis of survey returns will take place in November and will be circulated 25 November with results presented at the 1 December meeting.
- 5.3 In answer to a question, Amin confirmed that the period we would be looking at in terms of headcount/levy spend would be 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and payscales from April 2022 (current).

Action:

- Circulate presentation post meeting

- Circulate copy of 2021 templates of headcount/levy/payscales for new members
- Data points for 2022 combined survey to be presented at June meeting for discussion and agreement.

6 Updates and Discussion

LGA

- 6.1 Jamie Saddler (LGA) introduced Fay Edwards, Head of Learning and Development, South West Councils, who joined the meeting to speak about the Local Government Apprentice of the year event taking place on 25-26 May this year.
- 6.2 Fay advised that this is a combined effort between South West Councils, East of England, and the LGA with numerous regional partners registering apprentices to participate. Running through her presentation, Fay advised that the event allows people to work alongside their peers. 110 apprentices took part last year, which they hope to see increase to 200 this year. Eligibility is for apprentices currently on a L2 or L3 apprenticeship or those who have qualified within the last twelve months. The event divides apprentices into teams that are assessed throughout the day by Development Leads across six activities.
- 6.3 Following the event, apprentices taking part are recognised for their participation in local government and nationally amongst their peers. Post event participants receive an individual report with learning materials, and feedback is given to employer/training provider for further personal development.
- 6.4 Fay confirmed the [website](#) is open for registrations, and advised there are prizes available for the winner, runner-up, and each member of the winning team. A question was asked about whether the activities were appropriate for all apprentices; Fay confirmed they were as the activities are generic and broad. Noting that the last two events have been held virtually and this would continue for this year, Jamie added that there has been overwhelming feedback from participants, and that London is historically underrepresented.
- 6.5 Rebecca thanked Fay for taking the time to come and speak to us about the event and urged colleagues to have a look at the details on the website.
- 6.6 Jamie moved on to his LGA update and referred to their most recent newsletter, which included news of the announcement to the end of the public sector target.

However, other reporting lines should still show how councils are getting on. They will be running two webinars in April, one of which will be around social care/work. The newsletter in April will provide a list of online events and contain more information on end point assessments.

- 6.7 Pooled PAYE is a long-term issue, and there has been no progress with the government on its resolution. Brighton and Hove went directly to HMRC who advised them to set up separate PAYE accounts (a dummy account), something which the ESFA had advised boroughs against doing. Jamie will engage with the government to check if this is indeed a viable option.
- 6.8 In response to a question around levy payback, Jamie advised that there has been a general shift in thinking about a wider skills portfolio. The LGA had not lobbied to get rid of the public sector skills target, and they hope this doesn't affect drive behaviours. Alan Galloway (Hillingdon) said that having an internal target was helpful, and Michelle Fitzgerald (Brent) agreed, adding that a levy spend target would be a good option and would drive higher level apprenticeship opportunities. Jamie advised the LGA are keen to hear about any ideas or changes to lobbying colleagues would like to put forward. Rebecca noted that councils are using the levy to fill skills gaps.

ASG members

- 6.9 Bridget Arnold (Greenwich) advised that she and colleagues had recently met with Andy Lunn of the ESFA, and one item raised was the difficulties managers are experiencing in accommodating requests for the 20% Off-The-Job release when existing staff undertake apprenticeships for upskilling purposes. It is often the case that existing staff will be able to take 10% off from their everyday role/commitments, and she asked Andy if the government would consider a change. Bridget asked colleagues if anyone was prepared to work and support lobbying for more flexibility, and if so, to get in touch with her directly.
- 6.10 Cheryl Jones (Bexley) agreed that it is a definite barrier for councils, especially given the scarcity of financial resources. It would be really helpful to have this type of flexibility especially around higher level apprenticeships. Further comments:

- In response to a question on how to stop people taking advantage, Bridget replied by possibly having a manager and learner sign an agreement so there is a mechanism in place for people to go back to.
 - The off-the-job aspect helps providers by ensuring time is given and acts as a negotiating tool.
 - 20% off the job is always a struggle and requires a policy to be in place
 - It would be useful to get some specific guidance about what can be included as "off the job" that can be carried out in normal worktime would be useful, alongside good practice examples
- 6.11 In response to a question regarding procurement, Rebecca suggested that this can be taken up as an agenda item at the next meeting.
- 6.12 Jo Robertson (Hounslow) commented on the upskilling of existing staff, and the fact that it was not always possible to prove qualifications (such as English and maths), and asked whether it would be possible to lobby for discretion in this area to address barriers for those apprentices that are clearly capable. Rebecca agreed, noting this was a common issue.
- 6.13 Jack Biggs (Hammersmith and Fulham) asked colleagues whether any were able to talk about inclusive apprenticeships for people with disabilities. Rebecca said they were also looking at this for residents with autism and learning difficulties. Bridget said this is an area where they also have been struggling. Michelle said they are looking at supported apprenticeships and they have an SEN internship programme that she would be happy to share details about.

Actions:

- Circulate Fay Edwards presentation in post meeting note
- Anyone wishing to support Bridget Arnold with the 20% off the job, to email her at Bridget.arnold@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.
- Procurement and apprenticeships for those with barriers to be on the agenda at June meeting.

Item 7. AOB

- 7.1 It was agreed that for the next meeting in June, a hybrid option would be available. No further business was recorded.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 16 June 2022, 10-11.30am, hybrid, meeting room