

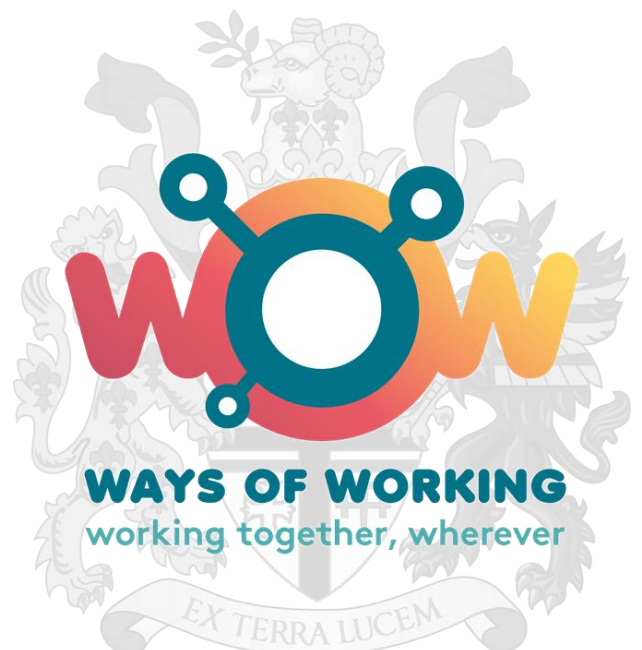


ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Apprenticeship Strategy

Increasing apprenticeship opportunities across the council by offering high quality apprenticeship programmes, for new and existing employees of all ages, that are linked to career pathways, and support workforce development and planning.

Helping to get the Right People, in the Right Place, with the Right Skills at the Right Time



Executive Summary - Supporting Our Borough Strategy Vision

“Working together for a better borough, with people at the heart of everything we do by improving people’s lives together and creating distinct, attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive, and accessible places in which to live, work, visit and invest.”

To achieve our vision, we need a flexible, skilled, aspiring, and resilient workforce, that can only be accomplished by creating capacity through ongoing investment in our workforce’s professional development and by attracting and retaining talent into the organisation. This is aligned to the outcome outlined in our Borough Strategy Priorities ‘We invest in developing the strengths and skills of our workforce...’

Apprenticeships can support this by delivering innovative and cost-effective professional development opportunities for new and existing employees of all ages, to assist the Council in meeting its current and future skills needs.

This strategy outlines: -

- what we want to achieve as an employer and the positive action we will take to increase the number and range of apprenticeships within the Council, as part of our broader approach to workforce development.
- our commitment to work with the services and schools, to help identify the available apprenticeship opportunities and to address specific skills and recruitment and retention challenges.

The strategy is aligned with our Council Priorities and identifies the outcomes it will contribute towards within the action plan in appendix 1.

The strategy also supports our organisational values of Trust, Integrity, Collaboration and Keep Innovating, by investing in our employees’ skills and professional development to equip them to deliver high quality services and to achieve the best outcomes for our communities and residents.

St Helens Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and social mobility. Our apprenticeship programme reinforces this approach by providing inclusive training, development and apprenticeship opportunities that are accessible to all employees and residents.

Our Apprenticeships Programme Aim

“To increase apprenticeship opportunities across all service areas of the council by offering high quality apprenticeship programmes, for new and existing employees of all ages, that are linked to career pathways, and support workforce development and planning.”

Apprenticeships will be embedded as an integral tool for workforce development and succession planning, to ensure we have the right people with the right skills at the right time, to deliver high quality services and to achieve our Council priorities.

Strategic Context – What do we need to deliver?

Meeting Current and Future Skills Need

We are undergoing an ambitious programme of internal modernisation, to transform and improve the way we work. Investing in the development of our workforce and ensuring we

have the skills and capabilities to respond positively to and embrace change, is a key factor in the success of the programme.

Apprenticeships provide cost effective opportunities for St Helens Council to attract, develop and retain a diverse, creative, and innovative workforce with the key skills and abilities required now and into the future.

Through apprenticeships we can offer a wide range of career opportunities to people of all ages by: -

- identifying apprenticeship opportunities for new employees, of all ages,
- committing to a 'growing our own' approach to raise aspirations and support the development and professional skills of our existing workforce.

This approach will enable us to ensure we have the capacity and capabilities to achieve our priorities and demonstrate our commitment to "invest in developing the strengths and skills of our workforce".

Apprenticeships will be utilised alongside the wider corporate workforce development offer to respond to current and future skills requirements and establish a talent pipeline. This will enable us to take a strategic approach to succession planning and help address recruitment and skill gaps.

Supporting Delivery of Our Strategic Priorities

Our Borough Strategy sets out our ambitions for working together for a better borough, to continue to address the challenges of economic growth, low attainment and skills and deprivation. Our Apprenticeship Programme aims to attract and retain talented people and develop their strengths and potential to create a motivated, engaged, and skilled workforce thus supporting the council's commitment develop a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy by providing high quality jobs and learning opportunities with related qualifications which are embedded in career progression routes.

We endeavor to be an inclusive employer, representative of the residents and communities we serve; by utilising apprenticeships we can create accessible and purposeful employment opportunities for our residents and ensure that the Council continues to operate as both a socially responsible employer and a leader for innovation and change.

Apprenticeships will also provide opportunities for young people to access sustainable employment pathways and professional development, and as Corporate Parent, we will prioritise Care Leavers and other young people who are not in education, employment, and training (NEET) for all new apprenticeship vacancies created by the organisation.

Government Apprenticeship Reform

The Government established the: -

- Apprenticeship Reform Programme in 2015
- Apprenticeship Levy in 2017; a 0.5% payroll tax payable by all employers with an annual tax bill of more than £3m,
- Public Sector Apprenticeship Target in 2017 for public sector bodies, in England, with 250 or more employees to employ an annual average of at least 2.3% (headcount) new apprentices starts over the period 2017-2021.

The levy is a significant cost to the Council, equating to an approximate average annual spend of **£insert figure** and a target of 588 new apprentice starts between 2017 and 2022, and therefore it is incumbent on us to utilise it as effectively as possible.

Our Strategic and Programme Aims

To enable us to attract and retain apprentices our apprenticeship programme must: -

- address the skills requirement within our workforce
- support the achievement of the council's strategic priorities and outcomes
- maximise our apprenticeship levy spend
- have regard for the public sector apprenticeship target

To achieve this our strategic aims are to: -



Maximise the apprenticeship offer to promote skills development and create capacity and capability across all Directorates and Departments

We will work with Heads of Services to map apprenticeships to existing and potential critical skills needs. Identifying apprenticeship opportunities as part of service workforce planning will enable the services to take action to mitigate potential skills gaps and develop the capability required for the future.

We will utilise apprenticeships to further develop management and leadership capacity and capability across the organisation, and to create opportunities for those that aspire to be managers and leaders in the future.



Pro-actively promote apprenticeships and work with services to maximise apprenticeship spend and achieve the public sector target

Traditionally, apprenticeship qualifications were considered as being applicable only to school leavers and young people recruited into entry level roles. We can address this myth by pro-actively raising awareness and understanding of the benefits of apprenticeships through increased engagement with Heads of Services and regular ongoing promotion of available apprenticeship opportunities to existing employees.



Design and develop opportunities for higher level apprenticeships to address skills needs, improve capability raise aspirations

We will work with the services to identify and provide opportunities for existing employees, of all ages, to utilise apprenticeships to gain new skills and progress their career by developing a greater awareness of the types of apprenticeships available, particularly higher-level apprenticeships. This activity will enable us to proactively increase the number of employees undertaking an apprenticeship and maximise apprenticeship levy spend.



Incorporate apprenticeships within our recruitment offer to provide a sustainable talent pipeline route into and up through the organisation and wider economy

We will work with HR to review our recruitment processes to enhance our recruitment offer by enabling the organisation to identify and promote more apprenticeship opportunities and help St Helens to become more inclusive and attractive to perspective

employees.



Support workforce planning initiatives – management & leadership development, service redesign and retraining for redeployed employees

Management and Leadership Development - In line with our values and behaviors, we require strong, visionary, and inspiring managers and leaders to drive forward our transformation and modernisation programme to achieve our strategic priorities. To support this need, incorporate operational management and leadership apprenticeships at levels 3, 5, 6 and 7 (dependent on individual need) within our leadership development programme, Skills for Leading Together at St Helens. All new and existing employees within a Team Leader / Supervisor, Manager, Head of Service, Assistant Director role will be offered the opportunity to access a relevant apprenticeship qualification.

The operational management and leadership apprenticeships will be an essential element of our aspiring leadership development programme supporting our commitment to 'grow our own'.

Service redesign and retraining for redeployed employees – We will work with HR to identify suitable apprenticeship opportunities to support service / job role redesigns and those at risk of redundancy, thereby enabling us to develop our current workforce, aid retention, retain talent and raise aspirations and mitigate the risk of redundancies.



Work with the services to identify entry opportunities for young people

Whilst apprenticeships can provide worthwhile opportunities for young people to enter the workplace and gain valuable work experience, without the right support mechanisms and basic employability skills in place, research findings demonstrate that many care leavers find it difficult to sustain and complete an apprenticeship. We will work in partnership with Children and Young People Services to identify and develop pre-apprenticeship work experience opportunities or traineeships to help prepare the young people to develop the necessary skills and confidence to progress into an apprenticeship.

We will also work with the services to develop an approach and support offer to enable us to prioritise Care Leavers and other young people who are not in education, employment, and training (NEET) for all new apprenticeship vacancies created within the Council.



Proactively engage with maintained schools to identify apprenticeship opportunities to address skills need

Local Authority schools, as part of the Council, are subject to both the levy charge and are required to 'have regard' to the 2.3% apprenticeship target. We will proactively engage with the schools to promote the benefits of apprenticeships, particularly at Teacher, Teaching Assistant and School Business Manager level, as well as the broader range of standards that could be used by the wider schools' workforce in helping to create apprentice opportunities to maximise apprenticeship levy spend and achieve the apprenticeship target.