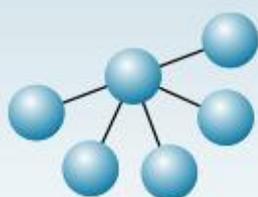


# LONDON COUNCILS - APPRENTICESHIP EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS



SHARED INTELLIGENCE

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# 1 Introduction and methodology

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- 1.1 London Councils commissioned six London boroughs to deliver projects to develop and test approaches to employer engagement as a mechanism for increasing the numbers of 16-18 year old apprentices recruited by SMEs. Shared Intelligence was commissioned to provide an independent evaluation of the projects. The evaluation reviews the extent to which the projects were successful in achieving their aims, identifies the barriers to employers taking on younger apprentices and discusses the ways in which the projects tackled these barriers. It also identifies the lessons learned through the projects and draws out good practice and recommendations for the future for boroughs, London Councils and National Apprenticeship Service. The projects ran for nine months from June 2013 to February 2014.
- 1.2 Apprenticeship participation has increased steadily every year since 2007/08, but although the image of apprenticeships is of a practical vocational career path for young people, those aged under 19 only make up around a quarter of the total apprentices. The picture has not changed despite the funding for 16-18 year olds being double that for 19 to 24s. With youth unemployment in London at very high levels and a widespread concern that the education system is not preparing young people adequately for the world of work, it is vital to ensure that the apprenticeship system is functioning effectively. The London Councils apprenticeship projects are designed to overcome some of the barriers to business engagement, and business recruitment of young people. If these barriers can be better understood, it will be possible to increase the numbers of young people accessing apprenticeship opportunities.

## Methodology

- 1.3 Each borough produced their own evaluation of their project and sent them to London Councils. These reports included a summary of their activity, an outline of the support they have provided to employers and the partnership arrangements, the specific issues around employing 16-18 year olds and how they tackled these issues, the marketing undertaken, and lessons learned, along with case studies of the businesses supported.
- 1.4 The overall evaluation has involved a review of these reports to bring out key conclusions from the projects followed by interviews with the project managers, interviews with a number of employers and a review of the employer case studies, analysis of the monitoring data provided to London Councils by the projects, and a workshop with project managers and another with employers to draw out further details and confirm the findings.

## Wider context

- 1.5 Of course the apprenticeship landscape is undergoing a series of major changes and developments as the government seeks to improve the quality and uptake of apprenticeships. There have been a number of reviews of apprenticeships, including the

Richard Review<sup>1</sup> which highlighted the lack of quality and poor employer engagement, and made a series of recommendations for improvements.

- 1.6 In response, the government has now published an Implementation Plan<sup>2</sup> setting out a response to the Richard Review recommendations. It introduces measures to establish clarity and simplicity within the system, and to put employers in the lead. The detail of the proposed funding changes will be announced over the coming months, but the intention is to provide payments directly to employers. A series of Trailblazers for different sectors will develop new project standards, and identify effective practice. From 2017/18 all projects will be based on these new standards.
- 1.7 It is important to try and understand the conclusions arising from the London Councils projects in the context of these changes to apprenticeships, and this has also been discussed in the document following consideration at the workshop with project managers.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Review (2012) <http://www.schoolforstartups.co.uk/richard-review/richard-review-full.pdf>. November.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/253073/bis-13-1175-future-of-projects-in-england-implementation-plan.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253073/bis-13-1175-future-of-projects-in-england-implementation-plan.pdf)

## 2 Background to the projects

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- 2.1 London Councils commissioned six London boroughs, with funding from the National Apprenticeship Service, to run employer engagement programmes. These were designed to engage local employers in apprenticeships, create new apprenticeship vacancies, and encourage employers to consider recruiting 16-18 year olds. The aim of these projects was to deliver employer engagement activity that leads to good quality apprenticeship vacancies, with as many of these as possible being filled by 16-18 year olds. The projects integrated a wider package of activities such as increased marketing, support for young people in the form of employability workshops in schools, providing CV workshops and mock interviews.
- 2.2 The boroughs involved in the project were Barnet; Ealing; Greenwich; Hounslow; Lambeth and Southwark; and Merton. Overall the target number of employer commitments was 550 and the projects ran between June 2013 and February 2014.
- 2.3 While the focus of the projects was to increase the availability and take up of apprenticeships by 16 to 18 year olds, it was understood that it would not be possible to require or guarantee that all additional apprenticeship vacancies would be filled by young people. The focus of the work was therefore to increase the number of vacancies on offer alongside some targeted work to improve the chances of 16-18 year-olds being hired. The suggested activities included:
- informing employers about the benefits of recruiting younger people;
  - linking up with employability support to access a pool of good, work-ready candidates;
  - promoting the AGE grant which is available for apprentices under 24;
  - providing guidance and support to employers, both before and after their apprentice has started, to improve chances of a successful placement;
  - linking up with existing activity, such as pre-apprenticeship support and the Education & Employers Taskforce work with schools, to identify suitable candidates;
  - targeting employers in sectors which are most appropriate and open to younger candidates.

### Description of the projects

- 2.4 The approaches taken by boroughs to deliver the project varied. Most boroughs already had some structures to support apprenticeships in place, and were able to build on this quickly rather than set up programmes from scratch. In some cases delivery was undertaken by existing staff, in others specialist support was brought in, and in some cases delivery was shared between two or more partner agencies. Across the boroughs some emphasised wide scale publicity programmes, and others adopted a greater emphasis on approaching employers on a 1 to 1 basis to discuss the potential for apprenticeship creation and support them through the process. Summary information on the approaches is provided in the following paragraphs.

### Barnet

- 2.5 A post was established and this post-holder was responsible for employer engagement and support. The approach taken in Barnet involved a wide range of methods of contacting employers, including networking events, press releases, e-mails and social media, leafleting and sector specific business events. A total of 2068 businesses were contacted through these methods. Interestingly, the method found most successful in resulting in recruitment was e-mail, followed by newsletters.
- 2.6 Relationships were developed with 20 training providers, and the Council worked with Jobcentre Plus in arranging the sector engagement days. A local business database was used to identify contacts for e-mailing, and generated a good response.
- 2.7 On the basis of the apprenticeships created there appeared to be a strong emphasis on working with existing housing and construction partners. Barnet Homes and a number of major construction firms provided a significant number of vacancies, as did a number of local schools, who were contacted through the Barnet Schools newsletters.

### Ealing

- 2.8 In Ealing, the funding was used principally to employ a consultant and develop marketing to employers. Activity included employer events including dinners, adverts, e-mails and job fairs. The project was tied into the Ealing "100 in 100" campaign - the 100 in 100 campaign launched in September 2013 aimed to create 100 job vacancies in 100 days for 16 to 24 year olds, giving them access to high quality employment and training. The most effective approach to generating interest from employers was through following up leads generated by the publicity through direct phone calls. The most conversions into live vacancies were created when the specialist broker carried out subsequent visits.
- 2.9 Following an expression of interest by an employer, an Organisational Needs Analysis was undertaken, and referrals to training providers made if the employer agrees to take on an apprentice. In some cases the apprentice was also provided with support following recruitment.
- 2.10 The project found that older candidates, particularly when experienced, were more popular with employers than the 16-18 age group. To help provide suitable candidates, the Council worked with Jobcentre Plus to help recruit potential apprentices, and to conduct screening workshops. Candidates who were deemed appropriate for referral to employers were offered help to identify opportunities, and those who needed prior help with employability skills were referred to pre-apprenticeship training through existing services.

### Greenwich

- 2.11 A partnership was established in Greenwich between the Council and the two principal project delivery agencies, Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB<sup>3</sup>) and the London Apprenticeship Company (LAC).

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<sup>3</sup> GLLaB is part of the Council

2.12 The approach taken in Greenwich was to use Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB) and the Council's Employer Engagement Team as the principal mechanisms for engaging employers and recruiting candidates. The benefit of this approach was felt to be that these businesses were already involved in local recruitment initiatives and would know the agency. While the apprenticeship open days, events and pre-screening sessions were held at the GLLaB, the Employer Engagement Team worked very closely with the South East London Chamber of Commerce, existing business partners and local SMES through events, publicity leaflets and websites. The approach, while engaging a smaller number of employers than other boroughs, appeared to result in a similar number of project vacancies being created, although relatively few of these (30%) were filled by younger people (compared with the programme average of over 40%). In addition, an employer engagement post was created, marketing leaflets produced, and events organised. Greenwich also worked with the London Apprenticeship Company, an Apprenticeship Training Agency<sup>4</sup>, to deliver support to employers, and in some cases, including in relation to Council Apprentices, LAC undertook the full recruitment and management function on behalf of the employer.

#### Hounslow

2.13 The Hounslow project was led by the 14-19 Team based in the School Effectiveness Service. A small partnership group was established with the College and the Connexions service which is still funded by the Council. Funding was provided to these partners to support additional work with employers and young people.

2.14 In addition to targeting SMEs to encourage the creation of projects the project also included a specific focus on supporting 16 to 18 year olds; particularly those who had applied but been unsuccessful in obtaining apprenticeships previously. Each of these partners used their contacts to advertise the opportunity to young people, and there were drop-in sessions advertised through schools for young people following GCSEs and A levels.

2.15 A Council database of employers was used and telephone contact was made with them. In addition, events were held with the Chamber of Commerce, and Council departments were encouraged to recruit apprentices. A particularly successful employer event was organised by Council apprentices, who were able to demonstrate the potential of apprentices to attendees.

#### Lambeth and Southwark

2.16 A wide range of employer engagement events were organised, along with follow up telephone calls. In addition, there was a press campaign, with adverts and articles, and targeted leafleting campaigns to some 4,000 businesses. The College, JCP and local Business Improvement Districts were all involved in hosting events. Follow up visits were provided to those businesses interested in apprenticeships. The events and follow up visits were felt to

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<sup>4</sup> Apprenticeship Training Agencies are set up to recruit, arrange, and employ apprentices on behalf of the companies where they work, in order to facilitate the process, particularly for smaller employers.

be far more successful than the wide scale publicity provided through leaflets and press campaigns.

### Merton

- 2.17 The funding was used to provide dedicated support to promoting and delivering a joined up Project offer. The project was delivered by the Merton Chamber of Commerce, and operated by making referrals to a specialist apprenticeship adviser from business support activity with employers. This support was provided in the context of a wider package of business advice, and this generated a significant increase in demand for apprentices locally and, in particular, from SMEs. The project in was delivered by the Merton Chamber of Commerce and formed part of Merton Commerce's "Take One" campaign launched in April 2013. This campaign is designed to increase opportunities for young people with local employers.
- 2.18 A dedicated adviser was appointed to meet with the employers, explain the concept and benefits of apprenticeships (particularly 16-18 year olds) and discuss their suitability to the employer's needs. If the employer then wanted to progress their interest further, the adviser would assist with development of a job descriptions if necessary, and help source a training provider. The adviser maintained contact following a referral being made to a provider and throughout recruitment of a candidate.
- 2.19 A further service offered was to screen potential recruits prior to passing to an employer. This has been a successful part of the broader Take One campaign and is considered to be a significant selling point to employers.

## 3 Impact of the projects

- 3.1 This information is derived from the formal monitoring data provided by the boroughs to London Councils. We have looked below at the numbers of businesses contacted, size and sectors of businesses, the number of project vacancies created, and the proportion of these filled by young people, and the value for money.

### Apprenticeships created

- 3.2 The boroughs had each planned to create between 77 and 125 vacancies during the period. All but one reached the target in terms of firm pledges, and overall the projects created 615 vacancies: 376 with an apprenticeship in post, and 239 where the vacancy has been agreed, and everything is in place except the recruit.
- 3.3 Not all the vacancies created were filled during the delivery timeframe for the programme, as it can take some weeks, or in some cases months to follow through the development and recruitment to an apprenticeship.
- 3.4 The creation of 615 apprenticeship positions is a huge achievement in a short space of time. The total figures are provided in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Apprenticeship vacancies actually started and vacancies being recruited to**

Borough	Actual starts	Recruiting	Actual + Recruiting
Barnet	60	43	103
Ealing	78	99	177
Greenwich	37	26	63
Hounslow	74	25	99
Lambeth / Southwark	18	38	56
Merton	109	8	117
<b>Overall totals</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>615</b>

- 3.5 It is clear from the evidence from boroughs that the numbers of contacts they made to employers had little impact on the numbers of employers generating vacancies, so marketing campaigns and leaflets appear to have had little impact overall. In some boroughs however they did help to generate initial leads, but these need direct follow up through calls and visits in order to translate into apprenticeships being created.

### Apprentices recruited by age

- 3.6 The number of apprenticeships filled, and the age of the apprentices are provided below in Figure 2.
- 3.7 In terms of the proportion of vacancies presently filled by 16 to 18 year olds, this varied significantly. Across the six boroughs, 84 companies have created 156 vacancies for 16 to 18 year olds, which account for 41% of the total.

**Figure 2: Apprentices recruited by age**

Borough	[16-18] started	[19-25] started	Total started	% [16-18] started
Barnet	24	36	<b>60</b>	40%
Ealing	30	48	<b>78</b>	38%
Greenwich	11	26	<b>37</b>	30%
Hounslow	31	43	<b>74</b>	42%
Lambeth / Southwark	5	13	<b>18</b>	28%
Merton	55	54	<b>109</b>	50%
<b>Overall totals</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>376</b>	41%

### Employers - size and sector representation

- 3.8 As can be seen in the following table, 190 or 87% of the businesses involved in the programme were SMEs, and 44% in micro businesses, with fewer than 10 staff. SMEs generated 63% of all vacancies created through the programme.

Business size	Total vacancies created	Number of businesses
1-10	155	97
11-50	111	55
51-250	123	38
250+	217	23
Not known	9	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>218</b>

- 3.9 136 of the vacancies were provided from within the Councils themselves. We note that for Ealing and Hounslow the share of vacancies offered by the Council itself represented over 40% of the total vacancies created (and respectively 24% and 38% for Merton and Greenwich).
- 3.10 The table below sets out the sectors of the employers for those vacancies now filled, which probably provides the most accurate picture of the potential. The contribution made by the local authorities themselves is significant, providing the greatest number of apprenticeships, with related services and schools also being highly significant.
- 3.11 It is also worth noting that 13 (8%) of the vacancies filled by the 16-18 age group are in the hair and beauty sector (under Art, Entertainment and Other Services). Public Administration provided 60% of the apprenticeships in business administration (30), 14% in property and housing related frameworks (7) and 10% in customer service (5). Business Administration and support services industries provided more than half of their apprenticeships in construction related frameworks.

**Figure 3: Number of actual apprenticeships filled per sector [16-18]**

Industrial sector of employer	Apprenticeships filled	% 16-18	Number of businesses
Public administration & defence	50	32%	8
Business administration & support services	21	13%	9
Education	19	12%	18
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	19	12%	13
Accommodation & food services	12	8%	8
Construction	10	6%	7
Information & communication	5	3%	4
Property ( <i>Real Estate activities</i> )	5	3%	3
Health ( <i>Human health and social work activities</i> )	3	2%	3
Motor trades & repair	2	1%	2
Wholesale	2	1%	1
Retail	2	1%	2
Transport & storage (inc postal)	2	1%	2
Financial & insurance	2	1%	2
Manufacturing	1	1%	1
Unknown	1	1%	1
<b>Column Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>98% (rounded)</b>	<b>84</b>

## Apprenticeships - frameworks and levels

- 3.12 The frameworks of the apprenticeships created across all ages through the programme are listed below.

**Figure 3: Number of vacancies created per sector [16-25]**

Frameworks	Apprenticeships created - total	% total vacancies
Business & Administration	134	36%
Construction building / Construction specialist	54	14%
Beauty therapy / Hairdressing	35	9%
Children and young people's workforce / Youth worker	21	6%
Customer service	20	5%
Housing / Property Service	19	5%
Food and drink	16	4%
Facilities Management	8	2%
Health and social care	5	1%
Highway Maintenance	5	1%
Hospitality	4	1%
Adult Health and Social Care	3	1%
Creative and Digital Media	3	1%

3.13 The most frequently adopted frameworks were:

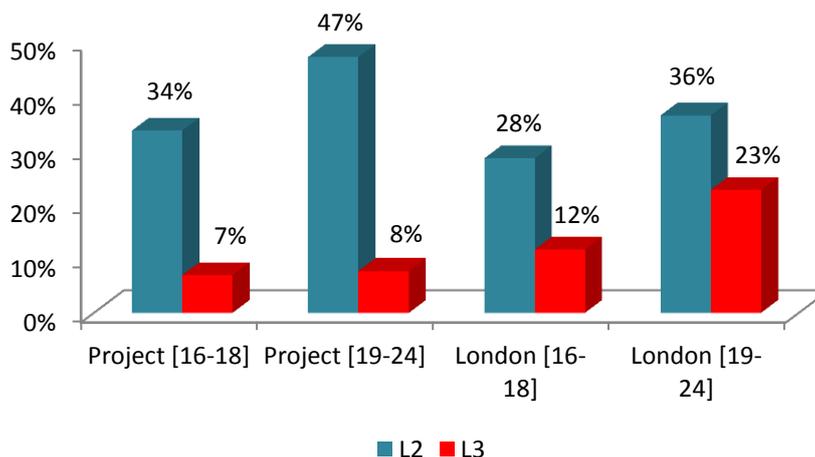
- Business & Administration - accounting for more than a third of the total vacancies created across all ages. Vacancies created in this framework have been mainly provided by the public sector - local authorities in particular;
- Construction building and Construction specialist account for 14% of the total vacancies created and still offer a potential for further growth with 22 positions still in the pipeline;
- Beauty therapy and Hairdressing are well represented, with 9% of the total vacancies created; and,
- Frameworks related with children and young people make up 6% of the total.

3.14 Interestingly, with the project coming to an end, the share of boroughs positions in the potential vacancies decreases drastically and near 90% of the vacancies arranged where an apprentice is still to be recruited (CRM) are in the private sector, mainly within SMEs. This may well be simply because of the time taken to agree the frameworks and finalise arrangements, but it does raise the question about the ability of the boroughs to provide sufficient support to the employers following the completion of the projects.

### Framework Level

3.15 Across all age ranges, 81% of the vacancies have been created at Level 2 (306 out of 376). The bulk of Level 3 apprenticeships are found in Beauty Therapy & Hair dressing (10), Business Administration (15) and Construction (10), out of a total of 55 actual apprenticeships in L3.

**Figure 4: Apprenticeship Level: London figures 2013 & 6 Borough project**



3.16 For the purpose of comparing the percentage of posts created at Level 2 and Level 3 within the projects with those across London as a whole, we have split them by age ranges. At the London level there is a significant number of apprenticeships filled by people over 25, but we have not included these for comparison purposes.

3.17 As can be seen from the chart, overall, there were fewer apprenticeships created through the projects at Level 3 than within London as a whole over the last year, and none at higher

levels. It should be remembered, however, that the emphasis within the projects was on creating positions for younger people, not on raising the level of qualifications.

### Value for money

3.18 In terms of the grant funding for the projects, the average cost of an apprenticeship position generated through this programme is £199, and cost to date per young person placed in an apprenticeship is £326. It should be noted that these figures represent only the NAS grant funding<sup>5</sup>, and in at least some of the boroughs, the budget was supplemented with council funding, so these figures probably under-estimate the average cost.

3.19 Nevertheless, in relation to comparator costs for placing young people into work, this appears very good value indeed. Recent information provided through the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to Local Enterprise Partnerships gave the following rates:

- 14-19 NEET support provision involving tailored support to young people to move to employment, education or training - SFA unit costs - average to maximum, are £2,128 per participant;
- SFA skills support for the unemployed - targeting people facing skills barriers to access employment - cost is a maximum £1,500 per participant;
- Education Funding Agency youth contract support - providers are paid up to £2,200 per person to fund support for disengaged 16 to 17 year olds move into education, training or employment with training; and,
- DWP Work Programme maximum payments per participant for 18 to 24 year old JSA recipients is £3,810.

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<sup>5</sup> The NAS grant totalled £158,000

## 4 Findings from the projects

### Support for employers

- 4.1 There was general agreement from the boroughs that intensive, one-to-one support with employers is required in order to increase uptake of apprentices. In the course of this support, boroughs were requested to identify the extent of different types of support required from the following list, presented below in order of importance:

Support provided to employers	
1.	Recruitment support (this often included identifying applicants, writing job descriptions, helping with short-listing and interviews)
2.	Finding an appropriate apprenticeship framework and training provider
3.	Knowledge and understanding of apprenticeships
4.	Specific information in relation to employing 16-18 year olds
5.	Providing support post recruitment - for employer and apprentice
6.	Working with an Apprenticeship Training Agency

- 4.2 There was some difference between boroughs in interpreting the questions about the importance of these types of support, and sometimes the support required clearly reflected the support available through the project. However, it is possible to see that the first three of the above are universal employer requirements. The questions around specific information in relation to employing 16 to 18 year olds would only have been taken up by those employers who felt that this might be a suitable option for them, and was therefore not universally taken up. Support post-recruitment was widely seen as being helpful, but not offered by all the projects. Only two boroughs identified any role or employer interest in using an ATA, and these two boroughs used the services of ATAs in project delivery. Other boroughs discussed their use, but there appeared to be no interest at all from employers.

### Recruitment

- 4.3 In relation to recruiting apprentices, one employer described the impact of the support provided, below:

*"Until we met Frances we were coming up against brick walls finding the right place to go to recruit apprentices. Frances has helped us by inviting Lovell to apprentice events and introducing us to ....Jobcentre Plus. This has given us different avenues ... to work with enabling us to recruit apprentices from the Barnet area..... we are due to attend a mini sector day at the Hendon job centre to interview potential apprentices."*

- 4.4 Some employers have also found the process difficult, and need impartial assistance of the kind that can be offered by local authorities under this type of project. In one case study example provided by Ealing, the employer found the experience of recruiting an apprentice difficult, mainly because they found the first training provider they worked with somewhat unresponsive, slow and uncommunicative. They were very grateful for the impartial and responsive advice offered by Ealing Council. This was particularly important, when they encountered issues with the 17 year old appointed, and they needed advice on duty of care, lone working and employment issues.
- 4.5 Work trials were found to increase success with recruitment. These were one-week trials held with candidates following an initial assessment by the training provider, and were very successful in resulting in retention throughout the pilot timeframe.
- 4.6 Training providers are satisfied with the NAS apprenticeship vacancy service as a mechanism for identifying candidates. However, this was not always felt to be the case by employers. Boroughs reported that a good training provider can help employers with identifying suitable candidates. For example in Merton one employer, Home Instead, a care services provider, was finding it hard to identify potential apprentices but the training provider was able to help:

*“Shirley Woodcock from training provider Capital Training helped by pre-screening potential candidates to see if they have the skillset we needed, for example, Maths, English and Excel. Then I was sent several CVs, but looking at people on paper was too difficult, so Shirley came into our offices to see how we run the operation so she could get a better feel for who would be right to work for us. A short time later, she rang to say that she thought she had the perfect person for me. On interviewing Emma, I offered the job to her on the spot. Shirley got it 100 per cent right and I can’t thank her enough.”*

### Working with schools

- 4.7 There was limited work done with schools as this was not part of the brief of the project. However several of the boroughs felt that it would be beneficial to try to develop stronger links in order to raise awareness amongst pupils about apprenticeships. It is clear that engaging with schools is not always an easy process, and it can be easier for those parts of the 14-19 service with good links with schools to make these contacts. Nevertheless with the raising of the participation age it is an area that should be further developed.

### Apprenticeship Training Agencies

- 4.8 Apprenticeship Training Agencies were on the whole not used. In Barnet for example, while the offer was available to employers, no employers chose to take it up. In the cases of larger employers it was not considered to be necessary, but even for small employers if they were willing to take on an apprentice, they were willing to take the risks associated with employment. Nevertheless in those boroughs where ATAs were partners in delivering the programme, their services were felt to be useful. For example in Southwark:

*As an SME, Cycle Confident found the ATA model attractive because it offered support with recruitment and eased the potential burden of sourcing and navigating the process associated with employing an apprentice; and,*

*Gemma (at The View from the Shard) found the experience of working with an ATA a satisfactory one, stating that the ATA did most if not all of the paperwork, liaised with the training provider and ensured the apprentices were on track to achieve their qualification. This left time for Gemma to actually line manage the apprentices and support them in their roles as Ambassadors for View from The Shard.*

## Salary and Financial incentives

- 4.9 There can also be real financial implications for employers in taking on apprentices, particularly younger apprentices, as described by one employer below:

*"I have found the apprentice route financially challenging as they require a lot of nurturing from myself and my senior managers. We are all big earners in the business and the focus on the apprenticeships has affected the Spa takings, the funding received for having the apprentices doesn't cover the cost of having them, the financial support I have received from Barnet council has enabled me to have these apprentices and have given me the confidence to take more. I also have a number of salons interested in taking students from my Academy and I am looking to in the future train apprentices in the academy and place them in other beauty salons."*

- 4.10 The AGE Grant was very helpful in marketing to employers. However, the withdrawal of the doubling of that grant by the GLA (because of rapid and high take up from employers) was a setback, in some cases leading to the withdrawal of interest from employers.
- 4.11 The salary provided by employers made a great difference to the quality of potential recruits. In Barnet the salaries varied from £6.16 per hour - somewhere over £11,200 per annum) up to £15,000 per annum, and the response from potential apprentices was far better in relation to the higher salary offer.
- 4.12 There is some uncertainty around the likely impact of the proposed funding changes. Currently training providers have an incentive to engage employers as they receive funding for the apprentices being trained. In the future, with funding going direct to the employer, the employer will have the responsibility to identify an appropriate training provider, and they may find this harder than in the current system. This is likely to affect smaller employers in particular.
- 4.13 One borough reported some difficulty with out of date and inflexible Frameworks, particularly for lower level Apprenticeships.

## Specific barriers to employing younger apprentices

- 4.14 Boroughs reported that employers had a number of particular issues relating to the recruitment of 16 to 18 year olds:

Barriers/issues around employing 16-18 year olds	
1.	Many employers cited a lack of experience and maturity of young people, along with in some cases time-keeping, lack of basic skills, and additional supervision requirements.
2.	Some industries are not suitable for young people - construction sites require insurance and this is difficult for young people, similarly some types of care work are not suitable for young people - or at least they require a level of maturity that is not usually found in young people. Some occupations require driving licences.
3.	Some employers assume an age and qualification requirement that is not necessary – eg Barnet Homes changed their advertising and qualification requirements to GCSEs from A levels.
4.	Employer duty of care towards young people, depending on the working environment, and whether for example they are left alone while working
5.	Some employers were disappointed that there are not more young people interested in apprenticeship opportunities coming forward for interview.

- 4.15 There were also some types of employers, for example in hair and beauty, who felt that it was beneficial to employ a young person without experience so that they could be trained properly from the start and would not arrive with "bad habits" learned elsewhere:

*"In recent times the beauty business is going through a tough time with getting good quality therapists, I have always preferred to train my own staff in my academy and then place them in my Spas, I find that this way they work to my standards and slot in easily. I prefer to take young therapists because I find they can be moulded to fit into the job description and have longer mileage. My current Spa team of 10 therapists were recruited from my academy and they were all between the ages of 16-19. Most of them have been with me for over 7 years. These senior therapists are now ready to be promoted to trainers and managers, hence I have found the apprentice route very useful. The 7 apprentices I have taken on will enable me to expand."*

- 4.16 Other benefits identified in relation to employing 16 to 18 year olds included:

- likely to have excellent IT skills especially in relation to social media;
- lower wage bills; and they attract full funding for Apprenticeship training.

- 4.17 In addition, some employers want to give young people a chance, and others had started work at a young age themselves and believed in the concept of Apprenticeships.

## Employer Views

- 4.18 A number of employers who had taken on apprentices under these projects were interviewed as part of the evaluation process, and discussions were held with two other employer representatives at London Councils' offices. Some important points emerged from these discussions.
- 4.19 Firstly, although boroughs perceived the AGE Grant to be very helpful in marketing apprenticeships to employers, the grant is not necessarily felt by the employers to be significant. This may depend on the size of the employer, and their motivation for recruiting an apprentice. It is clear that some employers take on apprentices as part of a workforce development and succession strategy, whereas others are motivated by social responsibility aims and want to give young people a chance, and others recognise advantages of low cost labour provided by apprentices.
- 4.20 Although there are cost advantages to employing apprentices, employers confirmed that the biggest issue for them is the resource commitments required in providing supervision for them. There are also significant company reputational risks where apprentices are placed in front-line roles.
- 4.21 There is clearly a link, however, to salary - while some employers found it very hard to recruit to apprenticeship positions, those prepared to offer higher salaries were able to recruit more easily, from a higher calibre of applicants.
- 4.22 The employers at the workshop discussion suggested that more pre-apprenticeship training would have been helpful for their apprentices.
- 4.23 Finally, most (though not all) the employers felt that the additional support provided through the councils as part of this programme was very helpful, particularly in making the right contacts in various agencies, such as JCP as well as helping finding training providers.

## 5 Conclusions and further questions

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### Conclusions

- 5.1 The main objective of the programme was to increase the generation of apprenticeship vacancies, and it is clear that the projects were successful - generating 615 vacancies between them. Of these places, 376 were filled, in a relatively short period of time, and it is likely that many more of the vacancies will be filled over the coming months.
- 5.2 It is clear that local authorities can play a very useful function in generating apprenticeships, particularly with smaller firms, and with their partner agencies, some of whom have the capacity to recruit substantial numbers of apprenticeships. Employers appear to value their impartial advice and assistance in navigating what is a highly complex system.
- 5.3 Wide scale marketing and promotion appears to be of limited value. The way to generate vacancies is through 1 to 1 support for employers, providing them with advice on recruitment, frameworks, identifying training providers, general information about apprenticeships, and where appropriate, the specific employment framework relating to 16 to 18 year olds.
- 5.4 There are some sectors where it is more difficult to employ younger apprentices including construction, and social care - others where it is far easier - hair and beauty. Some roles, particularly those which require lone working, or particular certificates or licences (for example driving licences) are harder to fill with young people who require additional supervision and support.
- 5.5 Overall the boroughs' experience was that it is easier to generate interest from employers than from young potential apprenticeship candidates. While it was not identified as being part of these projects, the learning from the programme is that it is essential also to increase interest from young people. Work with schools and with parents as well as young people is important in this process. From that point of view, the timing of this work is also important. The most successful apprenticeship programmes start in September at the start of the new term, and require applications over the summer. Some employers provide conditional offers, where for example, 5 GCSEs at grades A\* to C are required.
- 5.6 The investment in these projects demonstrated very good value for money. The average cost of a vacancy generated and filled was £326, which compares extremely well to the cost of other related mainstream programmes.

### Questions for the future

- 5.7 The experience provided by the programme raises a number of other issues for existing and future apprenticeship programmes. These are discussed in the paragraphs below.

#### Working with young people

- 5.8 It is widely accepted that the impartial information and advice that most schools are able to offer to their pupils is limited. In most cases and in relation to apprenticeships in particular it is inadequate, and most young people are unaware of the potential of apprenticeships as a

career route. Apprenticeships vary widely in quality, of the work, the level of training, and in length, and most parents would still prefer their children to remain in formal education. With the Raising of the Participation Age, and at a time when young people, even those with good qualifications, find it very hard to get jobs, the apprenticeship route has clear advantages for many young people, and should be presented to them, and their parents, in conjunction with the alternative offers from schools and colleges.

### **Sustainability and Progression**

- 5.9 It is not possible to assess how many of the young people going into apprenticeships through these projects completed their apprenticeships, or were retained by their employers after a year. While for many young people a year's employment experience is of itself a very useful step in a career path, the long-term impacts of the decision to enter an apprenticeship are important. The vast majority of the apprenticeship vacancies created under this programme were at Level 2. Of course it is possible that some of the apprentices progressed on to Level 3, but the government's objective is to see the balance shift towards higher level qualifications and we know that employer demand for higher level skills is projected to increase into the future.

### **Implications of the changing apprenticeship regime**

- 5.10 One particular issue arising from the projects relates to the proposal to pay the apprenticeship grant direct to employers rather than as currently, to training providers. While the aim of putting employers in the driving seat has been widely welcomed, this programme has shown the potential for increasing the numbers of small employers providing opportunities for apprentices. However, the process of creating a vacancy can be complex, and the additional responsibility associated with this change raises some practical issues for small employers. In addition to the management responsibilities, the process of identifying a training provider in the absence of impartial advice and support could be made significantly more complex for small businesses.
- 5.11 In this context, the projects demonstrate the value of impartial advice and support for employers navigating the apprenticeship system, and the government might consider this when introducing changes to the system.

### **New skills, new sectors, new frameworks**

- 5.12 Across the country, local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships are working with colleges and other training providers and with businesses to align training provision more closely with employers' skills requirements. Although it is clear that apprenticeships are more readily developed in some sectors than others, in general terms it should be an objective of those agencies involved in this area, that apprenticeships reflect broadly the sectoral composition of employment, and where possible, specifically in growth sectors. This was not demonstrated through this programme, and was not a specific objective for the programme. The conclusion must be though that additional and specific efforts need to be made in order that the potential range of sectors using apprentices is broadened out. This is a particular issue in London which has a different sectoral composition to other areas and may require more concerted action to develop new apprenticeship frameworks.

## 6 Good practice points

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- 6.1 The purpose of the projects was to demonstrate approaches to employer engagement as a mechanism for generating increased numbers of apprenticeship vacancies, and it has been possible to reach a number of conclusions about the most effective way to achieve the greatest impact.

### **Intensive one-to-one support for employers**

- 6.2 One to one, preferably face-to-face, work with employers is far more productive in terms of generating interest in apprenticeships and apprenticeship opportunities than marketing/press campaigns and leaflets. Support for employers through the process of recruitment, particularly if this is the employers' first experience of doing so, is important and can make the most significant difference in increasing take-up. The availability of this support was acknowledged to be extremely important by employers.
- 6.3 This support should cover information provision, but also active support throughout and following the recruitment process, and certainly throughout the referral to a training provider. Some training providers were found to be far more effective than others at continuing to engage an employer up to and through recruitment.

### **Providing support to young people**

- 6.4 Support also needs to be provided for potential recruits, particularly where they are 16-18 years old. This support requires some type of assessment process to enable referral to traineeship or employability support programmes, or help with cvs, applications and interviews. In addition help to newly recruited apprenticeships was provided in some cases, to help the transition process.
- 6.5 Support for the apprentice following recruitment covering the transition to work - mentoring or regular contact is also important, but there are various options for providing this, and it is frequently provided from within the employer organisation.

### **Running wider campaigns and holding events**

- 6.6 Running the pilots as part of an apprenticeship campaign was felt to be very helpful by those boroughs where this was a feature. They felt it generated a more positive response from employers where they were seen as contributing towards this type of target. Employers themselves said that meeting employers who have established apprenticeships is the most effective advertisement for apprenticeships.
- 6.7 Promoting apprenticeships through showing off existing apprentices was identified as a very positive experience, with employers able to see the skills and maturity of the young people. Ealing and Hounslow both held events which featured apprentices, and Hounslow's event was organised by Council apprentices.

### **Using levers - partners and procurement**

- 6.8 As discussed in the analysis section above, a good proportion of apprentices were taken on by Councils themselves, or their partners or contractors. For example, all of Southwark

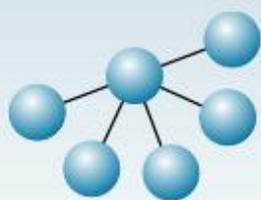
Council's contractors, including Cycle Confident, were invited to 'Apprenticeships Work' in November 2013, a business breakfast event designed to help contractors learn more about apprenticeships, how apprentices could add value to their business, and the support available to them. Attendees heard from various sector experts, business that already employed apprentices, and apprentices themselves. Contractors were then asked to pledge that their business would create apprenticeship opportunities. Using procurement as an apprenticeship generation tool is clearly an effective approach in extending opportunities.

### **Increasing supply - working with schools**

- 6.9 Some boroughs experienced greater difficulty in sourcing potential apprentices than in identifying employers. This suggests that activity designed to increase apprenticeships needs to support both sides of the equation, with resources put into increasing take up by young people.

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