



## **Employer Skills Task Force**

### **1,000 NEW APPRENTICESHIPS IN 1,000 DAYS**

The number of apprenticeships across the South East is falling; the number of apprenticeships in Brighton & Hove is no exception. Meanwhile businesses cite lack of skilled labour and skills mismatch as factors that hold back their growth. The Employer Skills Task Force sees traineeships, apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships as one solution to these local skills challenges.

The Task Force has made eight recommendations, (detailed in section three of this report), which if implemented will make a material difference to apprenticeship numbers and local employment growth. The Task Force has set the city a target of a minimum of 1,000 new apprenticeships in 1,000 days ; to achieve this they have developed an Employer Pledge asking the wider business community to support the campaign.

#### **1. Context**

Brighton and Hove has a great heritage of innovating and providing rewarding jobs and careers. However the city faces a major challenge with emerging skills gaps and an ongoing mismatch between the skills of our workforce and the skills needed by our local firms.

Local and national research confirms that our workforce and, in particular, our young people need to have both the hard and soft skills that will prepare them for the technical, entrepreneurial and ever changing jobs of the future.

In September following consultation between the Council and the local business community a new Employer Skills Task Force (ESTF) was formed. The ESTF is an independent, time limited body with a remit to consider how the number of apprenticeships can be increased locally; how those who have not worked for some time can be supported back into work; and, how more businesses can be encouraged to engage with schools as a way of helping to build and grow a pipeline of local talent able to enter work and learning with a greater understanding of the local job and career opportunities in different sectors.

The number of new apprenticeship starts in Brighton & Hove has recently hit a five year low yet recruiting apprenticeships can have positive economic benefits to a business. A recent government survey found that businesses reported tangible economic benefits from hiring apprentices with nearly three quarters (72%) of businesses surveyed for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) stating that apprenticeships had improved product and service quality, while 68% said that apprenticeships had improved productivity. Hiring apprentices has also often brought additional benefits, such as improved staff morale, staff retention and organisational reputation.

Apprenticeships need not be solely focused on new entrants to the organisation they are available to all those of working age. They can be used to re-train staff or develop their skills for more senior roles; and, as existing staff move onto other jobs new people can be recruited to entry level roles thereby ensuring that a pipeline of talent is being created.

Whilst it is recognised that the opportunities for apprenticeships are open to all those of working age, the Employer Skills Task Force has focused on young people and the opportunities presented by working with schools, training providers and the wider business community to raise the profile and quality of apprenticeships as a valuable route to sustainable jobs and careers.

There are 60 young people aged 18 to 24 years in the city who have been claiming Jobseekers' Allowance for over a year and while the number of young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) is falling there is a concern that the transitions to and through work and learning is still a challenge for many young people.

Zac Toumazi, Chief Executive of Sussex Cricket Ltd, was appointed as Chair of the Employer Skills Task Force in September. Zac joined Sussex Cricket in January 2013 and has a track record of developing business and delivering excellent customer service. He has extensive experience in the financial services sector having fulfilled senior roles with Citigroup and Goldman Sachs before joining the cricket world.

Zac appointed Gary Peters, Founder & Chief Executive of Lovelocaljobs.com, and Charlotte Blant, CEO at Youthforce, as Deputy Chairs of the Task Force to help develop the Terms of Reference, agree the focus of the meetings and the delivery of the Task Force Report and Employer Pledge.

The Apprenticeship challenge is not confined to Brighton & Hove; there has been a decline in apprenticeship numbers across the South East. In seeking to address the local challenges the Employer Skills Task Force has invited businesses and training providers from across the Greater Brighton City Region (Adur & Worthing, Lewes and Mid-Sussex) to be involved, in recognition that these local economies are inter linked and that joint working will reap benefits for all.

As Chair Zac made clear that the Task Force would be forward-thinking, unrestricted and creative in generating ideas for increasing apprenticeships; supporting people back into work; and, increasing employer school engagement.

***The Terms of Reference for the Employer Skills Task Force are provided in Appendix 2.***

## 2. Key Findings

The City faces a number of skills and employment challenges and some of these key issues were discussed by the Task Force. It was, however, agreed by the Task Force at the outset to focus its efforts on apprenticeships and the key issues regarding barriers to increasing the take-up of apprenticeships are outlined below.

The apprenticeship landscape is unclear and there are too many barriers to creating apprenticeships.

The return on investment and the economic benefits of apprenticeships are not always apparent to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

There is a need to educate parents and carers on the benefits apprenticeships so they can understand all of the opportunities for their children and make informed choices.

Levels of confusion about what is available in terms of training and engagement with schools and transitions through work and learning could be reduced if there were one single agency to work with in the City.

The reputation and quality of apprenticeships needs to be improved to encourage more high achieving students to take up this option.

Apprenticeships are not well understood by business or by parents; a local brand should be developed that provides positive case studies of apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships and raises the profile of apprenticeships as a route to quality employment

Some of the existing models of business/ school engagement have been successful, e.g. Be the Change, however levels of engagement are not uniform across the city and a more coherent and consistent level of engagement is needed with the City's 70 schools and academies.

The level of bureaucracy associated with apprenticeships acts as a barrier to businesses and there are few opportunities for businesses to share their experiences or discuss shared skill needs with one another. The new Youth & Employability organisation should help to reduce levels of bureaucracy around apprenticeships.

## 3. Recommendations

The Employer Skills Task Force has considered the evidence presented to it alongside the considerable experience and knowledge held within the group. The recommendations set out below are a call to action for all **Greater Brighton City Region** partners with a stake in helping our young people make informed choices about their future jobs and careers and, ensuring that local firms have access to skilled and motivated staff that are able to help their business grow.

Note: The quotes in italics represent the priority areas for improvement identified by ESTF members

*'The apprenticeship landscape which needs to be clearer and easier to navigate'*

- R1.** To establish a Youth & Employability Organisation with the following broad remit:
- Work with schools to promote understanding of traineeships and apprenticeships and help generate a pipeline of new talent for local businesses;
  - Work with businesses to deepen understanding of the skill needs within different sectors and, as part of this, businesses to collaborate regarding their mutual skills needs e.g. sector clusters;
  - Work with training providers (including private sector providers) to help create a better match between training provision and the skill needs of local businesses and develop a Kitemark to quality assure local provision for businesses;
  - Provide a brokerage service to help large employers and small and medium sized enterprises (including micro businesses) to find trainees, apprentices, and higher apprentices;
  - Track the number of apprenticeships starts and completions and provide evidence in the form of metrics that will detail take up by a range of indicators e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, disability and geography.
- R2.** Local businesses should be encouraged to sign the Greater Brighton Pledge to work with the Youth & Employability Organisation and use it as the main source for trainees and apprenticeships.
- ‘Engagement between schools and businesses that is longer – e.g. year-long and less random’***
- R3.** Every school in Brighton & Hove should be allocated at least one key business partner in the city and form a relationship lasting at least two-years with the aim of increasing pupils understanding on the work and career opportunities in different sectors locally and across the Greater Brighton City Region and as a means of raising aspiration.
- ‘Get more businesses going into schools to sell their companies and find their apprentices’***
- R4.** A campaign in local schools similar to the ‘London Ambition’ and schools pledge to organise at least 100 hours of contact time between pupils and local businesses.
- ‘Engage with parents and businesses to help them steer their children and understand what we can offer’***
- R5.** Develop and maintain an apprenticeship brand for the Greater Brighton City Region to help simplify the training and apprenticeship offer and reduce confusion for businesses, young people, schools and parents.
- ‘Engage young people the earlier the better (before GGSE)’.***
- R6.** Encourage each school to have a school governor for enterprise to champion entrepreneurship within the curriculum, support initiatives that raise awareness of the world of work and promote employability.
- ‘Local Businesses should be encouraged to sign up to an Employer Pledge to offer apprenticeship opportunities for local people’***

- R7.** Large businesses (over 250 employees) in the Greater Brighton City Region, including Brighton & Hove City Council, should lead by example by identifying entry level through to higher level jobs that will be appropriate for traineeships and/ or apprenticeships.
- R8.** The Council and local businesses should lobby for a proportion of the proposed Apprenticeship Levy on large employers to be used to help fund the creation of the new Youth and Employability organisation.

The Recommendations of the Employer Skills Task Force will require the support across the Greater Brighton City Region and engagement of local businesses, the Local Authority, local training providers and the co-operation of schools if it is to succeed. The Employer Skills Task Force therefore calls upon all of these partners to support the recommendations in this report; sign the Greater Brighton Pledge and be part of the solution that will see 1,000 new apprenticeship places created in 1,000 days.

The new Youth & Employability organisation will track progress of delivery. Tracking completions of apprenticeship is vital – there is one third less completions in Brighton & Hove compared with in Croydon.

# Appendix 1

## Methodology

Cllr Morgan, Leader of the Council, and Zac Toumazi, Chair Employer Skills Task Force, wrote to a representative sample of key businesses and providers in the city and surrounding areas inviting them to join the Task Force. Over 30 leading businesses, sixth form schools and colleges in and around Brighton & Hove joined the Task Force and took up the opportunity to help give the city's young people and marginalised residents greater opportunities and better jobs.

The Task Force met five times between September 2015 to January 2016 and each meeting was focused on a theme, as shown below.

The themed meetings were supported by speakers from a wide range of different organisations who provided examples of existing practice which gave the group the context to develop the Employer Pledge.

### Meeting One – Setting the Scene

This meeting gave the members a chance to hear about the current skills sector and an employer's perspective on apprenticeship and engagement with schools.

Kirsten Trussell, Skills Development Manager at Coast to Capital, spoke about the drop in apprenticeship numbers in the city over the last five years to 990 (2014/15 in year data) and the challenge of ensuring young people study what businesses need to reduce the local skills gap.

Charlotte Blant, Director at Youthforce and Deputy Chair of the Task Force, gave an employer's perspective and that budget constraints and bureaucracy are often cited by small firms as barriers to taking on an apprentice.

Gary Peters, CEO at Lovelocaljobs.com and Deputy Chair of the Task Force, gave an overview of employers engagement with schools and that there are a wide range of ways that employers can engage with school such as attending assemblies, school visits, workshops etc. He emphasized the need for this Task Force to be action focused and make a real difference to the lives of young people.

The scale of the challenge for employment and skills in the city was outlined, which included:

- The number of apprenticeships has fallen below 1,000, lower than all statistical neighbours. The number of new apprenticeships in Brighton & Hove recently hit a five year low. In 2013/14 the city created just under 1,700 opportunities; compared with similar cities such as Sunderland created 3,500 and Coventry created 2,940; and
- Fewer young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) but those that remain are hard to reach and there are concerns that the transitions to and through work and learning is still a challenge for many young people.

Task Force agreed its remit which broadly includes:

- An employer led approach that is apolitical;
- To harness the talent in group and achieve tangible outcomes;
- Focus on young people and inspire them to reach their potential;
- Consider how the number of apprenticeships can be increased locally;
- Consider how those who have not worked for some time can be supported back into work;
- Its work is time limited and the Task Force will feedback by March to handover to others to deliver;

The Task Force agreed to consider the viability of creating an Apprenticeship Training Company / Service with the intention of making it easier for small businesses to take on an apprentice. The Task Force agreed to extend the service beyond the city boundaries to include the Greater Brighton City Region to achieve the necessary scale to potentially make it viable. The city region encompasses Brighton & Hove, Lewes, Mid Sussex, Adur and Worthing and represents over 680,000 residents.

### **Meeting 2 - Raising Aspirations**

This meeting looked at approaches to raising the aspirations of young people and improving models of delivery so that young people reach their potential and secure the jobs being created locally and regionally.

The Task Force heard about the 'Be the Change' initiative, organised by Gary Peters at Lovelocaljobs.com. The programme started in April 2015 and consists of inspiration youth career events. Its aim is to understand and help address the young people's lack of engagement in order to move forward and help inspire them and provide them with employability skills. The first programme was targeted at year 10's in Brighton & Hove Schools at risk of being Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET); those facing exclusion or those that were disaffected. A new programme will target year 9's and run over twelve months and aim to build stronger and more sustainable links between businesses, school and colleges; help young people think about their future and deal with barriers.

An ex-apprentice spoke about the pro's and con's of their apprenticeship experience after completing a Business Administration apprenticeship at a Brighton Law Firm. The pro's included securing two year's work experience and a recognised qualification with a range of transferable skills. However, the con's included a low starting wage, a lack of time to complete the study work and the need for training providers to support young people making their next steps once the course is completed.

Dylan Davies, Principal at Brighton Aldridge Community Academy (BACA) and Phil Harland, Principal at Varndean Sixth Form College, gave an overview of the business engagement programmes at their schools. There offer a wide range of successful programmes which include Varndean's 'Access to Business' which incorporates experience into the curriculum (100 hours of learning) and BACA works with Prince's Trust to provide young entrepreneurs with business mentors.

### **Meeting 3 - Apprenticeship Delivery Model**

The first part of this meeting involved a group exercise where members looked at how businesses can get more involved in schools and help raise young people's aspirations. The members identified the highest scoring priorities, outlined below, which helped focus the development of the Employer Pledge. Members also pledged their organisational commitment to helping raise aspirations (see Appendix 3).

- Priority 1: How can businesses raise aspirations of young people: engage with parents and businesses to help them steer their children and understand what we can offer;

- Priority 2: How can we get more businesses engaging with schools: encourage more businesses to go into schools to sell their companies and find apprentices;
- Priority 3: What help will businesses need to engage with schools effectively: engagement between schools and business that is longer;
- Priority 4: What stops you from engaging with schools: apprenticeship landscape is unclear; and
- Priority 5: What would make it easier to employ young people: engage young people earlier.

This meeting also focused on identifying what business want from an apprenticeship service model and discussed different models of apprenticeship training companies and agencies.

Jeremy Hempstead, CEO and Chair London Apprenticeship Company, outlined a model of apprenticeship services. Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs) are a one-stop employability centre for apprenticeships and do everything except the recruitment interview. It is a service to businesses providing specialist skills to help them get apprentices and the fees are equivalent to recruitment agency commissions (c. 20%). Many ATAs are owned by FE colleges however the majority of ATAs are not financially sustainable.

Nick Juba, CEO Brighton & Hove City College and Sue Dare, Principal and CEO Northbrook College spoke about apprenticeship delivery from their perspective. The colleges identified barriers and solutions to apprenticeship delivery, as follows:

- Difficult to find and engage employers to take on apprentices;
- Apprenticeships not marketed to young people in the right way;
- Lack of large local employers taking on apprentices;
- Model must be cost neutral, clear, joined-up, collaborative and one-stop shop for businesses and schools; clear sign-posting for businesses and young people;
- Need to articulate the return on investment and the economic benefits of apprenticeships to SMEs; and
- Colleges would welcome more work with local businesses to design courses to ensure training products are aligned to local skills need.

#### **Meeting 4 - Developing an Employer Pledge**

Members discussed the highest scoring priorities from the previous meeting and developed recommendations for action, as outlined above in Section 3.

It was agreed that the aim is to reach the target of a minimum of 1,000 new apprenticeships in 1,000 days however this requires the 'buy in' of the wider business community. This meeting therefore also looked at how to encourage the wider business community to engage through the development of an Employer Pledge including the need for the pledge to offer a wide spectrum of offers from the business community.

Richard Freeman, Consultant at Always Possible, spoke about the barriers business face recruiting for coding/programming jobs because there are a high number of unfilled vacancies. Businesses say the apprenticeship landscape is unclear and some developed their own training programme to deliver the specific skills needed for these jobs. He highlighted the need for providers to engage and collaborate with SME's and micro businesses in the development of training products to meet their needs and reduce skills gaps.



## **Meeting 5 - Employer Pledge**

The meeting focused on the sign-off and delivery of the final pledge including agreement to the commitments pledged by the members (Appendix 3).

The Task Force provided feedback on the draft report and draft Pledge.

Zac Toumazi and Cllr Bewick thanked the members for their contributions and help to develop eight tangible recommendations.

The Task Force agreed that the Pledge is for all ages but the Task Force has a particular focus on young people. It was agreed to get professional help with branding the initiative for 1,000 new apprenticeships in 1,000 days for the launch event and work thereafter.

The Task Force recognised that the work was not solely about apprenticeships but it also seeks to address pathway and transitions to and through school, routes to work and tackling low aspirations.

Cllr Bewick confirmed that the new Youth & Employability organisation will track progress on delivering apprenticeships.

The group will report to the Leader of the Council and the city's three Members of Parliament in March 2016. The Task Force is a key element in the development of the new City Employment & Skills Plan (2016-2020).

## Appendix 2

### Terms of Reference for the Employer Skills Task Force

#### September 2015

It is proposed that a key feature of the development of the new City Employment & Skills Plan is to establish an Employer Skills Task Force.

The Task Force will provide the vital business leadership to develop and deliver the new Plan.

The Task Force will lead the development of an Employers Pledge for employment and skills, putting local employers in the driving seat to achieve greater impact across employment and skills budgets in the city.

Terms of Reference for the Employer Skills Task Force include:

- To review current efforts to provide employment and skills opportunities to local residents, with a particular focus upon young people, the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and those facing disadvantage in the labour market;
- To review best practice nationally and internationally in terms of employment and skills strategies and boost the number of youth apprenticeships;
- To encourage solid pledges from the city's employers to deliver more apprenticeship places on a sustainable basis;
- To explore the feasibility of establishing new and existing models of delivery such as an Apprenticeship Training Company;
- To establish better links with the various regeneration and infrastructure projects commencing across the city and, where appropriate, the Greater Brighton City Region to maximise employment and training opportunities for local people;
- To recommend new models of delivery across the city that secure greater engagement of small and micro-employers in apprenticeships;
- To consider ways to improve employer engagement with local schools to improve provision of information, advice and guidance(IAG);
- To inform and feed into the forthcoming review of Further Education and the work that is being undertaken in the devolution of skills in the Greater Brighton City Region; and
- To report to the Leaders of the Council and the city's three Members of Parliament within 6 months of the first meeting.

### **Operating principles:**

1. Chair: Meetings will be chaired by Zac Toumazi, CEO of Sussex Cricket.
2. Membership: The Task force is employer led, with other intermediaries having observer status.
3. At least 10-12 Employers (covering large employers and SMEs), plus Chair.
4. The Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership will have one seat (taken from a private sector member of the LEP Board).
5. Members can nominate one deputy to attend in their absence.
6. The Employer Skills Task Force will aim to meet five or six times over a 6 month period.
7. Meetings will be held in various venues across the membership.
8. The task force will be supported by a multi-disciplinary team of officers:
  - BHCC Head of City Regeneration
  - BHCC Head of HR
  - BHCC Economic Development Programme Manager
  - BHCC Economic Development Project Officer (Skills)
  - C2C LEP Skills Development Manager
9. The Task Force will report after 6 months to the Leader of the Council and the city's three Members of Parliament.

## Appendix 3

### Employer Skills Task Force Pledges

November 2015

#### Summary of Commitments from Task Force members:

##### What is your commitment to help raise aspirations and when will you do it?

- 100% commitment, we are already doing it, but want to do it more, communicate about it more and share good practice, and learn from others what works well
- To support a region wide bid for funding to build on careers and enterprise projects that have a proven track record
- Provide apprenticeship opportunities for people to manage 'Beach'
- Work with BHCC & LEP to upgrade 'Beach'
- Rollout 'Be The Change'
- We are doing it, spreading what we do well in Shoreham to our other sites in the UK is a key priority for us
- AWBP sponsors the Shoreham Big Bang
- Help place more 16-20 year olds into great jobs
- Lead Hub of employer knowledge for schools, parents, and kids to draw on re careers in financial services. Tell the story and make it attractive
- From now, provide career pathway with employer input for shortage areas in the City Region based on what has been successful to date
- Provide a single point of contact for employers to engage with apprenticeships
- More Focused full day events led by students with business input
- Engage with Youth Employment UK to build a campaign for the region to support businesses to break down barriers to employing young people
- Hotel career opportunities, graduate development, programme presentation to Brighton & Hove schools
- School Vision is driven by aspiration 'believe you can', 'now'
- Better translate the relationship between schools and businesses. Then speak to pupils through people they follow/look up to/aspire to

- Further investigate higher level apprenticeships
- Include skills development, confidence building into next two projects for young people
- Publish a commitment to apprenticeships
- Appoint a champion
- Role modelling
- Time and expertise in providing simple navigation & advice. Find and prepare the right young people
- BHCC is committed to increasing the number of apprenticeships & traineeships. We have an apprenticeship co-coordinator
- Support communication to investors in creative economy
- To run Enterprise Advisor Pilot to engage 20 businesses with 20 schools to support strategic development of career & entrepreneurial strategies

