

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 27 February 2024

The City of Edinburgh Council – Apprenticeship Programme

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee note:
 - 1.1.1 The continuous improvements to the delivery of the Council's Modern Apprenticeship Programme since the Annual Performance Report 2022/23;
 - 1.1.2 The expectation of the 2024/25 Apprenticeship Contract Award from Skills Development Scotland, with an anticipated 54 new apprentices within the Council in 2024/25; and
 - 1.1.3 The on-going plans to raise the profile of apprenticeships across the Council in 2024/25 to maximise apprenticeship opportunities.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Lucy Pearson, Contracts and Programme Manager

E-mail: lucy.pearson@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 07834 619 640

The City of Edinburgh Council – Apprenticeship Programme

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report outlines the work undertaken to deliver an effective apprenticeship programme within the Council and the actions taken to mitigate underperformance as outlined in the Annual Performance Report 2022/23.

3. Background

- 3.1 The City of Edinburgh Council delivers Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) in two different ways:
- 3.1.1 Under a contract with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), which is awarded annually and dictates the volume and types of MAs that can be delivered. Responsibility for managing this contract lies with the Council's Business Growth and Inclusion team who, as part of the delivery offer, provide wrap-around support to managers and apprentices from initial recruitment through to completion of the qualification; and
 - 3.1.2 Departments can also manage their own MAs, working with external companies to deliver the academic component.
- 3.2 Only the MAs under the SDS contract are centrally monitored and reported in the Annual Performance Report.
- 3.3 In the [Annual Performance Report 2022/23](#), reported to Policy and Sustainability on 22 August 2023 and referred to the Council on 28 September 2023, the MA Programme had a red status performance rating due to the number of new apprentices annually between 2020/21 and 2022/23.
- 3.4 The Council, on 28 September 2023, [requested](#) that a review be undertaken of the Council apprenticeship scheme with actions being taken to meet or exceed the target being reported to the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee within two cycles.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Officers conducted a review in early 2023 to understand the reasons for the underperformance of the MA contract. This review concluded the following were impacting delivery were:
- 4.1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic rendered it difficult to deliver the practical elements of many apprenticeships due to department priorities changing during the pandemic and working-from-home models still being established;
 - 4.1.2 Due to budget pressures, some service areas were unable to ring-fence the budget to pay for an apprentice, making forward planning difficult;
 - 4.1.3 The inability to amend the contract with SDS meant there has been no flexibility to deliver new apprenticeship frameworks to meet the change in business needs since the pandemic; and
 - 4.1.4 A vast reduction in applications for apprenticeship vacancies. As has been observed in the Council's wider employability programmes, young people did not engage or apply in the same volumes as in previous years due to the impact of the pandemic on their confidence, health and change in ambition.
- 4.2 A hiring manager survey was also issued to gather information about the current perception of the Apprenticeship Programme and highlight areas that the Apprenticeship Team should focus on in the year ahead to ensure the correct support is given to apprentices, hiring managers and service areas.

Operational Improvement Plan

- 4.3 In response to the review and the survey, an Operational Improvement Plan was implemented in 2023/24 to improve performance:

Internal engagement:

- 4.3.1 A revised internal marketing strategy, including promotion of National Apprenticeship Week and ongoing publication of apprenticeship case studies on Newsbeat for promotion across the wider council workforce; and
- 4.3.2 Online drop-in events for Council services to learn about the benefit of hiring an apprentice in their team and an overview of the support that is provided to both the hiring service and the apprentice.

Engagement of Young People:

- 4.3.3 Increased regular engagement (online and in person) with all schools, the Department of Work and Pensions and the Joined up for Jobs Network to promote the Council's MA Programme.

Communication and Support:

- 4.3.4 A dedicated Council Apprenticeship email address, monitored daily, and with a commitment to respond to any queries within one business day.

4.3.5 The publication of a new Managers Guidance Document (available on the Orb) to provide recruiting managers with an easy-to-follow guide on how to recruit an apprentice and what is expected of managers throughout the training.

Increased collaboration with Human Resources:

4.3.6 Improved workforce planning processes to ensure MAs are considered as an opportunity to diversify recruitment and a solution to recruitment issues in areas with staffing issues.

Current Performance Update

4.4 Introducing these improvement measures over the course of 2023/24 has markedly improved the performance of the MA Programme this year:

4.4.1 31 out of the contracted 54¹ new apprentices had been recruited by 28 November 2023, with the remaining anticipated to be recruited in Q4 of 2023/24, subject to service need; and

4.4.2 There have been over 593 MA applications overall, with 300 of these for trades MAs, have been received to date this year, up from 79 applications in total in 2021/22.

4.5 In addition, thanks to an increased focus on the wraparound support model, up to 95% of those who completed an apprenticeship since 2020 have moved into employment, with up to 60% staying in the Council workforce.

MA Programme 2024/25

4.6 Officers have recently submitted an application to SDS to deliver 54 new apprentice starts annually from 2024/25 onwards for the next three years.

4.7 If successful, the contract will allow for new MA frameworks to be delivered (such as Youth Work and Management and Freight Logistics) which will meet new priorities across the Council (as scoped out during the review). Alongside this, the application still includes frameworks that have continuously been in demand (such as Business Administration and Trades).

5. Next Steps

5.1 In anticipation of being awarded a new contract in 2024/25, there are on-going discussions with services across the Council to ensure vacancies can be advertised as early as possible in the new financial year.

5.2 The MA team will continue to support hiring departments and promote MAs within new areas of the Council, to build on good practice in the years ahead.

¹ Since the Annual Performance Report 2022/23 was published, there has been a national reduction of 10% across all awarded contracts due to Scottish Government funding reductions. Therefore, the contract for 2023-24 has 54 starts instead of 60.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Apprenticeship salary costs are to be covered by the hiring department and therefore the financial impact will vary subject to individual department budget priorities.
- 6.2 The majority of MAs are Grade 2 employees for the duration of their apprenticeship and cost the hiring department approximately £ £23,087- £23,388 annually (subject to annual pay review and on costs).
- 6.3 Trade apprentices are classed as Craft Employees and paid differently – the rate for these for 2023/24 is still under review but currently, they are approximately £20,382 - £24,526 annually.
- 6.4 The Council receives approximately £100,000 p.a. to cover the costs of paying training providers to deliver the qualifications for the SDS contracted apprenticeships. Residual funding supplements the Business Growth and Inclusion core costs for managing the contract with SDS, including the 2.5 Full Time Employees (FTE), providing wraparound support to MAs and recruiting managers.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 The impact on protected characteristic client groups will be positive as the actions outlined in this report will enable them to apply for apprenticeships and enhance their employability skills to help them secure employment in the future.
- 7.2 The Council is a real living wage employer, and this includes apprentices. Therefore, partaking in the MA programme has a positive financial impact for participants.
- 7.3 Officers will continue building on equality, diversity and Fair Work approaches across the MA programme on the same trajectory as in recent years of delivery. For example:
 - 7.3.1 In 2023/24, 22.2% of the current cohort identified as having a disability, higher than the national average of 16.2%;
 - 7.3.2 In 2023/24, 55.2% of the individuals on the Council's MA programme identify as female, higher than the 33.1% national average; and
 - 7.3.3 7.1% of the 2023/24 cohort identify as ethnically diverse, higher than the 3.9% national average.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 The impacts of this report have been considered in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties requiring public bodies to contribute to climate change mitigation and to climate change adaptation,

and to act sustainably. Relevant Council sustainable development policies have also been considered.

- 8.2 The proposals in this report help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh primarily by improving the areas of social justice, economic wellbeing and a just transition to a sustainable economy. By supporting local employment opportunities in local businesses and helping young people into positive destinations there is a positive impact on inclusion, employment and training, and shared prosperity.
- 8.3 There are no direct negative impacts in the effects of climate change or improving the resilience to the effects of climate change as a result of this report.
- 8.4 There are no direct nature emergency implications as a result of this report.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 There is a risk that the Council may not be awarded a contract in 2024/25, however, the likelihood of this is small. Should this happen though, work would continue to support all MAs currently employed within the Council to ensure they are able to complete their apprenticeship and secure employment. If awarded the contract, officers will continue to deliver the programme in line with SDS's compliance and governance policies.
- 9.2 The Scottish Government's response to The James Withers Skills Delivery Landscape: Independent Review could see significant changes to the Apprenticeship Landscape in the future, which officers are monitoring.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Apprenticeships - Skills Development Scotland](#)
- 10.2 [Apprenticeships - UK Employer Skills Survey 2022 – Scotland Report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- 10.3 [Skills delivery landscape: independent review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- 10.4 [Skills delivery landscape: call for evidence - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 The City of Edinburgh Council – Apprenticeship Recruitment across the Council 2023/24

Appendix 1 – The City of Edinburgh Council – Apprenticeship Recruitment 2023-24 (to date):

Department and Directorate	Volume of Apprentices
Housing Operations Place	8
Road Operations Place	2
Operational services Place	2
Business Support Corporate Services	2
HR Corporate Services	1
Registration Services Corporate Services	2
Early Years Children, Education and Justice Services	11
Neighbourhood Environmental Services Place	1
Parking Place	2
Total	31