local authorities employing apprentices in care
An evolving workforce

As the economic climate evolves, the world of employment is changing. Local authorities and public sector organisations therefore need to take a fresh look at their workforce development strategies to secure highly skilled workforces for the future.

A number of factors are driving local authorities to reassess their employment strategies. These include the future care needs of an ageing population, the diverse needs of people using services and the way services are commissioned and delivered. Also, with a typically older workforce than the private sector, local authorities need to create employment programmes that will attract, train and retain younger employees to provide essential public services for tomorrow’s community needs.

Apprenticeships are fast becoming the means for employing a younger, skilled workforce within local authorities, particularly to cater for the growing needs of the adult social care sector.

An Apprenticeship is a work-based learning programme designed around the needs of employers, which leads to nationally recognised qualifications. You can use Apprenticeships to train both new and existing staff of any age and funding is available.

Despite public spending cuts and the financial constraints on budgets, local authorities need to prepare for demographic change and the future impact on essential services including housing and care.
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What is an Apprenticeship in social care?

The Apprenticeship in adult social care is a framework of qualifications aimed at those who want to work in a social care environment, formalise their knowledge and gain new skills. The programme can vary in length and is tailored, dependent on the workforce requirements and the individual career aspirations of employees. The aim is to develop qualified, skilled workers for the future of the adult social care sector.

The benefits are vast and apprentices don’t necessarily require previous experience. They earn a salary whilst receiving training, gain qualifications and learn job-specific skills. Apprentices have the chance to take part in a structured development pathway and develop a rewarding, long-term career in a sector that offers endless opportunities.

The Apprenticeship offers a post-16 flexible programme that is not restricted by any upper age or experience. Apprentices can work towards Intermediate, Advanced and Higher level Apprenticeships consisting of competence and knowledge-based qualifications. They are designed for people across all ages who want to work in adult social care including existing staff, school and college leavers and those aspiring to senior practitioner and management levels.

What does an Apprenticeship involve?

Apprenticeships are designed by the relevant sector skills council or sector skills body. Skills for Care designs the framework for those working in adult social care, and the Skills Funding Agency supports the training with funding.

The Intermediate and Advanced Apprenticeship framework consists of:

- a competence qualification which ensures the apprentice is practically skilled
- a knowledge qualification which gives apprentices knowledge and expertise about the sector and their work
- Transferable Skills which ensure good standards of English and Maths
- Personal Learning and Thinking Skills, identified as essential to successful life learning and work
- an award in Employment Rights and Responsibilities.

Apprenticeships also have the scope for any specialist employer requirements to be included.

Skills for Care has created the Higher Apprenticeship in Care Leadership and Management, a level 5 Apprenticeship that will support your organisation to recruit, develop and retain high quality leaders and managers. The Higher Apprenticeship has been designed following extensive consultation with employers. It contains occupational qualifications that are recognised across the sector.

The Higher Apprenticeship has two pathways; one for General Managers and one for Specialist Managers. The General Pathway comprises of the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People’s Services – a combined competence and knowledge qualification. The Specialist Pathway offers a direct route into university by using a Level 5 university Diploma. This comprises of the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People’s Services and further university modules for those in Specialist Manager roles.
Why Apprenticeships in care?

The care sector, like any other, strives to employ, train and retain the very best people to deliver its services. This can be achieved through good employment practices, career development pathways, employee prospects and rewards.

Today’s councils need to attract the right candidates that will take up opportunities to progress their careers in care through lifelong learning and skills-based qualifications. The Apprenticeship programme provides the ideal structured learning pathway.

Although Apprenticeships are undertaken by people of all ages, they provide local authorities with a platform from which to attract younger employees, addressing a real workforce development issue in the public sector.

Skills for Care and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have agreed a more flexible approach that allows 16 to 18-year olds to provide personal care as long as they are appropriately trained and supervised.
the benefits of the Apprenticeship scheme are far-reaching, benefiting the local authority, the apprentice and private care providers that are subcontracted through service level agreements. Ultimately, the council’s service users benefit from a holistic, skills-based approach towards their care needs.”
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The benefits

For employers

Through an Apprenticeship programme, local authority employers can address current and future skills gaps, particularly during today’s economic uncertainty. They can harness fresh talent, and develop managers of the future. The end result is a productive, motivated and highly skilled workforce. This route can also offer a practical and cost-effective solution to the recruitment and retention of staff and offer a good return on investment. The Apprenticeships are designed by employers for employers and therefore reflect the changing needs of the care sector.

Skills for Care has created a guide for employers implementing social care Apprenticeships. Visit: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/apprenticeshipsguide

For apprentices

The Apprenticeship offers the opportunity of a structured pathway and the chance to develop a rewarding, long-term career in the growing care sector. Apprentices earn while they learn through hands-on practical experience in a range of adult social care environments.

The Apprenticeship scheme is available to both existing and new employees. Existing employees can start on an Apprenticeship as part of their continuing professional development, whereas new employees can be recruited straight onto an Apprenticeship programme from school, college or even another profession. Staff that are indirectly involved in the delivery of social care can also participate on an Apprenticeship programme, for example in catering, housekeeping or administration.
The government is one of the driving forces behind the scheme and is therefore making significant funding available to public sector organisations.

**Funding Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeship funding is available from a number of sources, including the National Apprenticeship Service and Skills Funding Agency. Although the employer pays the apprentice’s salary, funding is widely available for training.

Depending on the age of the apprentice, employers may be asked to make a financial contribution by the learning provider. Apprentices aged 16-18 are fully funded by the government. Funding is not available for apprentices’ aged 24 and over who wish to do an Advanced or Higher Level Apprenticeship. The apprentice can, however, take out an Advanced Learning Loan to cover the cost of learning, in the same way as a university student. The individual taking out the loan will pay back the loan upon completion, provided they are earning a minimum of £21,000 a year.

The funding is paid directly to the organisation that provides and supports the Apprenticeship scheme. This can be an employer’s in-house training or workforce development centre, or an external learning provider like a local college.

For the most current information, and to find out how much funding you can get, please speak to your learning provider.

Skills for Care’s Workforce Development Fund can be used to help fund the delivery of Apprenticeships in adult social care.

For more information visit:
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdf
any local authority thinking of starting an Apprenticeship programme should do it – the benefits are really worth it”

In five years 90% of apprentices have not only complete, but have gone on to permanent employment in the council. The retention of these apprentices currently stands at a staggering 90%.

The challenge
In 2005, less than 0.2% of the council’s workforce was under 19. Looking to solve this ongoing problem, the learning and development team, led by Paul Rainbow, designed an Apprenticeship programme, in conjunction with the HR department. North Hertfordshire College was selected as the learning provider.
One of the biggest challenges was convincing senior managers within adult care services that an Apprenticeship programme would be beneficial for the service and its users. This, and other concerns over child protection issues, and the ability of young people to provide personal care were overcome through training and specialist support for managers and mentors.

Another concern was the apprentices’ ability to sustain the study element of the programme, but Paul’s team’s supervision on college days proved to be especially valuable in allaying any fears.

The solution

The decision was taken that apprentices would earn a living wage from the outset. Government funding to attract young people into the care sector was available at the time, and this, along with contributions from the council’s learning and development budget, was allocated for salaries.

Initially, a local advertising agency helped to create a campaign aimed at attracting a diverse group of 16-19 year olds, via youth clubs and other targeted channels. The college also advertised to students already studying care-related subjects. A recruitment open day was a huge success as was a tour of one of the council’s adult care units. The college also advertised to students already studying care-related subjects. A recruitment open day was a huge success as was a tour of one of the council’s adult care units. The college also advertised to students already studying care-related subjects. A recruitment open day was a huge success as was a tour of one of the council’s adult care units. The college also advertised to students already studying care-related subjects.

The initial cohort of ten apprentices selected was a diverse group: one came from the traveller community, another had special learning needs, two were young people leaving care and two had already been studying at the college.

Paul and his team knew that the success of the programme would hinge on the training and support available to the apprentices. This began with a two-week induction, covering the council’s general policies and practices, as well as Skills for Care’s induction resources.

Each apprentice had a trained mentor in their own workplace as well as a supervisor. The apprentices worked four days a week in their allocated service and attended college on one day to study for a vocational qualification. Regardless of their prior qualifications, all apprentices also studied Transferable Skills.

Success

Within five years, 90% of apprentices had not only completed the Apprenticeship programme, but gained permanent employment within the council.

Apprentices have gone on to study a variety of care subjects including nursing, forensic psychology, social work, occupational therapy and community care work. Some have progressed to become senior support workers, supervisory staff and day service organisers, as well as deputy managers.

A cohort of apprentices now starts in September every year, with candidates coming from the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) vacancy matching service as well as through adult care services within the council.

The council was recognised for its Apprenticeship programme, with Paul’s team winning the ‘Most Effective Employer of Apprentices’ category in the Skills for Care Accolades in 2010.
This document is part of Skills for Care’s comprehensive range of resources that includes case studies and guides aimed at potential apprentices and employers considering adult social care Apprenticeships. Leaflets and posters are also available for teachers, career advisers, Year 9 pupils and school leavers.

For more information about social care Apprenticeships and to access further resources, please visit:

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/apprenticeships

You can also see us online or get in touch via:

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Facebook www.facebook.com/icareapprenticeships
Twitter @skillsforcare

Skills for Care
West Gate
6 Grace Street
Leeds
LS1 2RP

Telephone 0113 245 1716
Email apprenticeships@skillsforcare.org.uk
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