



St. Helens Council

Environment, Regeneration, Housing, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Apprenticeships

July 2016

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Chairman's Foreword and Acknowledgements



Councillor Martin Bond
Chairman of the Scrutiny Task Group

I believe that for a strong and growing local economy the borough needs a high level of skills to meet employer demand. Increasing the number and range of apprenticeships on offer, and ensuring their quality, is key to that growth.

There are many benefits that Apprenticeships bring to individuals and employers. Individuals can earn while they learn, and learn in a way that is best suited to them through hands-on, on-the-job experience, in addition to gaining vital and transferable skills. For employers, an Apprenticeship is one of the most cost-effective way to develop their businesses, improve productivity and enhance staff retention whilst reducing training and recruitment costs.

St Helens offers a wide range of Apprenticeship opportunities which has increased over the last few years. Since 2010, an increase in government funding has seen more than two million apprenticeships taken up. However, this surge in numbers has been mainly in sectors such as customer service, retail, administration and care.

This review has been very timely as the legislation and government initiatives to drive up the number of apprenticeships in the UK have been developing as we have worked through the review process. The Apprenticeship Levy and Public Sector Target for Apprenticeships are going to have a big financial impact on the St Helens Overall, especially the council. We need to ensure that we are prepared to make the most of the changes and reap the benefits that high quality apprenticeships can bring to the organisation.

Ofsted, in its survey of apprenticeships¹, has suggested that schools need to support young people more who want to do an apprenticeship. We heard first hand from young people in our borough that schools' poor promotion of apprenticeships is depriving pupils and their parents of information about the full range of options available through the apprenticeship route.

We believe that secondary schools are still not doing enough to promote apprenticeships to young people, and careers advice and guidance is not sufficiently detailed. It has been found that too few pupils experienced high-quality work experience and employer engagement as part of their compulsory education.

Apprenticeships have a powerful potential, alongside other measures in supporting young people into work. This is a crucial post 16 pathway that allows young people to gain work experience, develop skills and thus lowering unemployment in our borough.

I would like to thank the members who sat on the task group, Council Officers and the various organisations and young people themselves who gave up their time to speak to us. In particular I would like to thank Joh Ellis-Sheldon, the 16-19 Learning and Skills Manager, whose support throughout the process has been invaluable.

¹ Apprentices developing skills for future prosperity. October 2015 - Ofsted

1.0 Introduction and Terms of Reference

- 1.1 During the process of agreeing the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2015/2016 the Council's Environment, Regeneration, Housing, Culture & Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed to look at Apprenticeships.
- 1.2 It should be noted that St Helens Council has a dual role in relation to apprentices, in that it is both an employer of apprentices and is also a community leader for the wider strategic agenda.
- 1.3 The aim of the review was to examine the work already delivered by the Council and its partners to support apprenticeship growth in St Helens.

The terms of the review were as follows:

- To evaluate the national policy in relation to apprenticeship schemes and differentiate between craft-technical apprenticeships and otherwise.
- To examine St Helens Council funded apprenticeship schemes and monitor and review its effectiveness.
- To examine the roles and responsibilities of respective agencies, in particular St Helens Chamber and St Helens College to drive forward the Apprenticeships agenda in St Helens.
- To look at engagement with the private sector and establish how apprenticeship opportunities can be increased.
- To examine the future job opportunities for apprentices and establish how apprenticeships will help improve skills and enterprise in St Helens.
- To produce workable recommendations for the council and partners to deliver sustainable improvements to the outcome of apprenticeships in St Helens.

2.0 Method of the Investigation

- 2.1 Information was obtained from Brendan Farrell (Head of Human Resources), Julie O'Neil (Work-based Learning Coordinator), Joh Ellis-Sheldon (Post 16 Learning & Skills Manager), and Steve Berlyne (Economic Development Manager).
- 2.2 We met with Neil McGuire - National Apprenticeship Service (NAS).
- 2.3 We met with Kath Boullen (Chief Executive) and Jo Abraham (Apprenticeship Manager) from St Helens Chamber.
- 2.4 We met with Jette Burford (Principal), Beth Nolan (Director of Business Development), Julia Callaghan (Director of Customer Relations and Marketing) and Caroline Lister (Apprenticeship Manager Business & Professional Studies) – from St Helens College.

- 2.5 We met with apprentices from St Helens Chamber, St Helens College and St Helens Council to obtain information about their journey to becoming an apprentice.
- 2.6 We undertook desktop research and examined national policy

3.0 Background

3.1 The government has made a commitment of 3 million new apprenticeship starts in England between 2015 and 2020. The government's goal set out in the report English Apprenticeships: Our 2020² is "for young people to see apprenticeships as a high quality and prestigious path to successful careers, and for these opportunities to be available across all sectors of the economy, in all parts of the country and at all levels. This will support our aim for young people to get the best start in life, through the opportunity that high quality education and training provides". The full report can be found as Appendix 1.

3.2 What is an apprentice?

3.3 Apprenticeships are full-time, paid jobs which incorporate on and off the job training. There are over 200 different types of apprenticeships currently available in England, through existing apprenticeship frameworks available in 13 broad sector subjects. A successful apprentice will receive a nationally recognised qualification on completion of their contract.

3.4 Apprenticeship qualification levels.

3.5 Apprenticeships can be studied at different qualification levels:

- **Intermediate Apprenticeships** lead to Level 2 qualifications, equivalent to 5 GCSE passes.
- **Advanced Apprenticeships** lead to Level 3 qualifications, equivalent to 2 A-Level passes.
- **Higher and Degree Apprenticeships** lead to Level 4 qualifications and above.

3.6 Funding for apprentices

3.7 The Department for Education funds training for apprentices aged under 19. The Department for Business and innovation and Skills provides funding for apprentices aged 19 and over. Employers are free to fund apprentices themselves without any support from the government.

3.8 Funding and support for employers

3.9 Additional funding from government is available to incentivise businesses to hire an apprentice. The Apprenticeship Grant for Employers of 16-24 year olds (AGE 16-24) paid £1500 to small businesses hiring a young apprentice if the firm has not hired an apprentice before. City Deals include provisions to support employers hiring apprentices. From April 2016 no employer will pay secondary Class1 national insurance contributions for apprentices under 25 earning up to the Upper Earning Limit. The government have a job site for apprenticeship vacancies and promote apprentices. Providers in the LCR are

also benefiting from local grants to support the increase in participation of apprentices.

² English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision – December 2015. *See Appendix 1*

3.10 The Apprenticeship Reforms

3.11 The government launched the Apprenticeship Reforms in 2013 with the focus on employers designing apprenticeships to make them more responsive to their needs and the future economy, and controlling funding.

3.12 In line with recommendations from The Richard Review³, employer led groups known as “trailblazers” are developing new apprenticeship standards. These standards will eventually replace the frameworks.

3.13 Apprenticeship Levy

3.14 The modalities of the Apprenticeship Levy were announced in the Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015. The levy will be rolled out in April 2017 and paid by 2% of UK employers. It will raise over £3 billion a year by 2019-20 - £2.5 billion of which will be spent on apprenticeships in England only. This is the highest investment in real terms ever made for apprenticeships. In the Liverpool City Region (LCR) it is estimated there are 400+ employers who will pay the Levy into an automatic digital account.

3.15 The levy will be set at a rate of 0.5% of an employer’s gross pay bill. Each employer will receive a £15,000 allowance, meaning that only those paying pay bills worth more than £3 million will pay the levy. They will only pay the portion of their pay bill that is above this £3 million threshold. The government estimates that 2% of UK employers will be eligible. Public bodies will also pay the levy if their pay bill meets the above criteria.

3.16 The Statement on Apprenticeship Quality, published in May 2012, summarises the aspects of apprenticeships subject to minimum standards:

- **A minimum length of 12 months:** The minimum apprenticeship length is 12 months. Some apprentices aged over 19 may complete an apprenticeship in six months, if they demonstrate prior attainment of certain relevant qualifications.
- **280 hours guided learning:** Guided learning is the time spent developing technical skills, knowledge of theoretical concepts and practical skills on the job whilst being guided. Apprentices must spend at least 280 hours in ‘guided learning’ in their first year. 100 hours or 30% (whichever is greater) of all guided learning must be delivered off-the-job. Clear and verifiable evidence must be provided of all learning undertaken.
- **Employed for 30 hours a week:** Apprentices must be employed for a minimum of 30 hours per week, including time training away from the workplace. If an apprentice’s personal circumstances or if the nature of employment in a given sector make it impossible to work these hours, then an absolute minimum of 16 hours a week must be worked. In these exceptional cases, the total duration of the apprenticeship is extended accordingly.

- **Training to level 2 in Maths and English:** Apprenticeships must offer training to Level 2 in English and Maths or Functional Skills, if the apprentice does not already have these or equivalent qualifications.

Richard Review of Apprentices - DfE, November 2012

- **Apprenticeship Agreements:** Apprentices must sign an Apprenticeship Agreement with their employer before the apprenticeship begins. This is a contract stipulating the framework being followed and the skill, trade or occupation the apprentice is working in. It is not a legally binding contract, but without it an apprenticeship completion certificate cannot be issued.
- **Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE):** SASE sets out minimum academic requirements that all frameworks must meet. This is a technical document written principally to guide organisations designing frameworks. It stipulates minimum qualification levels required of successful apprentices under the vocational, technical and key skills elements of the apprenticeship. It also specifies standards of attainment expected of successful apprentices, including “team working” and “creative thinking”.

3.17 Apprentices aged 16-18 are entitled to the apprentice minimum wage of £2.73 an hour. The apprentice minimum wage increased to £3.30 from 1 October 2015 after the government rejected the Low Pay Commission’s recommendation of an increase to £2.80. Apprentices are paid for both their normal working hours and the time they spend training as part of their apprenticeship.

3.18 Apprentices aged 19 and over are also entitled to the apprentice minimum wage in the first 12 months of their apprenticeship. After the first 12 months of their apprenticeship, people aged 19 and over are entitled to the National Minimum Wage. National Minimum Wage rates are age dependent and rise from £5.13 an hour for 18 to 20 year olds to £6.50 an hour for people aged 21 and over.

3.19 As apprentices are employees they are entitled to the same employment rights as other employees, such as holiday entitlement and maternity leave.

3.20 Traineeships provide education, training and work experience for young people to help them get an apprenticeship or other job. Traineeships were introduced in August 2013 for people aged 16 to 24, and are primarily target at young people who:

- Have little work experience and are not employed
- Qualified below level 3
Could be ready for employment or an apprenticeship within six months

4.0 Findings

4.1 The National Apprenticeship Service

4.2 The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) was created in April 2009 and in 2013 became a division of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). NAS had at the

time of writing this report responsibility for; apprenticeships in England including the promotion of apprenticeships with employers (of all sizes and from all industry sectors) and learners; supporting employers through the process of recruiting and training an apprentice; and maintaining the national online apprenticeship vacancies system which allows employers to post vacancies, and aspiring apprentices to search and apply for them using the NAS website.

- 4.3 The Task Group met with Neil McGuire (NM), the North West Advisor for the NAS, who provided an overview of NAS and a summary of the implications of the Apprenticeship Reforms. NM emphasised the importance of the council as a large employer being fully prepared for the Levy and the Apprenticeship targets.
- 4.4 The Task Group were informed how apprenticeships are available to businesses of all sizes and sectors in England, and how they can help a workplace to grow their own resources resulting in a qualified workforce.

The Task Group were provided with an overview of the performance of apprentices as illustrated below;

- 450,000 people started apprenticeships in 2014/2015 of which 120,000 were 16 – 18 year olds
- 90% of apprenticeships stay in employment after finishing their apprenticeship and 67% stay with the same employer
- Nationally / LCR 250,000 workplaces employed an apprentice in 2014/2015.
- St Helens had approximately 1800 apprentices in 2014 - St Helens College and St Helens Chamber being the largest employers.
- St Helens Council employed 20 apprentices across a wide range of services in 2014

- 4.5 The Task Group found out about the many benefits for a young person to be an apprenticeship which includes; obtaining valuable work experience whilst gaining qualifications without having the amount of debt that university course carry, developing important skills that employers want, earning a salary, training in the skills employers want and paid holiday.

4.6 Apprenticeship Offer St Helens

- 4.7 The 16-19 Learning and Skills Manager provided an overview of Post 16 opportunities and the Apprenticeship offer in St Helens. Learning and training opportunities in Post 16 are very diverse and range from entry to level 3 qualifications and beyond. Apprenticeships are one of several pathways within this arena.
- 4.8 Sitting alongside the apprenticeship reforms, the education system as a whole is being challenged like never before to equip all young people with the qualifications, skills and experiences that will enable them to succeed in work and life. Providers are managing the implications of; significant curriculum reforms, local area reviews of Post 16 provision, reduction in budgets and changes to the national funding formula which impacts on provision offered. Providers in St Helens recognise the importance of supporting all young

people to achieve better educational outcomes and be better prepared for skilled employment or further learning at age 18 and beyond.

- 4.9 There is a full range of work-based learning provision that includes apprenticeships, traineeships and enterprise activity. The providers based in St Helens includes: St Helens Chamber, St Helens College, Team Enterprise, Lite and Waterside Training. There are many training providers based outside of the borough but also deliver provision in St Helens such as Myerscough College, Riverside College and CITB. Providers are “competing” locally and regionally to attract young people, resident and out of borough, onto their provision. Impartial information, advice and guidance has never been more important to ensure effective transition from school.
- 4.10 The 16-19 Learning and Skills Manager represents St Helens at the LCR Apprenticeship Hub and through this receives support for the borough such as: occasional funding to support promotional activity, new resources to share with providers and support to train St Helens Apprenticeship Ambassadors in May 2016. At a local level the 16-19 Learning and Skills Manager chairs the St Helens Apprenticeship Forum that was set up in September 2015 which helps drive the apprenticeship agenda forward and shares good practice. Recent agenda item include first-hand experience of the Trailblazers delivered by Waterside Training. Intelligence from these forums and regional events over the last year suggests there is a need to;
- Raise the aspirations & understanding of young people about apprenticeships as a career option.
 - Provide staff development and resources for schools and parents about the modern day world of work to display any historical perceptions of particular industries, e.g. engineering which has moved from being very industrial to highly digital.
 - Consider to what degree the apprenticeship offer reflects the need of the local economy and growth sectors, e.g. currently very few apprentices in Digital Sector.
- 4.11 The Post 16 team are starting to work more closely with schools and training providers to address any gaps in resources or support needed around apprenticeships. There are currently a myriad of information, advice and guidance and employability initiatives, funded nationally, which are welcomed by providers and the LA. However, better cohesion and co-ordination across the LA and the LCR is required to ensure high impact from limited resources.
- 4.12 Apprenticeship performance in St Helens**
- 4.13 Performance data for apprenticeship provision outside of your own organisation is available from government websites but it is not timely hence the most recent data in the tables provided is from 2014/2015. The data illustrates the skill levels being developed by our local population, the workforce.
- 4.14 Overall, intermediate level apprenticeships (i.e. those equivalent to NVQ Level 2) remain the most popular amongst learners and employers. Ongoing reductions within wider skills funding budgets and the changes to Apprenticeship policy (including the forthcoming introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy) means that even more emphasis will be placed on

Apprenticeship delivery for colleges and other training providers based in or out of the borough. In particular, this will potentially lead to an increased focus on Higher, Advanced and Degree level apprenticeships and greater competition. Local provision needs to better respond to the gap in businesses' higher level and technical skills needs by ensuring a strong, integrated role for employers in shaping the curriculum.

- 4.15 The number of apprenticeship starts in St Helens has decreased over the last 4 years at the intermediate level for both age groups There has been an increase in advanced levels but this remains low. In St Helens there were 520 starts of all apprenticeship levels of young people under the age of 19 in 2013/14 in comparison to 360 in Halton and 540 in Knowsley.
- 4.16 Over the last 4 years there have only been 10 starts in Higher apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship Starts By Level

		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
16-18	Int.	490	460	430	350	370	370
	Adv.	130	150	160	120	150	160
	High	0	0	0	0	0	0
19-24	Int.	260	470	450	410	420	350
	Adv.	160	190	290	270	290	240
	High	0	0	10	10	10	10

Source: www.gov.uk

- 4.17 Comparing apprenticeship start data by sector between 2011/12 and 2014/15 indicates all sector areas have seen a reduction in the number of starts with the exception of Health, Public Services and Care - which has shown an increase. The three sector areas that have shown the highest reduction in starts are Education and Training, Travel and Tourism and Business Administration and Law. Apprenticeships in Business, Administration and Law have been the most popular for the last 4 years. A summary is provided below however further detail is available in Appendix 2.

- 4.18 Apprenticeship starts by sector

Year	Sector	Starts
2011	Education and Training	100
2014		30
2011	Leisure and Tourism	160
2014		80
2014	Business, Admin and Law	1010
2014		740
2011	Health and Public Services	590
2014		670

Source: www.gov.uk

- 4.19 Apprenticeship Achievements.
St Helens has seen an improvement in framework achievement for the age group 16-18 but a slight decrease in 19+. In 2013-2014 there were 300

framework achievements for young people under 19 in St Helens in comparison to 220 in Halton and 320 in Knowsley

4.21 Apprenticeship Achievements

		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
16-18	Int.	64.3	53.6	71	Not available
	Adv.	72.4	73.9	75.7	Not available
	High				Not available
19-24	Int.	72.6	70.3	70	Not available
	Adv.	72.5	76.8	70	Not available
	High				Not available

Source: www.gov.uk

4.22 Post 16 young people with Special Education Needs

4.23 The majority of young people 16+ who have Special Education Needs (SEN) are learning at level 1 and below, apprenticeship qualifications commence at level 2. Many young people with SEN are capable of sustainable paid employment with the right preparation and support but more opportunities and appropriate employers are required to enable this. Supported Employment Programmes and Supported Internships are being further developed alongside the New Ventures Service and programmes from the ESF Ways to Work for September 2016.

4.24 Traineeships & NEET

4.25 There is a range of traineeships in place for young people that are not work ready. Whilst there are approximately 350 NEET young people in St Helens, many of these do not have the qualifications, technical or personal skills to access either a traineeship or an apprenticeship. The options for this cohort include Level 1 vocational employability programmes, however many of these young people are; very disengaged, tired of education and “just want a job”.

4.26 St Helens College

4.27 The Task Group met with Jette Burford (Principal), Beth Nolan (Director of Business Development), Julia Callaghan (Director of Customer Relations and Marketing), and Caroline Lister (Apprenticeship Manager - Business & Professional Studies), and 4 college apprentices - all of which were local to St Helens.

4.28 St Helens College (SHC) is a general further education provider judged good in 2012 by Ofsted. SHC is the largest provider in St Helens and has over 2000 full time and over 500 part time students enrolled, aged from 16 and over. The 14-16 Academy was opened in 2014 and has approximately 90 young people enrolled. The college offers an extensive portfolio of qualifications from entry to degree level meeting the needs of the local community and economy.

- 4.29 To support this statement SHC has recently announced the success of a collaborative £3million bid to launch a new Logistics Academy, which is set to open in the autumn term 2016. The Logistics Academy will prepare both young people and adults for a career in the growing supply chain industry enabling the refurbishment, reconfiguration and update of existing skills and training accommodation to develop new talent. This new venture is in collaboration with Knowsley College.
- 4.30 The college currently has over 800 apprentices studying at all levels, from level 2 to advanced level 5. SHC are continually responding to the needs of employers and as an example are introducing new apprenticeships in Logistics in September 2016. Apprenticeships at SHC are from a minimum of 12 months to a four-year framework, programmes can be tailor made to suit individual needs and SHC access government grants to assist students. SHC offers apprenticeships in a range of sectors working with both small and large multi-national companies in the public and private sectors. The Business Development Team is responsible for apprenticeship and training provision
- 4.31 During the Ofsted visit in March 2014 inspectors commented on all aspects of apprenticeship provision, their judgements, examples are illustrated below, reflect key strengths and what the provider needs to do to improve;
- In the workplace, apprentices develop their skills rapidly
 - Staff frequently review students' and apprentices' progress ensuring that they have a clear understanding of what they have achieved and the progress they are making. However, a minority of target setting lacks sufficient detail to help students take full responsibility for their own progress and learning.
 - Too many apprentices do not complete their training successfully and specified as an area for improvement there is a need to "ensure that apprentices' on-site reviews have sufficient emphasis on the progress they are making and that assessors and employers provide the support that apprentices require to complete their training"
 - A smaller number of apprentices achieve less well, with rates just below the national figures. At the time of inspection, the percentage of students and apprentices still attending their lessons or training was higher than at the same point in the previous year.
- 4.32 Many frameworks have success rates for all ages above the national benchmark. For example Warehousing and Storage at level 2 and Customer Service level 3 have been above the national benchmark for the last 2 years from 2012-2014. Frameworks performing below the national benchmark for the same period include Hairdressing level 2, Construction at level 2 and 3 and Health and Social Care at level 3, all of which have high levels of participation and the latter two frameworks are from growth sectors.
- 4.33 The Task Group spoke to four apprentices aged between 17 and 25 years old who were completing apprenticeships in IT, Accountancy and Hospitality and Catering. Following on from taking GCSEs at school, two of the young people had proceeded onto sixth form prior to their apprenticeship and one had "felt pressurised to consider" higher education by his parents. Three of the four young people stated they had not been made aware of apprenticeships whilst

at school.

4.34 Feedback from the apprentices included:

- the young people felt that at school apprenticeships were aimed at those students not expected to obtain necessary grades and A-levels and university pathways had been promoted as the only option for higher achievers;
- there is insufficient information about apprenticeships at school.
- all apprentices were really enjoying their programme and would recommend the option to other young people;
- they were glad to be gaining recognised qualifications whilst working and being paid;
- they did not have any regrets doing the apprenticeship.

4.35 St Helens College deliver a range of promotional events at various locations around the borough and offer a variety of activities to schools, however the take up is variable. During the last academic year this has included; Apprenticeship Bootcamp, open evenings and in conjunction with the St Helens Youth Service delivered taster sessions in the community for young people from vulnerable groups.

4.36 St Helens Chamber

4.37 The Task Group visited St Helens Chamber, which is one of the largest chambers in the country, to meet the staff and a selection of apprentices. St Helens Chamber is located in the centre of St Helens, it has three main sites and provides training for approximately 500 apprentices, 1,000 adult learners, 70 learners on traineeships and a small group of around 20 learners on study programmes. St Helens Chamber was graded good by Ofsted in April 2016.

4.38 The Chamber provides a range of services and qualifications for their community which includes; bespoke support for businesses, Enterprise Greenhouse comprising 31 enterprise units that support young businesses and a broad training programme entailing employability courses, apprenticeships and study programmes.

4.39 The Task Group met with the Chief Executive Cath Boullen and Jo Abraham Apprenticeship Manager who explained how the Chamber work closely with employers in developing their apprenticeship portfolio. St Helens Chamber offers apprenticeship frameworks in a range of sectors, the most popular being Customer Service and Business Administration, Manufacturing and Health and Social Care. New apprenticeships are being offered from April in Construction, Hair Dressing and Logistics. St Helens Chamber offer apprentices from level 2 up to degree level. Despite responding to employer demand, some apprenticeships are difficult to fill and are in growth sectors such as ICT and manufacturing.

4.40 Recruitment to an apprenticeship includes new positions and workforce development within an existing company. New recruits often follow an in house work ready programme lasting a minimum of 4 weeks to ensure they are work ready. Young people that have been NEET for longer periods of time may require longer in-house training and this is accommodated.

4.41 At the time of the meeting there were 467 apprentices working with St Helens Chamber, almost half were aged 24 plus as evidenced in the table below.

4.42 Table: Apprentices at St Helens Chamber

No of Apprentices	Age group
110	16-18 yrs
138	19-24 yrs
219	24+ yrs

Source: St Helens Chamber

4.43 All apprentices are allocated a training advisor who completes moderating visits on site every three weeks. Apprenticeships are paid a minimum of £3.30 per hour. Training is delivered in small classes of 10 – 12 students. Apprentices can start at any time throughout the year and not just in line with traditional term times.

4.44 In February 2016 Ofsted indicated apprenticeship provision was good. Key judgements about the organisations' strengths and what the provider needs to do to improve further are provided below.

- Outcomes for apprentices and learners are good; a very large proportion progress to employment and use the skills they have gained.
- As a result of good teaching, learning and assessment a large majority of apprentices successfully complete their framework. Training advisers are experienced and skilful; they provide apprentices and learners with good all round support and learners make good progress.
- Learners and apprentices demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning and very good behaviour in lessons and the workplace
- Written feedback to apprentices and adult learners is not precise enough to help them improve their performance.
- Not all apprentices complete their qualifications within planned timescales.

4.45 The Task Group spoke to four apprentices employed by St Helens Chamber. Their journeys to becoming apprentices were different in that; two of the apprentices did not obtain the results they had hoped for at school, one had previously been enrolled in further education and another had previously enrolled at university.

4.46 All the young people were enjoying their apprenticeship role and their feedback included:

- the pay was a barrier at first but this increased quite quickly;
- they were pleased to be achieving qualifications at the same time as being at work;
- they enjoyed being part of a team and had developed self confidence in their work roles;

- three of the four young people stated that apprenticeships were not discussed at school and one said it was mentioned briefly during a Careers Education lesson;
- wished they had been given more up to date information about the world of work;
- they lacked confidence before the Traineeship and would never have thought they could ever be considered for an Apprenticeship;
- more information about the range and benefits of Apprenticeships should be given to you whilst at school
- more information about local jobs of the future to help young people plan their careers;
- all were pleased with the progress they were making and would recommend the apprentice route.

4.47 The Chamber holds a range of promotional activities such as; open evenings for schools leavers, meet the apprentice, taster sessions and job fairs. St Helens Chamber offered complementary activities for schools during Apprenticeship Week in March 2016 but there was no take up. The Job Fair in the autumn term attracted over 200 young people from year 9 upwards.

4.48 St Helens Council

4.49 The Task Group met with Brendan Farrell (Head of Human Resources), Julie O'Neill (Work-based Learning Coordinator), and Steve Berlyne (Economic Development Manager)

4.50 The council has a well-established apprenticeship programme and has been a traditional employer of apprentices and over the last 3 years has provided over 60 apprenticeships mostly at level 2. Recruitment has declined during this period as evidenced in the table below

4.51 One of the fundamental qualities about the council programme is providing apprenticeship opportunities young people from vulnerable groups, such as Care Leavers and Looked After Children (LAC). Some of these young people achieve their apprenticeship due to the extensive support provided pre and on programme.

4.52 The council apprenticeship programme is well known in the borough, although no formal apprenticeship scheme is in place and it appears responsive rather than part of a medium term skills strategy or linking into the 2020 vision.

4.53 Table: St Helens Council Apprenticeship Programme 2014 – 2016

In 2014 there were 31 apprentices on the programme. Of the 31:

- 15 were successful in gaining employment with the Council
- 11 were successful in gaining employment with Private Organisations
- 5 unfortunately, did not complete the Programme

In 2015 there were 20 apprentices on the programme. Of the 20:

- 14 are still on programme, due to complete throughout 2016
- 4 were successful in gaining employment with the council
- 2 were successful in gaining employment with Private Organisations

In 2016 (January / February), the council had recruited a further 17 apprentices

Source: Julie O'Neill

- 4.54 Young people aged 16-19 are offered a 12 month training contract in a variety of occupations across departments. The council pays the National Training Allowance of £122.10 per week and is funded centrally or by department. This is a national rate and does not conflict with current government policy in terms of minimum / living wage. In return, the council offers excellent work experience and the opportunity to study NVQ Level 2 (relevant subject) and Functional Skills in English, Maths, ICT.
- 4.55 The council's apprenticeship programme recruits all year round and vacancies are advertised on the Council's website. In recent years and due to the economic climate, the council has exercised its discretion and provided funding for apprenticeships within the borough.
- 4.56 The majority of apprentices within the current cohort are resident in Sutton, with no apprentices presently from the Blackbrook, Bold, Earlestown and Town Centre Wards. Many of the apprentices previously attended Sutton Academy, Haydock High and St Cuthbert's secondary schools. Further information is available in Appendix 3
- 4.57 As part of the review the task group met 4 young people had faced significant barriers prior and whilst on the Apprenticeship programme. Pen portraits were shared with the task group. Feedback from the young people indicated that information, advice and guidance at school regarding apprenticeships had been very limited. The apprentices spoke very highly of the:
- Council Apprenticeship Scheme and the opportunities it had given them;
 - the support provided by staff of the council;
 - personal skills they had developed, especially self-confidence and aspirations for the future.

4.58 St Helens Apprenticeship Programmes Economic Development

- 4.59 Overview of Urban Regeneration Apprenticeship Programmes
- 4.60 Steve Berlyne provided an overview of the programmes managed by Urban Regeneration. The provision of financial support (wage incentives) for apprenticeships in St Helens is made up of two separate programmes, both funded by the council: one providing a subsidy for the apprenticeship programme delivered by St Helens Chamber, and a newer programme that aims to support apprenticeship offers across all the other providers in St Helens. Both of these programmes are coordinated and delivered via the Council's Economic Development Team.
- 4.60 The Economic Development programme is designed to add value to the longer-standing Chamber programme by covering a broader range of apprenticeships and providers. Both programmes offer the same basic £2500-£4000 wage incentive to employers, although there are differences in criteria around acceptable wage levels and payment terms to employers.

4.61 Council Apprenticeships Fund Offer – all providers (non-Chamber)

4.62 Steve Berlyne provided a summary of the Council Fund Offer Apprenticeship Programme. The purpose of this fund was to increase the participation levels of Apprentices with SMEs across all apprenticeship providers other than the Chamber, and thereby to broaden the range of apprenticeships in terms of levels and frameworks. In practice, the majority of apprenticeships supported through this fund were delivered via the College. The fund offers a maximum of £4,000 subsidy to eligible employers and apprentices. £2,500 provided by St Helens Council with an additional £1,500 provided by the governments AGE Grant as previously referenced in the report. (accessed via the Liverpool City Region).

4.63 The St Helens Council Apprenticeship Fund requires the apprentice to be paid at least the National Minimum Wage (NMW) for their age (as at 17/02/16 the NMW Rates are: 16-17 £3.87ph, 18-20 £5.30ph and 21+ £6.70ph).

4.64 Council Apprenticeship Fund - St Helens Chamber programme

4.65 This offers £2,500 subsidies to employers who offer apprenticeship via St Helens Chamber, with additional subsidy available for eligible apprenticeships from St Helens Chamber's Skills Fund Agency Contracts.

4.66 The St Helens Chamber programme only requires the apprentice to be paid at least the Apprenticeship NMW (as at 17/02/16 the apprenticeship minimum wage rate is £3.30ph and this has been the minimum payment requirement since July 2015).

4.67 Overall Delivery Outcomes (both programmes)

4.68 September 2012 – December 2015 (3 year 3 months);

- 397 Apprentices started through St Helens Chamber Delivery
- 130 Apprentices started through St Helens Council Delivery supported
- Total apprenticeship starts of 527
- 68 at level 3 (13%)
- 459 at level 2 (87%)
- 261 Apprentices from the top 25% most deprived super output area's (50%)

4.69 Analysis

4.70 The majority of apprentices through the council funded programme were delivered by St Helens Chamber and St Helens College. Twenty five percent of apprentices were from the most deprived super output area.

Interestingly, the young people participating were well represented across the borough - the highest numbers were from Parr, Blackbrook, Windle, and Sutton. Both programmes were successful, although it is worth noting that the non-Chamber fund supported the delivery of a broader spectrum of frameworks and more level 3s. Further detail is provided in the tables below. Future schemes should consider targeting growth sectors, higher level apprenticeships, and particular cohorts of young people such as LAC.

4.71 Breakdowns by training provider and ward below:

Apprenticeship Provider	Number
St Helens Chamber	396
St Helens College	115
CITB	7
YMCA	2
Riverside College	2
Warrington Collegiate	1
Sysco	1
Andrew Collinge	1
Floortrain	1
Learning Lite	1
Total	527

Source: S.Berlyne

Ward	Number
Moss Bank	40
Blackbrook	45
Parr	48
Thatto Heath	38
West Park	38
Windle	44
Bold	35
Town Centre	37
Haydock	32
Rainhill	17
Sutton	43
Billinge & Seneley Green	15
Eccleston	28
Rainford	24
Earlestown	26
Newton	17
Total	527

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 From the outset this was an ambitious brief set by the Task Group but substantial and noteworthy progress has been achieved against the Terms of the Review.
- 5.2 The Apprenticeship Reforms bring their own challenges and opportunities for providers, young people and small to large size employers. Paying the government's new apprenticeship levy and meeting national apprenticeship targets could be costly for large providers and public sector organisations such as councils. The Council is fully aware of its obligations with regard to the apprenticeship levy and has been working for some time to understand, analyse and respond to its implications. These include identifying and assessing the significant costs to the Council and taking a workforce planning approach to the identification and provision of sufficient suitable high quality placements to meet the required target.
- 5.3 On reviewing the council's approach to offering apprenticeships, activity is dispersed across several council services. The task group were particularly inspired by elements of the Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority Pilot Waste Apprenticeship Programme. In conclusion, the Scrutiny Task Group felt that the Council Apprenticeship Programme has provided valuable opportunities for a considerable number of local young people. Some of these young people have been from vulnerable groups such as Looked After Children and in line with recent Ofsted recommendations more focus and resources are being committed to supporting this group in accordance with the Council's responsibility as a corporate parent.

- 5.4 Once the full implications of the apprenticeship levy are known the Council Apprenticeship scheme would benefit from a stronger focus on medium term planning and correlation to skill priorities of the Council 2020 Vision and the Skills Strategy.
- 5.5 According to Ofsted providers delivering in St Helens are good or better. Evidence collated during the review from the 2 largest providers, St Helens Chamber and St Helens College reinforced these judgements. Nevertheless key areas for further development were identified in such as target setting, completion timescales, written feedback and success rates of some frameworks.
- 5.6 The apprenticeship offer is relatively broad by sector and level reflecting specific needs of the local and regional economy. The new logistics academy at St Helens College will support sector demand and growth. Conversely the number of starts has decreased over the last 3 years, participation at levels 3 and 4 is low and there are recruitment difficulties in growth sectors, such as manufacturing (which includes engineering), creative and digital. There is duplication in the apprenticeship offer, which may be due to providers responding to the increase in demand or competitive positioning. The borough would benefit from a more calculated approach to ensure added value.
- 5.7 Young people are enjoying and progressing on their apprenticeship programme. Based on the feedback provided at the review the Scrutiny Task Group were disappointed young people appear to have limited access to information about apprenticeships. The Education Act 2011 determined that providers have a responsibility to deliver careers information advice and guidance (IAG) to their learners. However there is an impression that young people lack an up to date understanding of the world of work and present day jobs in some industries such as manufacturing.
- 5.8 Development of employability provision for young people who are SEN is essential and securing suitable employers is crucial to the programmes. These opportunities will enable young people with SEN to be supported to develop the skills and acquire the necessary experience they need to succeed in their futures.
- 5.9 Relationships between providers and employers appear productive. Whilst the Task Group did not meet directly with employers from the private sector the main delivers of apprenticeship provision, St Helens College and St Helens Chamber, demonstrated proactive relationships with employers from both the private and public which in turn, alongside effective usage of local market intelligence, inform their apprenticeship offer and training courses. Established working relationships bode well for the implications of employers being at the centre of the new apprenticeship standards and at the heart of the apprenticeship reforms.
- 5.10 New partnership structures, including the introduction of the new St Helens Economy Board in January 2017, should improve; collaborative working between providers, streamline the apprenticeship offer and sharing of data to inform improvement. As evidenced in this report due to existing procedures capturing data from different formats and monitoring outcomes makes any true comparison impossible.

- 5.12 Since the completion of this Review by the Task Group many developments have taken place indicating apprenticeships remains a key and fast paced agenda for the government. Examples are provided below;
- Lord Baker is calling for radical action to prepare young people for the next industrial revolution in a new report published today. The Digital Revolution. 9th May 2016
 - A new taskforce has been announced which to look at improving accessibility of apprenticeships for people with learning disabilities. The taskforce has been created by the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and the Department for Education, May 2016.
 - Get In, Go Far. The government launches its latest apprenticeship promotional campaign with young apprentices from 12 leading businesses showing how far an apprenticeship can take you, 19th May 2016
 - On May 16th 2016, the government informed providers they can submit requests for additional funding, to support a targeted exercise for apprenticeships and traineeships growth for the 2016 to 2017 for 16 to 18 and 19+ apprenticeship delivery in the following areas:
 - higher and /or degree level apprenticeships
 - food, farming and agritech apprenticeships
 - STEM based apprenticeships

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 St Helens Council to fully prepare for the implications of the Apprenticeship Reforms, including the target number of apprentices, the Levy, the digital account and new standards. It is recommended that the Task & Finish group continue to assess the implications of the reform proposals, particularly when the awaited national guidance is produced (scheduled for December 2016).
- 6.2 To write and implement a Council Apprenticeship Strategy that:
- Takes full account of the apprenticeship reforms;
 - Relates to the skills needed for the Council's 2020 vision. The Apprenticeship Strategy should link to the outcomes and priorities of the Council Skills Strategy which is presently being developed;
 - Maximises external grant opportunities e.g. link apprenticeships to ESF projects;
 - Includes tailored pathways for young people from vulnerable groups, such as Looked After Children, that are matched to their career aspirations.
 - And finally adds value to the local economy by better equipping residents and businesses with the skills needed to take advantage of future growth opportunities.
- 6.3 To ensure that Apprenticeships are within the remit of the developing St Helens Economy Board (due to launch in January 2017 as part of the revised partnership arrangements in the Borough). The St Helens Economy Board will strategically steer the Apprenticeship agenda. Priorities of the Board will

include monitoring the apprenticeship offer against skill demand, monitoring outcomes using consistent data sets and proactively addressing policy change. It is recommended that the St Helens Apprenticeship Forum is brought into this local governance structure through reporting into the St Helens Economy Board.

- 6.4 Develop a Supported Employment Pathway for Young People who are SEN, through working closely with key partners such as St Helens College, New Ventures, and by maximising ESF Ways to Work funding opportunities to develop supported employment and Internship pathways for young people post 16 SEN.
- 6.5 To undertake a review of existing careers education / information, advice and guidance resources to inform improvement strategies that will ensure young people have a sound understanding of apprenticeship opportunities and present day world of work, especially in growth sectors such as manufacturing and digital. It is recommended that an evaluation report confirming the outcome of this review is produced.
- 6.6 To review the role of schools in offering apprenticeships and to ensure that they are engaged in developing future apprenticeship offers.
- 6.7 St Helens Council to promote apprenticeships with existing and new employers. It is recommended that a local apprenticeship offer is developed and promoted, in accordance with a local Apprenticeship strategy in order to increase participation levels across St Helens and widen opportunities with a range of employers.

Apprenticeships

Rec No	Recommendation	Responsible Lead Officer	Agreed Action	Date of Implementation
1	St Helens Council to fully prepare for the implications of the Apprenticeship Reforms, including the target number of apprentices, the Levy, the digital account and new standards. It is recommended that the Task & Finish group continue to assess the implications of the reform proposals, particularly when the awaited national guidance is produced (scheduled for December 2016).			
2	<p>To write and implement a Council Apprenticeship Strategy that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes full account of the apprenticeship reforms; • Relates to the skills needed for the Council's 2020 vision. The Apprenticeship Strategy should link to the outcomes and priorities of the Council Skills Strategy which is presently being developed; • Maximises external grant opportunities e.g. link apprenticeships to ESF projects; • Includes tailored pathways for young people from vulnerable groups, such as Looked After Children, that are matched to their career aspirations. • And finally adds value to the local economy by better equipping residents and businesses with the skills needed to take advantage of future growth opportunities. 			
3	To ensure that Apprenticeships are within the remit of the developing St Helens Economy Board (due to launch in January 2017 as part of the revised partnership arrangements in the Borough). The St Helens Economy Board will strategically steer the Apprenticeship agenda. Priorities of the Board will include monitoring the			

Apprenticeships

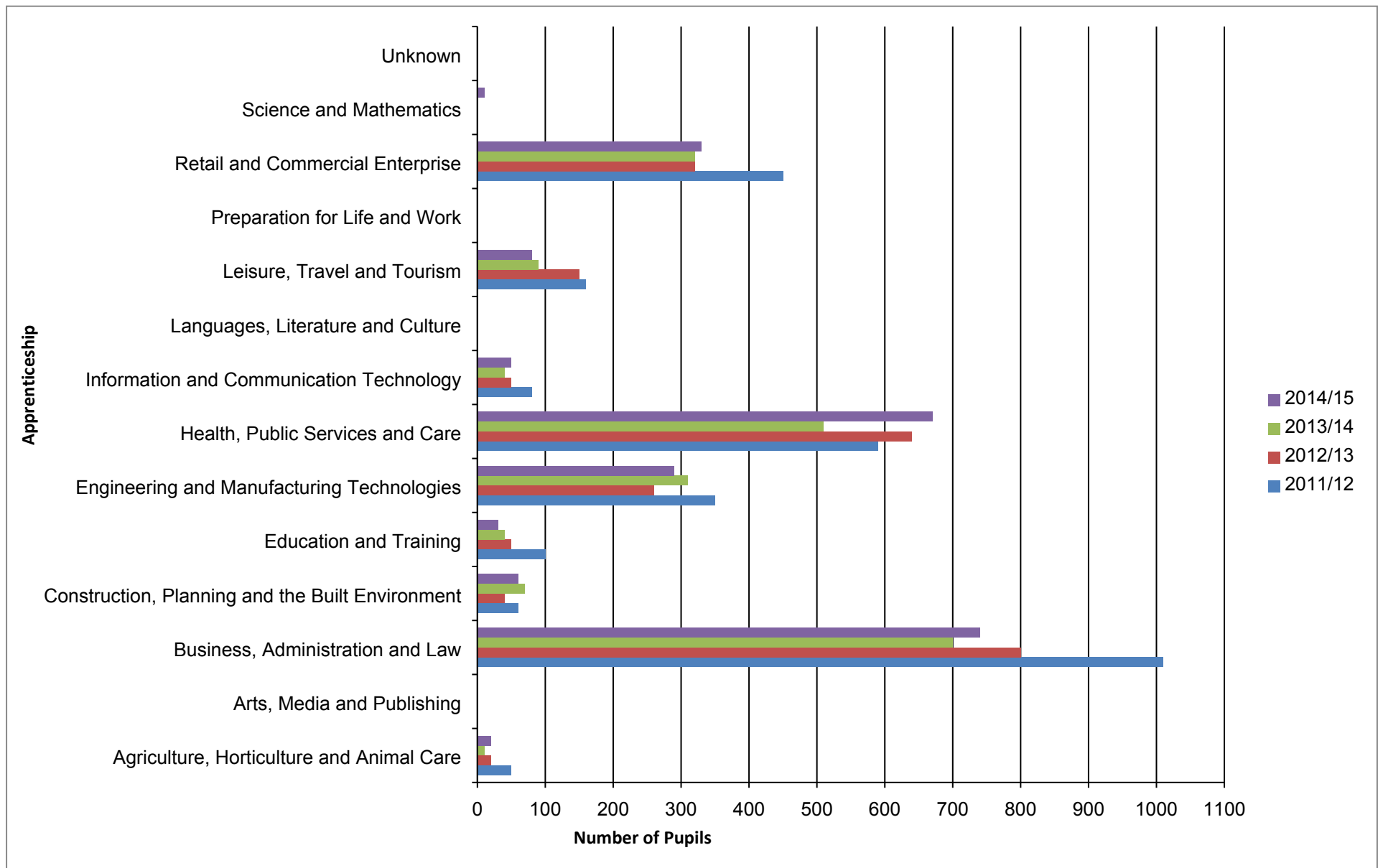
	apprenticeship offer against skill demand, monitoring outcomes using consistent data sets and proactively addressing policy change. It is recommended that the St Helens Apprenticeship Forum is brought into this local governance structure through reporting into the St Helens Economy Board.			
4	Develop a Supported Employment Pathway for Young People who are SEN, through working closely with key partners such as St Helens College, New Ventures, and by maximising ESF Ways to Work funding opportunities to develop supported employment and Internship pathways for young people post 16 SEN.			
5	To undertake a review of existing careers education / information, advice and guidance resources to inform improvement strategies that will ensure young people have a sound understanding of apprenticeship opportunities and present day world of work, especially in growth sectors such as manufacturing and digital. It is recommended that an evaluation report confirming the outcome of this review is produced.			
6	To review the role of schools in offering apprenticeships and to ensure that they are engaged in developing future apprenticeship offers			
7	St Helens Council to promote apprenticeships with existing and new employers. It is recommended that a local apprenticeship offer is developed and promoted, in accordance with a local Apprenticeship strategy in order to increase participation levels across St Helens and widen opportunities with a range of employers.			

APPENDIX 1 – English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision



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APPENDIX 2 – Areas of Learning by Academic Year



APPENDIX 3 - Profile of St Helens Council Apprentices by ward, gender and school attended

MALE	FEMALE
21	18

WARD	NUMBER OF APPRENTICES
Billinge	1
Eccleston	3
Haydock	5
Moss Bank	1
Newton	6
Parr	5
Rainford	2
Rainhill	1
Sutton	10
Thatto Heath	2
West Park	2
Windle	1

SCHOOL ATTENDED	NUMBER OF APPRENTICES
Byrchall High School	1
Cowley International College	3
De La Salle	4
Haydock High	5
Hope Academy	3
Rainford	2
Rainhill	1
St Augustines	4
St Cuthberts	5
St Edmund Arrowsmith	1
Sutton	10

Source: Julie O'Neill