

apprenticeships – how local government is making a difference

best practice examples from Labour
councils in England



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Preface

Paul Hackett, Director of the Smith Institute

An improved and expanded apprenticeship programme is at the heart of Labour's vision for a better further education and skills system, and the public sector has a lead role to play. At the 2012 Labour conference Ed Miliband made a call to arms for all employers, public and private, to do more to support apprenticeships. He said that local government had an important role to play in supporting apprenticeships and promised that:

the next Labour government will ensure that every private sector contract will only be awarded to a large company that trains the next generation with apprenticeships.

Following his speech Ed Miliband established the One Nation Skills Taskforce, chaired by Professor Chris Husbands, director of the Institute of Education. That taskforce has been developing a new approach to increasing the number of high quality apprenticeships and work experience placements that young people desperately need. The Taskforce's interim report ('Talent Matters - why England needs a new approach to Skills, 2013') stated that:

There is a strong political consensus that apprenticeships play a critical role in the skills infrastructure and should be expanded. Various government reviews – most recently the Richards Review – have highlighted that the apprenticeship 'brand' is at risk from the low standard of some apprenticeships, particularly those created in recent years.

The LGA endorses this view and in its evidence to the House of Commons BIS Select Committee inquiry on apprenticeships in 2012 commented that:

Our principal concern with policy on apprentices is that it does not have a spatial dimension. It does not recognise that local economies perform differently and that skills needs are different from one functional economic area to another. In our view public subsidy could be targeted more effectively to generate training outcomes with higher economic returns. There is a strong value for money case for exploring whether decentralised approaches could deliver even better apprenticeship outcome.

The BIS Select Committee concluded that local government could help boost apprenticeships and recommended that the Government encourages the employment of apprentices in its procurement contracts:

While we concede that some flexibility is required (for example around the sector and nature of the work contracted), we recommend that Central Government, Local Government and other publicly funded bodies should seek to achieve at least one additional apprenticeship for every £1m awarded through public procurement as a benchmark.

This discussion report echoes the sentiment expressed by Labour's Taskforce, the BIS Select Committee and the LGA. The aim of the report is to highlight the contribution local government can make to promoting jobs and growth in local economies through high quality apprenticeship schemes. In particular, the report demonstrates how Labour councils in England are leading the way in delivering apprenticeship schemes, despite deep spending cuts and a weak and uncertain economic climate.

Foreword

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP, Shadow Communities and Local Government Minister

We have been very clear that a future Labour Government will have jobs for young people at the very heart of its agenda. We want to ensure that there are opportunities for young people with a diverse and wide range of skills. There is no better way of showing what a Labour government could achieve than the success that Labour councils are having. In providing apprenticeships and offering training opportunities for young people the 17 councils who have contributed to this report are showing the difference that local Labour leadership can make to people's lives and their futures.

This report shows that even as local government continues to suffer the brunt of disproportionate government cuts whilst bearing the burden of helping the vulnerable who have been hit hardest by the government's economic failure, Labour councils are leading the way in prioritising jobs and opportunities for young people.

In the current economic climate it is helpful to remember that apprenticeships can provide important and life changing training opportunities for people. Labour councils are at the forefront of re-invigorating the role of apprenticeships and building on the work of the previous Labour government in this area.

This research also sets out how Labour values can shape public spending. The £62 billion pounds spent by local authorities each year gives them huge spending clout and means that their spending decisions have a huge impact on businesses, jobs and wider social value in their local area.

This report is clear evidence of how this spending power can and is being harnessed by Labour local councils to create apprenticeships and opportunities for local people. Lewisham has set the pace by insisting in its procurement policy that contractors employ apprentices. Sheffield and Leeds are following suit using their procurement policies to ensure that all contracts over £100,000 create apprenticeships, work experience and employment opportunities, and others like Manchester are using their spending ability to encourage suppliers to take on apprentices - something that will become increasingly important as deep spending cuts force increased outsourcing.

Many of these councils and others have gone ever further and are thinking continuously about what value can be won for their community from their contracts beyond jobs and training and are looking holistically about how their procurement spend can support

and shape their local area. But too many others are failing to follow the lead set by Labour councils. In a survey of all local authorities in England a large majority told us that they saw EU procurement laws as a barrier to using their spending power to support their local area.

Social value clauses can be essential in helping to secure apprenticeships, training and other local benefits with major contracts. Many councils have used procurement to win a living wage for the lowest paid workers, ensuring that they and their families have a decent standard of living. Others have used these clauses to secure transport for the elderly or youth engagement programmes.

Further, while almost three quarters of Labour councils are using social value contracts there are a number of English councils who aren't doing as much as they could. This needs to change. We need to work with these councils and key partners in the sector to ensure that councils are able to learn from the work that is being done elsewhere and have the support to use these lessons to the benefit of their communities.

The examples for supporting apprenticeships in this report are just the beginning of what local and central government could achieve through procurement. Every local authority needs to think about how they can best wield their spending power to the advantage of their communities. It is up to us to work together and ensure that every council, whether Labour or not, knows exactly what is possible and is encouraged to follow the lead of these best practice examples.

With people's job prospects and living standards suffering so acutely under the Government's austerity the role of councils in supporting their local economies has never been so critical.

I hope that this report encourages more councils to start thinking proactively and strategically about how their money can go further and the benefits of projects can be spread more widely. The councils that have contributed to this paper have shown what is possible, now I hope that others are able to learn from their experiences.

Apprenticeships and the art of localism

Gordon Marsden MP, Shadow Minister for Further Education, Skills and Regional Growth

Apprenticeships and the art of localism

If today's apprenticeships occupy centre-stage as a given good in the challenge of how to revive our economy and give skills and opportunities to young people, it is because the previous Labour government substantially helped to put them there. When Labour came to power in 1997, the apprenticeship programme was floundering. The Labour government resurrected that historic badge of excellence to make it fit for purpose in the 21st century. Labour launched National Apprenticeship Week (now significantly celebrated not just in Whitehall and Westminster - but in dozens of local colleges and by employers, councils across England) as a focus for recognition, and set up the National Apprenticeship Service to drive the project all round the country. When we left office the number of apprenticeships had quadrupled.

Wisely the Coalition continued this emphasis, helped by the former Skills Minister John Hayes MP, who had an empathy for the human values and aspirations as well as the economic ones driving the apprenticeship programme. But now he is gone from that post, and in terms of numbers the Government's grand project is faltering. The latest figures have underlined this, with apprenticeship starts down 6% in comparison to the same period last year - while equally alarming, the numbers of 16-18 year olds starting an apprenticeship dropped by 13% in the same period.

Why is this? Partly because the 'too far, too fast' expenditure cuts by the Chancellor, George Osborne MP, have borne down most heavily on those areas traditionally strongest in this regard, with the dire economic statistics also not encouraging enough new employers to take apprenticeships on elsewhere. But partly because with honourable exceptions (including Greg Clark MP the Cities Minister and the bravura Lord Heseltine) Government and Whitehall has been far too slow to understand or grasp the nexus between skills and sectoral delivery, and also place delivery. At times it's been completely antipathetic to it - as the Chancellor's over-hasty abolition of the Regional Development Agencies in 2010 showed.

With nearly a million unemployed young people that is a myopia we simply cannot afford. I am glad that the linkage between skills and regional growth policy in my own front bench portfolio continually refreshes that appreciation on top of my own experiences and biographical perspectives. It's not just 16-19 year olds or young people finding their feet in their 20s whose futures are threatened if we don't get that linkage right. Retraining and reskilling is going to be key for those in their 30s, 40s and yes 50s needing to find new types and patterns of employment or returning to it. This particularly affects women, and most of that will involve strong local and sectorally-based strategies.

The analysis in Lord Leitch's Skills Review on this still holds good, despite everything that has happened since the financial services meltdown of 2008. With a shrinking proportion of young people in the UK's demographic cohort, 80% of the 2020 labour force have already reached adulthood. If we don't recognise that we will have not one, but two lost generations.

Put bluntly the age of relying on Government micromanagement and mandarins to deliver what we need in this area has reached a bit of a dead-end. As Jon Cruddas MP recently put it:

Too often we thought that a delivery state powered by choice and competition was the only answer to better and more productive public services. We did not devolve enough meaningful power to front line services and their users."

The Oxford economists Ewart Keep and Ken Mayhew have recently described the situation now as one where:

The role of the state changes from systems architect, controller and resource allocator, to being a coordinator, coalition builder, pump primer and potential regulator of some kind of employment and training marketplace.

There will doubtless be lively debate on whether that is too precipitate an analysis. But if only half of it is right it implies that an active intelligent government and industrial policy (which my colleague Chuka Umunna MP, the Shadow Business Secretary, has championed as central to our future success) will have to look vigorously to wider mechanisms than the one-stop centralisation that has traditionally framed the drive for apprenticeships. That is why Ed Miliband's acute analysis of the urgency to enhance and expand the vocational route for young people as a centrepiece of his speech to last year's Labour Party Conference – is now being taken forward by the One Nation Skills Taskforce chaired by Chris Husbands of the Institute of Education. Its interim report has just appeared and the final one with a series of recommendations over the coming months will set the framework for looking at the apprenticeship journey. The support for a new emphasis on employer-led activity, but also a new valuing of the role of both sector and place in what a future Labour government would do in this area has been striking.

This is part of the process of our substantial engagement with new thinking in this area – building on some of the place-based budget and funding initiatives brought forward by John Denham MP in the final two years of the last Labour Government. That new thinking includes our emphasis on the role of government using its Department procurement powers over companies bidding for all contracts over £1 million (a benchmark incidentally

which both the cross-party Select Committee and leading construction sector businesses such as Keir, Wilmot Dixon and Laing have agreed with) to create tens of thousands of new apprenticeship places and energise both recovery and growth sectorally and locally.

There is also the series of steps in addition to procurement that I outlined in a speech to apprentices and staff at Training 2000 in Blackburn in January 2012 – the expansion of Group Training Associations, for example, to help small businesses take on young apprentices, the promotion and incentivising of best practice and 'buddying' – with large companies creating and supporting apprenticeships in their supply chains, as well as a larger direct role for business and industrial partnerships in creating and setting apprenticeship frameworks and direct involvement in careers advice and guidance.

That step-change is not just about ways of expanding opportunities for apprenticeships – though with less than 10% of SMEs currently employing apprenticeships we certainly need them to expand. It's also about a recognition of how the potential for apprenticeships is diversifying – to encompass new low carbon and hi-tech industries and strong high quality expansion in the creative, leisure and higher-end service industries as well as the reinvigoration of more traditional manufacturing bases. Such initiatives cannot any longer simply come out of Whitehall – as Lord Heseltine so eloquently laid out in 'No Stone Unturned: In Pursuit of Growth' (2013). They will need though a strong genuine localism, not the narrow 'forced to be free' disintegration and experimentation that has marred some Coalition initiatives, notably in education.

If quality and progression are to be key in delivering apprenticeships – and they must be, after some of the abuses which compelled this Government to introduce a minimum one-year requirement last summer- that also has to include locally and sectorally-based routes. Neither skills nor apprenticeships on their own can be a magic bullet for growth – it's crucial to have a step change in productivity as well. That is something, which as the Germans have demonstrated, needs continued interaction within companies but also between parties at local and sectoral levels. UK productivity is now 12.8% lower than pre-recession trends suggest it should be. And if we want (as I argued in a recent speech at the launch of another Smith Institute report 'Where Next for LEPs?') to emulate the Mittelstand success of Germany in productivity, skills and collective drive across regional or sub-regional areas we must start to emulate their perspectives as well.

That perspective in our UK situation with LEPs and the need for real, not sham, localism means combining the maximum amount of outward facing entrepreneurialism to generate apprenticeships, skills and growth to promote economy recovery alongside the maximum amount of place-based democratic accountability.

Local government as the innovators

Gordon Marsden MP, Shadow Minister for Further Education, Skills and Regional Growth

Local government as the innovators

This then is the backdrop to which the ideas in this report came together encouraged by Lord Adonis, who is being as fruitful a thinker and strategist in opposition as he was in Government and as fierce a champion of apprenticeships as he is of region-based approaches to growth strategies, as his recent North East Independent Review shows. A meeting between myself, him and Cllr. Dave Sparks, the leader of Labour's Local Government Association Group last summer, was followed up by a successful fringe meeting at last autumn's Labour Conference in which representatives from over a dozen Labour-led Councils came to tell me and my frontbench Local Government colleague Roberta Blackman-Woods MP what they were doing in the skills and apprenticeship area.

Since then we have brought together and published in this report short narratives of what they are doing. As the introduction to those case studies makes clear that covers not just the direct creation of apprenticeships by local government and the use already of some procurement powers to create apprenticeships but also the promotion of apprenticeships locally and a strong contribution to putting together apprenticeship hubs that can then enable more smaller and medium sized companies to take young people in a range of different sectors and areas. It does not claim to be an exhaustive list even of what Labour-led authorities are doing – and in fairness it should be noted that there are some other local authorities, such as Conservative run Kent and Northamptonshire, that have recognised a proactive role for councils, particularly in requirements for apprenticeships in procurement contracts.

But what is impressive about the range of examples given here is these are initiatives carried out not just by large cities with newly-won City Deal powers, but also by other smaller areas and towns such as my own in Blackpool, which is even in the teeth of suffering the most severe and some would say lop-sided cuts in local government funding. Elsewhere there is Manchester, which is building on a generation-old coming together of the ten local authorities after the old metropolitan county areas was abolished by Mrs Thatcher. The councils are working pragmatically and have achieved a strong convergence with their local enterprise partnership. Some of the best practice examples described here such as the 'Knowsley Apprentice' route are ones being replicated across Liverpool and the Merseyside area.

It's also the case that in areas such as the West Midlands the lead taken by Birmingham City Council under Cllr. Albert Bore and supported by local MP and my colleague Shadow Minister Jack Dromey is helping to forge a similarly energetic approach. 'The Path to Local Growth' published in March 2013 by Greater Birmingham and Solihull

LEP (which highlights the opportunities of substantial 'single pot' funding). It addresses very specific growth issues including a coherent skills offer – the 'Birmingham Baccalaureate' – to get public and private sector employers involving young people jointly in the world of work at an earlier age (very appropriate from a city whose 19th Century Mayor Joseph Chamberlain was a pioneer in building up civic capital). The devil is always of course in the details – and outcomes – of such initiatives. However, I believe there's enough in this report to show the potential also for angels in the architecture.

I have referred elsewhere to getting the 'Art of Localism' right to deliver the changes we need, not just for economic success but to deliver decent life chances for the hundreds of thousands of younger people fearful they face worse outcomes than their parents. And it is an art – not a science, let alone a formula. It is one that will have to battle not just over skills and apprenticeships powers but over all those issues where geography makes a difference. The messy inheritance of hastily-abolished RDAs, which dispersed many of the individuals and informal co-ordinators that brought schemes together, under-funded and sometimes chaotically formed successor Local Enterprise Partnerships, and the flaws in Regional Growth initiatives that rely on due diligence from Whitehall based civil servants without the necessary tools or instincts, do not make it easy.

Not every 'pilot' or 'initiative' on apprenticeships will be capable of being scaled up either by central government or elsewhere. In a more organic system there will be differences – though the pitfalls of postcode lotteries must be avoided.

But it is salutary to remember that throughout the 20th century history of the Labour Party initiatives put together at local level – not just by Labour-led councils but also involving co-operatives, unions and other local institutions, have often produced templates for Government, most notably in the way in which many of the ideas about health, social care and insurance tried locally in the 1920s and 30s found their way into the great programmes of the 1945-51 Attlee Government.

Whoever comes into Government in 2015 will inherit a seriously fractured skills landscape with continued potential for tension and conflict between Whitehall and the regions (and within regions) of competition for resources from a currently diminishing cake. That is why there will be a premium both sectorally and locally on those who can build bridges and overcome barriers to co-operation over expanding skills and apprenticeships and make them dovetail effectively with local enterprise, growth,

education and training hubs and travel to work areas. That is also why Government must play a key strategic and enabling role in incentivising those who do it and helping construct frameworks that will fit with large national and infrastructure objectives. Those who can accomplish a major expansion of apprenticeships (bringing together employers, FE Colleges, sector skills based organisations and local businesses, alongside unions and community groups in locally-based alliances that can deliver success with jobs and adaptable skills for rapidly changing work and career environments) will get – and rightly earn – that support and those incentives.

This report makes it clear local authorities can be well-placed to accomplish this and that Labour ones are in the vanguard. It's a scenario sketched out by Jon Cruddas in his recent One Nation statecraft speech to the LGA: 'the radical social innovation we need in order to do more with less means working with systems and networks and not silos and rigid bureaucracy.' It can also be an empowering mechanism. The Americans have a pithy if slightly brutal expression 'if when you get lemons make lemonade!' Abraham Lincoln put it more positively 'when the occasion is piled high with difficulty...as our case is, so we must think anew and act anew.'

Working together locally in tight circumstances requires a greater focus on quality and a determination to maintain social mobility. If it succeeds then we will not only improve our economic outlook but also rejuvenate pride in place, social connectivity and the individual self-worth of those taking on and succeeding through apprenticeships and skills as well as through academic achievement. That is surely a prize worth striving for.

Best practice among Labour councils

Best practice among Labour councils

The following showcases some of the best practice examples from Labour councils. Reference is made to 17 councils, including London boroughs, large city councils and unitary authorities. The aim is to provide a brief insight into what Labour councils are undertaking, with the intention of helping spread good practice and informing the wider public policy debate about how to improve apprenticeships and skills development. The examples are eclectic and cover a variety of approaches. The common factor is that all are locally designed and locally managed.

The examples are bunched into four main broad categories: direct creation of apprenticeships by local authorities; use of procurement (contract compliance) to create apprenticeships; promoting apprenticeships locally and creating apprenticeship hubs; and supporting smaller and medium sized companies to take on apprentices. Brief details are given on each and further information can be obtained from the relevant council websites listed at the end of the report.

In-house council apprenticeship schemes

As major employers locally, councils themselves can play a direct role in opening up new apprenticeship opportunities by creating in-house new placements, or via their delivery agencies. By offering apprenticeships directly, councils are not only helping tackle youth unemployment but also offering young people the chance to improve their skills and career prospects. These type of schemes offer a clear route into either higher vocational training or employment opportunities within a council. Furthermore, a council is sending out a clear message to local businesses of the value gained by taking on an apprentice.

City of York Council have successfully expanded their in-house apprenticeship scheme. The Council, which is the largest employer in the city, believed this was essential given the long-standing problem of falling apprenticeship starts. Following the huge success of its 100 in 100 York Apprenticeship Challenge across the city in 2011, the council has continued to take the lead locally on Apprenticeships.

Opportunities have been offered right across the Council from business admin to events management and support, mostly aimed at the 16-19 age group. Half the costs of employing an apprentice on the minimum apprenticeship rate are met centrally and half by the relevant departments. Some 69 apprentices have been taken on by the Council in 2011/12. The Council have since moved the programme away from largely fixed term apprenticeship creation to offering permanent posts following a

successfully completed apprenticeship. Wages of apprentices have also been raised to meet national minimum wage levels.

Lewisham Council have increased the number of apprenticeships directly employed by the Council under its Lewisham Apprenticeship Programme (LAP), established in 2009. Lewisham made a commitment to supply over 100 apprentices, as well as additional apprenticeships with partner organisations through their supply chain. The LAP is designed to offer an alternative route to young people not going on to Further Education or University. Potential apprenticeship positions are identified by focusing on council departments with: high agency usage; high staff turnover; and a high age profile. Managers from these departments which take on apprentices (for up to two years) are then asked to map out a possible career trajectory for them.

Lewisham Council's programme has been a substantial success with departments who previously have had apprentices coming back for more, and the reiteration that the apprenticeship is the start of a young person's career. The Programme also continues to place emphasis on the fact that this is a training opportunity, rather than the opportunity to get a new member of staff on a low salary. Lewisham offered 74 apprenticeships for their 2013 intake, including one level 4 apprentice. They are hoping to add more at this level in the future.

Oldham Council place great emphasis on their direct council apprenticeship scheme, and in particular their challenge to departmental managers to consider how their apprenticeships can play important roles during their time at the Council. Since 2005 they have committed £200k annually to create a number of apprenticeships across the Council. Apprentices get a year of work experience and obtain a qualification, usually Level 2 or 3. The Council uses core funding as leverage to part fund apprentices, with service departments making up the difference. In 2012/13 the Council created 84 apprenticeships, leveraging in £600k from managers' budgets to match the £200k pa corporate pot.

Sandwell Council, which is the largest employer in the area, offers an apprenticeship scheme for young people up the age of 24. The scheme provides short work experience placements to students in both school and college and longer placements of up to twelve weeks for those not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and young graduates. The Council expect this scheme to provide around 100 placements every year. It is currently run solely by the Council, although they are looking to expand into the private sector in the near future to ease the cost burden.

Blackpool Borough Council have already directly employed 45 apprentices as well as a further 47 apprentices with their partners in the construction industry. The Council has pledged £100,000 extra investment to create additional apprenticeship posts, and are actively seeking to co-fund more places in service departments. The direct apprenticeship programme has also been embraced by the Council's delivery partners, such as Blackpool Coastal Housing, which is creating new apprenticeship posts within its organisation. The Council provides extra help for NEETs, and any young person who applies for a job with the Council from a disadvantaged group in Blackpool is guaranteed an interview.

A Blackpool Council apprenticeship scheme launched in April this year has already employed 12 young people on long term contracts, with another eight to be created later in the year. Each apprenticeship contract lasts for a minimum of 12 months and allows the young people to learn all the skills necessary to make them employable permanently. After 10 months, each apprentice is given CV support to find their next job, and, as their contract comes to an end, can apply for internal posts.

Newcastle City Council has maintained its commitment to apprenticeships. In 2012, under the 'Newcastle City Deal' with government, the Council pledged to increase apprenticeships by 500 people. At any one time the Council have around 100 apprentices across an extremely wide range of disciplines – from the construction trades to apprenticeships in childcare, adult social care, and administration. All come with fixed-term training contracts from 1-4 years, covering an age range of between 16 and 52. The Council's scheme is fully endorsed and supported by the trade unions. Apprentices are paid the standard National Minimum Wage rates, rather than the apprenticeship rates.

Manchester City Council has led by example by employing over 200 unemployed local residents as apprentices over the past 15 months. This followed the advice of the Apprenticeship in Manchester Steering Group, which brings together the City Council, the National Apprenticeship Service and other providers to boost the numbers of apprentices in the City. Apprentices are required to complete a 6 month probation and to complete a Level 2/3 qualification relevant to their role and any associated training, development and learning opportunities. The Council offers a wide range of opportunities, from business administration to youth and community work.

Bury Council has had a long history of supporting apprenticeships, in part through its 'Backing Young Bury' campaign. The Council has created 30 additional in-house apprenticeships over the past three years, covering a broad range of young people –

many of whom are NEETs. The Council works closely with Work Programme providers, Youth Contract providers, Connexions, Job Centre Plus and the largest local private sector employer O2. According to the TUC's Unionlearn "Bury Council clearly had the foresight to understand the considerable value of apprenticeships".

Knowsley Council has committed funding for a second phase of its in-house apprenticeships programme, which forms part of the Council's plans to provide apprenticeships for 100 young residents. Under the 'Knowsley Apprentice' scheme a further 18 apprenticeships will be on offer across the Council's own directorates. The opportunities will be for two year fixed term contracts across a range of departments, including housing benefit, council tax, youth service and horticulture. The apprenticeships provide three year work placements offering training to NVQ level 3 and national minimum wage for 18-21 year olds regardless of age. Each apprentice is given a mentor to call on , as well as personalised support package. There are also opportunities to secure to a permanent job at the end of the placement.

Plymouth City Council currently employs 49 young (16-24) apprentices and 21 adult apprentices (in total equivalent to 2.6% of the Council's workforce). This is double the number from the previous year. In the past 12 months, 94% of those who finished the apprenticeship scheme have gone into full-time employment, with 12 apprentices moving to the higher or advanced level. The benefits offered through in-house apprenticeships include: an Earn whilst you Learn scheme (Year 1 salary £10,000 pa) and NVQ 2 qualification. For 2013/14 the Council aims to increase the number of apprenticeships by 30%.

Bradford Council pre-apprenticeship programmes supports participants with low or no academic qualifications. It offers up to 40 'traineeships' per year directly at the Council, targeted at vulnerable young people who are below level two at English and Maths.

Apprenticeships and public contracting

More and more Labour councils are making sure that buyers in their organisations are supportive of embedding apprenticeships in public contracts. This not only boosts the number of apprenticeships locally and strengthens the local skills base, but also sends out a positive message to other employers. Building on the success of Labour councils, Ed Miliband is seeking to make more use of public procurement to support the promotion of employment and training. He is calling on the government to require suppliers to offer apprenticeship opportunities on public contracts worth over £1 million alongside changes to ensure that the apprenticeship brand remains a high quality symbol of achievement.

Labour councils are challenging the culture of conservatism towards contract clauses for apprenticeships, derived from narrow interpretations of EU procurement laws. Some councils, for example, are trailblazing the use of community benefit (apprenticeship) clauses and placing obligations on contractors over a minimum contract level. Labour councils will also be working with construction firms to take forward the latest advice from the National Apprenticeship Service, 'Working together to boost local construction Apprenticeships through public procurement' (2013).

Leeds City Council is seeking to influence local businesses and developers through its planning and procurement role, placing employment and skills obligations on contracts worth over £100,000. This has been put into practice with the construction of Leeds Arena, which has to date supported the creation of 82 apprenticeship opportunities.

Lewisham Council amended their procurement policy in December 2011 to include a requirement for contractors to employ apprentices. The Council won an award from the pan-London body, London Councils, for 'Best work with supply chains in creating apprenticeship opportunities.' The Council is now targeting the partner organisations they currently work with to secure further apprenticeship opportunities in their supply chains.

Manchester City Council actively encourages businesses within its supply chain to take on apprentices and local unemployed people as part of the Council's sustainable procurement strategy. Over 66 young people have started their working career as an apprentice working on the town hall extension.

Newcastle City Council have in place formal arrangements to ensure that where they are involved in major infrastructure projects or procuring services of a substantial value, the Council makes every effort to ensure the organisations they are dealing with

recruit and employ apprentices. This includes a number of major local regeneration projects currently underway across the City.

Oldham Council used the Building Schools for the Future Programme to develop its procurement process to include local economic benefit key performance indicators (such as measures on the proportion of the spend going to local companies and the number of apprenticeships created). The Council also set up a Construction Network which is private sector led. It meets quarterly to hear about procurement opportunities, and offers training on how to win contracts and use local economic benefit clauses. The number of contracts won by local companies and the number of apprenticeships created have significantly increased.

Sandwell Council include community benefit (apprenticeship) clauses, via section 106 agreements, into major public contracts. The Council then monitor these throughout the process to ensure that apprenticeship places are filled and maintained. The Council is currently targeting creating 198 apprenticeship opportunities over 3 years.

Sheffield City Council have been actively using public sector procurement to create apprenticeships. The Council has attached clauses in all contracts that it lets in excess of £100,000 to create apprenticeships as well as work experience and employment opportunities. This programme has already identified 233 apprenticeships that already have or will be created over the course of the next two years.

Wakefield Council have developed a Skills Procurement Strategy to ensure that the contracts developed between the authority and suppliers ensure that local people with relevant skills are utilised as part of the contractual agreements.

Getting the message across

Promotion of apprenticeships is vitally important to their success. As well as reassuring employers and others that the initiative will both benefit them and be a constructive contribution to the local economy, Labour councils have come up with new and innovative ways to promote apprenticeships to young people. Many Labour councils have joined the National Apprenticeship Service '100:100' scheme to encourage employers to take on 100 apprenticeships in 100 days.

Blackpool Council have put apprenticeships at the heart of their Youth Employment Programme and are engaging with employers to boost apprenticeship and employment opportunities locally. In mid 2012 the Council held a 'Chance2Shine' event to explain to businesses the range of incentives and support that are on offer if they take on apprentices. The programme is a joint initiative between the Council and Blackpool and the Fylde College. Already a number of companies are actively looking at creating apprenticeship placements following this initiative.

Camden Council is an active supporter of the '100:100' campaign. The Council promotes the campaign through the Camden Business Board's members and partners, who held a series of apprenticeship events. The council also made sure their apprenticeship programme was advertised in the local newspaper and through partner communication channels to reach employers and young people. Camden runs various apprenticeship workshops for students and has recently recruited 'Apprenticeship Champions' – who are act as ambassadors for the Borough.

Wakefield Council adopted the '100:100' Wakefield Apprenticeship Challenge. The Challenge took place from 3 February to 11 May 2012. The programme was a great success and secured 197 apprenticeship places working with 64 local SME's. They delivered the programme through a targeted marketing campaign and dedicated contact number and signposting to the National Apprenticeship Service.

Sheffield City Council established the Sheffield '100:100' programme shortly after Labour took control of the Council in 2011. The apprenticeship scheme is brokered by the Council using the Opportunity Sheffield database; it is preceded by a six week pre-apprenticeship course and a work trial. This scheme offers the employer a 50% wage subsidy to employers for up to two years until the apprenticeship is complete. The scheme has so far set up 146 apprenticeships, and had aimed to establish a total of 220 by April 2013. The current drop-out rate is 17%, compared with a national average of 25% and BME young people make up a fifth of the recruits, which is well above the national average.

Promotion in schools and colleges

Many Labour Councils have been going into schools and colleges to talk to young people about the vocational opportunities available to them in addition to routes into further and higher education.

Manchester City Council has a first class record of promoting apprenticeships in schools. In partnership with the Greater Manchester Learner Provider Network the Council has helped to design and deliver an Apprenticeship Ambassador Programme (involving a dozen young people) and support careers aspiration events at the Etihad Stadium in January.

Sandwell Council's Education Business Partnership works closely with schools and businesses to promote apprenticeships. Local employers, such as the metals manufacturer, the Hadley Group, go into schools to promote apprenticeships.

City of York Council supports the York Training Providers Group, which in its first year (2012/13) made over 50 presentations to schools, colleges and job fairs. The Council works through the National Apprenticeship Service.

Leeds City Council has secured support for the creation of a 14-24 apprenticeship academy in Leeds, giving young people and local employers access to opportunities and training.

Sheffield Council have put into place their 'Ambition Sheffield' programme, focusing on school age learners unlikely to achieve five GCSEs and 16-18 year olds requiring a Foundation Learning programme. The programme is delivered through an extensive network of quality assured colleges and training providers, offering apprenticeship pathways. The Council is using its own training units in supporting this 'traineeship' programme working in partnership with local schools and a college.

Engagement with business

An independent report by leading small business owner and entrepreneur, Jason Holt ('Making apprenticeships more accessible to SMEs', 2012) found that many SMEs feel unable to take on an apprentice. Many Labour councils have responded to the findings of the Holt report by focusing support for apprenticeships on smaller businesses.

Kirklees Council have been directing significant resources into giving SMEs a clear, easy to understand and easy to access apprenticeship offer – this is particularly important as 99% of businesses within Kirklees are classed as SMEs. They have achieved this through a number of initiatives including engaging their local strategic partners in a 'call to action' on the development of a collaborative approach to investing in skills, with investment in youth employment and apprenticeships - culminating in a 'Investing in Skills Conference.' The Council has helped create 50 apprentice jobs and a Market Traders pilot with Skillsmart and the National Market Traders Federation.

Newcastle City Council provides a number of initiatives to encourage SMEs to take on apprenticeships, liaison with employers and organising programmes. The Council's 'Apprenticeship Plus' scheme has created around 90 apprenticeship opportunities.

Oldham Council has been reaching out to smaller businesses via support for the online 'Oldham Business Network' forum. Through this network the Council have been promoting the DWP Apprenticeship Wage Incentive programme, which offers pathways for 16-24 year olds to smaller businesses.

Plymouth City Council launched their plan for jobs in January 2013, which aims to create 500 apprenticeships over the next two years. The Council is also working closely with City College Plymouth in rolling out this strategy, with a focus on supporting smaller businesses across the city. The Council has also set up its '1,000 club', which seeks to recruit 1,000 locally based companies and encourage them to support a young person into work via an apprenticeship or other work placement.

Darlington Council launched their 'Foundation for Jobs' in January 2012, with active support from the Darlington Partnership and the Northern Echo newspaper. The Foundation is promoting apprenticeships to businesses and makes them aware of the funding available to take on apprentices. It also offers pre-interview training for young people and helps firms to find suitable training courses. This has led to the creation of 120 apprenticeship places since the scheme launched.

Knowsley Council's apprentice programme has so far provided 414 young people

with new work opportunities in a range of business sectors. Each apprentice trains while they work, are paid a wage and attend college to gain an NVQ Level 3 qualification or above.

Sheffield City Council is leading the City Region's new £77.3m 'Skills Made Easy' programme, which aims to create 4,000 apprenticeships. The programme aims to ensure SMEs can access financial support for apprenticeships and accredited training.

Camden Council set up the King's Cross Construction Skills Centre in 2004. The centre is offering apprenticeships, training and employment advice and opportunities to people looking to start a career within construction or those who are interested in furthering their career within the industry. The Centre has benefited from a number of major construction projects, including King's Cross Central, one of the biggest construction developments in London. Working closely with developers Carillion, 58 young people started apprenticeships between January and March of 2013

Apprenticeship hubs

Labour councils are setting up 'Apprenticeship Hubs' which offer a 'one stop shop' of services and support to help businesses engage with the apprenticeship programme. There is no one model for the hubs, although they all target SMEs.

Wakefield Council uses its Apprenticeship Hub proactively to secure quality apprenticeships for their local community. The Council has recently appointed an Apprenticeship Hub co-ordinator to provide 300 additional apprenticeships across the district – with a focus on firms who have not offered apprenticeships in the last 12 months.

Manchester City Council have established an Apprenticeship Hub across the Greater Manchester area. The Hub includes partners from the Greater Manchester Local Authorities and Chamber of Commerce, the Skills Funding Agency and National Apprenticeship Service. The Hub supports joint activities such as a Greater Manchester wide marketing and communications strategy for apprenticeships, as well as the 'Greater Manchester Commitment' to offer grants of up to £2,250 to employers that recruit a young unemployed person into an apprenticeship. Over 600 young people have been supported into apprenticeships through the Greater Manchester Commitment.

Leeds City Council's Apprenticeship Hub network (covering 8 hubs and two 'Apprenticeship Training Agencies') has received backing from the new Leeds City Region Deal. The Hub will encourage 7,500 new employers to take on apprenticeships, with the aim of generating 15,000 apprenticeships by 2017.

Bradford Council's Apprenticeship Hub forms part of the Leeds City Region Deal and 'Get Bradford Working' programme. The new hub will link with other hubs in the region.

Newcastle City Council are developing a Skills Hub across the Local Enterprise Partnership area. The Hub will aim to increase apprenticeships by 15%. Government funding, through the City Skills Fund, will be used support the Hub.

Sandwell Council has set up its own training centre – Future Skills Sandwell – with a focus on construction training. The centre operates the 'Building Futures Hub' for young ex-offenders, offering 10 week construction taster courses that can lead into apprenticeships. Over 100 people have participated since the hub was set up in 2011.

List of Contributing Councils

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Blackpool Borough Council; www.blackpool.gov.uk; @BpoolCouncil; Leader: Cllr Simon Blackburn

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council; www.bradford.gov.uk; @bradfordmdc; Leader: Cllr David Green

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council; www.bury.gov.uk; @BuryCouncil; Leader: Cllr Mike Connolly

Camden London Borough Council; www.camden.gov.uk; @Camdentalking; Leader: Cllr Sarah Hayward

Darlington Borough Council; www.darlington.gov.uk; @Darlingtonbc; Leader: Cllr Bill Dixon

Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council; www.kirklees.gov.uk; @KirkleesCouncil; Leader: Cllr Mehboob Khan

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council; www.knowsley.gov.uk; @KnowsleyCouncil; Leader: Cllr Ron Round

Leeds City Council; www.leeds.gov.uk; @Leedscc; Leader: Cllr Keith Wakefield

Lewisham London Borough Council; www.lewisham.gov.uk; @LewishamCouncil; Mayor: Sir Steve Bullock

Manchester City Council; www.manchester.gov.uk; @ManCityCouncil; Leader: Cllr Richard Leese

Newcastle City Council; www.newcastle.gov.uk; @NewcastleCC; Leader: Cllr Nick Forbes

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council; www.oldham.gov.uk; @Oldhamcouncil; Leader: Cllr Jim McMahon

Plymouth City Council; www.plymouth.gov.uk; @Plymouthcc; Leader: Cllr Tudor Evans

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council; www.sandwell.gov.uk; @SandwellCouncil;
Leader: Cllr Darren Cooper

Sheffield City Council; www.sheffield.gov.uk; @SheffCouncil; Leader: Cllr Julie Dore

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council; www.wakefield.gov.uk; @Mywakefield;
Leader: Cllr Peter Box

City of York Council; www.york.gov.uk; @CityofYork; Leader: Cllr James Alexander

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Gordon Marsden MP, Shadow Minister for Further Education, Skills and Regional Growth

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