



# Apprenticeship Strategy

**2024 - Onwards**

# Foreword

Creating a strong and prosperous Bradford that is resilient and resourceful can only be achieved if we have a highly trained, ambitious, and flexible workforce in Bradford and can continue to attract and retain the very highest talent to live and work in our area. Apprenticeships can make a positive contribution to this by creating opportunities for young people and by providing a framework for the workforce, of all ages, to undertake relevant qualifications, helping to raise skills and aspirations.

The Government's Vision for Apprenticeships has continued to highlight the value of apprentices to economic prosperity and its recent apprenticeship reforms have called for a substantial rise in the number of apprentices.

Bradford Council has a responsibility in helping to create these opportunities both as an employer and as a strategic leader. It is also crucial that we continue to take positive action in utilising apprenticeships as part of our Council's own workforce strategy.

This Apprenticeship Strategy offers the opportunity for the Council to provide entry routes into the organisation, particularly for young people, as well as to enable our existing workforce to undertake relevant apprenticeship qualifications aligned to current and future skills need. Adopting a more strategic approach as to how we attract, retain, and develop our workforce to meet our communities' needs both now and in the future is vital.

**Apprenticeships are an integral part of this.**

# Introduction

This document sets the Apprenticeship Strategy for Bradford Council as an employer and the positive action that we will take in our approach to apprenticeships as part of our workforce strategy. It is aligned with “[Our Council Plan](#)” 2021-2025.

This Apprenticeship Strategy will be used to inform service and workforce plans to help identify the actions that individual service areas will take in support of this strategy and in meeting the specific challenges they face. The Apprenticeship Strategy also supports and works alongside other talent and entry to work initiatives such as work experience, traineeships, graduate programmes and internships as part of our wider talent approach.

“I greatly appreciate the opportunity of this apprenticeship. It is helping me to develop as a better youth worker every day that I'm in the job”.

- Ali



# Vision

Apprenticeships within the Council are seen and valued as high-quality pathways to successful careers, providing opportunities for new and existing employees to develop and which assist the Council in meeting its current and future skills needs.

The Council faces a number of challenges over the next few years. These challenges can only be met if we have the right people, with the right skills at the right time to meet demands.

**Apprenticeships therefore need to form an integral part of our organisational workforce strategy** to provide the Council with a talent pipeline that supports our current and future skills needs.



# Context

## Meeting current and future skills needs

Some service areas, particularly within the Adults and Children's areas are already experiencing skills shortages as competition for skilled workers increases. Adopting a more strategic approach to 'growing our own' future workforce will become increasingly important.

In addition to identifying apprenticeship opportunities for new employees, a 'grow our own' approach will also need applying to our existing workforce if we are to ensure we have the capacity and capabilities we need. Providing opportunities for existing staff to undertake apprenticeships, particularly higher-level apprenticeships, to gain skills and progress their career will further help to develop talent pipelines within the organisation.

## Government reforms

Set against the Government's drive to increase apprentices, will result in circa £1 million of the Authority's budget allocated to the apprenticeship levy (per year), attracting apprentices, and providing opportunities to progress to higher level apprenticeships will be critical to ensuring the Council meets both its skill needs and maximise its levy fund.

Against a background of public sector change it is, however, important that the increase of apprentices within the Council is aligned to our future skills needs and quality of apprenticeships and not just to meet Government targets.

## Supporting Bradford Council's Strategic Ambitions

Providing apprenticeships and routes into apprenticeships are an integral part of Bradford's wider economy, skills and education strategy by helping to raise skills and aspirations of the district it serves.

Providing opportunities for staff to undertake apprenticeships and developing a pro-apprenticeship culture at all levels within the Council will not only help to raise skills within our workforce in support of skills needs and assist in meeting the Government's apprentice targets but also support the Council's wider strategic ambitions as well as succession planning.

As a leader of public services and one of the largest employers in the district, it is also important that our workforce is representative of the communities we serve. Within the Council, current 3.98% (*Feb 2024*) of our workforce is aged under 25, which has decreased from 5.38% in 2022.

*(There was an increase in figures due to the funded Kickstart programme between 2021-2022).*

The challenges for finding work are particularly acute for young people aged 18-24, as well as for care leavers, long term unemployed, returners to the labour market and those with disabilities, as they try to compete against more experienced candidates. Bradford Council as an employer and as strategic leader has a responsibility in helping to create opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

“I felt like I’d rather be working and earning money whilst I was learning.

- Joseph

## Apprenticeship Strategy Aims

Set against this wider context, it is therefore timely to review our approach to apprenticeships and how we attract, develop, retain apprentices and develop apprenticeship programmes.

Some service areas, particularly within the Adults and Children’s areas are already experiencing skills shortages as competition for skilled workers increases. Adopting a more strategic approach to ‘growing our own’ future workforce will become increasingly important.

- Support our workforce skills needs.
- Support Bradford Councils Plan “Better skills, more jobs and a growing economy”
- Meet the challenges of the Governments apprenticeship reforms.



## **Our Apprenticeship Strategy aims to:**

### **1 Identify apprenticeship opportunities as part of Service Workforce Planning activity to support skills needs**

Maximising the use of apprenticeships is critical in helping to build the capabilities we require. Consequently, we will continue to work with service managers to map apprenticeships to critical skills needs. Identifying apprenticeships opportunities as part of service workforce planning will enable service managers to act in mitigating potential skills shortages and develop the skills needed for future service delivery.

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### **2 Actively promote apprenticeships within the Council as a valuable recruitment and talent pipeline opportunities and develop a pro-apprenticeship culture amongst managers and staff**

Vacancies that are Band 7 and below will automatically be considered as an apprenticeship opportunity wherever possible.

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### **3 Develop opportunities to utilise higher level apprenticeships in support of skills needs, raising skills and aspirations.**

Providing opportunities for existing staff to utilise apprenticeships to gain skills and progress their career will help to develop talent pipelines within the organisation. Apprentice qualifications have traditionally been perceived as only relevant for school leavers and for junior entry level roles. Developing a greater awareness of the types of apprenticeships available, particularly higher-level apprenticeships and the benefits they offer for both new and existing employees will be essential to increasing the number of employees undertaking an apprenticeship.

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### **4 To continue to promote and start apprenticeships:**

- Increasing the opportunities for new entrants through vacancies
- Increasing the number of existing employees undertaking an apprenticeship to develop their skills and career paths.

“This apprenticeship has really allowed me to take the first step to progress my career and will be the start of a long journey in Project Management, which I don’t think I could have gotten to without this opportunity – Dan.

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## **5 Increase the number of new apprentices moving into a job role within the Council.**

### **Increasing opportunities for new entrants**

Until the new apprentice reforms in 2017, apprenticeships within the Council were predominantly utilised via vacancies to provide apprenticeship opportunities in the main for trade occupations and business admin. This approach relied on individual service managers identifying opportunities willing to take on an apprentice.

For the Council to provide a greater number of opportunities, in addition to considering the use of apprentices as part of service workforce planning, a corporate approach was taken to use vacancies wherever possible for apprenticeships roles. The rates of pay for the apprentices are a percentage of the current job band, depending on age.

### **Generic Business Support and Administration programmes**

Against a background of organisational change, a range of business support apprenticeships (e.g. Business Administration, Customer Services) have and will continue to enable entry level apprenticeships to develop a foundation of generic skills that are relevant to a number of job roles. They provide a good foundation on which to develop more specialist or technical skills.

### **Other specific occupational programmes**

Expanding the apprenticeship programme approach to provide an entry route into other occupational areas will also help support the Council's skills needs. The Council has a diverse range of job roles. Identifying relevant apprenticeships that can support the skills needed within specific occupational areas will be crucial in helping to maximise the levy funding and mitigate potential skill shortages. Since the start of our Apprenticeship programme from May 2017 we now have had 957 apprenticeship starts at Bradford Council from Level 2 to Level 7 (master's degree) with more apprenticeship standards becoming available to meet the needs of organisations.

### **Increasing opportunities for existing employees**

In addition to increasing promotional activity of the different types, levels and benefits of apprenticeships for new entrants, identifying opportunities to utilise relevant apprenticeship frameworks to support skills development and as part of career pathways for existing employees will help to increase the demand for apprenticeships. Apprenticeship opportunities are also integrated within our council wide learning and development offer for employees.

Opportunities to use relevant supervisory and management apprenticeships to support aspiring and developing managers will also be identified.



## 6 Develop work experience and traineeship opportunities as a pathway into apprenticeships and to ensure our workforce is more representative of the communities, we serve by providing opportunities for diverse groups

### Disadvantaged young people

The challenges for finding work are particularly hard for young people aged 18-24 as they try to compete in the labour market against more experienced candidates. Offering good quality apprenticeships that provide an entry and development route, and at a competitive salary, is vital if we are to attract and retain young people within the organisation.

Research has shown that apprentices who start their careers with employers providing good quality programmes have a high commitment to the overall culture and aims of the business and provide a ready-made talent pool. However, unless there is a planned approach to ensure apprenticeships are aligned to areas where there are sufficient employment opportunities at the end of their training programme, the resulting churn will do little to help stimulate the growth of apprentices, secure a return on investment or improve the Council's reputation.

Consequently, identifying apprenticeship opportunities aligned to vacancies and skills needs will be crucial.

In conjunction with education colleagues within the Council we will also seek opportunities to access and utilise relevant projects and funding streams to help disadvantaged young people overcome personal barriers to accessing training opportunities within the Authority.



### Care Leavers

Those leaving care have been identified as a particular group who find it hard to enter and sustain the labour market. It is especially difficult for those that have not had the opportunity or developed the ability to navigate the complexities of finding and sustaining work. Whilst apprenticeship can provide an opportunity, research evidence has shown without the right support mechanisms and basic employability skills in place, many care leavers find it difficult to sustain and complete an apprenticeship.

The Council has committed a pre-apprenticeship 12 month paid work placement to help prepare them for the world of work and the support services are in place to enable greater success. To continue to work with internal and external colleagues in direct contact with care leavers to identify how we can better engage with children in care and care leavers and raise their interest in undertaking the 12-month work placement and other opportunities (ie work experience, traineeships within the Council. The programme will assist their transition to an apprenticeship, for those that successfully complete the work placement and wish to continue to work for the Council would offer a guaranteed interview for an apprenticeship.

## **Long term unemployed/returners to the labour market**

Providing work experience pathways to apprenticeships, along with apprenticeship opportunities, would also assist the longer term unemployed and older workers returning to the labour market. Whilst apprenticeships have tended to focus on providing opportunities for young people all apprenticeship opportunities at Bradford Council can be accessed by both young and older applicants.

## **People with a disability**

Similarly, we will work with a range of supported employment organisations to develop work experience opportunities for people who are unemployed and who have a disability. These individuals, by virtue of their disability are one of the groups furthest from the labour market. Identifying and creating effective ways of increasing access to education skills and training will help improve the life chances for individuals and assist their ability to become economically active. Work experience and job carving roles will be implemented across the Council to progress onto a traineeship or apprenticeship opportunity.

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## **7 Develop partnerships with training providers and other Local Authorities to identify existing and new apprenticeship standards that support the Council's occupational skills needs.**

Ensuring apprenticeships are relevant to skills needs, particularly for skill shortage areas, is essential. In addition to developing partnerships with other public sector bodies and training providers, working with relevant learning steering groups to help shape and drive the future provision of apprenticeships will be critical to both organisational success and in supporting Bradford's economy.

Skills for Work the Councils internal training provider will be a key partner in delivering apprenticeship standards to the Councils workforce.

Local colleges/universities and training providers will also play a key part in delivering apprenticeship standards to the Council workforce.

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## **8 Work with schools, and other partners to maximise the levy funds and develop the skills required by Bradford's economic growth**

### **Working with schools**

To maximise the opportunities from the levy it is essential that Local Authority schools are aware of the apprenticeship reforms. The Council will have the responsibility for publishing data regarding the number of apprentice starts within schools as part of the Councils Annual Apprenticeship report required by the Government.

Consequently, in addition to providing advice, information and guidance relating to the reforms we will also work with our schools to promote the benefits and the changes can offer in helping to meet skills gaps and future workforce needs. This will include raising awareness of the new Apprenticeship standards in development for Teachers, Teaching Assistants and School Business Directors, as well as a range of other broader standards that can be used by the wider school's workforce in helping to create apprentice opportunities.

In addition to this we will also strengthen the relationships with the wider school's population to promote apprenticeship opportunities as routes into jobs and careers within the Council.

### **Working with partners**

The opportunity to maximise the levy funds in conjunction with other partners to develop the skills that are required for Bradford's economy will also be critical for the future. As a large levy paying employer with an ambitious Apprentice Strategy, we can transfer 25% of our apprenticeship levy funds to other employers, helping to boost the high-quality apprenticeships across the district. Identifying where best these monies are required to support Bradford's skills need and influencing this through the LEP and other strategic forums will also be important moving forward. This will also include the support of the Council's procurement service team to influence the creation of apprenticeships and traineeship opportunities within the supply chain by building in a social value element to the Council's commissioning arrangements.

“I've found my apprenticeship has given me confidence in abundance, transferable skills and has given me the freedom to do the things I want to do”.

- Samuel

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## **Actions to support our Strategic Aims**

Appendix 1 provides an outline of the actions required over the short, medium and long term to support our organisational Apprentice Strategic Aims.

In responding to the Government's apprentice reforms this action plan also outlines how we as an employer have “regard to” how we intend to meet the apprenticeship targets.

## Performance Monitoring

The action plan will be regularly reviewed and reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The plan will be updated on an annual basis in line with the Bradford Council Plan and any other local and national influences.

In accordance with our Public Sector Duty requirement, we will also publish annually, data relating to the Council's progress set by the Government.

“This apprenticeship has really opened a door for me; I wouldn't be able to work for the Countryside and Rights of way department if it wasn't as an apprentice. Going through school I envisioned a different career path, I studied and got my qualifications for that, when I realised that that path wasn't for me then the apprenticeship was a real lifeline.

The fact you get the qualifications as you go rather than needing them to start has made countryside work a real possibility for my future...” - Dylan.

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## Contact Us

For further advice and guidance please call the apprenticeship team:

01274 434451/434450/431479 Or email the team at:

[apprenticeships@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@bradford.gov.uk)

The wording in this publication can be made available in other formats such as large print and Braille. Please call 01274 436699.

## Apprenticeship Strategy Action Plan

1. **Identify apprenticeship opportunities as part of Service workforce planning activity to support skills needs.**
2. **Actively promote apprenticeships within the Council as valuable recruitment and talent pipeline opportunities and develop a pro-apprenticeship culture amongst managers and staff.**
3. **Develop opportunities to utilise higher level apprenticeships in support of skills needs, raising skills and aspirations.**

Actions	Responsibility	Time Scale	Desired Outcome
<p>Embed the use of apprenticeships within the Council's Workforce Planning to Succession Plan and Guidance for Managers</p> <p>Business Partners to work with Managers to identify apprentice opportunities as part of service workforce planning and a 'grow our own approach' to meeting skills needs.</p>	<p>Apprenticeship Team</p> <p>HR Business Partners</p>	<p>On going</p>	<p>Apprenticeships are utilised to support service skills needs</p>
<p>Continue to work with managers to map apprenticeships across the organisation and include higher level apprenticeships, for critical skills needs and to succession plan.</p>	<p>Apprenticeship team</p> <p>HR Business Partners</p> <p>Skills for Work</p>	<p>On going</p>	<p>Apprenticeships are utilised to support service skills needs</p>
<p>Identify opportunities to use relevant supervisory and management apprenticeship standards to support aspiring and developing managers</p>	<p>Managers</p> <p>HR</p>	<p>On going</p>	<p>Assist organisational skills.</p>
<p>Increase awareness and activity of the different types, levels, and benefits of Apprenticeships to staff and managers.</p> <p>Regular communication and success stories through variety of communication methods.</p> <p>Plan regular manager information sessions throughout the year and National Apprenticeship Week</p>	<p>Apprenticeship Team</p> <p>Skills for Work</p>	<p>On going</p>	<p>Increase awareness and the uptake of apprenticeships and training.</p>

**4. To continue to hold regard to the former Public Sector target of 2.3% required by the government to increase new apprenticeships starts per year by: -**

- Increasing the opportunities for new entrants
- Increasing the number of existing employees undertaking an apprenticeship to develop their skills and career paths.
- Pre apprenticeship programmes to work towards apprenticeships

**5. Increase the number of new apprentices moving into a job role within the Council**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time Scale</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>
Implement a recruitment strategy which progressively increases the number of apprentices each year	Apprenticeship Team HR	Ongoing	Apprentices are recruited in line with organisational skills needs
To continue to increase the number of new apprenticeship starts each year.	Apprenticeship Team HR Managers Skills for Work	On going	Former Public Sector target of 2.3% workforce new apprenticeship starts per year is met.
Increase the attraction of potential applicants through greater use of social media and digital platforms as well as gov.uk to promote apprenticeship opportunities and as a route to jobs and careers within the Council.	Apprenticeship Team Recruitment Team Marketing Team Skills for Work	On going	To encourage more young people to apply for vacancies in the Council as well as targeting potential applicants
Pay rates are a percentage of the actual job band depending on age and these rates are competitive in the labour market to recruit and retain apprentices to meet organisational needs.	HR	On going	To attract and retain candidates to meet organisational needs
Adopt a more pro-active approach to identifying apprenticeship opportunities for new entrants by: 1) All Band 7 and below vacancies to be considered as an apprenticeship in the first instance. 2) All other vacancies to be considered as an apprenticeship with the relevant qualification linked to the job role – to include Higher and Degree apprenticeships 3) Grow our own programme – develop shortage of skills through apprenticeship opportunities	HR Apprenticeship Team	Ongoing	Pro apprenticeship culture developed.  Apprenticeships are utilised to support service skills needs.

<p><b>Existing Employees</b> Provide apprenticeship opportunities for existing employees aligned to skills development requirements across the organisation. Raise awareness of apprenticeships as route to progression for all employees which will include statutory and mandatory training requirements.</p>	<p>HR Apprenticeship Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career development opportunities provided.</li> <li>• Training Needs Analysis</li> <li>• Succession Planning</li> <li>• Levy funding maximised.</li> </ul>
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**6. Develop work experience and traineeship opportunities as a pathway into apprenticeships and to ensure our workforce is more representative of the communities, we serve by providing opportunities for diverse groups.**

Actions	Responsibility	Time Scale	Desired Outcome
Develop, implement and embed a diverse job route programme that offers work experience and traineeship opportunities to young people, children in care, care leavers, long term unemployed those with disabilities.	HR Children Services/Trust Apprenticeship Team	Ongoing	Accessible routes into talent pipeline provided. Development of enterprise and work readiness skills in young people.
Align placement/job vacancy opportunities with skills gaps and skills shortage areas across the organisation.	HR Apprenticeship Team Children Services	Ongoing	Support service skills needs.
Map placements with apprenticeship opportunities and promote opportunities as pathway into employment with the Council.	HR Apprenticeship Team	Ongoing	Grow and develop future workforce and skills.
Improve the promotion and attraction of apprenticeships as career choices for young people and disadvantaged groups (care leavers, disability, long term unemployed). Maximise the use of the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network group to help promote apprenticeships opportunities.	HR Apprenticeship Team Apprenticeship Department Champions	Ongoing	Value of apprenticeships is promoted. Apprenticeships are accessible to the widest demographic.
Provide additional support and development opportunities to increase retention rates and provide sustainable jobs for young people and care leavers.	HR Apprenticeship Team Children Services	Ongoing	More young people and care leavers working for the Council.
Provide additional support for young people (aged 16-18) and care leavers aged 19-24 in line with Government funding criteria.	Apprenticeship Team Children Services	Ongoing	Retention on apprenticeship programme.
Increase the number of employees under the age of 25 years and increase number for Equality target groups: - 10% people with special educational needs or disabilities 30% Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) 100% opportunities for Looked After Children where they would have access to traineeships and apprenticeships	Managers HR Apprenticeship Team	On going	To increase and meet the Councils targets on apprenticeships.

**7. Develop partnerships with Training Providers and other local authorities to identify existing and new apprenticeship standards that support the Council's Occupational skills needs**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time Scale</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>
Review existing standards that are fit for purpose and develop flexible, tailored delivery models to meet organisational requirements and demands.  Work with providers to identify and develop new training routes available through the new apprentices funding.  Identify priority areas for development based on skills needs and gaps.	Managers HR Apprenticeship Team Skills for Work and other training providers	Ongoing	Future skills requirements are built into the delivery content of apprenticeships.
Contribute to the identification of common core skills needs across the public sector in Bradford.	Managers/HR Apprenticeship Team	Ongoing	Future skills requirements are built into the delivery content of apprenticeships.

**8. Work with local authority-maintained schools to maximise the levy funds and develop the skills required for Bradford's economic growth**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time Scale</b>	<b>Desired Outcome</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure local authority-maintained schools are aware of the apprenticeship reforms and levy arrangements.</li> <li>• Work with schools to utilise levy funds to meet skills gaps and plan future workforce needs.</li> <li>• Provide advice, information, and guidance about: -               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recruiting apprentices in line with the National Apprenticeship Service</li> <li>• reporting arrangements</li> <li>• accessing the digital account via the Apprenticeship Team</li> <li>• Skills for Work (Internal training provider)</li> <li>• External training providers to use through the YPO procurement process</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Finance, Payroll Apprenticeship Team	Ongoing	Apprentices are recruited in line with organisation skills needs.  Public Sector duty target of 2.3% workforce apprenticeships is met.
Support colleagues to promote benefits of apprenticeships as employees and as career routes.	HR Apprenticeship Team Skills for Work	Ongoing	Value of apprenticeships and vocational route ways is promoted.
Strengthen the relationship with the wider school's population to promote apprenticeship opportunities as routes into jobs and careers within the Council.	Apprenticeship Team Children Services	Ongoing	To work towards former Public Sector duty target of 2.3% workforce apprenticeships is met.