

JSCC

Apprentice update: December 2020

We have been running our apprenticeship programme since 2013, with funding for approximately 8 apprenticeships per year which are shared across a variety of service areas. Expression of interest forms are completed by service areas and then collated and presented to the Leadership Team. Apprentice posts are allocated to service areas on a priority basis.

The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced in April 2017, and this levy applies to all employers with an annual pay bill of £3,000,000 or more, who must pay 0.5% of their pay bill. Employers may then access this money through the Digital Apprenticeship Service to pay for apprenticeship training from a selection of training providers.

Entry Level Apprenticeships

The majority of our apprentices are recruited into entry level apprenticeships. The payment of fees for training and education are offset against the apprenticeship levy. These apprenticeship contracts are fixed for 18 months and although there is no guarantee of permanent employment at the end, apprentices are encouraged to apply for suitable vacancies and many stay with us after they complete their apprenticeships. Nonetheless the scheme provides an excellent introduction into employment for young people as well as the opportunity to study and achieve a Level 3 qualification e.g. Business Administration, Customer Services, or Events Apprenticeship (Hitchin Town Hall only).

The majority of NHDC apprentices are paid at Grade 1 - £9.34 per hour which is well above the minimum apprentice rate of £4.15 and also above the National Living Wage of £8.72. Higher level apprenticeships paid at Grade 3 - £11.00 per hour have been trialled in HR with a Level 5 qualification in Human Resource Management.

The following service areas currently have apprentices:

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|---------------------------|---|
| - Customer Services | - Democratic Services |
| - Hitchin Town Hall | - IT |
| - Management Support Unit | - Community Engagement and Policy |
| - Property Services | - Community Protection and Licensing (shared) |

Recent graduates from the new apprenticeship scheme are now employed in the following roles:

- Revenues Officer
- Information and Asset Officer
- Assistant HR Business Partner
- HR Projects and Systems Officer

The assessment process is very different under the new scheme and consists of an End Point Assessment (usually an on-line exam) and a Professional Discussion, which is a one to one interview to discuss the portfolio evidence submitted throughout the Apprenticeship.

In addition to those listed above, we have 12 other current employees who are graduates of the apprenticeship scheme working in a range of service areas including IT, Customer Services, Management Support Unit, Environmental Health, Planning Compliance, and Active Communities. Other apprentices have opted to stay on with NHDC following the completion of their apprenticeship either in temporary or permanent roles but have since left to further their careers.

Training for Existing Staff

The Apprenticeship Levy can also be used to fund Apprenticeship qualifications for existing members of staff – providing an alternative way to achieve a professional qualification – this was recently trialled by a member of staff who completed the Level 3 Team Leader qualification and we have another member of staff who has recently started a professional qualification as a Revenues and Welfare Benefits Practitioner (Level 4).

Careers Fairs

We support a number of annual school careers fairs with members of the HR team attending along with current NHDC apprentices to promote the apprenticeship scheme and to raise awareness of the Council as a local employer.

Feedback

To celebrate National Apprenticeship week earlier in the year, we sought feedback from former apprentices:

I'm extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to be an apprentice in Environmental Health. I learnt so much over that year and made great connections with different teams. This then enabled me to move over to another team and learn even more skills. After I returned from travelling, I was lucky enough to start a temporary position back in Environmental Health. This then resulted in a permanent position which I love. Being an apprentice gave me a lot more confidence, better people skills and knowledge of Environmental Health. I saw a good opportunity and I most definitely took it. If it wasn't for my apprenticeship, I wouldn't be doing what I do today!

Natalie, Environmental Health Technical Officer

My first reaction and the reason behind my becoming an Apprentice was to get a way into working at the council, and with a lack of office experience it seemed like a sensible way in. I am very grateful for the apprenticeship for getting me the job, for giving me the opportunity to work in 2 departments, for getting to meet a group of apprentices in the same boat to share good things and frustrations with. It gave me a way to show off the skills I already had without having the necessary "Paper evidence" (qualifications etc.) But other than just an "in", it also gave me the opportunity to display why I would be worth keeping on afterwards.

I also enjoyed the support I got during the apprenticeship from management and HR, that you may not get as much of just coming into a regular role.

Matt, LLPG & GIS Officer

I have now been at NHDC for nearly 7 years and started as an apprentice. I joined with the idea of improving my office and PC experience and skills in a professional environment. NHDC has allowed me to develop and evolve through several roles to now be a Technical Development Officer which I would not have been able to do without the apprenticeship scheme.

Peter, Technical Development Officer

The apprenticeship at NHDC has helped me to learn new skills, develop skills I already have and use programs I have never used before. I found the course very useful and when I finished my apprenticeship, there was a job vacancy that I applied for and was offered that enabled me to continue working at NHDC and use the knowledge I had gained in my new role. I have been at NHDC for 5 years now.

Emma, MSU Admin Support Officer