

Brighton & Hove City Council case study: key details

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Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) has been recruiting apprentices since the council was set up as a unitary authority in 1996. Apprenticeships provide genuine jobs with training and BHCC has continuously improved and expanded its apprenticeships offer in recent years. With the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and public sector targets, it has seen an opportunity to upskill and diversify its workforce.

Putting the Levy to good use

BHCC use apprenticeships to attract younger people to the council to grow their own future workforce. Indeed, several senior managers began their careers as apprentices in the organisation. The council recruits a wide range of apprenticeships in Accountancy, Childcare, Business Administration, IT and have taken full advantage of the new apprenticeship standards including, Junior Journalism, Digital IT degree's, Digital Marketer, Data Analyst, Project Management, Housing and is looking forward to using more degree apprenticeships. They have been involved in a number of trailblazer groups and particularly looking forward to introducing new apprenticeships in digital and planning departments.

Apprenticeship Champions in each directorate are key to raising the profile of apprenticeships, looking for opportunities for new apprenticeships and advocating for staff to use apprenticeships for their own upskilling. The apprenticeship programme is fully supported by the senior leadership team who also facilitate opportunities for apprentices to job shadow them for a day as well as directors coming to work with apprentices.

Just over 40% off the council's 120 apprentices have been recruited externally and with the introduction of more degree level standards in areas such as management and IT, the take up has been at all levels of staff.

BHCC has found that its apprentices, whether internally or externally recruited, are passionate about sharing their experience. To harness this enthusiasm, in 2014, it set up a group of Apprenticeship Ambassadors, who go into local schools, colleges and employment fairs to talk about their experience and offer an inside view on what it's like to be an apprentice

Carla Butler, Apprenticeship Programme Manager, says: "It's common sense to do this: young people want to hear from other young people about their experiences. Previously, one apprentice joined the council at 16, became an Apprenticeship Ambassador and returned to her old school – 100 young people turned up to listen to her speak. In the previous year she had been the only student interested in being an apprentice. It shows how apprenticeships now have a higher profile." The council apprentices have now joined the South East Youth Apprenticeship Ambassador Network ([YAAN](#)) and look forward to engaging with more young people.

The council recently ran two "myth busting" events aimed at students and parents, challenging the misconception about apprenticeships, promoting higher and degree level opportunities. Parents and schools are reporting a greater interest in apprenticeships as an alternative into employment and training.

Supporting and representing the community

As well as offering quality training, BHCC believes it's important to provide a supportive environment. As a member of the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network (ADCN), the council has two main goals: improving support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and improving representation of people from a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background.

Carla explains: "We want to make progress in ensuring our workforce reflects our local community. We don't have all of the answers but we are able to access a national network and work collaboratively to address challenges."

She continues: "We communicate vacancies to key departments and organisations in the City and attend employment and community fairs to educate others on the recent apprenticeship reforms. This includes recently a multicultural health and wellbeing event open to everyone from minority ethnic backgrounds in Brighton & Hove where we were on hand to answer questions on apprenticeships, share stories and distribute new Parents Guides to Apprenticeships in Polish and Punjabi provided by the ADCN."

Carla explains: "Reaching out to parents and showcasing apprenticeships as a quality route into work is important. We also need to make sure that our Apprenticeship Ambassadors reflect the communities they reach out to."

BHCC have recently recruited two Supported Apprenticeships in partnership with the council's Supported Employment Team. The council builds in plenty of flexibility for individuals with LDD including part-time roles, flexible hours and additional time for one-to-one training in English and Maths. BHCC aims to increase opportunities for part time apprenticeships.

Carla says: "We want to provide more part-time roles for those for whom full-time jobs are a challenge. More flexibility in the recruitment of apprenticeships allows those who have previously faced barriers to entering the world of work to get their foot on the ladder. The difficulties encountered by those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) are more easily overcome with the possibility of part time work and greater support. Our adverts where possible, communicate part time opportunities."

The next generation

BHCC recruits apprentices as one of the ways to bring in younger talent to address its ageing workforce where only 2% of employees are currently under the age of 30. As well as reaching out in-person by going into schools and colleges, the organisation uses digital channels to better target young people. An apprentice is responsible for a dedicated BHCC Apprenticeship Twitter profile, which promotes the activities of the apprentices and opportunities at the council. The council also has a YouTube channel, with a section on apprentices and is looking at developing further digital tools to expand their reach.

BHCC uses the Government's 'Find an apprenticeship' tool, believing it's important potential apprentices see National Apprenticeship Service branding and so that all roles at the council and in the community are advertised in one place.

Carla explains: "Using digital methods to promote our apprenticeships is an important tool for us. Our apprenticeship case studies bring apprenticeships to life and also attract candidates that otherwise wouldn't consider joining us."

Aside from young people, BHCC has a social responsibility as a Local Authority to support those in long-term unemployment. The council has very strong connections with local Job

Centres, and occasionally goes in to local JCP offices to educate staff about apprenticeships and promote live vacancies.

Carla says: "With 12,000 people in Brighton & Hove on Employment and Support Allowance, it's important no one is left behind. That's the key to social mobility. With 90% of the council's apprentices going into another apprenticeship or permanent employment with the council, it's clear that apprenticeships give learners the skills and experience they need to stay in work." Apprenticeships are open to all ages and BHCC have recruited a number of apprentices in their 40s and 50s who were looking to gain new skills after being long term unemployed, and now in permanent employment.

She adds: "It's important the workforce reflects the community it serves, particularly in Local Authorities – and apprenticeships are a way of achieving this. We'd absolutely recommend apprenticeships to any employer. They are not only a great way to diversify your workforce, but national stats show they're productive, bring in new skills, and help with succession planning. There are a thousand reasons to employ apprentices – they're amazing."