Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Hub

Supporting the Delivery of Advanced & Higher Level Apprenticeships

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Newton Hall
Newton
Cambridge CB22 7ZE
Tel: (01223) 871551
Fax: (01223) 871303
cpc@campolco.co.uk
## CONTENTS

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... ii

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1. The Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Hub ..................................................... 1
   1.2. Supporting the Delivery of Advanced and Higher Level Apprenticeships .......... 1
   1.3. Research methodology ......................................................................................... 2

2. Project Delivery .............................................................................................................. 3
   2.1. How was the project delivered? ............................................................................ 3
   2.2. What was the profile of provision? ....................................................................... 5
   2.3. How were the grants utilised? ............................................................................... 6
   2.4. Issues encountered during delivery ...................................................................... 10

3. Employer Perceptions .................................................................................................. 11
   3.1. Employer views on provision ............................................................................... 11

4. Project Outcomes ........................................................................................................ 14
   4.1. Apprenticeship Starts ........................................................................................... 14
   4.2. Sustainability of outcomes .................................................................................. 16

5. Conclusions & Recommendations ............................................................................. 17
   5.1. Introduction .......................................................................................................... 17
   5.2. To what extent did the project impact on existing delivery? ............................... 17
   5.3. How effective was the project in engaging employers in Higher Apprenticeships? .... 17
   5.4. How effective was the project in involving employers to ensure provision met business needs? ................................................................. 18
   5.5. What lessons can be learned from this project? .................................................... 19
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1. The Greater Manchester City Deal committed to the creation of a City Apprenticeship and Skills Hub. The aim of the Hub is to increase the take up of Apprenticeships and other skills provision through greater involvement of employers, in particular to empower SMEs in the skills system and deliver higher levels of employer engagement and investment in skills. The GM Hub has a number of objectives:
   - Objective 1 - to maximise employer take up of apprenticeships in GMs key sectors.
   - Objective 2 - Improve information, advice and guidance services for young people.
   - Objective 3 – Develop the capacity of providers ensuring supply is matched to demand.

2. This project aims to support training providers to ‘develop provision to support both employers and the needs of young people in line with Greater Manchester’s current and future skill needs, including sector requirements and the increasing demand for advanced and higher level skills’\(^1\). The rationale for this support is based on an analysis of Greater Manchester’s current and future skills needs, especially around Advanced and Higher level Apprenticeships (Level 3 and Level 4) in areas such as financial and professional services, digital economy and advanced manufacturing.

3. The capacity building projects were funding through a number of calls between October 2013 and December 2014. Proposals were assessed on the following basis:
   - The effectiveness, quality and success of current provision and growing the market within an identified and plausible business case;
   - A business case illustrating how the provider has arrived at the decision to deliver the proposed framework and the evidence to support its case.
   - Value for money and how the investment will be used as part of the overall project costs.
   - A minimum number of 20 Advanced Apprenticeship starts aligned to this investment achieved by September 2015.

4. The research was undertaken between November 2014 and February 2015 and included a review of monitoring data, interviews with providers and employers who were involved in the development of the projects and/or started a Higher Apprentice. The objectives of the evaluation were to assess progress to date and any issues arising in delivery that might act as constraints on the successful delivery of the overall project.

Key findings

5. In the majority of cases the project has been effective in bringing forward provider’s plans to develop new frameworks at higher levels. In seven out of the eight cases, the provider would have developed the same frameworks anyway but at a later date. In two cases of the eight cases the provider considered that without the financial support the profile of delivery would have been different. Discussions with providers elsewhere has

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highlighted the reluctance of providers to run ahead of the market on higher level Apprenticeships, given wider uncertainties over the funding and other aspects of Apprenticeship policy.

6. **There is some evidence of an attempt to create a new market** although to a large degree most providers to date have worked with existing employer contacts, testing delivery and reputation building with an ‘easy’ market. There is limited evidence of ‘growing the market’ as many of these employers would have undertaken investment in training to an equivalent level through other qualifications. However, the project still has some time to run and there is potential through subsequent cohorts of learners to engage with new employer markets.

7. **Many of the employers engaged were already providing an alternative form of training**, for example, CIPD, HNC and QCF qualifications and there was limited evidence that providers were engaging employers who were new to this level of training. That said, employers saw real added value in the vocational delivery model of these qualifications in that apprentices could apply their learning immediately in the workplace.

8. Only one of the providers was involved in the framework development process and engaged with employers to ensure that the framework met business needs. In all other cases, the providers consulted with employers to varying degrees over the selection of modules and delivery methods including the amount of offsite and online provision. Although employers experienced limited opportunity to select modules and delivery methods, there was general satisfaction with arrangements for their employees. There was no feedback suggesting that releasing employees to provide time for learning was a problem.

9. **Overall, the project to date has had a mixed level of success although it should be noted that it is only part way through.** There is evidence that in the majority of cases providers have been motivated to introduce new frameworks on a shorter timetable that would have occurred in the absence of financial support. Employers have been in the main, keen to take up this provision particularly where it represented a cost saving in terms of the ability to gain a specific qualification at a reduced cost.

10. **Employers have been satisfied with the quality of provision** and in some cases have been able to provide examples of how the Apprenticeship meets their business needs more closely than alternative qualifications due to the level of on-the-job provision and the tailoring to individual employer requirements. This is an important message for the future marketing of the higher level Apprenticeships – many employers were already familiar with the qualifications but reported significant added value in using the vocational delivery method.

11. There are several areas where improvements could be made to ensure better value for money for the public purse:

   - **Growing the market** – there is a need, to encourage providers to grow the market and engage with new employers in order to increase the added value of the support. This could include a reassignment of funding to provide a higher payment for ‘new blood’ starts who have not engaged in Apprenticeships in the past 2 years.
   - **Tailoring provision to employer needs** – there is a concern that in order to break into new markets there needs to be a greater focus on developing co-design process with employers in the framework design process.
Executive Summary

- **Provision for young people** – very few of the Apprenticeships were taken up by young people (16-18) and the vast majority of recruits had 3 or more years of work experience. Vocational qualifications do require that learners are working in job roles that demand such skills and so most Higher Apprenticeship roles are more suited to over 25s. That said, Advanced Apprenticeships that subsequently lead on to Higher Apprenticeships are more appropriate for younger age groups.

12. There is still some time to run on this programme and there are opportunities to tweak current and future delivery through:

- **Sharing of good practice amongst providers** – the research found some examples of good practice and one suggestion of a way forward is to bring the providers that have received grants for Higher Level Apprenticeship development together to share lessons learnt.

- **Focussing on practices which add value** – the above process needs to focus on those elements of delivery which add the most value. For example:
  - Identification of **provision which improves upon existing delivery in better meeting business** needs e.g. practical delivery of the CIPD qualification. What elements of the support should be replicated?
  - Highlighting **good practice in opening up new markets in order to increase the additionality of the support**. To what extent can employers who currently do not use Apprenticeships be attracted to the programme by engaging with training providers to develop appropriate learning at Level 4?
  - Review the sustainability of provision. This needs to include **more consideration of whether and how providers will work differently as a result of the programme**? To what extent has capacity been built?
  - Review of gaps in provision – for example are there specific gaps in Level 4 provision at the framework level and how to these gaps fit with growth sectors and employer need.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Hub

1.1.1. The Greater Manchester City Deal\(^2\) which was agreed in 2012 committed to the creation of a City Apprenticeship and Skills Hub. The aim of the Hub as outlined in the City Deal is to channel skills participation funding for Apprenticeships and other skills provision funded by the state to increase engagement with and take-up of high quality apprenticeships by young people and employers, in particular GM’s 97,000 SMEs. This will empower SMEs in the skills system and deliver higher levels of employer engagement and investment in skills.

1.1.2. Work to develop the Apprenticeship Hub Delivery Plan highlighted a number of significant and critical gaps in delivery:

- Low volumes of level 3 and above apprenticeships available
- Low recruitment into apprenticeships of young unemployed
- Limited availability of impartial information, advice and guidance for young people that is restricting demand amongst learners
- SMEs not fully engaged in the skills system, which they often perceive as complex and disjointed

1.1.3. The Apprenticeship Hub Delivery Plan was produced in July 2014\(^3\) and set out three core objectives:

- Objective 1 - to maximise employer take up of apprenticeships in GMs key sectors.
- Objective 2 - Improve information, advice and guidance services for young people.
- Objective 3 – Develop the capacity of providers ensuring supply is matched to demand.

1.2. Supporting the Delivery of Advanced and Higher Level Apprenticeships

1.2.1. This report reviews the Delivery of Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships, an initiative of the GM Apprenticeship Hub designed to support training providers to ‘develop provision to support both employers and the needs of young people in line with Greater Manchester’s current and future skill demand.”

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\(^2\) GCMA (2012) Greater Manchester City Deal.

needs, including sector requirements and the increasing demand for advanced and higher level skills⁴.

1.2.2. The rationale for this support is based on an analysis of Greater Manchester’s current and future skills needs:

- Evidence from The New Economy Skills Analysis 2013/14 and the series of ‘Deep Dive’ Skills Reports suggests that half of jobs by 2022 will require the equivalent of NVQ Level 3 and a quarter will require NVQ Level 4. However out of 26,970 apprenticeship starts in 2013/14, 9,160 (34%) were at level 3 and only 530 (2%) were at level 4.
- Sectors in GM that have been forecast to grow significantly over the next five years include Financial and Professional services, Digital, Creative Industries, Health and Social Care, Education, Advanced Manufacturing. Other sectors that possess a high degree of constant skills requirements (high churn) include Logistics, Retail, Hospitality and Tourism.
- Analysis has shown that whilst there is apprenticeship delivery across each of the sectors, the offer to employers is too narrow. For example, in the Professional and Financial sector for GM, delivery at Level 3 is mainly concentrated in three frameworks (Business Administration, Management and Accounting). This does not reflect the range of vacancies that are available to young people from employers. There are other sectors in which this trend is repeated.

1.3. Research methodology

1.3.1. The research was undertaken between November 2014 and February 2015 and included:

- A review of secondary information sources
- Telephone discussions with each of the providers involved in the project.
- Telephone discussions with employers who have undertaken Higher Apprenticeship or who has been involved in the development of the project.

1.3.2. This report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides an overview of project delivery mechanisms and the activities undertaken. Chapter 3 then reviews engagement and involvement of employers before chapter 4 reviews project performance. The final chapter sets out key conclusions and recommendations.

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2. **PROJECT DELIVERY**

2.1. **How was the project delivered?**

2.1.1. Grants were available to support providers to develop their capacity to deliver Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships which they did not already deliver. The grants were available to allow providers to invest in training and recruitment of staff; resource development; and marketing to employers and potential apprentices.

2.1.2. Grants were available up to £50,000 per project, as a contribution of up to 50% of total costs. Payments were made to cover start up and implementation and per Higher Apprenticeship start achieved.

2.1.3. The first call for proposals was made in October 2013 and remained open for applications until 31st December 2014. A second call in June 2014, focusing on Advanced Apprenticeships. A third call for proposals was made in October, closing in December 2014, which at the time of writing not been assessed (and so is not the subject of this evaluation). In all calls providers were asked to put forward proposals for expansion and applications were assessed by an appraisal panel on the following basis:

- The effectiveness, quality and success of current provision, particularly in the occupational area of interest; proposals on developing this new provision and growing the market within an identified and plausible business case;
- A business case illustrating how the provider has arrived at the decision to deliver the proposed framework and the evidence to support its credibility based on the research and work with employers in this market.
- Value for money and how the investment will be used as part of the overall project costs.
- A minimum number of 20 Advanced Apprenticeship starts aligned to this investment achieved by September 2015.

2.1.4. Under the first two calls a total of ten providers bid for funding to support the delivery of Higher Level Apprenticeships. Of these ten providers, six were awarded funding for all of the frameworks that they bid for, and one was awarded funding for some of the frameworks included in the bid. Six providers bid for funding for Advanced Apprenticeships and two providers were successful in receiving funding – one of which had already received a grant for Higher Level Apprenticeship provision.
2.1.5. A programme management team oversee the progress of all projects. Providers are asked to complete a monitoring report on a monthly basis in an excel format, which includes:

- Project progress to date which includes the identification of risks to the project and how these will be mitigated
- Progress towards milestones
- Outputs – achievement against profiles
- Finances – expenditure against profiles

2.1.6. This information is then used by the Programme Team in their reporting procedures and also to access the need for further face-to-face monitoring meetings.

2.1.7. The majority of providers decided to bid for funding because they had an existing market at Levels 2 and 3 and considered there to be demand amongst their existing employer base for higher level provision. There was limited evidence that providers researched the wider market.

2.1.8. In a number of cases this demand came from employers who were already training their existing employees on knowledge based qualifications, for example:

- In the care sector – the QCF Level 5 diploma;
- In Human Resource Management – the CIPD qualification;
- In Engineering and IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals – the HNC.

2.1.9. In some cases the providers had already been providing the knowledge based qualifications themselves and were using the Apprenticeship wrapper as a way of reducing the cost to the employer. In many cases, this substantially reduced the cost of these qualifications to the employer. For example:

- Care leadership and management level 5 – in one case the cost to the employer was £950 per start, compared to £1750 on QCF diploma. In a second case the cost to the employer was £200 per start, compared to £1500 on QCF diploma.
- Higher Apprenticeship in Advanced Manufacturing & and IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals – cost to the employer was £1000 per start compared to £3000 on the HNC.
- Level 5 Higher Apprenticeship in Human Resource Management – in one case £800 per start compared to £2000 for CIPD qualification, in another £500 per start compared to £2000 for CIPD qualification.
2.1.10. In the above examples there was evidence that employers were not always aware that they were using an Apprenticeship and that the provision had not been marketed as an Apprenticeship.

2.1.11. The provider of the legal services and legal advice frameworks had responded to employer demand. The Crown Prosecution Service and Citizens Advice Bureau had developed the frameworks two years prior but had not found a provider with the capacity to deliver them. The provider took the opportunity to utilise the funding to respond to this demand.

2.2. What was the profile of provision?

2.2.1. The table below sets out the profile of frameworks supported through this programme. The majority of frameworks are in GM growth sectors with Health and Social Care, Advanced Manufacturing, Digital and Creative Industries and Financial and Professional Services all represented. Three of the frameworks are at level three with four at level four and three at level five.

2.2.2. One of the frameworks, Human Resource Management, Level 3 is yet to be approved by the Sector Skills Council.

Table 2.1: Profile of frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Framework</th>
<th>Providers</th>
<th>Framework approval status</th>
<th>School entry possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and social care</td>
<td>Care Leadership and Management (level 5)</td>
<td>Babington Business College, Bury College</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rochdale Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Manufacturing</td>
<td>Advanced Manufacturing (level 4)</td>
<td>Rochdale Training, Stockport Engineering Training, Bury College</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital and creative industries</td>
<td>Creative and Digital Media (level 4)</td>
<td>Total People</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals (L4)</td>
<td>Total People, Bury College</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Retail Management (L4)</td>
<td>TMC</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and professional services</td>
<td>Legal services (level 3)</td>
<td>Damar Training</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal Advice (level 3)</td>
<td>Damar Training</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Professional Administration (level 4)</td>
<td>Bury College</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross sector</td>
<td>Leadership and Management (Level 5)</td>
<td>Rochdale Training, Bury College</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Resource Management (level 3)</td>
<td>Churchgate</td>
<td>Not yet approved</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Resource Management (level 5)</td>
<td>Churchgate, Bury College</td>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3. How were the grants utilised?

2.3.1. Providers were required to identify the total project budget and proposed activities to be funded in their initial grant applications:

- The total cost of all the projects funded through the programme (including match funding) was £1.73m and providers received an average of 37% of these costs in grant funding.
- The vast majority (92.8%) of the funding was used to support staff costs including the preparation of resources;
- a further 6.2% was used to support marketing to employers and potential apprentices.
- Just 1.0% of the total budget was used to support the development of new frameworks.

Up-skilling existing staff and recruitment

2.3.2. The vast majority of the funding was used to recruit new staff and upskill existing staff. A number of the providers recruited an assessor in order to assess the higher level provision. Bury College also recruited a project coordinator to oversee the implementation of the six separate frameworks awarded grant funding. Several of the providers reported difficulties in recruiting assessors in one case (Total People Creative and Digital Media Level 4 apprenticeship) leading to delays in implementation.

Engagement of employers

2.3.3. All of the providers reported using the funding to market the apprenticeship to employers. In the majority of cases this marketing was relatively minimal as the employers tended to be their existing client base:

- Babington Business College (Care Leadership and management, Level 5) – employers are mainly existing contacts from their Level 2 and 3 Apprenticeship delivery.
- Bury College (varying frameworks). The college sent out an e-shot to employers on their database asking them to get in touch if they were interested in the new frameworks. Their employer relations team followed up on these existing leads and some new leads.
- Churchgate (Human Resource Management, Level 5) - undertook research with their existing employers on potential demand and sent out a mailshot with a survey to ask them about their requirements. They have however subsequently been inundated with applications by new employers who have been directed from the CIPD website.
- Damar Training (Legal Services and Legal Advice, Level 3) – Damar were initially approached by two specific employers, the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Crown Prosecution Service who required a provider to deliver frameworks which they had both developed around two years prior. Employer engagement activity has been somewhat limited although
they do point to potential opportunities with local councils (welfare advice and housing) and in the public sector (Trading Standards and the Health & Safety Executive).

- **Rochdale Training (various frameworks).** Rochdale already delivered three of its four frameworks at Levels 2 and 3 and recruitment onto the Level 4 manufacturing framework was mainly targeted at existing employers wanting to progress employees further.
- **Stockport Engineering Training (Advanced Manufacturing Engineering, Level 4).** Stockport chose to target employers who were already utilising the HNC to progress apprentices and visited them to present the business case for Higher Apprenticeships.
- **The Manchester College (Retail Management, Level 4) – although TMC has been delivering the Level 2 and 3 apprenticeship in retail for a number of years they choose to engage with a wider body of employers and sent out a mailshot to Trafford Centre tenants aimed at gauging interest. This was followed up by a sales call and then more in-depth conversations with employers that were interested.
- **Total People (Creative & Digital Media and IT, Software, Web and Telecoms, Level 4) has directed the majority of its employer engagement activity through Manchester Digital who have an in depth understanding of employer requirements. They have chosen not to engage employers directly in order to reduce the amount of marketing material employers receive.**

Framework development & development of delivery materials

2.3.4. In all bar two cases, employer involvement in content design has been limited to the selection of units from an existing framework:

- In one case there is evidence of more significant input by employers into the content of the framework. One of the providers of the IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals framework reports specifically tailoring the content of the framework to employer needs. This is possibly due to the need to deal with the specialism within the industry and the rapidly changing industry requirements.
- In a second case the employer was responsible for designing the legal services and legal advice frameworks. The provider was subsequently asked to get involved in delivering these employer led frameworks.
- Providers within other sectors report that employers are more conservative and resistant to change. For example in the engineering sector providers report that they are keen to retain the existing HNC content and delivery methods rather than to try something new.
- The Level 5 Care Leadership and Management frameworks delivered by Babington Business College, Rochdale Training and Bury College were all 'off the shelf' products whereby employers select from a wide range of modules with limited scope to tailor individual modules.
- The Advanced Manufacturing Framework was delivered by Rochdale Training, Stockport Engineering Training and Bury College. Providers largely sold this to employers as a way of achieving the HNC at a lower cost however one of the three providers also noted the value of the NVQ element in allowing them to gain a better idea of the job role and of the employer’s skill needs. They considered that this enabled them to better
direct the off-site training to employer needs. This process appeared to work better when the same provider was providing both the on-site assessment and the off-site training (HNC element) rather than sub-contracting the HNC delivery to a third party.

- The provider of the Human Resource Management framework originally worked with one employer to shape the content and to get an idea of what they wanted to include. They are now using the whole framework (with the exception of two units) with all employers. There is however flexibility in the project work which is based on business need.

2.3.5. Providers report, however, that employers are fully involved in discussions around the detailed arrangements for delivery methods:

- In the majority of cases this has tended to involve an increase in online content and on-site provision – in order to reduce the time staff spent out of the office learning.
- Existing staff undertaking Apprenticeships at higher levels (and particularly those in management roles) are felt to have more pressures on their time and providers have responded to this by ensuring that off-site provision is kept to a minimum.
- The amount of content appears to vary widely across frameworks with employers on the IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals framework reporting that their staff spend five mornings a week on the theoretical content.

Engagement of young people

2.3.6. Marketing to new recruits has tended to be through provider’s existing engagement activity, aimed at demonstrating to young people the opportunities for a progression route in the sector from Levels 2 and 3 rather than direct entry to Levels 4 and 5. Four of the frameworks require candidates with some or considerable experience meaning they are unlikely to be targeted at school/college leavers:

- **Care Leadership and Management (Level 5)** – the framework guidance states that Higher Apprentices will be working as managers of staff and/or services in general residential and non-residential settings; as advanced practitioners with a high level of knowledge of care provision activities or a specific specialism; as managers of specialist services with a specialist knowledge of particular adult social care provision and requirements, as a Business Development Manager starting and growing a new business and/or developing an existing business and/or supporting an employer to achieve any of these objectives

- **Retail Management (Level 4)** – the framework guidance states that Apprentices must have significant experience of working at a supervisory level to ensure that they have the necessary foundations on which to further build their knowledge, experience and skills. This can be demonstrated by a portfolio of evidence to show that they have the potential to complete the Apprenticeship.
Leadership and Management (Level 5) the framework guidance states that it is expected that Level 5 higher apprentices will have significant experience of working at a middle management level, to ensure they have the suitable foundations on which to further build their knowledge and skills.

2.3.7. The remaining seven frameworks have the potential to attract school leavers as well as existing employees with more practical experience:

- **Advanced Manufacturing (Level 4)** the framework guidance states that entry at Level 4 within the framework is flexible in that applicants: may have a variety of qualifications such as ‘A’ Levels, Certificate/Diploma in Engineering, Advanced Apprenticeship in Engineering or without formal qualifications can show, possibly through a portfolio, that they have the potential to complete this apprenticeship, through having previously worked in the sector at Level 3 or are currently employed in the sector and are looking for personal development and career progression. The three providers involved in delivering this framework largely focussed on engaging with their existing employer base who were already using the HNC and starts tended to be existing employees.

- **Creative and Digital Media and IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals (Level 4)** although most learners to date have been existing employees who have completed a Level 3 in the past, the provider is now starting to look at promoting the Level 4 to ‘A’ level students. The framework guidance states that the fundamental entry condition for the framework is the employer’s and training provider’s confidence in the candidate’s ability to thrive and achieve their potential within the Apprenticeship.

- **Legal services and legal advice (Level 3)** These frameworks were deliberately designed to attract young people into the sector. However, marketing and recruitment has been largely undertaken by the employers rather than the provider. For both these frameworks, the guidance states that there are no formal entry requirements for this framework. However, many employers will expect a high standard of literacy and numeracy e.g. GCSE grades A*-C, ‘A’ Levels or a proven ability to work at this level, such as experience gained through employment or voluntary work.

- **Business Professional Administration (Level 4)** the framework guidance states that employers are looking to attract applicants who have a keen interest in business and administration careers. They expect applicants to demonstrate a "can do" attitude and have at least basic numeracy and literacy skills on which the apprenticeship will build. Entrants will come from a diverse range of backgrounds and will come with a range of experience, age, personal achievements and, in some cases, prior qualifications and awards which may count towards the achievement of an Apprenticeship programme. Bury College has not launched this framework yet but is hoping in the future to attract some college leavers interested in working across different areas of a business.

- **Human Resource Management (Level 5)** the framework guidance states that the HR Management apprenticeship framework is open to those who have no prior HR experience as well as those who are working in HR. The CIPD Level 5 Diploma in Applied Human Resources requires that learners are a minimum of 18 years old. This requirement has been put in place due to the level of maturity required to manage
sensitive HR issues. Bury College is hoping to start delivering this framework in January 2015 and anticipates a 50:50 split between college leavers with Level 3 business studies and existing employees. Churchgate Academy has been delivering the framework for a few months and states that recruits have been mainly existing employees although they have had a couple of A-level leavers.

2.4. Issues encountered during delivery

2.4.1. The main delivery issue reported by a large minority of providers was difficulties in the recruitment of an assessor, especially at Level 5 with sectoral expertise, management expertise and training expertise. In a couple of cases this has led to delays in delivery.

2.4.2. Delays in the release of frameworks have led to delays in implementation in a number of cases. In many of these cases the provider has a waiting list of potential starts but is unable to commence delivery.

2.4.3. One provider reported issues with working with colleges as a delivery partner who will only accept September starts leading to inflexibility in provision.

2.4.4. For the IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals framework the main barrier to expansion is provider delivery capacity, as the skills required are very company specific. The provider has dealt with this by working closely with a third party who has a really good feel for what employers want. Much of the specialist training is subcontracted and they also work with employers to deliver training internally.
3. EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS

3.1. Employer views on provision

3.1.1. This section represents the views of 24 employers. Of these 24 employers:

- 15 were aware of having had an apprentice start on an Advanced or Higher Level Framework;
- a further 4 were unaware (although we had been informed by the provider that they had participated);
- 4 had been consulted about the Higher Level frameworks but had not gone ahead; and
- 1 was not aware the company had been consulted and had not gone ahead (in this case the previous Training Manager had left the company).

**IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals, Level 4**

3.1.2. Two employers had taken on Apprentices on the IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals framework. In both cases their rationale for participation was linked to the desire to train a young person to have both specialist knowledge and commercial experience. The latter was considered to be particularly important as one company explains:

> ‘Those that complete the Level 4 are effectively 2 years ahead of those with a degree due to their level of technical and commercial knowledge so the investment is worthwhile. For us the Apprenticeship is a win-win as the individual gets the qualification and we benefit from structured training. Financially the apprenticeship is better value – if it wasn’t available we would train in house and would not be able to afford to provide the same level of training’ (IT sector employer).

3.1.3. The IT companies are very satisfied with the quality of provision although they find the delivery timetable a challenge:

> ‘At Level 4 the apprentices spend the morning on theory and the afternoons on commercial work so delivery is fairly intensive. Providing time for staff to do the theory is an issue. We have a good working relationship with the provider however we do find that dates get knocked back as we sometimes have to use staff theory time to respond to commercial demand’ (IT sector employer).

**Care Leadership and Management Framework, Level 5**

3.1.4. Participating employers in the care sector had low awareness of Apprenticeship participation. Two of the four employers interviewed thought...
their employees were purely taking the QCF diploma. The third employer thought their employee was on an NVQ Level 4 in Business Administration rather than the Apprenticeship framework. The fourth employer was not aware that any employee was on a training programme with a provider, although they were on the provider’s list of starts.

3.1.5. In all cases the employers valued the training, considering it to be a good fit with the needs of the business.

‘The Senior Carers are able to utilise their learning on a daily basis in the workplace; for example, staff management, implementing policies and procedures, managing meetings. They regularly suggest improvements and innovations to the Manager, as a result of their learning. One example is the introduction of ‘champions’, whereby staff members are allocated a care issue in which they specialise, and ensure is kept up to date; e.g. nutrition and hydration’ (Care sector employer)

3.1.6. The qualification was also seen as important for career progression particularly as the Care Quality Commission advises that Registered Managers running a service in the Health & Social Care sector have the Level 5 qualification, although this is not mandatory. The employers also benefited from significant cost savings compared to the QCF diploma:

‘Although the Level 5 qualification is not essential for registration, it is recognised to be good practice. Although I was supportive of the Assistant Manager studying for the Level 5 qualification, the cost of the course (c £3000) was a barrier. We had discussed the possibility of the company and the Assistant Manager paying 50% each. The mail shot from the provider was timely, and we immediately supported the Assistant Manager’s enrolment on the Level 5 Higher Apprenticeship. We pay £200 towards the cost of the course’. (Care sector employer)

*Human Resource Management Level 5*

3.1.7. The Level 5 HRM framework provides the opportunity for Apprentices to complete the CIPD qualification. This was viewed as highly attractive by participating employers:

*There is no way that the company could have afforded to fund the CIPD qualification, which at £8,000 would have used all the training budget. We pay £600 [this] represents very good value for money for the company, and will provide a learning and a qualification which could not have been obtained otherwise’. (Employer, HRM framework)*
3.1.8. The employers undertaking this framework were very satisfied with the type and content of delivery:

‘The content of the Higher Apprenticeship is exactly the same as the CIPD course. The principal difference is that the apprenticeship route has more remote learning than the CIPD course. The tutor teaches both courses (different providers). I prefer the remote learning route as it is easier to relate taught content to personal/employer experiences’ (Employer, HRM framework)

3.1.9. Off the job training is monthly, which fits well with the business needs. One employer explains:

‘Monthly college attendance is better than weekly, because it gives the HR Assistant time to work on the coursework before the next taught session. The Higher Apprenticeship adds value compared to the CIPD route because it gives her a better opportunity to apply learning in the workplace. In addition, the learners benefit from sharing ideas at the college sessions. Real problems can be discussed, and it seems more relevant to the business.’ (Employer, HRM framework).

Retail Management Framework, Level 4

3.1.10. Employers participating on the retail management framework had mixed awareness of participation. In a number of cases the provider had directly recruited apprentices on to the framework through visits to local stores to inform potential recruits about the course. One employer was aware that an Assistant Manager had started the course in her own time, but had stopped attending the course after it was temporarily suspended near the commencement.

3.1.11. Views on the provision were somewhat mixed. Two of the three employers using the framework reported a good fit between the course content and needs of the businesses:

‘Training takes place on a weekly basis, at college, for 2 years. We also allocate both participants a day at work to pursue their studies/complete work set by tutor. I carried out a review with the employees in December, and had good opinion of the course content and progress made...the employees benefit from getting different perspectives from the other students’. (Employer, Retail management framework).

3.1.12. The third employer commented that the course seemed disorganised and was temporarily suspended due to staffing issues.
4. PROJECT OUTCOMES

4.1. Apprenticeship Starts

4.1.1. Table 4.1 sets out the starts to date across the frameworks funded under the programme taken from monitoring reports in February 2015. Across the eighteen frameworks providers report a total of 130 starts to date. Ten of the eighteen frameworks set up through the project have had one or more starts. The remaining eight frameworks have not yet had any starts. The reasons for this are as follows:

- Advanced Manufacturing Level 4, Bury College – the college is still developing the materials and plans to launch in May 2015.
- IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals Level 5, Bury College – there have been delays in the approval of the framework; the college is planning to launch this in January 2015.
- Human Resource Management Level 5, Bury College - the college is still developing the materials and plans to launch in January 2015.
- Human Resource Management Level 3, Churchgate - The Level 3 framework has not yet been released by CIPD and this is currently on hold.
- Damar Training – Legal Advice & CPS – planning to launch in January 2015.
- Total People – Creative & Digital - Difficulties recruiting an assessor has delayed implementation.

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5 A further three frameworks have been approved since research undertaken Wigan College, L4 Creative Digital Media, Churchgate Academy L4 Social Media and Oldham College L4 interactive Design and development
## Table 4.1: Starts to date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Framework</th>
<th>Project timescale</th>
<th>Target starts</th>
<th>Starts to date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babington Business College</td>
<td>Care leadership and management (L5)</td>
<td>June 2014 to Sept 16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Delays in framework release. Delivery started in Oct 2014.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bury College</td>
<td>Advanced Manufacturing (L4)</td>
<td>Feb 2014 to Sept 2015</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Planning to launch in May 2015 College still developing materials and pathway from Level 2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Professional Administration (L4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Delivery started in November 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professional (L5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Delays in approval of framework Planning to launch in January 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care Leadership and Management (L5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Delivery started in September/October 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Resource Management (L5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Hoping to start delivery in January, lots of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership and Management (level 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Delivery started in November/December 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churchgate Academy</td>
<td>Human Resource Management (L3)</td>
<td>Sept 14 to Sept 15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>The level 3 framework has not yet been released by CIPD however they have a waiting list of 20 companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Apprenticeship in Human Resource Management (L5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>A Trailblazer is also being developed for release in 2015. They have been inundated with applications for the current framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damar Training Ltd</td>
<td>Legal services criminal prosecution pathway (L3)</td>
<td>Aug 15 to Sept 15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>These frameworks had been designed by the employer 2 years prior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal Advice (L3)</td>
<td>Aug 15 to Sept 15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochdale Training</td>
<td>Engineering/Manufacturing (L4)</td>
<td>Apr 14 to July 2014</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership &amp; Management (L5)</td>
<td>Apr 14 to July 2014</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care Leadership &amp; Management (L5)</td>
<td>Apr 14 to July 2014</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockport Engineering Training Association</td>
<td>Higher Apprenticeship in Advanced Manufacturing Engineering (L4)</td>
<td>Jan 14 to Sept 15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Main issue is working with colleges who only accept September starts. Recruitment of employers too late for Sept 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Manchester College</td>
<td>Retail Management (L4)</td>
<td>Mar 14 to Sept 15</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total People Ltd</td>
<td>Creative and Digital Media (L4)</td>
<td>Mar 14 to Sept 15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Difficulties recruiting an assessor has delayed implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professional (L4)</td>
<td>Oct 13 to July 2015</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2. **Sustainability of outcomes**

4.2.1. The majority of provision was considered to be sustainable with a couple of exceptions:

- In the care sector one provider reported using some of the Higher Apprenticeship funding to reduce the employer contribution. They were not sure how sustainable this framework will be post project as they considered that the employers in this sector operate on particularly tight margins. However, the Apprenticeship represents better value for money than the QCF diploma and, in some cases, the Level 5 is a licence to practice so there will be ongoing demand. An issue is whether this is wholly funded by the employer or in combination with a financial contribution from the individual (as was being considered in one employer prior to involvement with the project).

- There were some issues raised over the sustainability of the Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship. The provider had been unable to draw down the funding for the HNC element of the Apprenticeship and was using the project funding to subsidise this. The availability of SFA funding will in future mean that the employer contribution to the cost of the HNC will be reduced to 50%, however, there are still concerns that even at this reduced level this will limit starts.

4.2.2. Providers had very mixed awareness of the implications of the Richards Review and subsequent apprenticeship reforms on sustainability. Rather worryingly, two of those interviewed had not even considered the implications arising from this. However, others were more optimistic:

- In the majority of cases the employers were seen to already contribute more than 30% towards costs. Some providers did, however, include employers’ ‘in kind’ contribution in this assessment.

- With regard to smaller companies some providers were planning to offset the contribution it they recruit 16-18 year olds. There was however concern by providers that the overall administrative burden on employers post Richards will discourage participation.

4.2.3. There is sufficient time remaining for providers to ensure that they meet the targets for each project.
5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. A number of core messages can be identified with regard to the effectiveness of the capacity building project so far. There is still some time until completion of the programme for providers to deliver on their contracted starts but more importantly enable more learning on engagement and delivery of higher level Apprenticeships.

5.2. To what extent did the project impact on existing delivery?

5.2.1. The project has focused on achieving the target number of starts. There is limited evidence of longer term learning from engaging with new businesses and with existing employers in different ways.

5.2.2. In the majority of cases, the project has been effective in bringing forward provider’s plans to develop new frameworks at higher levels. In seven out of the eight cases, the provider would have developed the same frameworks anyway but at a later date. In the remaining case the provider reported that because they were a small organisation they would not have been able to provide the higher level framework without the external support. Discussions with providers elsewhere has highlighted the reluctance of providers to run ahead of the market on higher level Apprenticeships, given wider uncertainties over the funding and other aspects of Apprenticeship policy.

5.2.3. In two cases, the providers considered that without the financial support the profile of delivery would have been different. For example, the provider of the IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals framework felt that without the funding they would not have been able to tailor the training to the needs of the employer e.g. they would not have been able to cater for specific software.

5.3. How effective was the project in engaging employers in Higher Apprenticeships?

5.3.1. There is some evidence of an attempt to create a new market. Three of the providers chose to focus their employer engagement efforts on informing employers on their existing database of the additional opportunities at Higher Level. This mainly involved the progression of existing employees who had completed the framework at a lower level.
5.3.2. Two of the providers undertook a more mixed methods approach, both informing employers on their existing database and looking into new markets. The remaining three providers focussed on new employer engagement, although in one of these cases for the Legal Services and Legal Advice frameworks, the provider was approached by the employer rather than the other way around.

5.3.3. It is important to note that many of the employers engaged were already providing an alternative form of training, for example, CIPD, HNC and QCF qualifications and there was limited evidence that providers were engaging employers who were new to this level of training.

5.3.4. To a large degree most providers to date have worked with existing employer contacts, testing delivery and reputation building with an 'easy' market. There is limited evidence of ‘growing the market’ as many of these employers would have undertaken investment in training to an equivalent level through other qualifications. However the project still has some time to run and there is potential through subsequent cohorts of learners to engage with new employer markets.

5.4. **How effective was the project in involving employers to ensure provision met business needs?**

5.4.1. Only one of the providers was involved in the framework development process and engaged with employers to ensure that the framework met business needs. In all other cases, the providers consulted with employers to varying degrees over the selection of modules and delivery methods including the amount of offsite and online provision.

5.4.2. Although employers experienced limited opportunity to select modules and delivery methods, there was general satisfaction with arrangements for their employees. There was no feedback suggesting that releasing employees to provide time for learning was a problem. Given the importance to the business, employers are clearly focused on keeping out-of-office learning to a minimum.

5.4.3. One employer, using the Level 5 Business Administration framework commented that all the training is delivered at the workplace. This suits the learner, as she prefers a one-to-one approach, rather than group sessions at a college. They have selected units that have the best fit with their requirements.
5.4.4. Another employer, using the Level 5 Human Resource Management Framework believes that the learning from the Higher Apprenticeship route is more valuable than the CIPD qualification:

‘The Higher Apprenticeship adds value compared to the CIPD route because it gives the learner a better opportunity to apply learning in the workplace. In addition, the learners benefit from sharing ideas at the college sessions. Real problems can be discussed, and it seems more relevant to the business. Participating in the Higher Apprenticeship has helped the company massively. The course has built confidence, and the HR Administrator’s input to the small team has given us a lot of flexibility.’

5.4.5. Several employers commented that employees using these frameworks are able to utilise their learning to improve policies and practices at work. One Care Home Manager believes that the course is a good fit with the needs of the business and staff development and aspirations. She commented:

‘The Senior Carers are able to utilise their learning on a daily basis in the workplace; for example, staff management, implementing policies and procedures, managing meetings. They regularly suggest improvements and innovations’.

5.4.6. Some employers prepared a business case for recommending that supervisors/middle managers enrol on Higher Apprenticeship Frameworks. The cost of the course was not an issue, as fees are relatively low, or courses are free to employers due to the additional GM funding subsidising employers.

5.4.7. Several employers also believe that on completion of the Higher Apprenticeship, participants will be better placed for career development, as well as benefiting the business with their talent pool, and increased flexibility, especially if qualifications are required, (e.g. by CQC).

5.5. What lessons can be learned from this project?

5.5.1. Overall, the project to date has had a mixed level of success although it should be noted that it is only part way though. There is evidence that in the majority of cases providers have been motivated to introduce new frameworks on a shorter timetable that would have occurred in the absence of financial support. Employers have been in the main, keen to take up this provision particularly where it represented a cost saving in terms of the ability to gain a specific qualification at a lower/nil cost.
5.5.2. In general, employers have been satisfied with the quality of provision and in some cases have been able to provide examples of how the Apprenticeship meets their business needs more closely than alternative qualifications due to the level of on-the-job provision and the tailoring to individual employer requirements. For example, in the case of the Human Resource Management framework which delivered a CIPD qualification some employers pointed to the added value of the ability to apply learning in the workplace. This is an important message for the future marketing of the higher level Apprenticeships – many employers were already familiar with the qualifications but reported significant added value in using the vocational delivery method.

5.5.3. There are, however, several areas where improvements could be made to ensure better value for money for the public purse:

- **Growing the market** – much of the marketing to employers has focussed on providers’ existing employer base, for example those employers already participating at Level 3 or those already undertaking equivalent qualifications at Level 4 and 5. There is a need, to encourage providers to grow the market and engage with new employers in order to increase the added value of the support. This could include a reassignment of funding to provide a higher payment for ‘new blood’ starts who have not engaged in Apprenticeships in the past two years.

- **Tailoring provision to employer needs** – employer feedback suggests that the majority of employers are satisfied with the content of the frameworks and consider that they meet their needs. Satisfaction with delivery methods was also good with employers welcoming the high level of on-the-job provision and level of provider flexibility. There is, however, a concern that in order to break into new markets there needs to be a greater focus on involving employers in the framework design process. There is an opportunity to encourage employers to get involved with trailblazers to take full advantage of government policy to place employers at the heart of the process to develop new apprenticeships.

- **Meeting target numbers of starts** – a number of providers have experienced delays in offering the new Apprenticeship frameworks for a range of reasons, including difficulties with the recruitment of key staff; issues with the sub-contracting of training provision and delays in the release of frameworks. Greater monitoring of providers is required to ensure that any issues are identified at an early stage.

- **Provision for young people** – very few of the Apprenticeships were targeted at school leavers and the vast majority of recruits had 3 or more years of work experience. This is in part due to the nature of the Higher Level provision – many of the frameworks do require considerable on-the-job experience. However there are exceptions and there is potential to focus expansion on Level 4 frameworks that do offer more potential for school leavers to enter on a direct basis (for example see table 2.1). Where this is not possible it would be advisable for providers to spend more time marketing the level 4 and 5 frameworks to young people as a
career progression routeway rather than focussing marketing efforts on existing employees.

5.5.4. There is still some time to run on this programme and there are opportunities to tweak current and future delivery through:

- **Sharing of good practice amongst providers** – the research found some examples of good practice and one suggestion of a way forward is to bring the providers that have received grants for Higher Level Apprenticeship development together to share lessons learnt.

- **Focussing on practices which add value** – the above process needs to focus on those elements of delivery which add the most value. For example:
  - Identification of provision which improves upon existing in better meeting business needs e.g. practical delivery of the CIPD qualification. What elements of the support should be replicated?
  - Identification of provision which fulfils a secondary objective for example, improving the recruitment of young people into apprenticeships. In general, frameworks which focus on more technical knowledge rather than the requirement of managerial experience are more likely to be appropriate for school learners although the later will help to provide a career progression pathway.
  - Highlighting good practice in opening up new markets in order to increase the addiionalty of the support.
  - Review the sustainability of provision. This needs to include consideration of whether and how providers will work differently as a result of the programme? To what extent has capacity been built?
  - Review of gaps in provision – for example are there specific gaps in level 4 provision at the framework level and how to these gaps fit with growth sectors and employer need.