



**ACORN**Environmental Solutions

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# MRWA Pilot Waste Apprenticeship Programme

## Evaluation Report

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### Date

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## **1. Background and Introduction**

MRWA Members approved a revised Corporate Plan on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012 (Report WDA/27/12) in which a key amendment was to consider a proposal to support apprenticeships in 2013/14. The programme fitted with Corporate Aim 1 around Sustainability in particular:

- Develop and implement waste strategies to maximise the value of otherwise wasted resources in terms of economic, environmental and social benefits
- Work together with partners and stakeholders to provide services that support the local economy, benefit the community and improve the environment

The MRWA approved the pilot Apprenticeship Support Scheme on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2013 (Report WDA 33.13) and the Budget at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014.

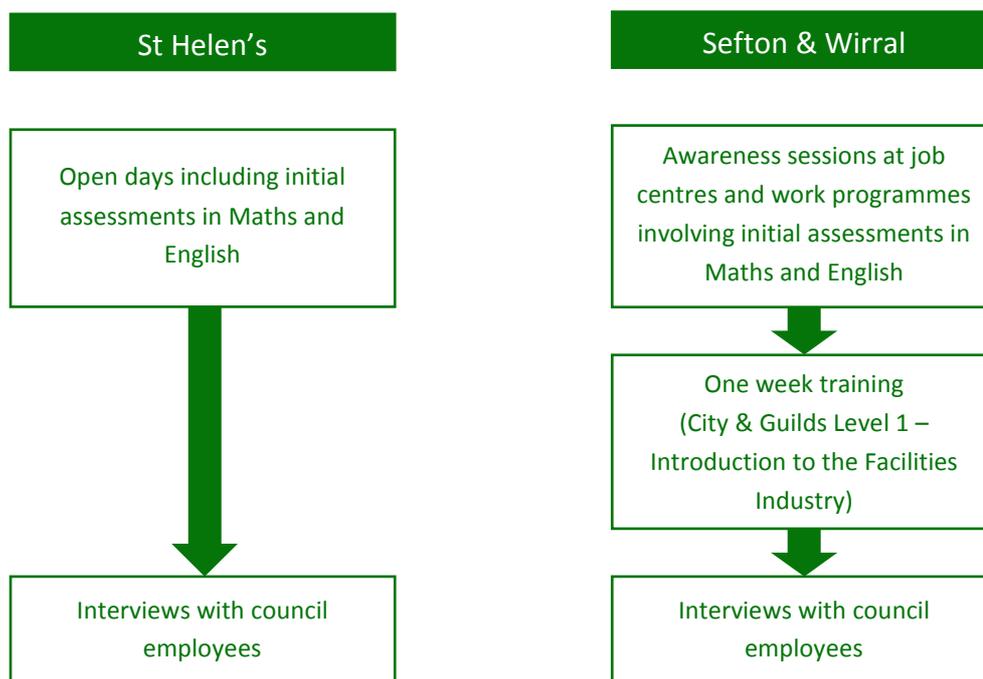
MRWA held discussions with all district officers in 2013 to discuss the opportunities to fund an apprenticeship programme. St Helens and Sefton submitted proposals and Members approved £77,000 of funding to support up to 12 one year apprenticeship in the two districts primarily for waste management and recycling schemes. An additional £60,000 was subsequently approved for the following year.

Wirral MBC officers indicated their wish to participate in the pilot Apprenticeship Support Scheme in 2013 and this was submitted to MRWA on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014. This was approved by an Executive Decision as it was felt to be sufficiently different from the other two schemes and would allow additional factors to be considered in the pilot phase. The Wirral project commenced in January 2015 for a twelve month period.

### **1.1 Recruitment process**

Once the three authorities were signed up to the programme, a recruitment process began to find suitable candidates. This process differed slightly in St Helen's as this was carried out internally, whereas in Sefton and Wirral this was carried out by Acorn Environmental Solutions.

Figure 1 Recruitment process in pilot authorities



## **2. Evaluation**

### **2.1 Aims and objectives**

This report outlines the findings of an evaluation of the pilot programme. This research study aimed to understand (from the perspective of both local authority managers and the apprentices):

- The drivers and barriers to engagement with the programme
- Expectations of the programme and how these were met
- The impact of the programme
- Innovations and efficiencies within the programme
- Dependency on the grant funding and policy drivers for each pilot
- Continuation and legacy of the programme
- Learnings for future programmes

### **2.2 Evaluation approach**

A series of face to face interviews were carried out in each of the pilot areas. In each area, the manager(s) of the programme was interviewed followed by two apprentices. In addition to the pilot areas, telephone interviews were carried out with the two non-participating authorities (Knowsley and Liverpool). A discussion guide was developed prior to the fieldwork taking places. This was agreed with MRWA and can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition a data capture form was sent to each authority prior to the interviews requesting facts and figures relating to their programme. This enabled the managers to gather information prior to the interview that they may not otherwise have had easily accessible. These were collected at the session and discussed in the interview. A copy of the data capture form can also be found in appendix 1.

### 3. The Pilot Areas

#### 3.1 Sefton Council

Sefton employed six apprentices and was the first authority to enter the pilot but due to leverage they managed to fund a further two apprentices so the programme commenced with eight. Out of the eight, six completed the programme, one dropped out very early in the programme and the second moved away to Liverpool and was unable to travel to continue the programme.

Out of the remaining six all completed the full apprenticeship including their Maths, English and ICT. Five of the six apprentices have subsequently been employed by Sefton Council.

Sefton divided its apprentices and initially six worked in the Coast and Countryside team, a division with previous experience of working with young long term unemployed people, and two were placed in the Waste team.

Sefton paid the apprentices national minimum wage which varied with age (ranging from £3.87 per hour for under 18s to £6.70 for over 21s). This decision was based on the existing council corporate policy which determines apprenticeship salaries.

##### 3.1.1 Sefton Waste Apprentices

A major part of the programme was an IT project to update the assisted collection database for disabled customers which had not been updated for at least six years. This involved going through an old database and contacting residents to see if they were still at the property and required an assisted collection. If they did still require this service, the apprentices checked that they were still eligible (against the council criteria).

They were also involved in the roll out of the new brown bin collection service to 100,000 properties to recycle cardboard. The apprentices were the interface with the customers ensuring that it all ran smoothly with the residents and the contractor.

*“The apprentices acted as our eyes and ears on the ground whereas in the past we have had to use our own officers”*

Manager, Sefton

The apprentices were then involved with the roll out of new recycling bins where others had been lost or broken. They also helped co-ordinate the green recycling rounds.

In addition, they attended three educational events throughout Merseyside (not just in the Sefton area) with MRWA to promote the key messages of the MRWA to reduce waste to landfill. This included 9 apprentices days at galas and shows and exposure to over 1,200 members of the public through the Liverpool Loves festival.

### 3.1.2 Sefton Coast and Countryside Project

Of the three pilots, this was the most diverse project in that it had a strong social dimension and the apprentices engaged with the widest parts of the community. The project initially began by looking at recycling marine waste, in particular plastics, that were washing up on the extensive Sefton Coastline (which is a triple SSSI and a site of international importance for bird life).

The apprentices collected the waste debris being brought in by the tide and rather than placing it in skips for disposal to landfill they began to recycle this material. This extended to drift wood which was recovered and used for boardwalks and planters.

The apprentices also worked with the MRWA at a range of events promoting composters and promoting the values of the MRWA to the public at these events. They also supported the MRWA campaign 'Love Food Hate Waste'

The apprentices undertook a wide variety of educational work with schools in particular. This included passing environmental messages into schools with a view to reducing the carbon footprint. Many of these educational messages led to direct projects from promoting diversity with wading birds, capturing seeds and replanting them, to preventing erosion of the dunes by marram grass planting. The teams were linked with other projects such as Heritage Lottery Funds, therefore, leveraging in additional support for the schools.

### 3.2 Wirral Council

Wirral Council employed four apprentices through the MRWA grant all of which were still employed at the time of the interviews (six months into the programme). All the apprentices were employed directly in the waste team at the Council. This was the first time apprentices had been employed within this department however, they were managed by one person with extensive experience of managing young long term unemployed people in a previous role. All are still currently in post.

Wirral paid the apprentices the living wage equivalent to a salary of £7.85 per hour. This decision was based on the existing council corporate policy which determines apprenticeship salaries.

The programme has changed since its initial inception when the apprentices were going to work very much in an educational role on the introduction of the new chargeable garden waste service. The initial plan was for the apprentices to become home composting experts and run community workshops to encourage residents to support this programme in their garden. Four of

*"The composting has become a smaller part of the job as we promoted the events through the calendars but only 11 – 12 people turned up at each...overall about 50 residents so they moved on to working more with schools"*

Manager, Wirral

these events were run and over 1500 composters were given out to Wirral residents, however, limited numbers of residents attended the events

The Council then decided that they could have greater impact reducing household waste by education and targeting schools within the authority. The Council is very strong with the Tidy Britain Group Eco-schools programme so they initially targeted this network to get waste minimisation messages across.

The apprentices ran a massive educational programme with schools and each was lead co-ordinator on a variety of projects. The projects ranged included: The Big Picnic, climate change conference, Ness gardens, Love food hate waste events, zero waste challenge, forest schools project, Eco-schools support, gardening courses, WEEE phone bin, textile forest, Big Bin Challenge, Junk band opera.

Particularly noteworthy is the Big Bin Challenge as it supported schools through council grants to purchase digesters. Coupled with an education programme to the school children it has set about reducing the amount of waste that the schools are putting in the residual bins for landfill. Whilst the metrics are still being developed early indications are that certain schools are reducing the waste they are sending to landfill and need less bins emptied per week (also reducing their collection costs).

During the summer period the council has tried to give the apprentices a wider experience to increase their skill sets and have placed them in a wide variety of roles within the waste team.

### 3.3 St Helens

The Council employed four apprentices through the MRWA grant and they were all based in the waste team. The Local Authority have a deliberate strategy of not 'cherry picking' the best apprentices and they work actively with Social Services to support young school leavers (16 – 18 year olds) into council apprentices. In many ways they target the hardest to reach young people. Three completed the programme and gained full time employment.

*"It was a deliberate strategy to take on people who were further away from the job market. Two lads struggled with the classroom style of learning. If it was a college they wouldn't have completed it I don't think*

Manager, St Helens

There are additional challenges with such a programme and the amount of investment that the council's Apprenticeship Manager puts into the programme to support the apprentices and the departmental managers is huge.

St Helens paid the apprentices the national minimum apprenticeship wage i.e. £2.73 per hour (this is well

*"We treat them exactly as we treat our own full time equivalent staff"*

Manager, St Helens

below the other two authorities but is a deliberate Council policy across all apprentices). They strongly emphasise whilst the salary is lower it allows them to support more young unemployed people into work as the budget can go further.

Out of the four apprentices, three completed the programme and one resigned

The apprentices were employed on a number of activities. At the start they were deployed with teams to ensure they had strong supervision and learnt the roles. These activities included working clearingfly-tipping on back alleys and attending road traffic accidents to clear the debris. Shortly they progressed, after training, to the bin lifts and recycling duties.

The apprentices were involved with kerb side recycling. This meant that the apprentices were sorting any contaminated waste and loading the correct recycle into the correct containers. The apprentices also had an educational role as well as a collection and separation role which involved answering customers' questions on why certain products could not be recycled.

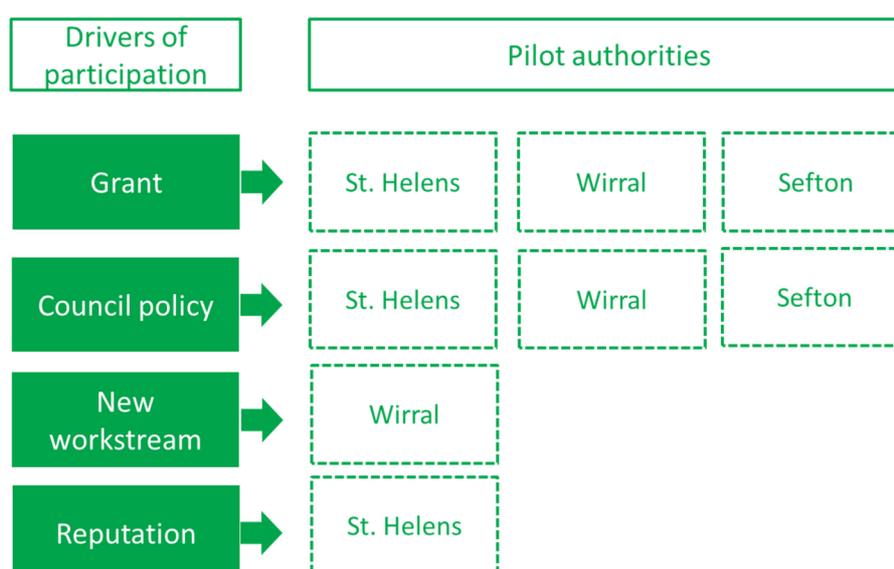
The apprentices also collected the green waste across the borough and ensured this was separated and collected in the right way.

## 4. Drivers and barriers to participation

### 4.1 Drivers for council participation

Four key drivers were identified for taking part in the programme as outlined below for each authority.

Figure 2 Drivers of participation by authority



Receiving the grant was cited as a trigger for all the three pilot areas. In addition, a common trigger was that the council had a strategic objective or policy to focus on getting more young unemployed people into work.

In Wirral, the programme was also appealing, as at the time of discussions they had just introduced a new garden waste policy but had no extra resource to deliver some of the implications of this policy.

St Helen's also wanted to maintain the reputation that the council has for dedication to employment of young people.

### 4.2 Dependency on grant

As shown in figure 2 above, the grant was a key driver for participation for all of the pilot authorities. In fact, for the Wirral, the programme would not have been possible without the grant from the MRWA. In Sefton and St Helen's they may have proceeded but would have not have been able to have as many apprentices.

*"There is no way we could have proceeded with the programme without the MRWA grant"*  
 Manager, Wirral

### 4.3 Barriers for council participation

Two authorities in the area did not take part in the programme, but were also consulted to understand their barriers to participation.

**Knowsley** – Knowsley were keen to be involved in the programme but the main barrier to them was that the timing was not appropriate considering other council priorities. Within the council, there is a policy to ensure that any apprentices that complete a programme are offered full time employment at the end. At the time of signing up to the MRWA programme, the council was undergoing a restructure which meant they had to save £0.5m as a department and potentially make staff redundant. It was therefore decided that to take on apprentices at the same time would not be appropriate and it would be difficult to see how a full time role would be possible at the end. Having been through this restructure, Knowsley, however, are extremely keen to take part in a follow on programme and will bid for the new grant

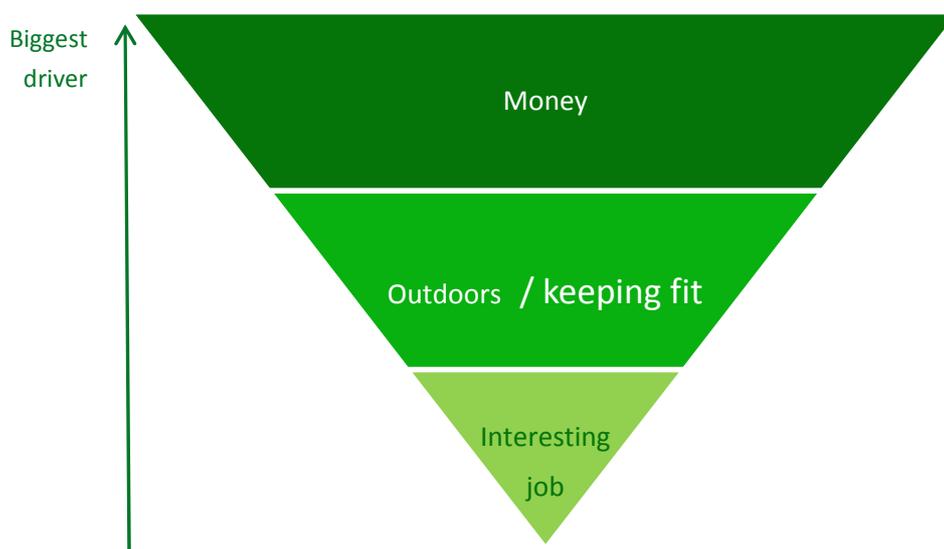
**Liverpool** – Similarly, Liverpool thought the programme was effective and are keen to be involved in the future. Their barriers were purely related to timing. As in Knowsley, the council was undergoing a restructure at the time of the programme, which brought together a number of teams into a new Street Scene Department. Now that this structure is in place, they would be extremely keen to have apprentices in the next financial year which would focus on waste prevention and education. They will be looking to appoint apprentices in April 2016

*“Apprentices are a good thing, because they bring people into the sector who would not normally do this. It is also generational, i.e. attracts young people which helps succession”*

Manager, Liverpool

### 4.4 Drivers for apprentice applications

Figure 3 Drivers of participation for apprentices



When the apprentices were asked to reflect back on why they applied for the job in the first place, most cited money as the main reason. They were out of work and needed a job which provided them with an income.

Some stated that the practical and outdoor nature of the job also appealed. Most of the apprentices stated that they were more suited to working outdoors than in an office environment.

Only one of the apprentices questioned referred to the job itself being a reason for application. In fact, most of the apprentices were unclear on what the role would involve before starting the programme and were merely focussed on having some kind of employment and income.

*“The first thing was the money, it was good pay...when we started the training it was interesting but we didn’t really know until then what we would be doing”*

*Apprentice, Wirral*

## 5. Expectations and experiences

### 5.1 Apprentice perceptions

Most of the apprentices had very few expectations when starting the programme. Primarily they were focussed on the money and hoping that they would gain some experience to help them to gain full time employment at the end of the apprenticeship.

*"No, it's not what we expected – it's much better, we are not someone's lucky. We enjoyed the variety & had lots to do"*

Apprentice, Wirral

Initially, the qualification was less front of mind but during the programme they tended to value this slightly more. In particular, they were very positive about the classroom sessions being held on-site rather than in college. The majority of the apprentices were less comfortable in a formal classroom environment and returning to college with younger 'kids' would have been seen as embarrassing.

*"The best experience I've ever had in my life – it's been amazing, I want it to be my job for life"*

Apprentice, Sefton

Overall, the apprentices were extremely positive about the experience stating that it exceeded any expectations that they had. In particular, they liked that they were treated the same as the full time employees and welcomed into the teams in which they were working.

From an apprentice perspective, the most challenging parts of the job were:

- **Time management** – in particular the early start time was felt to be difficult to get used to and admittedly sometimes they didn't manage to get into work on time.
- **Training** – although there was some acknowledgement that the training was beneficial to them in the long term, for most this element was the least enjoyable element which they found more challenging
- **Public interaction** – dealing with the public at shows / events or in the streets was a new experience for most of the apprentices.
- **Not enough to do** – positively, one challenge stated was not always having enough work to do. This was infrequent and nearer the start of the programme (as by the end they were more proactive in finding something) but they tended to prefer being kept busy.

*"It was difficult because of the start time and there were no buses – I got friendly with my supervisor and he picked me up"*

Apprentice, Sefton

*"It was a good laugh, but strange dealing with the public and their questions"*

Apprentice, St Helens

## 5.2 Overall behaviour

Overall, the behaviour of the apprentices was generally found to be positive in that the majority were eager, motivated and integrated well into the existing teams.

They tended to be shy at the beginning of the programme but gradually built in confidence and generally had very positive attitudes towards the

*“You can see the enthusiasm increasing in all of them, their confidence and performance has improved too.”*

Manager, Sefton

them.

role and were keen to develop.

Most of the tasks that were given across all the pilots were felt to not be beyond their capability and although guidance and support was required, they almost always took on the challenge and delivered what was required of

*“They were given training in social skills and how to conduct themselves when people come up to them with complaints... we saw a marked improvement over time”*

Manager, St Helen’s

## 5.3 Work readiness

*“She was a mixture of their babysitter and their mother at times, they needed a lot of guidance”*

Manager, Wirral

The main challenge regarding the apprentices’ performance is that they were perceived to not be ‘work ready’.

They tended to struggle with time keeping and didn’t understand the working etiquette such as how to behave in a meeting or when to use their mobile phone / social

media. This wasn’t related to their attitude on most occasions, it was purely them misreading or misunderstanding the working culture.

Those apprentices that were slightly older probably unsurprisingly were found to be more work ready, purely related to having had previous experience of working in other environments.

*“It’s the little things like how to conduct themselves in a meeting, less doodling and more engagement”*

Manager, Wirral

## 5.4 Manager expectations

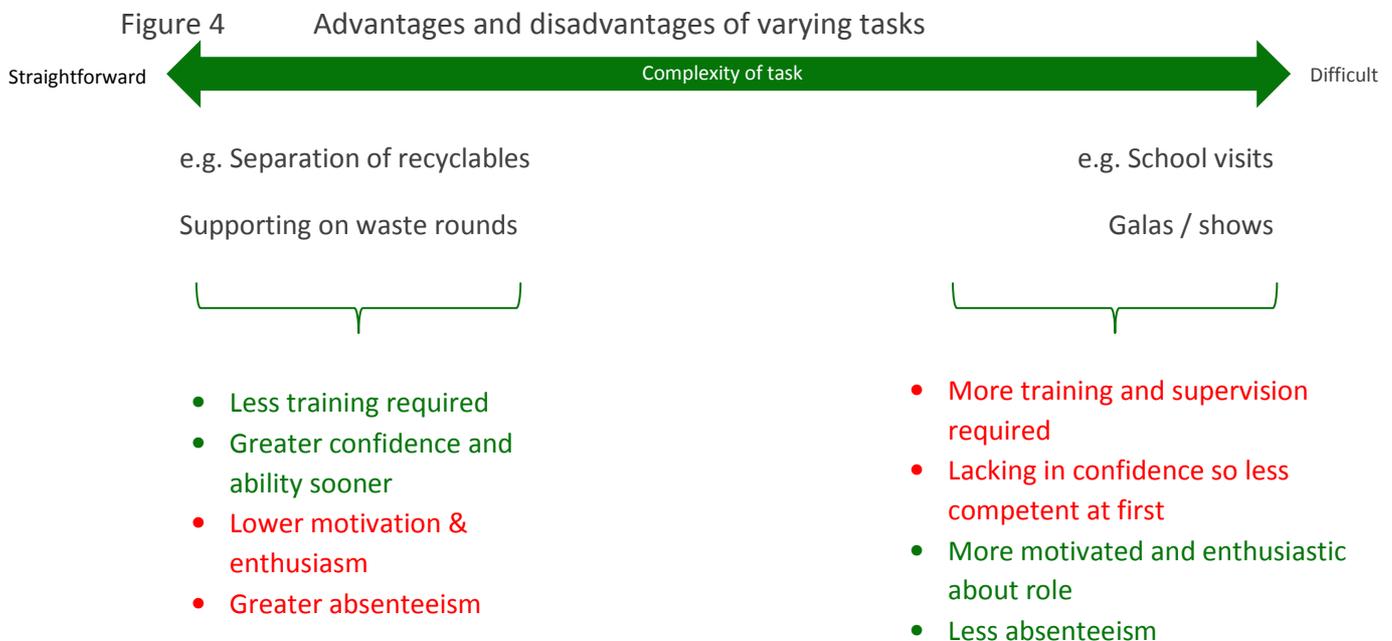
Prior to starting the programme, the expectation of the managers varied. In Sefton and St Helen’s where there were existing apprentice programmes, the expectations were more in line with the experiences, i.e. they were not expecting the apprentices to be work ready and had the support in place to assist them to develop. Both of these authorities also had a

Council Apprenticeship Manager who assisted in the development of the apprentices and provided a more pastoral role to support them with wider personal and social issues.

In the Wirral, this was the first experience of apprentices (in the waste team) and although the council had a policy to get young unemployed people into work, this was not necessarily the driving force within the department who were focussed on achieving high quality deliverables in the waste education work in schools. In this authority, the managers were less prepared for the work required in employing apprentices and would be likely to want higher skilled or experienced candidates in future years.

### 5.5 The role of the apprentices

Across the pilots, the apprentices carried out very different roles, ranging from being a support in an operational team to leading on education projects. There were advantages and disadvantages identified from the differing types of tasks as outlined below



*“I don’t think they realised how much effort it takes to lift bins on a wagon. It’s a repetitive, bending & lifting task”*  
 Manager, St Helen’s

“Jack was in charge of the climate change conference, Jon was working on waste through the ages and Kyle was leading a textile project – they all take a project and lead it”  
 Manager, Wirral

## 5.6 Managing the apprentices

Across the pilot authorities, the apprentice programmes ran slightly differently with some being in one team working together with a consistent line manager whereas others were spread across different departments. The range of tasks undertaken also varied from kerbside recycling and refuse work to educational initiatives in schools and at shows.

Key learnings from these pilots are:

Importance of Line Manager	Having the correct line manager is important for the success of the programme. Apprentices can be more demanding and therefore ideally the line manager should have some experience of coaching less experienced staff
Number of line reports	Due to the demanding nature of the apprentices both in training, guidance and more pastoral support, it is recommended that one line manager is not responsible for more than three apprentices at any one time
Matching skills	Apprentices tended to be more motivated and satisfied when the tasks / role were matched to their strengths or skill sets
Accountability	Generally, the apprentices thrived when given responsibility for a certain project or task rather than always providing a supporting role

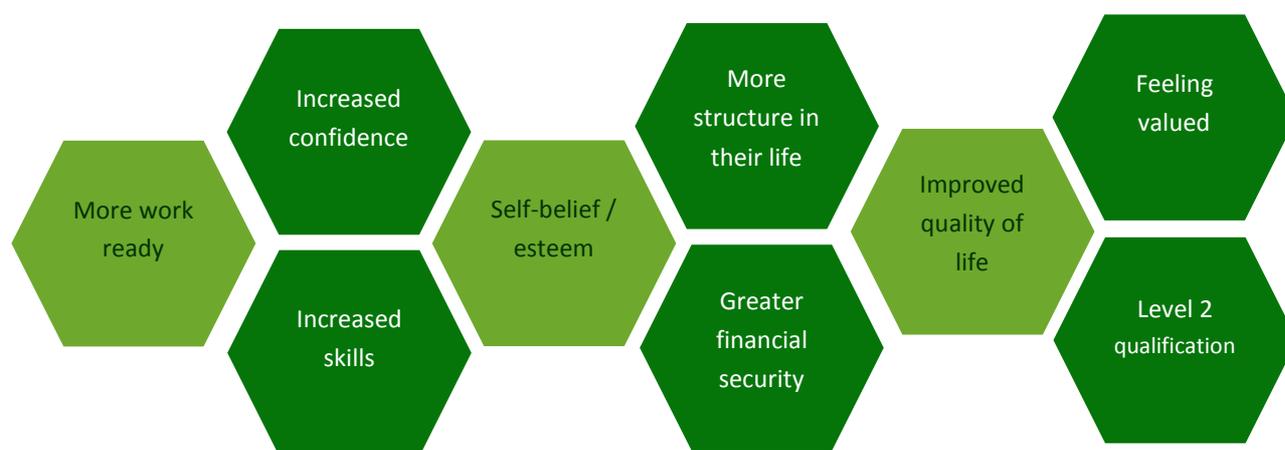
## 6. IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

### 6.1 Social benefits

#### 6.1.1 Apprentice developments

As outlined in section 4.1, from the perspective of the apprentices the programme generally exceeded their expectations and provided them with the grounding and confidence to move forward into employment in the future. This view was echoed by the managers and supervisors involved with the apprentices. Key developments observed by those managing the apprentices are shown below.

Figure 4 Apprentice developments observed by managers



In addition to being better prepared for work in the future in terms of skills, qualifications and general experience, it was felt that the apprentices gained in a broader social sense by having increased self-esteem and confidence as well as the stability gained from having a regular income and working routine.

*"They have been able to fund passing their driving tests by having the apprenticeship. Kids have gone on holiday who have never been on holiday for years. They feel valued by us."*

Manager, Sefton

On the Sefton programme, a significant emphasis was placed on working with disabled people through environmental initiatives.

#### 6.1.2 Manager experience

*"I watched them grow from being raw, naive and slightly angry boys, into everyday people and then grow into men"*

Manager, St Helen's

Although managing the apprentices was more challenging than managing more experienced members of staff, there were benefits gained from being part of the programme from a manager's perspective. The main benefit cited was being part of the development of the apprentices and seeing

their progression throughout the programme – this was described as very rewarding.

## 6.2 Economic benefits

There have been a number of economic benefits for MRWA from investment in this programme. This can be summarised in three tiers:

National	Government funding for apprentice training
Regional	Savings on recruitment, training and qualification fees
District	Local cash & benefit in kind investment by the pilot authorities

### 6.2.1 National

Nationally the programme received funding for Pre Employment Training (PET) and Apprenticeship Training for young people who were unemployed.

Across the project the following training monies was made available for the PET

- £27,000 (£18k Wirral and £9k Sefton)

St Helen's did not apply for funding as they have a different recruitment strategy in which they run open days and speak with young people wishing to become apprentices. They offer them advice and support on the CV and job role but don't run a one week pre – employment training course.

The following training monies was made available for the Apprenticeship Training

- £32,000 (£8k Wirral, £8k St Helens & £16k Sefton)

### 6.2.2 Regional

Regionally the following financial benefits were identified

- £6,000 - Free recruitment and Functional Skills testing and Interview scheduling (£2.5k Sefton, £3.5k Wirral)
- £8,000 - Zero college fees for the apprentices training (£2k Wirral, £2k St Helens & £4k Sefton)
- £3,645 - Candidates PET certification paid for by partner (£2.4k Wirral, £1.2k Sefton)

### 6.2.3 District

Locally the following investment was made by each council (from the data capture form):

- Wirral                    £27,278

- Sefton £32,000
- St Helen's £93,500

This investment includes a variety of 'in kind' and cash contributions. 'In kind' support includes, managers time, mentoring and support, interview time and classroom space for the apprenticeship training days (approx 17 days per year).

The direct cash contribution is towards the apprentice's salaries.

#### 6.2.4 Total

	Wirral	Sefton	St Helens
Districts (includes salary contribution, mentoring and on site training, interview and training room costs)	£27,278	£32,000	£93,500
Regional	£7,900	£7,700	£2,000
Other funding sources (National Pre Employment training grant)	£18,000	£9,000	N/A
Other (National Apprenticeship Grants)	£8,000	£16,000	£8,000
Total	£61,178	£64,700	£103,500

Total funding and contribution in kind excluding MRWA = £229,378

#### 6.3 Environmental benefits

The direct environmental benefit from the programme is difficult to measure accurately quantitatively from the information provided but a range of environmental benefits were realised within each of the pilot areas as outlined below:

### 6.3.1 Overall

- General improved standards through having additional resource to carry out work that wouldn't be possible with the full time workforce.
- Increased awareness and appreciation of the sector by the apprentices and their friends and family / community. At the start of the programme, the majority of the apprentices were not interested or engaged with the subject of waste management but by the end this had shifted significantly and they were taking their knowledge and enthusiasm home as ambassadors for recycling in the community.

*"It allows us to do projects that the mainstream workforce could not do..... the apprentices are a godsend, they are so helpful and enthusiastic"*

Manager, Sefton

### 6.3.2 Wirral

- Improved local environmental quality around the school grounds
- Target of number of children to be waste experts enhanced through the 310 school visits
- 20 young people trained on MRF site visit
- 20 apprentice days spent at galas / shows
- Reduced food waste from schools through waste audits and introduction of food composters in schools
- Reduction of waste generally in schools through the Big Bin Challenge
- 1500 waste awareness leaflets distributed by apprentices

*"The majority of the projects have been involved in behaviour change ... with school groups..... This has led to a lot of schools that don't normally engage with us coming on board"*

Manager, Wirral

*"The schools carried out a waste audit, which demonstrated exactly how much they throw away. Now all the food waste goes into a food composter, which has a big impact on their residual bin requirements"*

Manager, Wirral

### 6.3.3 Sefton

- 100,00 brown bins for plastic and cardboard recycling were delivered across the borough by the apprentices – this increased the council's recycling rate from 39% to just under 42%
- Reduction of multiple grey bins by targeting households with 2 or more bins to reassess eligibility
- Through the two above initiatives, the overall residual waste arising were reduced by 1,000 tonnes in 2014 / 15 compared to 2013 / 14
- Cleaner beaches through removal and recycling of debris and bin emptying
- Increased plastic recycling following collection of marine debris

*"We recycled plastics from the beach paths. We have recycled thousands of bottles over the year"*

Manager, Sefton

*"We tipped one thousand less tonnes of rubbish last year since introducing the brown bins"*

Manager, Sefton

- Nine apprentice days spent at galas / shows
- Drift wood diverted from landfill and utilised for boardwalks and planters
- 1,200 members of the public engaged through the stall at the Liverpool Loves Festival

#### 6.3.4 St Helens

- Approximately 500 recycling containers per week delivered to residents (including food caddies, black boxes and recycling bags)
- Increased recycling levels through having extra resource on waste separation
- Increased knowledge of recycling among apprentices and their families through training on why waste is recycled
- Increased number of missed bins emptied through extra apprentice resource

*“We trained the apprentices to know what material went in each container and why we recycle it... this meant a lot of waste was diverted from landfill”*

**Manager, St Helen’s**

#### 6.4 Value of the programme

Figure 5 below outlines the perceived value of each of the pilots for:

- The corporate i.e. the council
- The department
- The apprentices
- MRWA

Figure 5 Value of each pilot programme

	Corporate	Department	Apprentice	MRWA
Wirral	High	Medium	High	High
St Helen’s	High	High	Medium	High
Sefton	High	High	High	Medium

Overall, across the pilots, the value of the programme was high. There were three areas where the value was felt to be slightly lower as follows:

- Wirral – the value to the department was slightly lower than the other programmes as the apprentices were involved in work which was more challenging (education in schools) and therefore involved a lot more support from other members of staff.

- St Helen's – the value to the apprentices was slightly lower in this pilot as in comparison to the others, the work was less challenging and therefore was not as exciting or motivating for the individuals.
- Sefton – six of the eight apprentices in Sefton were primarily focussed on countryside activities so less directly related to waste management as the other pilots.

### 6.5 Continuation / Legacy

- Sefton - The council would be keen to apply for funding from the MRWA again and see an ideal project for the apprentices to work on the new comingled waste programme that is planned for July/ August next year.
- St Helen's – The council will definitely continue as previous years by employing four operational apprentices to work on the waste and recycling rounds. They would target the most vulnerable young unemployed people and would work with MRWA to do this.
- Wirral – The council were positive about the programme and would like to apply again next year but they would want to make some changes in that they would aim to find apprentices with higher levels of skills to run the educational work (and be more work ready).
- Liverpool – The council would be keen to be part of the programme next year (from April 1st next year)
- Knowsley – The council would be very keen to be part of the programme and will apply for the grant as soon as possible

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Innovations

The grant in itself was innovative. It was the first offered in England through a waste disposal authority to support apprentices in the sector. It has led to discussions now with North London Waste Authority. Without the grant, the programme would not have happened in the Wirral. It is starting to encourage a succession policy and young people into the waste industry. It is the first sub-regional waste programme for apprentices in England.

Particular project innovation within the programme have included the Big Bin Challenge and the marine debris clearance among others.

The programme has had a very high job retention rate out of the 16 apprenticeship positions created 13 are in full time positions after the completion of the one year apprenticeship (this includes all 4 Wirral apprentices who are still on programme).

### 7.2 A successful programme

For an apprenticeship programme to be truly successful in a local authority, there needs to be buy in and commitment across the organisation as shown below:

<b>CORPORATE</b>	Needs to have support at a policy level to ensure the programme can take place and be funded
<b>DEPARTMENTAL</b>	The policy needs to be embedded at a departmental level to ensure that delivery expectations match the ability of the young people
<b>INDIVIDUAL</b>	The individuals working with and managing the apprentices need to understand the apprentices' development needs and limitations

Without the buy in across the organisation, the programme can be less effective. This could involve training or briefing of line managers to ensure they have appropriate expectations and production of detailed job specifications so that all involved are clear of the role of the young people once employed.

### 7.3 The way forward

There is a desire within all five authorities to be involved in the programme in the coming financial year, therefore it is recommended that the grant is offered to these five. However a number of learnings were identified:

- Allow flexibility to authorities to enable them to follow their own internal policies and procedures with regard to employing apprentices, such as salary levels.

**Appendix 1**

- Take steps where possible to maximise how work ready the apprentices are when they commence. This could be through training / sessions with the work programmes.
- A number of apprentices felt that they knew little about the job when it commenced. Having a council representative at the awareness sessions or even a previous apprentice would be valuable to help them to fully understand the role before applying.
- The set up for apprentices takes more time than expected, i.e. HR forms, IT equipment, PPE provision, door passes, references, occupational health check. A reasonable time (3 weeks) should be allowed from interview to appointment to ensure this can take place effectively.
- Apprentices are not work ready at the start of the programme so it is important to have a line manager who understands young people and to ensure that they are not overloaded (maximum 3 apprentices).
- Support from the council Apprenticeship Manager (pastoral support) as well as the line manager has high value
- Can some criteria be provided to local authorities (following the learnings from the pilot) regarding eligibility criteria in terms of the type of work the apprentices are carrying out, i.e. how important is it that the work related to MRWA activities or is there a social focus too which means that programmes which are less waste hierarchy related would be acceptable.

## 8. Recommendations

- The programme should be offered to all five Merseyside local authorities as it became clear that the policy and restructuring barriers faced by Knowsley and Liverpool Council have been largely overcome. Knowsley want to apply for the funding this year. Liverpool are keen but unlikely to be able to access funding until April 2016. Liverpool due to a European Funding bid would be likely to apply after April 2016 and will focus their efforts on the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) but this could include apprentices.
- The districts are very keen to be the leaders in their area on the apprenticeship grant programme rather than other organisations as they have key responsibility and accountability for reducing waste in their area, therefore it is recommended that local authorities are the lead partners in any bid.
- The pilot has allowed us to view three very different programmes that all supported recycling reduction and reuse activities in Merseyside. This should continue to be a key eligibility criteria within the programmes. Those programmes that have a higher waste component (reduce, reuse, recycle) should be given priority on funding.
- All three pilots applied local council policies on salary to their apprenticeship programmes and it is strongly recommended that this continues rather than MRWA setting a salary figure.
- Members will need to consider that it is likely that the 4 Merseyside authorities will apply for the existing funding which is approximately £55,000. It is recommended that expressions of interest are sought in advance for sums up to £13,500 per authority. This will ensure the expression of interests are realistic against the budget available and expectations are managed at the start of the bidding process.
- Future programmes should continue to include data capture. To ensure metrics are recorded, quarterly returns should be an eligibility criteria of the grant process.

## 9. APPENDIX 1

### 9.1 Data capture form

This form is stage one in an evaluation of the programme. The purpose of this form is to capture data and measurements relating to the programme in your area. This will be followed up by interviews with apprentices and colleagues in your authority.

**Authority Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

How much did the programme cost your authority in £ invested?

£

How many apprentices started the programme?

**For each apprentice who started the programme, can you provide the following information?**

Name	Did they complete the prog?  Y/ N	No. of days of sickness	No of days of training received	Did they achieve their Level 2  Y/N	Details of other training received	What did they do after the apprenticeship?  FE / Job with you / job elsewhere / nothing / don't know

**What types of tasks did they undertake?**

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**Please record as many measures as relevant for your apprentices in 2013 / 2014**

(Please use the blank rows to add further actions / measures)

No of apprentice days spent on school visits		
No of apprentice days spent at galas / shows		
No of properties door knocked by apprentices		
No of waste awareness leaflets distributed by apprentices		
No of additional recycling containers delivered to residents by apprentices e.g. boxes, composters, wormeriesetc		

**For each event attended by apprentices, please provide, where possible an estimate of people engaged with.**

Event attended	No engaged?	Comments
e.g. Liverpool Loves Festival	1,200	Apprentices manned stall with 1 staff member

**What impact do you think the apprentices had on waste reduction, re-use and recycling?**

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**Please provide any measurements that could provide evidence towards this waste diversion?**

(Please use the blank rows to add further actions / measures)

e.g. Number of apprentice days spent at household waste recycling centres	
e.g. Number of apprentice days spent separating recyclables from litter	

**Please return this form to [David.smith@acornenv.co.uk](mailto:David.smith@acornenv.co.uk)**

## 9.2 Discussion outline – Primary contact & Apprentice managers

### Introduction

- Explain purpose of the interviews / introduce self
- Explain recording the interview purely for recall purposes

### Overview of programme

- Overall how would you summarise your thoughts on the programme?
- REFER to data capture form and probe for more detail.
  - How many apprentices started the programme?
  - How many completed? Why did some leave?
  - What did they all go on to do?
  - Have you employed any? Why not more? (ability or job availability etc)

### Behaviour / attitudes /culture

- How would you describe their attitudes and behaviours?
  - I.e. sickness / punctuality / motivation / attitude
  - How did this vary between the apprentices?
  - Are there any learnings for future interviewing / selection of apprentices?
- Did you see any changes in their attitudes or behaviours throughout the programme?
- How did the apprentices fit into the team?
- How did others in the team respond to the apprentices?
- Is there anything more that could be done to integrate the current workforce and the apprentices?

### Activities

- What activities did the apprentices get involved with?
- What types of tasks did they perform better at? / not so well at?
- REFER to data capture form and go through specific activities / types of activity
  - For each one, e.g. school visits – what tasks did they undertake?
  - What level of briefing / training was required?
  - Did they find the task challenging / difficult?
  - Did the apprentice getting involved reduce the level of employees involved?
  - What benefit was gained by the apprentices?
  - What benefits were gained by the council?
  - What benefits were gained by the community? (if relevant)
  - What benefits were realised in terms of reduce / re-use / recycle?
  - **REPEAT FOR ALL ACTIVITIES**

- Once discussed all different activities – if running this programme again, what tasks would you be more likely to get them involved with / why?

### Overall value

- What have you found the most challenging part of the apprentice programme?
- What have you found the most rewarding part of the programme?
- Overall, what would you say is the value of the programme to.....
  - The council?
  - The department / team?
  - The apprentices?
  - The environment?

### Summary

- What 3 things would you recommend to another department or council considering an apprenticeship programme?
- Any other learnings / comments?

### 9.3 Discussion outline – Apprentices

#### Introduction

- Explain purpose of the interviews / introduce self
- Explain recording the interview purely for recall purposes

#### Application / expectations

- Thinking back, what made you apply for the programme?
- Where did you see it advertised?
- Did you want the job? Or need it? (PROBE to understand appeal)
- What bit of the job outline most interested you?
- Has it turned out as you expected? Is there anything you've done that you didn't expect to be doing?

#### Working at the council

- Overall, how have you found it working at the council?
- Did you feel part of a bigger team?
- How did others in the team treat you?
- Is there anything more that could be done to make you feel part of the team?
- How did you find the working hours? The location?
  - Any comments on any other rules / procedures?

#### Activities

- What activities did you get involved with?
- What did you find the most difficult / boring / exciting?
- What types of tasks did you do better at? / not so well at?
- Go through specific activities mentioned (probe for those mentioned by managers if they don't recall)
  - For each one - what tasks did they undertake?
  - Did you enjoy it?
  - Did you find the task challenging / difficult?
  - What do you think you gained from this task?
  - Which 2 words best describe how you found this task? – show card of words
  - **REPEAT FOR ALL ACTIVITIES**
- Once discussed all different activities - what did you like the best / like the least – why?

#### Training

- How did you find the training part of the programme? (probe for useful / difficult etc)

- How do you feel about the training being on site? (rather than at a local college)
- What part of the training (probe for on the job v English / maths) did you find....
  - Most difficult?
  - Most useful?
- How valuable / important are the qualifications to you & your future?

### Overall

- What have you found the most challenging part of the programme?
- What are the 3 best bits of the programme?
- What are the 3 worst bits of the programme?
- What do you think has been most beneficial to you for the future?

### Summary

- Looking back, knowing what you know now, would you still apply?
- Would you recommend the programme to a friend? If so, what would you say?
- Any other learnings / comments?