

Higher Apprenticeships Support Service

Case Study: Helping employers understand the costs and public funding available to support Higher Apprenticeships – City of Bristol College and Peter Jones Foundation

City of Bristol College was successful in round one of the National Apprenticeship Service Higher Apprenticeship Development Fund with a unique bid that supported the West of England area through collaboration with five Colleges (Weston College, City of Bath College, Norton Radstock College, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College) and University of the West of England. As the lead provider, City of Bristol College set up a steering group for the partner Colleges to manage and deliver the outcomes for the development of Higher Apprenticeships.

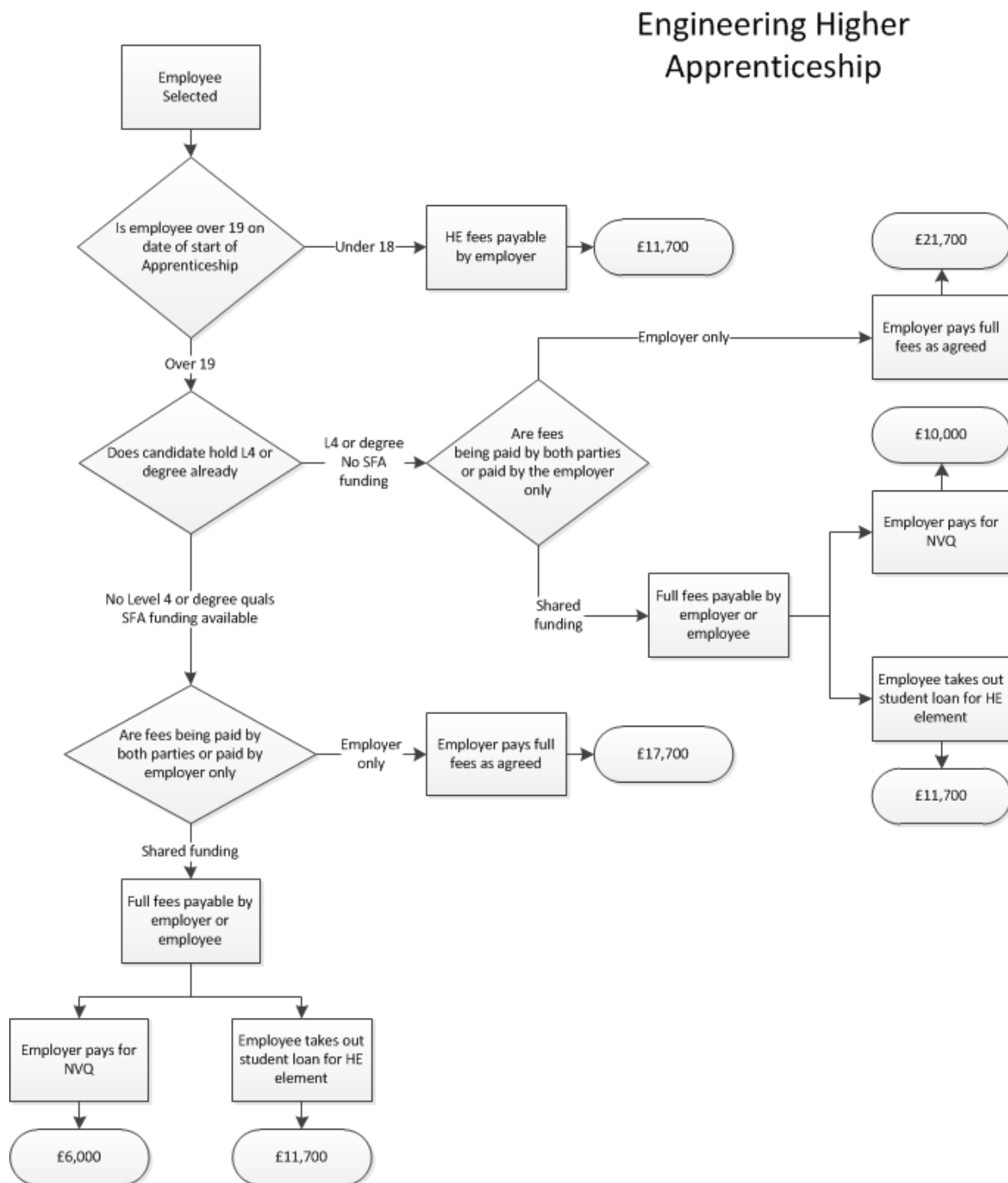
Across the Colleges Higher Apprenticeships are offered in Accounting, Business and Administration, Engineering, IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professional and Leadership and Management. New Higher Apprenticeship frameworks will be offered for Creative and Construction Technical and Professional. The University of the West of England has been responsible for the development of the Engineering level six and Healthcare Science Associates Higher Apprenticeship frameworks.

To date 70 higher apprentices have been recruited across the Colleges. As well as utilising the Higher Apprenticeship offer with professionals already established within work, nearly 30 Higher Apprenticeship vacancies have been generated in Engineering with Airbus and GKN Aerospace.

As a collaborative project, consistency in helping employers understand the costs and public funding associated with Higher Apprenticeship has been vital. Whilst all employees are eligible to study Higher Apprenticeship frameworks, only some will be eligible for government funding to support costs. Making pricing clear is essential for business decision makers. To support this process decision tree flowcharts have been produced for each Higher Apprenticeship framework, which have made an

initial discussion with employers about costs much more focused. The flowcharts have also been useful for explaining the funding implications internally. Figure one provides an example of this for the Higher Apprenticeship in Engineering.

Figure 1: Decision tree flowchart for the Engineering Higher Apprenticeship



Before the decision tree flowcharts could be produced the Higher Apprenticeship frameworks were subjected to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) approval process. This included the listing of qualifications on the Learner Aim Reference Application (LARA) database and the specifying of their funding values. This data supported the development of an Apprenticeship rate funding calculator using EXCEL and informed the decision tree flowcharts. The complexity of this decision tree depends on whether the framework is based solely on FE qualifications, and therefore SFA funded, or whether it includes HE qualifications. Where HE qualifications are included there is a need to be aware of the HE institution fee policy, the rules around HE loans and the extent of the shared funding (if any) between employee and employer.

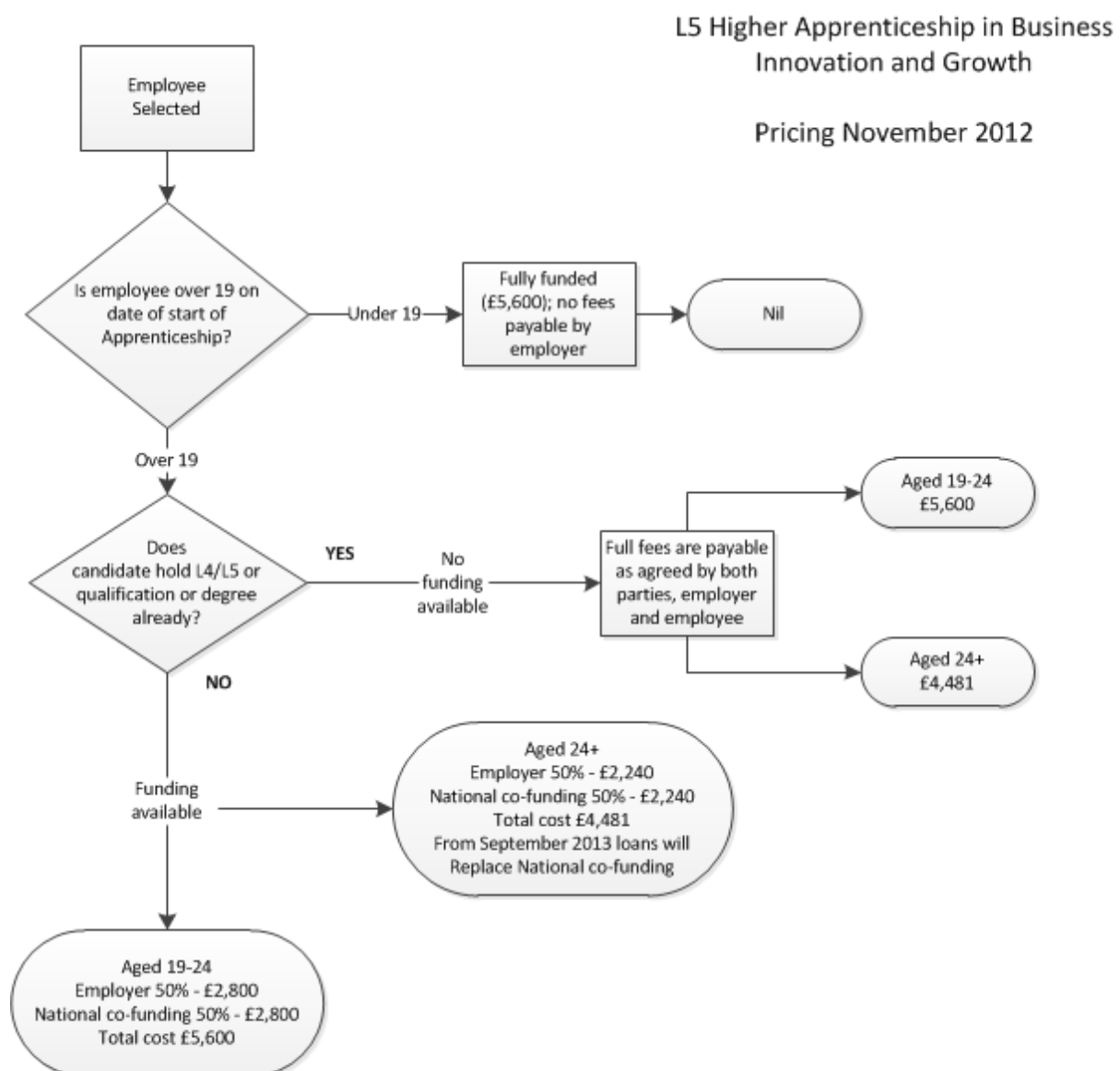
City of Bristol College have shared their decision tree flow charts with other Higher Apprenticeship pilots, including the Peter Jones Foundation (PJF) who have found them very beneficial and adapted them to meet their own needs. PJF is developing the level five Higher Apprenticeship in Innovation and Growth in conjunction with CFA, SFEDI and Edexcel. This is not linked to a single business role, enabling employers of all sizes and across all sectors to grow the next generation of innovative managers and leaders quickly. At the same time it offers the apprentice a new, faster route into a business career in areas such as Business Development, Product Development, Marketing and Operations. It is envisaged that the Apprenticeship will last 24 months, dependent on prior learning.

PJF is promoting and making available the Higher Apprenticeship through the existing network of Peter Jones Enterprise Academies. In addition they are also extending the network and provision by engaging and supporting additional FE Colleges and independent providers. In terms of widening the network and informing potential providers, employers and apprentices it became apparent that there was a need for additional documentation to support this process.

Building on the City of Bristol College decision tree flowchart, PJF have devised a simple and clear diagram outlining the funding linked to the Innovation and Growth Higher Apprenticeship framework, see figure two 2 below. It has proven invaluable in discussions with employers, apprentices and providers, offering clarity with regards

to Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funding and has aided decision making. It has been central to explaining the different possible funding scenarios which might arise due to the apprentice's age and prior learning, and what the different contributions might be in terms of delivery and also staff development.

Figure 2: Decision tree flowchart for the Higher Apprenticeship in Business Innovation and Growth



Please note figures quoted do not include Functional Skills. If an apprentice takes all three Functional Skills, the cost is £627 for 19-24 year olds and £502 for 24+, with the employer contribution set at 17.5% in both cases. Unless apprentices have already achieved Functional Skills at Level 2 in English, Maths and IT, or one of the alternatives listed in the framework, they must be achieved as part of the Higher Apprenticeship.

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