# Call for interest in the development of a Rehabilitation Work Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standard

## Background

Following reports from several employers of difficulties in recruiting to Rehabilitation Worker vacancies and the suspension of one of the rehabilitation work training courses due to low recruitment figures, the Vision 2020UK Rehabilitation and Low Vision Group convened a working group to consider workforce-planning issues within the Rehabilitation Worker field. It was acknowledged by the group that the numbers of new workers entering the profession each year is being outstripped by those leaving (due to retirement, career progression, career change etc.) resulting in increasing gaps in the provision of visual impairment rehabilitation services. One big issue for the profession is that it is relatively unknown, meaning that rehabilitation work course applications are largely limited to people already working in the visual impairment/sensory needs field e.g. as support workers, assistant rehabilitation workers, community support workers etc. Very few applicants come through the standard UK higher education application route of UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service).

## Apprenticeship Proposal

One proposition discussed by the working party is that of an apprenticeship route into the rehabilitation work profession. In recent years the government has invested significant funds into developing apprenticeships and has recently announced an Apprenticeship Levy on large employers from 2017 in order to secure more apprenticeships in the future. From 2017 ***all*** employers will be entitled to claim £15,000 per year to finance the mandatory ‘off-the-job’ training for apprentices. [For comparison: at current course fees, this would fund a year’s fees for 2.5 students on the Birmingham City University Foundation Degree in Rehabilitation Work (Visual Impairment).] This apprenticeship training funding can be spent on up-skilling new or existing employees of all ages. Support for employers, including the recruitment of apprentices, is provided centrally through the National Apprenticeship Service (this will change to The Institute of Apprenticeships which is currently being established). Employers are responsible for paying the employment costs of each employee. Please note that these details only refer to the plans to expand apprenticeships in England – each country in the UK has its own apprenticeship process.

### Apprenticeship Standards

Apprenticeships must be delivered according to an approved apprenticeship standard, which can be set between levels 2 and 7 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). [NB: The current level of qualification for a Rehabilitation Worker is Level 5 e.g. a Foundation Degree, Diploma of Higher Education or BTEC Level 5.] As with many other occupations, there is currently no standard for rehabilitation work BUT the government is very keen to receive applications from groups of employers to develop new ‘trailblazer’ apprenticeships in relation to any occupations not yet covered by apprenticeship standards. This presents the opportunity for a rehabilitation work employer group to develop a ‘trailblazer standard’ for rehabilitation work, which would define the knowledge, skills and behaviour (KSBs) required by an individual to be a fully competent Rehabilitation Worker.

If a rehabilitation work apprenticeship standard were approved, a new route into the profession, with government-funded training and assessment, would be created. This in itself would raise the profile of rehabilitation work, as the rehabilitation work standard would form part of the Adult Care apprenticeship offer, which would attract attention from people previously unaware of the profession. For example, vacancies for apprenticeships fulfilling the rehabilitation work standard would sit alongside other health and social care apprenticeship vacancies for perusal by potential applicants nationally.

### What is required

An employer group comprising at least ten sector employers would need to be formed. These employers would be committed both to being actively involved in the development of a rehabilitation work apprenticeship standard and to using the standard when it is ready for delivery through employing apprentices. The initial stage of the process is for the employer group to submit an expression of interest to the Apprenticeship Directorate. If this is approved then support is given to the group in order to fully develop the standard. It is expected that the whole process of developing a new standard would be completed within a year. Full details of the requirements for developing Apprenticeship Trailblazers are outlined in the government publication ***The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Guidance for Trailblazers – from standards to starts***, which can be found at the following link:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/487350/BIS-15-632-apprenticeships-guidance-for-trailblazers-december-2015.pdf](https://owa.bcu.ac.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=qx-pfAzqBkC1W3Rjmhjvy7T5b9tIR9MI5eMDqnvLvcPo6Waf6fSWpCQaVSR1yizq4r1cShCWOxU.&URL=https%3a%2f%2fwww.gov.uk%2fgovernment%2fuploads%2fsystem%2fuploads%2fattachment_data%2ffile%2f487350%2fBIS-15-632-apprenticeships-guidance-for-trailblazers-december-2015.pdf)

### Next Steps

This brief is intended to determine if there is appetite amongst the employers of rehabilitation workers to pursue this opportunity to develop a new rehabilitation work standard.

In terms of co-ordinating the management of this project, Catherine Smith (Birmingham City University) and Joshua Feehan (RNIB) are happy to support the employment group to complete the application process.

An initial conference call / meeting with interested parties will be arranged for April, with an expression of interest being submitted in May.

If you would like to have a more detailed conversation you can contact Josh or Catherine on:

Josh Feehan: Joshua.feehan@rnib.org.uk or 01216654204

Catherine Smith: Catherine.smith@bcu.ac.uk or 07775-640639

### Further information and resources:

More information about apprenticeships can be found on the Gov.UK website at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

The current Apprenticeship Standards can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards#healthcare-standards>

For comparison, the currently most closely related standard to rehabilitation work is the level 5 Adult Care Standard: Leader in Adult Care, which can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/455220/ADULT_CARE_Leader_in_Adult_Care.pdf>

The company BPP, which provides professional and academic education, has created some useful resources about the Apprenticeship Levy, including a Frequently Asked Questions document, which can be found at the following link:

<https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/bppassets/public/assets/pdf/handbooks/BPP-Apprenticeship-Levy-FAQs.pdf>