



## Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Data Publication 2017 – 2018

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The public-sector apprenticeships target was introduced by government in April 2017 and sets a target for any public-sector employer in England with at least 250 employees to employ an average of 2.3% of their staff headcount as new apprentice starts between 1 April 2017 and March 2021.

Staffordshire County Council fully supports the Government's apprenticeships reform agenda and the introduction of the public sector target, the transparency it provides and how this will encourage employers to act sooner to help reposition apprenticeships as the primary solution to technical and vocational skills development.

Apprenticeships play a vital role in growing Staffordshire's economy, and we have been working with our training provider, Entrust, since the introduction of the new Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017 to develop our programme. Whilst there are areas that require further development, the investment we have made into apprenticeships to date has meant more people than ever before have been able to take that important step up into the world of work or to develop their skills.

As a public-sector body in scope we must report annually on our progress towards meeting the target and publish our 'Data Publication'.

Local authorities have until 30 September 2018 to complete their returns for the period 01/04/17 – 31/03/18, submit them to government and to publish information about their progress towards meeting the target. This 'Data Publication' serves to meet that requirement and to explain Staffordshire County Councils performance in meeting the target.



# Public-sector apprenticeships target

The target of 2.3% is for new apprenticeship 'starts', which includes both newly employed apprentices and any existing employees that have begun an apprenticeship.

Each local authority's target is based on the headcount of their organisation not Full Time Equivalents, which includes community and voluntary controlled schools.

The Data Publication reports several figures which enable the Government, the public, and wider stakeholders to understand each body's headcount and the number of apprentices they employ to assess the progress they have made towards meeting the target;

- **Figure A: 1231** The number of employees whose employment in England by the Council began in the reporting period
- **Figure B: 82** The number of apprentices who began to work for the Council in that period and whose apprenticeship agreements also began in that period. This includes employees who were already working for the Council before beginning their apprenticeship, as well as new apprentice hires.
- **Figure C: 10496** The number of employees employed in England that the Council has at the end of that period.
- **Figure D: 86** The number of apprentices who work for the Council at the end of that period.
- Public bodies are also required to provide two percentages in order to give context to the other figures. These percentages do not reflect the progress the Council has made towards the target:
- **Figure E: 6.66%** Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure A.
- **Figure F: 0.82%** Figure D expressed as a percentage of figure C.
- **Figure G: 69** The number of apprentices who worked for the Council immediately before that period.
- **Figure H: 11884** Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period in the target period; and
- **Figure I: 0.69%** Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure H

# Public-sector apprenticeships target

Staffordshire County Council has employed an average of 0.69% of the staff headcount as new apprentice starts between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, achieving 30% of the public sector target of 2.3%. This equates to 82 new apprenticeship starts against a target of 273 during this period.

Early indications suggest that on average Local Authorities are achieving 40% of the public sector target for the same period.

Whilst we have taken a number of actions to help us progress towards meeting the target, we have faced a number of challenges in our efforts during its first year of operation. These actions and challenges are explored in this document alongside details of the plans we have in place to ensure we meet the target in future.



- **Lack of available Apprenticeship Standards**

As part of the government reforms existing apprenticeship frameworks are being replaced with new, more rigorous apprenticeship standards. The transition to the new system has not been completed in time for the start of the Apprenticeship Levy and there were some key areas for local government where apprenticeship standards were not in place, and, in some cases, where the frameworks they were replacing had already been 'switched off' meaning there are significant gaps in provision. Including for example Social Workers and Teaching apprenticeships.

- **Procurement**

The County Council must follow Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in order to procure apprenticeship provision. The process undertaken to consider and identify our solution to sourcing training provision alongside establishing the infrastructure to manage the Levy was complex and time consuming. In addition, the delays in receiving confirmation of the funding policy (a few months before the Levy started) meant less time to plan for the implementation ultimately limiting the number of apprentices we could take on board in the first year.

- **20% Off-the-Job training**

This requirement has proven to be a barrier for many, particularly schools who are reluctant to see a staff member take time away from the classroom. The Council has been working with our main training provider to ensure apprenticeship programmes consider innovative ways to meet this requirement and recent feedback suggests planning for 20% off the job training is good.

- **Reduced capacity to support and deliver Learning & Development, including apprenticeships**

Council funding has changed significantly in recent years, with significantly less grant coming from Government. Since 2009 we have reduced our costs by £240million, by changing the way we work and support Staffordshire people and businesses. However, the financial pressures ahead are far more significant than in the recent past. This has inevitably led to reduced workforce capacity to support and deliver learning and development, including for apprenticeships. This combined with the prohibition on using Levy funds for anything other than the cost of the training, for example funding management of the Levy, has restricted progress on meeting the target.

- **Utilising our networks**

We engage regularly with the Education and Skills Funding Agency and participate in the West Midlands Regional Apprenticeship Network, securing access to technical support and shared learning and expertise. We are exploring the potential to participate in an 'Apprenticeship Accelerator Programme' pilot led by the Local Government Association which is designed to deliver targeted technical support to help councils overcome barriers, create and deliver longer-term multi-year apprenticeship plans and increase apprenticeship starts.

- **Technical and Strategic Learning Needs Analysis**

Working with our operational management teams we have undertaken a technical learning needs analysis to map apprenticeship standards against job / skills shortage areas for the Council and any maintained schools to identify learning needs that may be met by apprenticeships. This work alongside the outputs of other diagnostics will ensure we have a clear plan for utilising the Apprenticeship Levy that is joined up with organisational initiatives and sits within a wider commissioning plan for learning and development.