



Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Data Publication 2018-19

the knot unites



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 chosen training providers 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 2019 to complete their returns for the period 01/04/18 – 31/03/19, 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 Council's 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: 1009** The number of employees whose employment in England by the Council began in the reporting period
- **Figure B: 61** 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: 9656** The number of employees employed in England that the Council has at the end of that period.
- **Figure D: 76** The number of apprentices who work for the Council at the end of that period.
- **Figure E: 6.05%** Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure A.
- **Figure F: 0.79%** Figure D expressed as a percentage of figure C.
- **Figure G: 86** The number of apprentices who worked for the Council immediately before that period.
- **Figure H: 10496** Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period in the target period; and
- **Figure I: 0.58%** Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure H

Public-sector apprenticeships target

Staffordshire County Council has employed an average of 0.58% of the staff headcount as new apprentice starts between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019, achieving 25% of the public sector target of 2.3%. This equates to 61 new apprenticeship starts against a target of 241 during this period.

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



- **Change in Training Provider**

The County Council previously sourced all of its apprenticeship training through a single provider. Following an initial monitoring visit from OfSTED, the provider was informed that it would not be able to take on any new apprentices with effect from October 2018. The provider then reconsidered its delivery position and ceased completely to provide any apprenticeship training with effect from January 2019. This has meant that, this year, most of our efforts in this area had to be expended in securing alternative training providers for our existing apprentices, rather than setting up new ones, and this has significantly reduced our Apprentice numbers for 2018/19.

- **Apprenticeship Reforms.**

As well as the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, there have also been other changes to the requirements of apprenticeships. The reforms have needed time to be understood by employers nationally, therefore there has been a general slow down in recruitment. The Council has now produced a new Apprenticeship Strategy which will mean that the apprenticeship programme is fit for purpose and meets the new requirements. The Council will provide support to schools in understanding the new reforms and how they can best use the apprenticeship levy to develop their workforce going forward.

- **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 how we support Staffordshire people and businesses. However, the financial pressures for Local Government continue to be significant. 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, being able to use the Levy to help with actions designed to supporting the growth in apprenticeships across the Council, such as learning and development and Levy management and administration), has made it more difficult to progress towards meeting the target.

- **Utilising Expertise and Networks**

The County Council has put together a team, with the appropriate skills, to implement the new Apprenticeship Strategy. This work will now continue to develop the programme further to ensure that the levy funding is used effectively to develop skills within the Council and its schools. This includes the completion of the first Transfer of Funding initiative which will support partners and stakeholders in raising skills levels within their workforce. We are working with partners and engage regularly with the Education and Skills Funding Agency, we participate in the West Midlands Regional Apprenticeship Network, and our Apprenticeship Strategy has been identified by the Local Government Association as good practice.

- **Aligning our Apprenticeship programme with our new People Strategy**

The County Council is currently implementing a new People Strategy, which includes the delivery of the Apprenticeship Strategy. This means that apprenticeships will very much move to the forefront of our managers' and staff thinking going forward. This work, alongside the outputs of other learning and development strategic 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.

- **Establishing a robust access to high quality Apprenticeship Training**

The County Council has now joined an established framework for procuring Apprenticeship training provision. This means that not only are we meeting the requirements of the public sector procurement regulations but we have a wider range of quality training providers to deliver the apprenticeships needed to meet the needs of the business, schools and the apprentices. This will further support the aims of the new People Strategy and put the Council in control of the procurement and quality monitoring of the apprenticeship provision.