



Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Data Publication 2019-2020

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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 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 2020 to complete their returns for the period 01/04/19 – 31/03/20, 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: 888** The number of employees whose employment in England by the Council began in the reporting period
- **Figure B: 79** 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: 8625** The number of employees employed in England that the Council has at the end of that period.
- **Figure D: 97** 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: 8.90%** Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure A.
- **Figure F: 1.12%** Figure D expressed as a percentage of figure C.
- **Figure G: 76** The number of apprentices who worked for the Council immediately before that period.
- **Figure H: 9656** Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period in the target period; and
- **Figure I: 0.82%** Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure H

Public-sector apprenticeships target

Staffordshire County Council has employed an average of 0.82% of the staff headcount as new apprentice starts between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, achieving 36% of the public sector target of 2.3%. This equates to 79 new apprenticeship starts against a target of 222 during this 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 third 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.



- **Public Sector Funding**

The County Council has been subject to funding reviews, the same as other authorities, therefore there has been a need to revisit the delivery of services over the past 12 months. Service reviews were carried out to make sure that residents were not affected and that teams work as effectively as possible within budgets. This has had an impact on staff recruitment including the recruitment of apprentices. The use of apprenticeships for workforce development has also been affected as teams through out the Council went through restructures.

- **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. Many teams have had to look at their ways of working and how we support Staffordshire people and businesses. 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 apprenticeships. The main focus of teams has been on providing a continuing service when staff leave, retire or move to other work as they have often not been replaced. This has made it more difficult to progress towards meeting the target.

- **Corona Virus Pandemic.**

The Council produced a new Apprenticeship Strategy in May 2019 and starts on apprenticeships began to improve especially at higher levels and the mix and diversity of sectors also improved but the end of the reporting year was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in some apprenticeship plans for February, March and April being postponed.

- **Utilising Expertise and Networks**

The County Council has started to implement the new Apprenticeship Strategy. This will continue to develop the programme further to ensure that the levy funding is used effectively to develop skills within the Council and its schools. Apprenticeships are now used widely for workforce development and succession planning. The first Transfer of Funding initiative to support partners and stakeholders in raising skills levels within their workforce has been successful with all of the 25% funding allowance utilised. We are working with partners and engage regularly with the Education and Skills Funding Agency, we participate in the West Midlands Regional Apprenticeship Network.

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

The Council is currently implementing a new People Strategy, which includes the delivery of the Apprenticeship Strategy. This means that apprenticeships have moved 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. 2 cohorts of an apprenticeship programme to develop managers have started during the year. Plus a programme has also started to retrain current staff to be social workers which is supporting a team that has previously had a high staff turnover. A second phase of social worker apprentices will be starting next year.

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

The Council is meeting the requirements of the public sector procurement regulations and we have a wide 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.