



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Fire & Rescue Service

Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee

APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 22 January 2021

Purpose of Report:

To provide an annual update on apprenticeships within the Service.

Recommendations:

That Members recognise the progress made in the employment of apprenticeship roles during the review period.

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1. BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 24 January 2020, Members received an update report on the implementation of the apprenticeship levy and introduction of a public-sector apprenticeship target through the enactment of the Enterprise Bill 2016. This report provides an update on developments since this time.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Since 2019, the Service has aligned its trainee firefighter development programme to the national Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship Standard, which is a level 3 qualification. There are currently nineteen apprentice firefighters progressing through the twenty six month programme. Ten apprentice firefighters are nearing the end of their training period, with final assessment completed in December 2021. Nine apprentice firefighters will complete the final assessment in July 2021.
- 2.2 The Service draws down funding from the apprenticeship levy for this training, and this counts toward the public-sector apprenticeship target of 2.3% of the workforce.
- 2.3 The development pathway follows the established internal development programme, with an initial training period at the Service Development Centre (SDC) to develop their core skills, knowledge and behaviours, followed by deployment to a designated watch where they attend operational incidents whilst continuing their development against the firefighter role map.
- 2.4 During this time, they are supported by a mentor who will review and guide their development on station and undertake periodic assessment by SDC trainers. As part of the apprenticeship programme, they are also monitored by the Workplace Assessment team who meet with them at six weekly intervals to review their progress.
- 2.5 At the end of the apprenticeship programme, the apprentices undergo an End-Point Assessment (EPA) by an independent provider, which entails a formal theory examination, practical assessments and professional discussion to confirm that the apprentice has met the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. The first cohort of apprentices have completed their EPA and are awaiting outcomes.
- 2.6 As an employer provider, the Service now receives £12,000 per trainee (rising to £14,000 in 2021) over a two-year apprenticeship programme life.
- 2.7 The Service currently has eight apprentices in support roles in the following departments:
 - Finance Department undertaking the Level 3 Assistant Accountant apprenticeship;
 - Finance Department undertaking a Level 2 Business Administration apprenticeship;

- ICT Department undertaking a Level 4 Network Engineer Apprenticeship;
- ICT Department undertaking a Level 3 Digital Support Technician Apprenticeship;
- ICT Department undertaking a Level 4 Cyber Security Technologist Apprenticeship;
- Occupational Health and Fitness team undertaking the Personal Trainer Level 3 Apprenticeship;
- 2 x Prevention and Protection Department undertaking a Level 2 Business Administration apprenticeship.

The Service draws down training costs from the levy to support the academic courses, however the levy cannot be used to fund salary costs.

- 2.8 An ILM Level 5 Operations/Departmental Manager apprenticeship also commenced in 2018 and there are currently three employees undertaking this programme via Sheffield College. The college provide two days per month of on-site tutorials, with 20% of working time committed to further study.
- 2.9 In the next year, the Service expects to draw down significant funding to support both internally provided and external training linked to apprenticeship schemes. The levy funding must be spent within twenty four months of pay-over.

PUBLIC SECTOR APPRENTICESHIP TARGET

- 2.10 As previously reported, public-sector employers have been set a target of 2.3% of the workforce as new apprenticeship starters. Based on a workforce of seven hundred and seventy (excluding those with dual contract arrangements), this would require eighteen new apprenticeships each year. The Service is required to report whether it has achieved the target in September of each year, reporting this year covered the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.
- 2.11 During this period, 23.5% of all new starters were apprenticeships. This represents 1.44% of the total workforce. Overall, apprentices account for 3.2% of the total headcount. Despite the increase in new-start apprenticeships, which saw twelve new apprenticeship starts between April 2019 and March 2020, the Service did not meet this target during 2019-20.
- 2.12 Further to the recent Wholetime firefighter recruitment process, which has recently completed, there will be twenty six new apprentice firefighters who will commence employment during 2021. This will contribute to achievement of the target in the future, if the target period is extended beyond the original completion date of 31 March 2021. The next reporting period will be in September 2021 for the year 2020-21.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 During 2020, the Service paid over £120k into the apprenticeship levy, based on payroll. The Service has received back £75,461 to date. Other funding has been received directly from our levy account to training providers.
- 3.2 As of the beginning of December 2020, the Service had £241,606 in its digital apprenticeship account, this includes a contribution from government. The monthly contribution to this account is approximately £9k depending on payroll numbers in a given month.
- 3.3 Between January and the beginning of December 2020, the Service drew down £103,478 toward apprenticeship training, at approximately £8,600 per month.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The human resources and learning and development implications are set out within the report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An initial equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as there has been no change in policy or service delivery.
- 5.2 However, of the twenty seven apprentices currently employed by the Service twelve (44.4%) are women and four (14.8%) from BAME backgrounds.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The apprenticeship levy is a statutory payment under the Enterprise Bill 2016 and is payable by all employers with more than two hundred and fifty employees.
- 7.2 The public-sector apprenticeship target is established under the Public-Sector Apprenticeship Target Regulations 2017.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The apprenticeship levy is paid over irrespective of usage and must be used within twenty four months or lost as a source of funding. To maximise draw

down from the levy, it is therefore imperative that the Service identifies apprenticeship opportunities, by either creating apprenticeship contracts for new employees linked to registered schemes, or by purchasing training for existing employees from registered providers.

- 8.2 The Public-Sector Apprenticeship Target Regulations 2017 require public sector employers to report on progress against the 2.3% apprenticeship target annually. A failure to meet the target will result in the submission of a statement to the Secretary of State explaining why the target has not been met and how this will be addressed. It is not yet clear what sanctions, if any, will result from a failure to meet the target.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members recognise the progress made in the employment of apprenticeship roles during the review period.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER