



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: 13 January 2023

Purpose of Report:

To provide an annual update on apprenticeship provision within the Service. The information compiled for this report covers Financial Year 2021/22 and aligns to the public sector reporting requirements from Central Government.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

1. Members recognise the progress made in the employment of apprenticeship roles within the Service during Financial Year 2021/22 including the Service exceeding the public sector targets relating to apprenticeship delivery;
2. That members note the positive outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspection.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28 January 2022, 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.
- 1.2 The standard reporting to the Human Resources Committee has been moved from January to October to better align the reporting timetable with the annual reporting requirements relating to public sector apprenticeship targets as required by Central Government.
- 1.3 Since the previous report the Service has been subject to a full Ofsted inspection as an Apprenticeship Employer Provider. The outcome of the inspection are included within the report, together with a copy of the full inspection report (included as Appendix A).

2. REPORT

Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship Programme

- 2.1 Since 2019, the Service has aligned its Wholetime Duty System (WDS) firefighter development programme to the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship Level 3 Standard. There are currently 25 apprentice firefighters progressing through the 24 month programme.
- 2.2 All operational firefighter apprentices are trained and developed in-house by the Service as an employer provider. This enables the Service to draw down £14000 from the levy fund per operational firefighter apprentice to support the cost of training and development.
- 2.3 The development pathway follows the established internal development programme, with an initial training period at the Service Development Centre (SDC) to develop core skills, knowledge and behaviours, followed by deployment to a designated Watch where apprentices attend operational incidents whilst continuing their development against the firefighter role map.
- 2.4 During this time, apprentices are supported by their line managers and an assigned mentor who review and guide on station development including undertaking periodic assessment of development progress. As part of the apprenticeship programme, they are also monitored by the Workplace Assessment Team at six weekly intervals. The SDC training staff conduct assessment of the apprentices at the 12 month and 18 month points in their development.
- 2.5 At the end of the apprenticeship programme, the apprentices undergo an End-Point Assessment (EPA) by an independent provider, which consists of a formal theory examination, practical assessments and professional discussion

to confirm that the apprentice has met the requirements of the Apprenticeship Standard.

Ofsted Inspection

2.6 In July 2022, Ofsted conducted a full inspection of the Service's Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship Programme. The inspection was comprehensive with 4 inspectors attending for a period of 4 days to review all elements of apprenticeship delivery. A copy of the full inspection report is included at Appendix 1 to this report.

2.7 Apprenticeship provision is assessed against 5 criteria as outlined below. Overall the Service provision was rated as 'Good' and inspectors were very complimentary about the quality of the programme and the commitment of both learners and employees involved in its delivery. This is reflected in the 'Outstanding' grading received against the behaviours and attitudes assessment criteria.

- Quality of education – Good
- Behaviour and attitudes – Outstanding
- Personal development – Good
- Leadership and management – Good
- Apprenticeships - Good

2.8 Following the success of the full inspection the Service will not receive a further routine inspection by Ofsted for at least 5 years.

Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers

2.9 The Service is periodically required to reapply to the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. The reapplication process was completed in July 2022 and the Service has been successful in maintaining its accreditation. This enables the Service to continue to directly draw down funding from the apprenticeship levy.

Other Apprenticeships

2.10 The Service currently has 7 apprentices in non-operational roles as follows:

- Finance Department undertaking Level 4 Accounting Technician Apprenticeship;
- ICT Department undertaking a Level 3 Digital Support Technician Apprenticeship;
- ICT Department undertaking a Level 4 Cyber Security Technologist Apprenticeship;
- ICT Department undertaking a Level 3 Infrastructure Technician Apprenticeship;
- Fire Protection undertaking a Level 3 Business Administration apprenticeship (x2);
- Corporate Communications undertaking Level 3 Junior Content Producer apprenticeship.

- 2.11 One Apprentice successfully completed their Level 3 Personal Trainer Apprenticeship in April 21. In addition one new station manager migrated across their Departmental Manager Level 5 Apprenticeship from their previous employer.
- 2.12 The Service is able to draw down funds from the levy to support the formal training and development for the apprenticeships, however the levy cannot be used to fund salary costs. The apprenticeships outlined in section 2.10 are all delivered through external training providers.

Public Sector Apprenticeship Target

- 2.13 The Service is required to report, to Government, an annual Apprenticeship return in September to cover the previous Financial Year. The data reported this year covered the period 31 Mar 2021 to 31 March 2022. During the reporting period, 42% of all new starters were apprenticeships. This represents 3.15% of the total workforce.
- 2.14 As detailed at previous reports, public-sector employers have been set a target of 2.3% of the workforce to be new apprenticeship starters. Therefore, the Service has exceeded the target set for FY 21/22.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 In Financial Year 2021/22 the Service has drawn down £170 044 overall from the Service's apprenticeship levy digital account. This money is used to support training and development of all apprentices.
- 3.2 During Financial Year 2021/22 the Service paid £116 562 into the apprenticeship levy, based on payroll. The monthly levy contribution to the account paid by the Service is approximately depending on payroll numbers in a given month.
- 3.3 During Financial Year 2021/22, the Service, as employer provider for the Operational Firefighter Apprentice Programme, directly drew down £136 371 from our digital account for the provision of that programme.
- 3.5 During the same period, £33 673 was paid to external training providers from our digital account for the external provider apprenticeships.
- 3.6 Further, an additional funding of £38 750 was received in FY 2021/22 from the Government Hire a New Apprentice payment scheme. This money has been reinvested into operational training development in the form of a temporary eLearning Developer to develop operational training eLearning packages
- 3.7 As at September 2022, the Service had £127 738 in its digital apprenticeship account.

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 delivery.
- 5.2 Of the 27 apprentices employed by the Service in FY21/22: 4 (14%) were women and 6 (22%) were 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 250 employees.
- 7.2 The public-sector apprenticeship target was established under the Public-Sector Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017. Public sector bodies with more than two hundred and fifty employees have a target to employ at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentices. Reporting against the target was until April 2022 a legal requirement.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The apprenticeship levy is paid over irrespective of usage and must be used within 24 months or lost as a source of funding for apprentice employment. By being an employer provider, the Service is able to best utilise the apprenticeship levy to fund our WDS firefighter development as an apprenticeship programme.
- 8.2 Apprenticeships support the Service's recruitment and retention priorities. The use of apprentices in part mitigates the risk associated with the limited availability of certain professional skills in the labour market.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 10.1 Members recognise the progress made in the employment of apprenticeship roles within the Service during Financial Year 2021/22 including the Service exceeding the public sector targets relating to apprenticeship delivery;
- 10.2 That members note the positive outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspection.

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

None

Craig Parkin
Chief Fire Officer