



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: 25 January 2019

Purpose of Report:

To provide an annual update on apprenticeships within the Service.

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1. BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 26 January 2018, Members received a report on the implementation of the apprenticeship levy from April 2017 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 In the previous report, the Service was preparing to apply for training provider status on the Register of Approved Training Providers. This would allow it to be recognised for training levy funding and to enrol new trainee firefighters on an Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship. Unfortunately, this application was unsuccessful and there was no opportunity to apply again in time for the first trainee programme, which commenced in September and completed in December.
- 2.2 The Service has therefore tendered for a training provider to support the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship, which commences in January. Whilst the training will be undertaken by trainers at the Service Development Centre, the Service will receive funding on a sub-contracting basis from Sheffield College, via the levy, to deliver the apprenticeship. This will be in the region of £7,500 per trainee over two years, plus the cost of the end-point assessment (£2,400 per trainee). This funding will be set against training costs incurred by the Service.
- 2.3 The application process for the Register of Approved Training Providers has now re-opened, and the Service will be seeking to become a training provider before the commencement of the next trainee course in September 2019. This will allow the Service to directly draw down funding for all future apprenticeships.
- 2.4 The Service currently has two apprentices in support roles. One is employed in the Finance Department and is undertaking the Association of Accounting Technician apprenticeship and the other in the ICT Department undertaking a Level 4 Network Engineer Apprenticeship. A further apprenticeship role has recently been approved within the ICT Department which will be advertised during 2019.
- 2.5 An ILM Level 5 Operations/Departmental Manager apprenticeship commenced earlier in the year, and there are currently six 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. The Service is also currently in discussion with Nottingham Trent University to develop a Level 7 Senior Managers Apprenticeship, which will have a public-sector focus. This would replace previous programmes up to Masters level and would be available to middle and strategic managers.

- 2.6 The process for drawing down levy funding and complying with the associated regulations is quite complex, although further clarity is being provided as the apprenticeship scheme becomes more established. 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 24 months of pay-over.

PUBLIC SECTOR APPRENTICESHIP TARGET

- 2.7 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 850 (excluding those with dual contract arrangements), this would require 19 new apprenticeships each year. The Service is required to report whether it has achieved the target in September of each year, and therefore the Service reported that it had not been able to meet this target during 2017-18.
- 2.8 Whilst the target is based on headcount and includes the whole workforce, the Service is unable to register on-call trainees onto the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship as they cannot comply with the eligibility criteria due to their hours of work. This means that the majority of appointments made each year, 27 on-call trainees since April 2018, cannot be counted against the target. This has been recognised by the NFCC as a sector issue and lobbying has been taking place to address this anomaly.
- 2.9 Given the numbers registered through apprenticeship schemes between January and September 2019, it is anticipated that the Service will meet the apprenticeship target when it reports again in September 2019.
- 2.10 The target extends over four years, between 2017 and 2021, and it is possible to aggregate apprenticeship starts between years.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 As of December 2018, the Service had £178k in its digital apprenticeship account. This includes a contribution from government. The monthly contribution to this account is approximately £10,800 depending on payroll numbers in a given month.
- 3.2 Between April and December 2018, the Service drew down £17,697 toward apprenticeship training, at approximately £2,340 per month.
- 3.3 Once the operational apprenticeships commence in January 2019, this draw down will increase to £7,140 per month and will increase again in September 2019 by a similar amount. At this point, the Service will be drawing down full funding from the levy 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

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the consultation on the Grading Policy.

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 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 24 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. The use of sub-contracting arrangements is a means by which the Service has been able to access funding to provide operational firefighting apprenticeships.
- 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 note the contents of this report.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER