



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

APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 24 January 2020

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 26 January 2019, Members received a 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 In the period since the last report in January 2019, significant progress has been made in respect of the numbers of apprentices employed by the Service in both operational firefighter and support roles, for which the Service is able to draw down funding from the apprenticeship levy and which count toward the public-sector apprenticeship target.
- 2.2 This has been primarily due to the intake from the 2018 firefighter selection process, which has seen 19 apprentice firefighters contracted to the Level 3 Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship Standard. This is a 26-month apprenticeship which, subject to successful completion, covers the full development period so that the apprentice firefighters become competent at the end of the assessment period. The first cohort of eleven apprentice firefighters commenced their apprenticeship in January 2019. A further cohort of eight apprentice firefighters commenced in September 2019.
- 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 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.
- 2.6 As previously reported, the Service appointed Sheffield College on a sub-contracted basis to act as its training provider (TP) pending its own application to become an employer provider (EP). This allowed the Service to draw down funding from the training levy through Sheffield College and provided a point of assurance for development of the apprenticeship scheme.

- 2.7 In September 2019, the Service was successful in its application to become an employer provider on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers and is now able to draw down funding directly from the levy. This status means that the Service must comply with the associated regulations, which are overseen by Ofsted and the Education and Funding Skills Agency. The drawn-down funding must be used to support the apprenticeship directly delivered by the Service as an employer provider to cover associated training or support costs.
- 2.8 As an employer provider, the Service now receives £12,000 per trainee over a two-year apprenticeship programme life.
- 2.9 The Service currently has five apprentices in support roles in the following departments:
- Finance Department undertaking the Association of Accounting Technician apprenticeship;
 - Finance Department undertaking a Level 2 Business Administration apprenticeship;
 - ICT Department undertaking a Level 4 Network Engineer apprenticeship;
 - Occupational Health and Fitness Team undertaking the Personal Trainer Level 3 apprenticeship standard;
 - Prevention and Protection Department undertaking a Level 2 Business Administration apprenticeship.
- A further two apprenticeship roles have been approved within the ICT Department and Corporate Communications Department, which will be advertised during 2020. The Service can draw down training costs from the levy to support the academic courses, however the levy cannot be used to fund salary costs.
- 2.10 An ILM Level 5 Operations/Departmental Manager apprenticeship also commenced in 2018, and there are currently five 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. This programme is due to end in 2020.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 The Apprenticeship Policy has been revised and updated during 2019, and is attached as Appendix A.

PUBLIC SECTOR APPRENTICESHIP TARGET

- 2.13 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 798 (excluding those with dual contract arrangements), this would require 18 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 2018 to 31 March 2019.
- 2.14 During this period, 16.67% of all new starters were apprenticeships. This represents 1.32% of the total workforce. Overall, apprentices account for 2.4% of the total headcount. Despite the increase in new-start apprenticeships, which saw 11 new apprenticeship starts between September 2018 and September 2019, the Service did not meet this target during 2018-19.
- 2.15 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 the majority of appointments made each year, 33 on-call trainees since September 2018, cannot be counted against the target. However, the headcount figure, against which the % of new starts is calculated, does include On-call employees. This has been recognised by the National Fire Chiefs Council as a sector issue and lobbying has been taking place to address this anomaly.
- 2.16 Whilst there have been 10 new apprenticeship starts since September 2019, and a further two apprenticeship starts during 2020, there will be no further apprenticeship firefighters due to commence employment during 2020, and it is therefore anticipated that the Service will not meet the apprenticeship target when it reports again in September 2020.
- 2.17 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 the beginning of December 2019, the Service had £231,405 in its digital apprenticeship account. This includes a contribution from Government. The monthly contribution to this account is approximately £900 depending on payroll numbers in a given month.
- 3.2 Between April and the beginning of December 2019, the Service drew down £56,000 toward apprenticeship training, at approximately £6,500 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 been undertaken and found that there were no negative equality impacts associated with the policy. The positive action measures undertaken as part of the recruitment of operational firefighter apprentices in 2018 led to the appointment of 32.5% of women and 15% from BAME backgrounds to new firefighter roles (excluding transfers from other FRSs). Participants in the first trainee course, in September 2018, were not appointed to apprenticeships as there was no scheme in place at that time.
- 5.2 However, of the 24 apprentices currently employed by the Service 14 (58.3%) are women and 4 (16.7%) 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 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 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



Title: Apprenticeship Policy

Document: 2094

Scope: This policy is mandatory.

Summary: This document sets out the policy on apprenticeships within the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

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Information Delivery System (IDS)

The IDS uses colour to identify sections within documents, namely:

Section	Colour	Purpose
Key	Red	Is critical 'need to know' information and can consequently be found at the front of the document.
Primary	Blue	Is information that supports and elaborates on key information, but is not immediately critical in nature.
Support	Green	Is background information that further underpins the previous sections.
Appendices	Lavender	Is relevant information such as process maps, tick lists, flowcharts and templates etc.
Document History	Yellow	Is a detailed history of the document and indicates which department 'owns' it.

KEY INFORMATION

1. Definition

- 1.1 Apprenticeships are available to anyone living in England, over the age of 16. Apprenticeships combine practical training in a job with study through working and gaining experience in a vocational or professional field.
- 1.2 All apprenticeships include elements of on the job and off the job training, usually leading to industry recognised standards or qualifications. Most apprenticeships will require an assessment at the end of the programme to assess the apprentice's ability and competence in their job role. Apprenticeships must last for at least a year and can last up to 5 years depending on the level the apprentice is studying.
- 1.3 Apprenticeships will be made available to new NFRS staff through an apprenticeship position or as part of a professional development route for existing employees. All apprenticeships delivered by Notts FRS will be those approved apprenticeship standards or frameworks as detailed by the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

2. General Principles

- 2.1 The Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to achieving the public-sector apprenticeship target and will seek to provide access to apprenticeships where this can be properly facilitated. Prior to recruiting to a vacant role, consideration will be given to the feasibility of employing an apprentice via the recruitment authorization process.
- 2.2 NFRS have committed to the target that our in-house delivered apprenticeship programme should have a full 100% success rate in retaining and developing our apprentices across the life of their programme.
- 2.3 A number of dedicated apprenticeship roles will be funded across departments (dependent on budgetary availability) in addition to substantive roles which may be open to an apprenticeship learning route.
- 2.4 Apprenticeships within the Service will be delivered either through an approved training provider or by the Service as an employer provider. Most apprenticeship are envisaged to be delivered through an approved training provider.
- 2.5 The Service may:
 - (i) Advertise an apprenticeship opportunity on its recruitment site.
 - (ii) Work with a registered apprenticeship training provider to identify suitable individuals for apprenticeship opportunities within the Service. This will depend upon the role undertaken.
 - (iii) Advertise available apprenticeships as part of the National Apprenticeship Service Online 'Find an Apprenticeship' Service.

This process will be managed by the Human Resources department.

- 2.6 An Apprentice may fill an established vacancy or be held as supernumerary to establishment as a funded fixed term post.
- 2.7 The Service will ensure that the apprentice is mentored and supported throughout the period of their employment with a programme of work based development. The apprentice will receive the necessary training for the duration of the apprenticeship in line with the requirement of the apprenticeship programme.
- 2.8 To provide value to the Service and to the apprentice, the work undertaken will be meaningful and relevant to the achievement of the apprenticeship occupational standards and any associated qualifications. It is the responsibility of the apprentice's manager to ensure that the learning programme provides access to relevant learning opportunities and that time is afforded to undertake relevant study – this should equate to 20% of the apprentice's working time.
- 2.9 All apprentices, whether in a substantive or fixed-term role, will be paid on the basis of the national minimum wage rates as laid down for employees aged 16-21 and for those aged up to 25. After the age of 25 the national living wage will be applied.
- 2.10 Where apprentices are employed in a substantive role, it may be possible, during the course of the apprenticeship, to move on to the NFRS grading structure appropriate to the role. This will be subject to agreed milestones which will generally, but not always, be linked to the achievement of relevant professional qualifications and/or ability to undertake tasks commensurate with the grading level applied. At the point that the apprentice successfully passes the relevant End Point Assessment (for those undertaking an apprenticeship standard), they will be moved to the permanent establishment.
- 2.11 If the apprenticeship is fixed-term or facilitated by a training provider, the Service cannot guarantee permanent employment at the end of the apprenticeship period. However, it will seek to match apprentices with suitable vacancies if an opportunity arises, subject to a selection process. In cases where a fixed-term contract ends, the Service will provide advice and guidance to enable the individual to seek other suitable employment.

Existing Employees

- 2.12 To encourage and facilitate development for its employees, the Service will support participation in recognized apprenticeship standards to achieve professional or vocational qualification and development. This will primarily include operational and leadership roles.
- 2.13 Existing employees undertaking an apprenticeship learning route are required to adhere to the study and programme requirements and will be required to sign a Learning Agreement to this effect. The Service will be required to ensure that learners receive the time required to fulfil the learning agreement, which includes time dedicated to study (20% of working time).

PRIMARY INFORMATION

3. Application

- 3.1 Heads of Department will be responsible for identifying suitable apprenticeship opportunities within Service Departments.
- 3.2 Where the Head of Department identifies a potential apprenticeship opportunity they will provide the Head of Human Resources with a proposed outline. (See Appendix C).
- 3.3 The Head of Human Resources will consider the outline and confirm with the Head of Department if agreement has been given to progress the potential apprenticeship opportunity. This will be progressed via the normal Recruitment Authorisation process.
- 3.4 The Human Resources Department will keep a record of all apprenticeships being undertaken within the Service.
- 3.5 The Service will recruit apprentices either directly or through an external apprenticeship provider. An agreement will be drawn up between the Service and the training provider setting out the arrangements that are to be put in place for the apprenticeships.
- 3.6 The responsibility for recruiting apprentices to suitable opportunities will lie with the appropriate Line Manager. A Human Resources Business Partner will liaise with the apprenticeship provider in relation to the provision of a pool of suitable potential apprentices.
- 3.7 The Line Manager will be responsible for identifying a suitable approved training provider and apprenticeship standard or framework for the apprenticeship. Advice and support can be sought from the Learning and Development Manager.
- 3.8 The Line manager will also be responsible for ensuring that the correct procurement policy is followed for any external contract with an approved training provider. Further the Line manager should ensure with the Learning and Development Manager that sufficient resources are in the Service's Digital Account to support the apprenticeship.
- 3.9 The Line Manager will undertake a selection process from the pool of candidates provided. The selection process will consist of an interview, and a job related test where appropriate.
- 3.10 The successful apprentice will be required to undergo standard Service pre-employment checks prior to confirmation of the apprenticeship to include:
 - a basic or enhanced Disclosure and Barring service check where appropriate;

- a medical check to include drug and alcohol screening to be undertaken by the Occupational Health Centre;
 - Checks to determine eligibility to work in the UK
- References

- 3.11 On successful completion of the pre-employment checks a contract of employment will be drawn up by the HR department and issued to the apprentice. The apprentice will be employed by the Service either on a fixed term basis for the period of the apprenticeship (i.e. resulting in the End Point Assessment) or on a permanent basis, where the Apprenticeship post is on the approved establishment. The performance of the apprentice will be monitored and reviewed during this period.
- 3.12 The Line Manager should ensure that any reasonable adjustments recommended by the Occupational Health Department are introduced prior to the individual commencing the apprenticeship role. In addition, consideration will need to be given to any specific needs that the apprentice may have.
- 3.13 The Line Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the apprentice undertakes a formal induction process (Please refer to the induction procedure for further details).
- 3.14 The Line Manager will ensure that an Apprenticeship Agreement is signed with the apprentice. This will state:
- How long they will be employed.
- The training that they will undertake.
- Their working conditions.
- The qualifications they will be working towards.
- 3.15 An apprenticeship agreement template can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/731352/Apprenticeship_Agreement.odt
- 3.16 The line manager will also sign a Commitment Statement with the apprentice and the training provider. It will include:
- The planned content and schedule for training
- What is expected and offered by the employer, the training organisation and the apprentice
- How to resolve queries or complaints.
- 3.17 The Line Manager is to liaise with the training provider to produce the commitment statement.
- 3.18 Once the apprenticeship is established the Line Manager is to inform the Learning and Development manager who will ensure that the funding application for the apprenticeship is completed on the Digital Apprenticeship Service portal.

- 3.19 The line Manager should ensure all health and safety requirements are met, to include a full risk assessment and risk control measures such as the use of Personal Protective Equipment as appropriate.
- 3.20 The Line Manager should ensure compliance with any special considerations for young workers under the Working Time Regulations.
- 3.21 The use of Service vehicles will require driving license checks and a requirement for the individual to undertake a light vehicle assessment.
- 3.22 The Line Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the apprentice has a development programme that sets out a programme of work activities to be undertaken. This should be completed on a weekly basis. (A template is attached at Appendix D). It should be noted that this template may be subject to review dependent on the requirements of the apprenticeship.
- 3.23 The Line Manager should meet with the apprentice on a regular basis, and at least monthly, to review the development and work performance. Where specific development or training needs are identified the Line Manager should ensure that appropriate support and development is provided to enable the apprentice to achieve the required skills.
- 3.24 The apprentice will be expected to fully engage with the development and training programme set out by the Line Manager and to maintain high standards of conduct, to include regular and punctual attendance and exhibit a positive attitude to the apprenticeship opportunity. Whilst the Service will make every effort to support the apprentice a continued failure to adhere to these requirements may result in the apprentice's period of employment being terminated by the Service in line with the contract of employment or apprenticeship agreement.
- 3.25 The apprentice will be placed on a probation period of six months, with formal reviews being undertaken at 2, 4 and 6 months. (Please refer to the probationary procedure for further guidance) or periods set out within the apprenticeship agreement.
- 3.26 The Line Manager should ensure that the HR Business Partner is informed of any potential performance or conduct issues involving the apprentice.
- 3.27 Where performance issues are identified the Line Manager should ensure that a Personal Performance Improvement Plan is introduced. Where the apprentice continues despite on-going support to be unable to undertake the work activities required of them the Service reserve the right to terminate the apprenticeship in line with the contract of employment or apprenticeship agreement.
- 3.28 The apprenticeship training provider will meet with the apprentice in the work environment on a regular basis to ensure that progress is being made towards the attainment of a nationally recognised qualification and to review the development opportunities being undertaken. The Line Manager should attend these regular Individual learning reviews with the apprentice and the training provider.

- 3.29 The Line Manager should ensure that they liaise directly with the apprenticeship training provider on a regular basis to ensure that the work development programme is providing the apprentice with the appropriate learning opportunities and to ensure that the provider is aware of any performance/conduct issues.
- 3.30 The Line Manager is to ensure that the 20% 'off the job training' required abstraction for apprenticeship training and development is provided for the apprenticeship. This should also be reflected in a 20% reduction in usual workload for existing employees undertaking an apprenticeship.
- 3.31 The HR Business Partner will regularly liaise with the Line Manager to ensure that the apprentice is receiving all appropriate support and development as required.
- 3.32 Following the End Point Assessment a meeting will be held between the apprenticeship provider, Service Line Manager and HR Business Partner to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the apprenticeship.

4. Role & Responsibilities

4.1 Apprenticeship provider

The apprenticeship provider will be responsible for providing the Service with a pool of potential apprentices and for ensuring that the apprentice/s selected for the role/s is/are working towards achieving a **nationally recognised qualification**.

4.2 Head of Department

The Head of Department will be responsible for identifying suitable apprenticeship opportunities and developing an apprenticeship proposal for consideration by the Head of Human Resources.

4.3 Head of Human Resources

The Head of Human Resources will consider all apprenticeship proposals developed by the Head of Department.

4.3 Line Manager

The Service Line Manager designated as the nominated officer for the apprenticeship will be responsible for ensuring the implementation of all working arrangements relating to the apprenticeship to include introduction of any reasonable adjustments, induction, development of a programme of work experience, mentoring and day to day management.

The Line Manager will be responsible for reviewing apprentice performance in conjunction with the apprenticeship provider on an on-going basis.

4.4 HR Business Partner

The relevant HR Business Partner will liaise with the apprenticeship provider and support the Line Manager with the selection of a suitable apprentice and ensure

all suitable pre-employment checks are undertaken.

The HR Business Partner will oversee the apprenticeship and provide HR support to the Line Manager on any employment related matter to include the drafting of the fixed term contract of employment.

Learning and Development Manager

The Learning and Development Manager will provide advice and support where needed to those involved in setting up and supporting an apprentice in the Service. The Learning and Development Manager will also ensure the payment stream through the digital apprenticeship portal is initiated.

5. Monitoring - Audit & Review

- 5.1 The effectiveness of the apprenticeship scheme will be regularly monitored by the Human Resources Manager/Head of Human Resources and the Learning and Development Manager as required.

SUPPORT INFORMATION

6. Related Documents.

- 6.1 Equalities Impact Assessment
- 6.2 Appendix 1 Head of Department Apprenticeship proposal pro forma
- 6.3 Appendix 2 Line manager work development pro forma
- 6.4 Professional development of employees
- 6.5 Apprenticeship agreement and Commitment statement
- 6.6 Training continuity plan – specific continuity measures
- 6.7 Delivering English and Maths to apprentices
- 6.8 Performing initial assessments of apprentice's prior learning
- 6.9 Quality assurance, Quality evaluation and quantitative KPIs

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Head of Department Apprenticeship Proposal

Appendix 2

Work Development Programme

Appendix 3

Safeguarding Policy