



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Overview & Audit Committee – 21 July 2021

Report title: Apprenticeship Programme – Annual Statutory Reporting 2020-2021

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Action: Decision

Recommendations: It is recommended that:

The Authority's annual return – attached as Appendix 2 – be endorsed for submission to the Department for Education, and for publication on the Authority's website.

Executive summary:

This report sets out the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (the Authority) annual statutory report on the public sector apprenticeship target for the year ending 31 March 2021, for member endorsement.

As part of the Government's Apprenticeships Reform agenda, a public sector target was introduced in 2017 whereby organisations in England must meet a minimum of 2.3 per cent apprenticeship new starts each year, based on employee headcount. For the Authority this equates to approximately 11 per year.

The Authority is a qualifying organisation within the scope of the public sector target and is therefore required to provide an annual report to the Department for Education (DfE), detailing its progress towards achieving the target. The 2020 / 21 report is set out in Appendix 1. It is also a requirement for the Authority to publish the information.

The current target period for annual reporting is from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021 and the deadline for returns is the 30 September each year.

For the period of 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 the Authority have exceeded their target with 21 new apprentice starts.

- 20 Operational Fire Fighters
- 1 Coaching Professional, Level 5

Appendix 1 states that qualifying organisations will be measured on average over the annual reporting period of 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021. With our previous employment statistics and our current workforce planning the Authority will exceed its required target for this reporting period with an average of 4.5% per year.

Financial implications:

There are no direct costs implications attached to the production and submission of this information.

The Apprenticeship levy was introduced in April 2017 for all employers that have an annual PAYE bill of £3 million per annum or more and employ over 250 staff. The employer's payment is set at 0.5% of their annual payroll and will include a £15,000 annual allowance. The Authority current pays approximately £68,000 per year into the levy which the government tops up by 10% making a total of £74,800.

The Authority is able to draw down on this levy for those employees who are currently undertaking apprenticeships to assist with their own development and to also enhance the skills within the organisation.

If the levy fund becomes depleted the Authority will enter into a co-investment with the government. The co-investment rate changed for new apprenticeships starting on or after 1 April 2019. The Authority pay 5% towards the cost of apprenticeship training. The government pay the rest (95%) up to the funding band maximum.

Risk management:

There is an ongoing risk that the Authority might not meet the annual 2.3 per cent target for new apprentice starts set by the Government

This risk is mitigated through effective workforce planning, and the Authority's continued commitment to using apprenticeships as part of its blended approach to refreshing and retaining its workforce.

The Apprenticeship Programme is continually monitored through regular updates to the Authority and internal governance boards.

The awarding body accredits the programme and yearly audits are undertaken by their representatives to ensure the required standards are being met.

The apprenticeship training provider is audited by Ofsted to ensure compliance with funding regulations.

Legal implications:

The recommendations meet and exceed the requirements of the statutory guidance.

Privacy and security implications:

Consideration has been given to any potential privacy issues or security implications from the data contained within this report and none have been identified.

Duty to collaborate:

The Authority continues to work with its Thames Valley fire service partners to determine options for a collaborative approach to operational apprenticeship recruitment. This includes looking at improving diversity and working together to resolve common issues.

In the past, career's fairs have been targeted with a collaborative approach being taken between ourselves and Thames Valley Police. These have included the WorldSkillsUK event at the NEC and also the National Apprenticeship show at the Milton Keynes arena. We have also utilised the assistance of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) with the organising and their attendance at the WorldSkillsUK. Due to Covid restrictions these have not taken place within this last year, however moving forward these opportunities will be revisited.

Health and safety implications:

There are no Health and Safety implications.

Environmental implications:

There are no Environmental implications.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

The Authority continues to explore ways in which to improve the diversity of its workforce and to reduce the average age of the operational workforce.

Workforce diversity is an ongoing priority. Building on the successes to date with our apprenticeship programme, and utilising the national On Call awareness campaign material, our aims are:

- To increase awareness through TV collaboration work and joined up resourcing;
- Existing workforce who already interact with the local community being utilised to promote the service we deliver and being supported by our ED&I ambassadors;
- The continuation of identifying role models within the organisation who can promote the values, commitment to diversity and our employment propositions e.g. we have a national diversity ambassador.

The Authority endorsed the submission of a pledge and were the first Fire and Rescue Service to be accepted by the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network (ADCN) in February 2018. The Authority were given the opportunity to be quoted within the 2019 ADCN report, and asked to showcase us as exemplars within this group and we continue to be active members thereof. This group's activities have been limited this year due to Covid restrictions. However, moving forward this will again become part of our business as usual and attraction and engagement strategy.

The Authority's innovative apprenticeship programme provides an excellent opportunity to improve the diversity make-up of the Authority and supports and endorses delivery of BFRS' Equality and Diversity Objectives 2020-2025.

Consultation and communication:

A range of methods are used to communicate on workforce reform across the Authority. Communication is delivered via the Senior Management Team's blog, the Leadership Group, and the intranet. The success of the Authority's apprenticeship programme is showcased internally and externally through virtual visits from other Services and national events.

Background papers:

The Authority introduced its apprenticeship programme in 2016, ahead of the Government's reform agenda, and this was driven by its workforce plan. Its key areas of focus were:

- How apprentices can be utilised most effectively
- Highlighting the importance of improving the diversity of our workforce
- Offering career development opportunities to our existing employees and increasing the resilience of our workforce.

Report to the Overview and Audit committee held on 22 July 2020: Apprenticeship Programme – Annual Statutory Reporting 2019/20

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/07/item-17-apprenticeship-programme-annual-statutory-reporting-2019-20.pdf/>

Report to the Overview and Audit committee held on 17 July 2019: Apprenticeship Programme – Annual Statutory Reporting 2018/19

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/overview_and_audit_committee_agenda_and_reports_170719-min-min.pdf/

Report to the Fire Authority held 13 June 2018: Update on Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority Apprenticeship Programme

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/130618_fire_authority_agm_agenda.pdf/

Report to the Fire Authority held 14 February 2018: Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/140218_fire_authority_agenda.pdf/

Report to the Fire Authority held 18 October 2017; Update on Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority Apprenticeship Programme

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/181017_fire_authority_agenda_part2.pdf/

Report to the Executive Committee held 29 July 2015:

Apprenticeship Scheme

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/2990715_exec_committee_papers.pdf
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Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Government Guidance – Meeting the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target	
2	Data Publication and Apprenticeship Activity Return 30 September 2021	



Department
for Education

Meeting the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target

**Statutory guidance for bodies in scope of
the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target**

September 2020

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Summary

About this guidance

This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education which accompanies the regulations bringing into effect the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target. Public bodies within scope of those regulations should have regard to this guidance when considering how they have regard to the target and how they report their progress towards meeting the target.

What legislation does this guidance refer to?

This guidance refers to 'The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017' which were made under powers conferred by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This guidance has been updated to reflect amendments made to these Regulations by the Apprenticeships (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2017, which come into force on 31 March 2018.

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for:

- All public bodies in scope of the target; with a few exceptions, all public bodies with 250 or more staff in England as of 31 March in each of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 are within scope.
- This includes schools, local authorities, central government and arms-length bodies, NHS organisations, the armed forces, and emergency services, together with anyone else who may be in scope of the target.

Main points

- Public sector bodies in scope of the target should appropriately demonstrate in their returns that they have had regard to the target.
- Public sector bodies should provide their returns in line with the reporting arrangements described in this guidance.

Having regard to the target

Prescribed groups and public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England have a target to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts over the period of 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021. Bodies in scope must have regard to the target.

The Government considers the duty to ‘have regard’ to the target to mean that, in making workforce planning decisions, public bodies should actively consider apprenticeships, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff. Apprentices are only considered as ‘new apprentices’ who will count towards the target, in the year in which they begin their apprenticeship.

Public bodies should use the Apprenticeship Activity Return (see pages 8-9) to explain how they have had regard to the target. This may include describing actions they have taken to challenge obstacles preventing them from meeting the target, for example:

- a relevant framework or standard is not currently available but the organisation has been involved in developing new standards and has plans for individuals to start on these;
- an organisation has a large number of part time workers whose Full Time Equivalent (FTE) makes it difficult to meet the numbers of apprentices needed and/or due to the number of hours they work are not eligible for apprenticeships. However the employer is taking steps to employ apprenticeships within those roles which are eligible for them. They are also permitted to report FTE alongside headcount in their Data Publication return (see page 7).

The Government would also encourage public bodies that are looking to establish further apprenticeship standards to engage with the Institute for Apprenticeships to establish these.

Grouped Bodies

Following consultation two groups have been prescribed in the regulations for the purpose of responding to the target. The bodies in these groups are collectively in scope – they are set a single target which covers all bodies in their respective group. These groups are ‘Transport for London and its subsidiaries’ and ‘Government Departments and those bodies listed in Schedule 1 of the Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017’.

There was no clear support in consultation for other groupings. Therefore the target will apply individually to all other bodies in-scope; they will each have an individual apprenticeship target which they must have regard to.

What must a public body do to have regard to the target?

Prescribed groups and in-scope bodies should demonstrate that they have actively considered apprenticeships, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff.

Where the target has not been met

It may be the case that a body believes it has been having regard to the target but yet is failing to meet the target set. As such, all bodies should use the Apprenticeship Activity Return (see pages 8-9) to explain how they have sought to have regard to the target and any factors they feel have hindered their efforts to meet the target. These explanations should be of sufficient detail to evidence the body's actions, in particular by:

- providing evidence which identifies where a body has actively considered apprenticeships, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff;
- identifying where an organisation, in attempting to have regard to the target, has encountered and attempted to overcome challenges in employing apprentices, as outlined in the previous section.

There may also be some circumstances where a body which has not met the target is able to highlight mitigating factors which demonstrate its commitment to apprenticeships, therefore demonstrating that regard has been had to the target. For example:

- an organisation employs a higher proportion of apprentices on two or more year apprenticeship programmes; and,
- an organisation is planning a major recruitment the following year which would bring their average number of apprenticeship starts up to or beyond the target.

Interpreting 'ordinarily work' in England

Regulations identify that an apprentice can only be counted towards the targets if 'they ordinarily work in England.' Whether an apprentice ordinarily works in England is determined by a number of factors, but generally the determining factor is where the apprentice is based. This might be determined by reference to:

- the location in which the apprentice ordinarily starts and ends the day;
- where the apprentice lives.

Interpreting those in scope

Almost all public bodies with 250 or more staff in England will be in-scope of the target. The number of staff working for a public body is determined by its headcount on 31 March in each of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

A public body with 250 or more staff working for it on any of those dates will be subject to the target for that coming year.

The primary legislation defines a public body as:

- a public authority or;
- a body or other person that is not a public authority but has functions of a public nature and is funded wholly or partly from public funds.

This is with the specific exception of; the BBC, Channel Four, The House of Commons and House of Lords and the Post Office Ltd., as well as all their associated subsidiaries. Also out of scope of the targets are charities (excluding academy trusts and multi academy trusts), FE colleges, Universities, housing associations, housing trusts, independent schools, and financial bodies which are partly state-owned (such as RBS).

Provided they meet the headcount criteria above, academy trusts and multi academy trusts came within scope from 31 March 2018. These academy trusts were not required to provide an annual return on progress towards the target for apprenticeship starts between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. They were required to do so for the first time from April 2019, for starts between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. They will also be required to complete an annual return on progress for the remaining 2 years of the 2017-2021 reporting period.

Police forces are required to include police officers within their headcount when calculating their target from 31 March 2018.

Providing returns to the target

Bodies in scope of the target are required to provide an annual return of two parts, detailing amongst other things their progress towards the target, to the Department for Education.

Content

As established in the primary legislation and the regulations, bodies in scope must provide the information identified below. In response to queries where the Council/Local Authority (LA) is the employer for schools and fire and rescue services, each LA may choose to show the information required for these organisations separately within their Returns.

Return Section 1 - Data Publication

The Data Publication includes several figures which will enable the Government, the public, and wider stakeholders to understand each body's headcount and the number of apprentices they employ, and then use that information to assess the progress a body has made towards meeting the target.

The information required is:

Figure A: The number of employees whose employment in England by the body began in the reporting period in question.

Figure B: The number of apprentices who began to work for the body in that period and whose apprenticeship agreements also began in that period.

- This includes employees who were already working for the body before beginning their apprenticeship, as well as new apprentice hires.

Figure C: the number of employees employed in England that the body has at the end of that period.

Figure D: the number of apprentices who work for the body 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 a public body has made towards the target:

Figure E: Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure A.

Figure F: Figure D expressed as a percentage of figure C.

If the public body is in their first reporting period they must also provide:

Figure G: The number of apprentices who worked for the body immediately before that period.

In addition, the Apprenticeship Activity Return (Return Section 2) requires public bodies to send the following figures, which will help identify their progress towards meeting the target, to the Department for Education. Public bodies could also consider providing these figures in the Data Publication:

Figure H: Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period in the target period; and

Figure I: Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure H

Return Section 2 - Apprenticeship Activity Return

The Apprenticeship Activity Return includes both information on a body's progress against the target and information to assess actions taken towards, and challenges faced in, meeting the targets.

The return includes quantitative and qualitative elements:

Quantitative

- Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period in the target period; and
- **Figure B** in Return Section 1 (the number of apprentices who began to work for the body in the reporting period in question and whose apprenticeship agreements also began in that period), expressed as a percentage of headcount on the day before the first day of the reporting period in question.

This will enable the Government to assess the progress a body has made towards meeting the target.

Qualitative

- Action that the body has taken to meet their apprenticeship target (i.e. how it has 'had regard');
- If their target has not been met then specific further evidence may be required. This may include an explanation of why the target was not met, actions the body has taken to overcome the challenges it has faced and/or mitigating factors which demonstrate the body's commitment to apprenticeships;

- Information about action the body proposes to take to meet their future apprenticeship targets; and
- If the body considers that a future target is not likely to be met, an explanation of why that is so.

In calculating their headcount public bodies should include the following staff, as at 31 March in each year they are in scope:

- those members of staff on the body's payroll, including apprentices, on whose behalf the public body makes National Insurance Contributions. This will include:
 - o permanent members of staff;
 - o members of staff who have a fixed-term contract;
 - o those who work full-time as well as those who work part-time;
- other members of staff who are not described above who have a fixed-term contract;
- staff who are on maternity, paternity or adoption leave;
- staff who are on sick-leave or any other type of extended paid leave;
- apprentices employed by the public body through an Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA); or
- employees on secondment or loan only if your organisation is paying for the majority (more than 50 per cent) or all of their wages.

They should not include:

- those who are employed through employment agencies;
- those who are working on a zero-hour contract;
- bank staff;
- employees in sub-contracted organisations who are not paid directly from the payroll; or
- those on career breaks.

Format

Bodies in scope are required to publish the Data Publication. Government is not being prescriptive about where the information should be published but it must be easily accessible to the public, for example on the internal and external facing website of a public sector body in scope. It must also be sent to the Department for Education.

Bodies do not have to publish the Apprenticeship Activity Return. However they must send this information to the Department for Education.

Most bodies will send their Data Publication and Apprenticeship Activity Return to the Department for Education through their Apprenticeship Service account. If you are a levy paying organisation, you should make sure you are registered on the Apprenticeship Service to submit your annual return. If you are unsure how to do this, please contact the National Apprenticeship Service Support Service on 0800 015 0600 (option 1 then option 2) or email helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk.

The Civil Service, Armed Forces and any non-levy paying organisations will not send their returns through the Apprenticeship Service. We are setting up an electronic mailbox for the receipt of returns from these bodies. For the form to complete and details of where to send it, please contact the National Apprenticeship Service Support Service from April 2018 on 0800 015 0600 (option 1 then option 2) or email helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk.

The Target and Reporting Periods

The Target Period is from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021. Throughout the Target Period, public bodies must have regard to the target and report their progress towards meeting the target.

However, it is important to note that there may be cases where a public body is not within scope of the target for the entirety of the Target Period. This will be the case if a body's headcount falls below 250 on any of the days on which headcount is determined (i.e. 31 March in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020).

For example, if a public body has 250 or more employees on 31 March 2017, but this falls below 250 employees on 31 March 2018, they will no longer be in scope of the target in 2018/19.

The Target Period is divided into four Reporting Periods lasting a year each.

As established in the Regulations, the targets will be measured as an average from 2017/18 to 2020/21. Public bodies must provide their Data Publication and Apprenticeship Activity Return for each of the following Reporting Periods where they are in scope:

- 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018
- 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019
- 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020
- 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

As explained above, they may fall in and out of scope during the Target Period if their headcount falls below or meets/rises above 250 people.

Reports for each year in which a public body is in-scope will be due within six months of the end of each Reporting Period. This is known as the Response Period and during this time in-scope each body must publish the Data Publication and send both that and the Apprenticeship Activity Return, to the Department for Education. The deadlines for these returns will be:

- 30 September 2018
- 30 September 2019
- 30 September 2020
- 30 September 2021

As explained above, provided they meet the headcount criteria, academy trusts and multi academy trusts came within scope from 31 March 2018. These academy trusts were not required to provide an annual return on progress towards the target for apprenticeship starts between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. They were required to do so for the first time from April 2019, for starts between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. They will also be required to do complete an annual return on progress for the remaining 2 years of the 2017-2021 reporting period.



Department
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Apprenticeship Programme – Annual Statutory Reporting 2020 - 2021

Who counts as an employee?

You should include the following staff when calculating your employee numbers:

- Anyone on your payroll on whose behalf you make National Insurance contributions
- Staff on fixed-term contracts
- Staff on maternity, paternity or adoption leave
- Staff on sick leave or extended paid leave
- Apprentices employed by the public body through an Apprenticeship Training Agency
- Employees on secondment or loan if you are paying more than 50% of their wages

Do not include:

- Anyone employed through employment agencies
- Those working on a zero-hour contract
- Bank staff
- Employees in sub-contracted organisations who are not paid directly from your payroll
- Those on career breaks

Number of employees who were working in England on 31 March 2020

465

Number of employees who were working in England on 31 March 2021

483

Number of new employees who started working for you in England between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

55

Your Apprentices

Who counts as an apprentice?

You should include the following staff when calculating your apprentice numbers:

- Anyone doing an approved English apprenticeship framework or standard with an apprenticeship agreement in place

Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2020

30

Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2021

27

Number of new apprentices in England whose apprenticeship agreements started in between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

This includes both new hires and existing employees who started an apprenticeship

21

Your full-time equivalents (optional)

[How to calculate your full-time equivalent numbers](#)

Firstly, work out the number of weekly hours each part-time employee is contracted to work divided by your organisation's standard full-time working week. For example, 10 hours divided by 37 hours equated to 0.27 full-time equivalents.

Then add your full-time employee numbers to come up with a total number of full-time equivalents. Round your total to the nearest whole number.

Number of full-time equivalents (optional)

What actions have you taken this year to meet the target? How do these compare to the actions taken in the previous year?

We, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (the Authority) have continued to evolve the enrolment of our operational firefighters, to ensure the apprenticeship programme is fit for purpose and delivers the right people, with the right skills in the right roles. By utilising the Authority's levy, it has enabled new starters to benefit from local terms and conditions and national pay rates which attracts a larger range of applicants and so the employment of the right candidates.

As part of the Authority's strategy for the retention and upskilling of existing staff and to develop future leaders, we have enrolled one member of staff onto an apprenticeship during this reporting period, to develop their professional leadership skills. This also helps raise the profile, embed and mentor apprenticeship programmes within the organisation. We have employed 20 new operational firefighters who were enrolled on to the level three operational firefighter apprenticeship standard.

Various staff have supported the development of apprenticeship standards within their area of competence by providing representation on trailblazer groups albeit via virtual meetings. This develops future networking opportunities for the Authority as well as a greater understanding of the standards being developed.

The Authority continues to deliver its pledge to the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network (ADCN). Information, guidance and resources from this network is being used in the attraction, engagement and recruitment of apprentices. These activities have been limited this year due to COVID restrictions.

Throughout the pandemic, we have adapted how we engage with our community to promote apprenticeships with virtual careers talks to local colleges and social media campaigns sharing apprentices 'real life' experiences of their journey. This had a particular focus during National Apprenticeship Week where we promoted the diversity of apprentices within the organisation, highlighting age range and previous work history to inform others that apprenticeships are for everyone.

We continue to review our apprenticeship strategy in line with our workforce planning to ensure that when recruitment opportunities present themselves, that our apprenticeships are part of our blended approach to recruitment.

What challenges have you faced this year in your efforts to meet the target? How do these compare to the challenges experienced in the previous year?

The lack of registered training providers available locally for Business Fire Safety Apprentices and Community Safety Advisors has meant we have been unable to utilise these apprenticeship Standards.

Although we have recruited and enrolled 20 new operational firefighters COVID-19 has presented the biggest challenge to us throughout this reporting period. It has put a stop to the “have a go days” that we programmed in throughout the year, reduced attendance at career fairs and meant we need to adapt our approach to training these new starts

Alongside the barriers the pandemic has presented, it also provided an opportunity for the Authority and its staff to review the way business as usual has been conducted and evaluate and implement learns to be better prepared for future campaigns. Our apprentices have adapted to working virtually with their respective training providers, which has allowed their progress to continue without the need for a break in learning.

The Authority had planned to have representation at WorldSkillsUK live at the NEC and at the National Apprentice show at the MK Arena but unfortunately both were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

We have unfortunately had some of our operational firefighter apprentices resign from their programme. The reasons for the resignations were sought to allow the Authority to evaluate any learns and implement changes for future programmes. Work has been undertaken to deliver a complete a robust process of recruitment from advertising through to employment to enable the Authority to recruit the right candidates from our local community.

A further challenge we have found when trying to enrol apprentices is that some training providers are only willing to take on cohorts of apprentices and not being able tailor their delivery to meet the requirements of only one apprentice i.e. project management and learning and development level five.

In addition, the lack of availability of the training provider courses for our operational firefighters based around our own workforce planning and timings.

The Authority is now more experienced and knowledgeable with apprenticeships since taking another cohort of operational firefighters and several support staff members through their End Point Assessment. We have been able to gain from this experience and by having regular engagement with awarding bodies through the NFCC Apprenticeship forum and being involved in the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship standard review. This has allowed us to impart our apprentices with a more rounded appreciation of this process.

The Authorities aspiration of applying to the Register of Apprentice Training Providers (RoATP) and the appreciation of what is required of us moving forward. With the register only being open at specific times of the year could cause issue with our employment programme. In relation to having to be on RoATP as a supporting provider, allowing us to train our own operational firefighters, as we currently have to put aside training time to convert our staff on return from their respective acquisition course which puts a greater burden on our resources.

How are you planning to meet the target in future? What will you continue to do or do differently?

NFCC Workforce Committee has set up an Apprenticeships Board to reinforce profile, and to optimise resources to best support FRS's to deliver their plans. The Authority has representation on this committee to ensure our local proposition aligns National developments.

Continuing to work with Emergency Services to deliver joint trailblazers and identify further opportunities for collaboration.

Continuation of the Authority's strategic workforce planning, where apprentices are an integral element of a blended approach to resourcing. This also involves developing career pathways for upskilling existing staff based on the NFCC leadership framework.

Continuing to support apprenticeship trailblazers for sector-relevant standards by providing resources and subject matter experts to the trailblazer groups.

Continued membership of the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network, improving networking opportunities, and learning from other members and organisations about ways in which we could improve the diversity of our apprentices and, therefore, our workforce.

Optimising the use of national resources to promote apprenticeship careers.

Building relationships with local training providers and other FRS's to develop new opportunities for new starters and existing members of staff to promote and deliver best practice.

Reviewing Apprenticeship options for On-Call employees and how they can meet the apprenticeship criteria to helping us attract and retaining On-Call FF's albeit aspirational at this time

Promotion of our apprenticeship programmes through National Apprentice week, social media campaigns and local events to attract our apprentices of the future, this will also help break down previous challenges and myths. Once COVID restrictions are suitably lifted the continuation of frequent "have a go days" to promote the operational firefighter role to include the targeting of specific groups. Utilising our station crews to champion apprenticeship programmes throughout the service when they carry out visits to include engagement sessions with local colleges that run emergency services courses.

Do you have anything else you want to tell us? (optional)

With current and previous apprentices now embedded across departments and fire stations within the Authority this has enabled a culture change allowing experience to be shared and also serving firefighters to become mentors for those new apprentices.

The Authority will be exploring the possibility of signing up to the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) as a supporting provider as this will enable us to deliver training to our own staff. It is also always encouraging that the National Apprenticeship service is open and available to discuss opportunities at the NFCC Apprenticeship forums.

We will be exploring the exciting work that Devon & Somerset continue to do with the delivery of On-Call firefighter apprenticeships and looking to see how we can utilise this model for our future On-Call staff giving us the ability to standardise the training and development offered to all new firefighter recruits regardless of contract this is also something that we would be interested in delivering to our Flexi-Firefighters.

The Authority continues to work with its Thames Valley Fire Service partners to determine options for a collaborative approach to operational apprenticeship recruitment. This includes looking at improving diversity and working together to resolve common issues. Specific actions were identified, both internally and through this collaborative work, to improve the diversity of applicants, primarily from both female and BAME candidates. These actions include awareness campaigns, 'have a go days' and allocation of 'recruitment buddies'.

We continue to champion the work we have completed with our apprenticeship programme to support other services and to share best practice, this will also include embedding the NFCC leadership and development framework into our apprenticeships.

Cadet courses and T- Levels are areas that will be looked at as a source for future apprentices within the organisation.