

Public Sector Apprenticeship Target

Reporting period

Reporting period

1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

Organisation

Organisation Name

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Number of employees who work in England

Number of employees who were
working in England on 31 March 2017

449

Number of employees who were working in England on 31 March 2018	454
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Number of new employees who started working for you in England between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018	43
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Number of apprentices who work in England

Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2017	37
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Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2018	32
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Number of new apprentices in England between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 (includes both new hires and existing employees who started an apprenticeship)	14
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Full Time Equivalent

Full-time equivalents (optional)	
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We have computed the percentages that will be reported from the figures you have given

Reporting percentages

Percentage of apprenticeship starts (both new hires and existing employees who started an apprenticeship) as a proportion of employment starts between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018	32.56%
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Percentage of total headcount that were apprentices on 31 March 2018	7.05%
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Percentage of apprenticeship starts (both new hires and existing employees who started an apprenticeship) between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 as a proportion of total headcount on 31 March 2017	3.12%
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Factors that impacted your ability to meet the target

Outline any actions you have taken to help you progress towards meeting the public sector target

The Authority supports the Government's Workforce Reform agenda through early (pre-levy) employment of apprentices as part of our own workforce reform. Apprentice firefighters were recruited on to the Emergency Fire Service Operations (EFSO) framework and support services apprentices predominantly through the Business and Administration framework. Future Firefighter apprentices will be recruited to Operational Firefighter trailblazer standard. Two members of the current workforce were enrolled onto higher-level apprenticeships during this reporting period, to develop their professional leadership skills and as part of the Authority's retention strategy and upskilling of existing staff. The Authority's Director of People and Organisational Development is the national sector lead (National Fire Chiefs Council) for apprenticeships, and has been promoting apprenticeships both within our organisation and, for the sector and beyond, through our partner agencies and organisations. The Authority's staff have been integral in the development of sector-specific apprenticeship standard trailblazer groups and, where applicable, have contributed to them being approved for delivery. During this reporting year, The Authority submitted a pledge to the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network (ADCN) and was the first fire service to be accepted into the Network. This group champions apprenticeships and diversity amongst employers, and encourages more people from under-represented groups, including those with disabilities, women, and members of the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, to consider apprenticeships. Information, guidance and resource from this network will be used in the attraction, engagement and recruitment of future apprentices.

Tell us about any challenges you have faced in your efforts to meet the target

Initial Government information and support on the levy, public sector target, digital apprenticeship service and apprenticeship standards was limited. This has improved significantly and relationships with the NAS and IFA are excellent. The Firefighter (EFSO) apprenticeship framework was removed prior to new standard being available and in the absence of a standard/framework, new apprentices could not be enrolled for a period of 8 months. The FRS-sector accepted lower than required funding bands for the Operational Firefighter and Business Fire Safety Advisor trailblazer standards, to ensure that these standards were in place for the start of Year 2 of the Apprenticeship Levy. This is a significant challenge across the sector as it is a barrier to recruiting operational firefighter apprentices. The number of registered training providers for firefighter trailblazer standard is very limited, restricting FRSs from being able to use apprenticeships to train firefighters. In addition, in order to deliver apprenticeships, FRSs have either to procure an approved external provider or gain approval to deliver internally via the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. This register has been subject to difficulties with regular shut-downs, and without tangible information on End Point Assessments, in part, because minimal EPA organisations are registered, makes it hard to plan and prepare apprentices. Some FRSs employ a high proportion of On-call (part-time) firefighters where the FRS is not the primary employer. Whilst the guidance on part-time apprenticeships allows some to embark on apprenticeships over a longer time period, for many the extended time period would be unrealistic.

How are you planning to ensure you meet the target in future?

Working with other fire and rescue services (FRS) and partner agencies to establish a procurement framework for the provision of

training. A collaborative procurement tender process has already commenced. Continuing to work with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to identify and progress a range of actions that meet FRS requirements. These include events, workshops, training, and specific guidance and communications to share across the FRSs. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Workforce Committee has set up an Apprenticeships Board to reinforce profile, and to optimise resources to best support FRSs deliver their plans. 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 FRS 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. Working with local training providers to develop new opportunities for new starters and existing members of staff. Reviewing options for part-time employees and how they can meet the apprenticeship criteria.

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

Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) - extending the timeframe for registering or increasing the frequency for registration, will allow more organisation and FRSs to apply and provide more opportunity to deliver apprenticeships. Some fire and rescue services

(FRS) employ a high proportion of On-call (part-time) firefighters where the FRS is not the primary employer. Whilst the guidance on part time apprenticeships allows some to embark on apprenticeships over a longer time period, for many the extended time period would be unrealistic and could impact on employee relations and present diversity concerns. This could impact upon the ability of those FRSs to achieve the Government's target where on-call make up a high percentage of the workforce. The Authority continues to work with its Thames Valley Fire Service partners, through regular resourcing meetings, to determine a collaborative approach to operational and apprenticeship recruitment. More recently, links have been established with Thames Valley Police (TVP) on apprenticeships and, in particular, in 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'. Future apprenticeship strategy considerations include career pathways, of which pre-entry qualifications and functional skills form part. Government funding to support organisations in the development and implantation of this would be beneficial.
