

## Public Sector Apprenticeship Target

**Responsible Officer(s):** Louise Ferris, People Business Partner and Nicky Rendell, HR Specialist

**Reason for Report:** The Department of Education require public bodies with more than 250 employees to report annually on progress towards their target of 2.3% apprenticeship starts.

**Financial Implications:** The partial spend of the Apprenticeship Levy.

### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Apprenticeship Levy came into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and the Council could begin to access funds in May 2017. The Levy was introduced by the Government in an attempt to address the shortage of skilled workers in the UK, by increasing the number of apprenticeships. Organisations with a PAYE wage bill of £3 million or over must pay a monthly fee of 0.5% of their wage bill. Apprentices can be new employees and/or you can retrain current employees to take the next step on their career ladder, or to change direction.

1.2 The Department of Education have set a target for public sector bodies with more than 250 employees in England to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentices from 2017 – 2021. New apprentice starts can include both existing employees who start an apprenticeship as well as newly employed apprentices. This will be assessed as an average over this timeframe.

Public bodies will be asked to publish information identifying their progress towards the target. Public sector bodies have a **legal duty** to have regard to the target. To have regard to means that it should be considered when making workforce planning decisions the organisation **must actively consider apprenticeships**, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff.

1.3 The Council submitted their report to the Department of Education on 1 September 2021. This report covered the period of 01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021.

## 2.0 The Councils progress toward the Department of Education's target

2.1 The Somerset West and Taunton Council figures are set out below:

Number of employees working in England:

Number of employees who were working in England on 31 March 2020	567
Number of employees who were working in England on 31 March 2021	592
Number of new employees who started working for you in England between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021	71

Number of apprentices who work in England:

Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2020	12
Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2021	6
Number of new apprentices in England between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 (includes both new hires and existing employees who started an apprenticeship)	2

Percentages:

Percentage of apprenticeship starts (both new hires and existing employees who started an apprenticeship) as a proportion of employment starts between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021	2.82%
Percentage of total headcount that were apprentices on 31 March 2021	1.01%
Percentage of apprenticeship starts (both new hires and existing employees who started an apprenticeship) between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 as a proportion of total headcount on 31 March 2020.	0.35%

### 3.0 The Narrative

Actions taken to meet the target:

The Council has now incorporated Apprenticeships into their Learning and Development (L & D) strategy. The L & D Specialist has met with various learning providers to network, build partnerships and to share apprenticeship opportunities in the community. The Council has identified where previous apprenticeships could have been improved and worked with managers and People Business Partners to create a framework of set Apprenticeship parameters and 'how to' guides for all Managers. The L & D Specialist has met with Managers and Assistant Directors as part of performance management conversations and highlighted apprenticeships as an option to develop existing teams. The Council has joined the Southwest Apprenticeship Network and

become an employer ambassador for apprenticeships for the West Country. The L & D Specialist was a development lead and mentor in the LGA apprenticeship of the year awards.

Challenges faced this year in meeting our target:

COVID-19 has been a major factor in taking on new apprentices, with remote working and recruiting restrictions, particularly in trade apprenticeships and the risks associated with entering housing stock. COVID has also limited face to face interactions. Some existing employees were redeployed during the early stages of the pandemic and therefore there were concerns regarding resourcing during this time. In addition, there was a lack of capacity for managers and mentors which lead to concerns that we could not deliver a rounded apprenticeship experience.

How the Council are planning to meet the target in the future:

The L+D Strategy will continue to re-enforce and promote apprenticeships. The introduction of 'grow your own' in areas where we have difficulty attracting and retaining staff. The Council will be working with the Employment and Skills Team to share apprenticeship opportunities in the community. Continue to work on the apprenticeship support and mentoring framework and communicate this to the wider organisation. Attendance at Southwest Apprenticeship Network meetings and Employer Ambassador conferences and events. The Council aim to enter our own apprentices into the Apprenticeship of the Year as delegates. The Council is working with the LGA to explore T Levels with the ambition to create pathways to apprenticeships and are working on an internal Leader Management Programme using an apprenticeship in level 5 and 7 management.

**Contact for more information:**

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