

Apprenticeship data & activity 2020-21

1.0 Introduction

Under the Public Sector Apprenticeships Targets Regulations 2017 public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England as at 31 March each year are required to publish a return demonstrating how they have had regard to the target. The target is to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentices start over the period from 01 April 2017 to 31 March 2021.

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 and count towards the target in the year that they start their apprenticeship.

2.0 Reporting Period

This report covers the period from 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

3.0 Data Publication

The Trust is required to publish the following data, which will enable the Government, the public and wider stakeholders to understand our headcount and the number of apprentices we employ.

A. Number of employees whose employment with the Trust began during the reporting period	332
B. Number of employees who began an apprenticeship during the reporting period (both new apprentice hires and current employees who started an apprenticeship)	53

C. Number of people employed by the Trust at the end of the reporting period	2505
D. Number of apprentices who worked for the Trust at the end of the reporting period	63
E. Figure B as a percentage of figure A	15.97%
F. Figure D as a percentage of figure C	2.52%
G. The number of apprentices who worked for the Trust immediately before the start of the reporting period	7
H. The number of employees in the Trust immediately before the start of the reporting period	2460
I. Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure H	2.16%

*This figure reflects recruitment activity during the reporting period. It does not include TUPE transfers into the Trust.

4.0 Apprenticeship Activity

4.1 Progress against public sector apprenticeship target

The Trust's headcount was 2460 on the day prior to the first day of the reporting period, and there were 53 new apprenticeship starts during the reporting period. The percentage of staff employed as new apprentice starts was therefore 2.16%, against a target of 2.3%.

This is the third year that the Trust has been required to report against this target. In comparison with the previous year this is an increase of 1.14%.

4.2 Action the Trust has taken to 'have regard' to the target

Apprenticeships have been included in the Trust's four year strategic plan and the HR team's strategy action plan.

Key figures within the Trust have taken on an active role in driving apprenticeships forwards. In September 2020 the trust partnered with the National College of Education to help build a more coherent CPD offering for our colleagues. We currently have L3, L5 and L7 programmes for both teachers and non teaching staff. The process for registering apprentices has become central which has led to a greater oversight as to how apprenticeships are working in practice, the benefits to the colleague and the academy and the financial funds available.

There has been regular communications to our colleagues on apprenticeships and options available. We encourage and promote apprenticeship programmes and emphasise the need for colleagues to discuss their development plans with their line managers as part of their performance management. We are confident that our colleagues are now more aware of the opportunities available to them.

HR Managers have also been asked to include apprenticeships in their workforce planning discussions with headteachers, both in relation to recruitment and colleague development. The HR team has also developed a "recruitment toolkit" and these communication materials have helped to add emphasis to such discussions and considerations. Particularly when vacancies have arisen and workforce planning needs to take place, consideration has been given as to whether roles would be suitable for apprentices, and whether relevant apprenticeship standards or frameworks are available.

Consideration has also been given to apprenticeships that could be undertaken by existing employees. This has been evidenced with a new HR apprentice role being created in the Trust when a gap arose.

Our Apprentice Pay Policy has been agreed with our recognised trade unions and approved by the Trust Board. It was reviewed on 1st April 2021 with a key change this year in relation to equal pay for existing members of staff who commence an apprenticeship as part of their ongoing development and for those colleagues recruited externally. Both internal and external apprentices are paid 100% of the rate for the job with effect from 01 April 2021.

4.3 Challenges faced / mitigating factors

4.3.1 Workforce

Teachers: the apprenticeship route for teachers is not widely established, and other teacher training routes are more cost effective.

Support staff: the vast majority of our support staff work term time only, and approximately 25% of them are contracted to work fewer than the 30 hours per week necessary for an apprenticeship.

Tight budgets in the public sector mean limited opportunity to create new apprentice roles, so the Trust is reliant either on staff turnover in relevant roles, or identifying existing support staff who are not already fully trained and who would benefit from and wish to complete an apprenticeship.

It is worth noting that although the Trust is in scope for reporting due to the number of academies within the group, none of our academies would be in scope as a stand alone entity.

4.3.2 Resource

The 20% off-the-job training requirement continues to be a barrier in engaging academies, who can be reluctant to see a colleague take time away from the classroom where cover for the absence needs to be provided, at an additional cost and with potential impact on teaching and learning. Within academies, capacity to provide coaching and support to apprentices can also be limited. At the moment, it isn't possible to use the levy funding to cover these additional costs.

During the reporting period all resources were given to support academy operations during the global health crisis therefore there has been a limited amount of managerial / HR resources that may otherwise have helped to facilitate action towards the target.

4.4 Proposed actions to assist in meeting the target in future

The Trust will continue to work with the National College of Education to implement programmes for our teaching and non teaching colleagues which includes Masters level professional qualifications and also a greater offering of quality CPD for our non-teaching staff. The Trust's apprenticeship leads will draw on experiences of existing cohorts and continue to work closely with NCE to ensure the best possible uptake and consistent outcomes.

The Trust has also identified potentially suitable frameworks for existing staff and external apprentices in specialist areas such as Finance, HR and IT. Key leads within the Trust are now working to promote such specialist subjects and to build on succession planning for colleagues in this area.

Furthermore, the Trust Board have approved the proposal for a post-18 school leaver apprenticeship pathway and the aim is to identify job opportunities across the Trust from Sept 2022 onwards which will be ring-fenced for our school leavers to apply for in the first instance. This is likely to concentrate on IT service roles initially within the central team and a select number of schools. Key leads within the Trust will now network to launch this pathway and recruit the first cohort.

5.0 Summary

Since the introduction of the target, we have seen an increasing proportion of our workforce being new apprenticeship starts. The above activities continue to build & improve on previous years of activity, and have led to a much broader understanding of apprenticeships and further engagement with this across our Trust. By utilising an evolving approach, we aim to deliver year on year improvements in our performance against the public sector target.

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