

Apprenticeship Performance and Target

The Apprenticeship Levy came into force on 6 April 2017 and was introduced by the Government in order to address the shortage of skilled workers in the UK, by increasing the number of apprenticeship opportunities offered by employers.

The public sector target was introduced in April 2017 and applies to any public sector employer with at least 250 employees. The Target requires public sector employers to employ an average of 2.3% of their organisation's headcount as new apprentice starts each year between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2021. The target (headcount) includes council employees and staff working in schools which are under the control of Trafford Council.

So is it an average target or an annual one?

It's an average target over the four-year period, but it is important to understand what this does and doesn't mean in practice.

The public sector target is in effect an aggregated target, with employers able to average out their performance over the four year period.

Employers do not have to meet a target annually, but they do have to calculate what 2.3% of their workforce looks like on 31 March of each of the four years in the reporting period. These four figures are then added together to calculate the total target. This figure represents the total number of apprenticeship starts that an employer should aim for by the end of the four year period. Delivery against this target can be averaged out over the four year period to manage peaks and troughs in recruitment.

As a public sector body in scope of this target, we must 'have regard' to the target and submit a report annually to Government, by 30 September, on progress in meeting the target.

The Government considers the duty to "have regard" to the target to mean that in making workforce planning decisions, we should actively consider apprenticeships, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing employees.

In addition to the data return, we're also required to publish some information about their progress made towards meeting the target.

Number of employees and apprentices who work in England

Employees	Total
Number of employees who were working in England on 31 March 2017	4357
Number of employees who were working in England on 31 March 2018	4306

Number of employees and apprentices who work in England	
Employees	Total
Number of new employees who started working for you in England between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018	544
Apprentices	
Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2017	32
Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2018	81
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)	75
Percentage of apprentices	
Indicator	%
Apprenticeship starts (both new hires and existing employees who started an apprenticeship) as a proportion of employment starts between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018	24.51%
Total headcount of employees that were apprentices on 31 March 2018	1.9 %
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 2018	1.72%

Progress towards the target:

Trafford Council does not have to meet a target annually, but we do have to calculate what 2.3% of our workforce looks like on 31 March of each of the four years in the reporting period (2017 to 2021) based on headcount. These four figures are then added together to calculate the total target. Delivery against this target is averaged out over the four year period to manage peaks and troughs in recruitment.

The Council has made good progress towards meeting the public sector target with 1.9% of the workforce undertaking an apprenticeship (this includes schools under the control of the Council).

The target is based on headcount and where public sector organisations employ a large percentage of part time staff which we do here at Trafford this does not reflect capacity and inflates the target. If Trafford Councils target was based on full time

equivalent (FTE) in the same reporting periods the Council would have exceeded its target as follows:

Total FTE of employees that were apprentices on 31 March 2018	2.6%
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 FTE on 31 March 2018	2.4%

Actions towards meeting the apprenticeship target in the future

We will continue to work closely with senior managers and schools to raise awareness of the potential benefits of apprenticeships, both for new and existing employees, including “growing our own” to aid succession planning for example: Social Worker degree apprenticeship.

We will improve our internal processes to make sure apprenticeships are considered as viable vacancy and new post options for new and existing staff.

In the New Year we will be procuring a number of providers to deliver the following apprenticeships to new and existing staff:

- New Adults standards, Level 2 and Level 3
- Public Services Delivery Officer Level 3
- Learning and Development Practitioner Level 3
- New Children’s standards, Level 4 and Level 5
- School Business Professional, Level 4
- Revenues and Benefits Apprenticeship, Level 4
- Leadership and Management MBA, Level 7

We have had some challenges along the way including:

- Delays in new apprenticeship Standards being available, which has specifically impacted on schools.
- 20% Off-the-Job training has proven to be a barrier for the Council and many schools, who are reluctant to see a staff member have to take time away from the office or classroom.
- The length of time it takes to procure a training provider which can take up to 12 weeks or longer.

However we are aiming to increase apprenticeships in our workforce over the next four years in line with our skills needs as part of our workforce planning. We will continue to have due regard for the Duty target and hope (and will continue to lobby) that some of the more complex issues and challenges we have raised for consideration by the government are addressed.