**Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Annual Return - Ashford Borough Council**

**1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019**

**Section 1 – Data Publication**

The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017 require public sector bodies (including local authorities), who employ more than 250 employees, to **employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts** over the period **1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021.**

Although the target period is 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021, public bodies must report their progress in meeting the target. The target period is divided into four reporting periods lasting a year each.

**Ashford Borough Council is pleased to publish progress made in the *second* reporting period.**

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| **Data Period** | **1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019** |
| **Figure A -** The number of employees whose employment in England by the body (ABC) began in the reporting period in question. | 72  | 65.18 FTE  |
| **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 incudes employees who were already working for the body (ABC) before beginning their apprenticeship, as well as new apprentice hires.  | **13** | **12.70 FTE** |
| **Figure C -** The number of employees employed in England that the body has at the end of that period **31.03.19.** | 482 | 432.51 FTE |
| **Figure D -** The number of apprentices who work for the body at the end of that period. **31.03.19.** | 14 | 13.88 FTE  |
| **Figure E -** Figure B expressed as a percentage of Figure A**B/A x 100** | **18.05%** | **19.48%**  |
| **Figure F -** Figure D expressed as a percentage of Figure C.D / C x 100 | **2.91%**  | **3.20%**  |
| **Figure G -** The number of apprentices who worked for the body immediately before that period (31.03.17) | 8 | 7.83 FTE |
| **Figure H -** Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period. – 31.03.2017 | 466 | 419.06 |
| **Figure I -** Figure B expressed as a % of Figure H.B/H x 100 | **2.78%** | **3.03%** |

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**Section 2 – Apprenticeship Activity Return 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019**

**Factors that impacted your ability to meet the target**

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| **Outline any actions you have taken to help you progress towards meeting the public sector target** |
| We are focused to have achieved our Public Sector Apprenticeship Reporting Target for this review period and are focused on maintaining this across the 2017-2021 review period. We have achieved what we set out to do in 2018 to 2019; namely to extend the usage of apprenticeships at a higher level across the organisation and to create apprenticeship opportunities for existing employees. It is our intention to continue to do this as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process.We were pleased to introduce six Level 4 qualifications in January 2019 in Intelligence Operations and in Revenues, Benefits and Welfare Apprenticeships for existing employees.When recruiting at a junior level line managers are encouraged to consider the suitability of an apprentice model in the recruitment that they undertake. |
| **Tell us about any challenges you have faced in your efforts to meet the target** |
| Of the 8 apprentices who were employed at 31st March 2018, 3 have been appointed to permanent roles in the organisation. As a relatively small council we have a more limited opportunity for creating new posts in the structure, without unreasonably and exponentially increasing the overall head count. We employ two apprentices on a four year apprenticeship programme and are currently recruiting for a third. Whilst this longer term approach is beneficial to both the organisation and the individual the number of new apprenticeship starts in the interim years is limited.We are committed to career development at an entry level and have developed our own graduate models within certain services. We would like to convert these programmes into a higher level apprenticeship (Level 4) this will be explored as resources allow. |
| **How are you planning to ensure you meet the target in future** |
| Further work is planned to consider how we can maintain our apprentice numbers whilst also providing meaningful work opportunities to help individuals achieve their qualification. These objectives were built into our service plans for 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 and we will continue to have regard to the target in our 2020/2021 service plans. |
| **Do you have anything else you want to tell us (optional)**To make apprenticeships accessible to all we introduced an Apprenticeship Wage Allowance in 2015. The Apprenticeship Wage Allowance is greater than the statutory Apprentice Wage rate. Currently we pay apprentices the age appropriate to the National Minimum Wage (25 and over - £8.21, 21 – 24 £7.70, 18 – 21 £6.15, Under 18 - £4.35) plus 0.15 pence per hour which is a higher rate than the statutory Apprenticeship rate of £3.90.  |