



NFCC People Programme Apprenticeship Strategy

DRAFT

Version 0.1
Date: March 2019

Contents

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Purpose | 3 |
| Aims..... | 3 |
| Benefits..... | 4 |
| Background | 5 |
| Expectations | 5 |
| Current Challenges..... | 6 |
| Delivery..... | 6 |
| Development Approach | 7 |

DRAFT

Purpose

Through the People Programme, the National Fire Chiefs Council has made substantial progress to support workforce reform. This nationally coordinated approach aims to support services as they work to match their capabilities and capacity to the changing role of their services and the demands placed upon them.

The new trailblazer apprenticeships provide an opportunity to bring consistency in how services train and assess staff.

As part of the NFCC People Programme, the Apprenticeships Project aims to:

- Provide support and guidance for services as they implement and embed apprenticeships
- Coordinate the development of any further trailblazer apprenticeships
- Look at the viability of establishing a sector-led End Point Assessment Organisation / Assurance body

The purpose of this strategy is to set out how the NFCC will be achieving these aims and supporting services by coordinating development and implementation of the new trailblazer apprenticeships.

Aims

The aim of this strategy is to support fire and rescue services in the use of apprenticeships as they build their workforce capabilities and ensure staff flourish in their careers. We will create an environment which encourages collaboration and information sharing amongst services, whilst centralising the things that are agreed as appropriate and supporting regional approaches where they are not.

To do this, the intention is to coordinate the development of a variety of apprenticeships. These would cover entry-level skills to higher and degree level apprenticeships, open to both new recruits and existing staff, as an opportunity to learn new skills or retrain.

Apprenticeships present an opportunity to improve the diversity and inclusivity of workforces. They provide an entry route for people from all backgrounds without requirements for educational attainment, where appropriate. They also provide retraining opportunities for existing staff. This approach removes some of the barriers that may be currently dissuading new starters from applying and our existing workforce from developing their careers.

Apprenticeships are part of a blended approach to career progression which is being addressed through the NFCC People Programme. Providing clear career pathways for employees allows them to understand what is required to progress from one role to another.

This consistent approach to career progression and training also enables easier movement of staff between services because their skills, knowledge, competence and behaviours will be recognised nationally, reducing the need for individual services to re-train individuals transferring from other services.

Benefits

The Benefits Management Framework provides all programmes within the Central Programme Office with a structure to ensure that the identified benefits of an initiative are clearly articulated, measured, managed and evaluated.

During the initiation stage of each programme and project, a detailed list of the benefits and dis-benefits are identified, documented in a benefits profile and mapped to the initial high-level benefit identification.

This strategy sets out the high-level benefits of the apprenticeships project. Throughout the lifecycle of the project, these benefits will be tracked and progress will be reported to the project board. Following the project closure, the long-term benefits will continue to be monitored and reviewed by the Central Programme Office Benefits Manager.

The use of apprenticeships forms part of a blended approach to training which has the potential to help increase diversity in fire and rescue services and drive workforce reform.

By taking a national approach to apprenticeships, we can deliver them more efficiently and services can utilise them to achieve a more diverse and representative workforce. The use of nationally recognised apprenticeships will also bring about consistency in how staff are trained and are deemed competent.

Apprenticeships provide an opportunity for the FRSs to develop the skills of their workforce and to provide people, from all backgrounds, with the opportunity to obtain both job-specific and transferable skills that will contribute to their achievement in the workplace.

Services can ensure they contribute to the development of a competent, safe, well-motivated and increasingly diverse workforce by incorporating apprenticeships into their workforce development plans.

By collaborating, and coordinating aspects of apprenticeships nationally with contributions from all fire and rescue services, we can achieve a range of benefits:

1. **Social return on investment** – recruiting apprentices from the local community benefits both the community and the local service, enhancing the workforce profile and improving diversity. We will build apprenticeship schemes that achieve the best mix of quality and economic efficiency.
2. **Clear career pathway** – we can attract individuals from a more diverse range of cultures, selected by suitability and on merit for the roles we have, and show clear routes for career progression. This enables the fire and rescue services to become employers of choice.
3. **Consistent approach** – collaborating to develop national apprenticeship standards brings about consistency in training approaches and requirements of our staff. Apprentices can be assured that by following the national apprenticeship standards their skills, knowledge and experience will be recognised across the country, should they wish to transfer. Use of apprenticeships saves services time, effort, and money for both development and procurement, and enables easier staff mobility.
4. **Raising professional standards within the sector** - we will help apprentices and staff develop strong professional capabilities and be part of a highly capable, skilled and engaged fire and rescue service. This includes developing profession-oriented apprenticeships which are fire specific. Where there is a need, we will work to develop modules to enhance existing management apprenticeships. Use of the apprenticeships will ensure apprentices receive high quality training and feel engaged throughout their career. This includes working with reputable training providers, complying with apprenticeship standards and considering collaborative solutions.

5. **Cultural change** – to ensure that apprenticeships are a key component of an inclusive fire and rescue service that reflects the society it serves. By focussing on the transferable skills and consistency in the way we deliver apprenticeships, this will lead us to embrace diversity within our workforce. We will work together to attract the right individuals based on merit, and potentially form a more diverse range of cultures who are right for the job.

Background

The Government reform agenda seeks to upskill the nation. Its driving mission is to create a country where everyone has the chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will allow, regardless of background, and for every young person to be offered either an apprenticeship or university place.

New Trailblazer Standard Apprenticeships have replaced the previous apprenticeship frameworks across all sectors. Standards are occupation-focused; they are not qualification-led. The learning happens throughout the apprenticeship, and the apprentice is assessed at the end to prove that they can carry out all aspects of their job. During the apprenticeship, they will develop transferable skills and gain credibility too.

The NFCC People Strategy sets out a commitment to ensure the fire and rescue services workforce are able to meet the challenges the services will face, both immediately and in the future.

This apprenticeship strategy sets out to support both the vision and aspiration of Government and the NFCC.

The requirement for a collaborative strategic approach to FRS apprenticeships has been driven by the NFCC Workforce Committee with buy-in from a majority of FRSs. The apprenticeships project seeks to demonstrate the efficient and effective use of resources, whilst being flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of individual FRS requirements.

Expectations

The government has set targets for all sectors to adopt the new trailblazer standard apprenticeships in the form of the Reform Agenda. For the public sector, the government wants to increase the number of apprentices in delivering world-class public services. A target came into force in April 2017, which requires public bodies with 250 or more staff in England to employ an average of 2.3% of their headcount as new apprenticeship starts between April 2017 and March 2022. Public bodies in scope include the NHS, local authorities, schools, police forces, fire and rescue services, the armed forces and the Civil Service.

The government agenda is a positive opportunity to support delivery of key elements of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) People Strategy 2017- 2022, improving workforce diversity. Nationally, up to a third of whole-time firefighters are predicted to retire in the next three to five years. It is anticipated that apprenticeships will form a key element of refreshing the workforce as part of a blended approach to individual FRSs delivering their workforce plans; which also seek to match capabilities and capacity with diversified service provision and better alignment with local risk and demand profiles.

The government is supporting this target through a levy which is taken from tax on UK employers which can be used to fund apprenticeship training. In the current (2018/19) tax year it is payable by all employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million at a rate of 0.5% of their total pay bill.

The target for the fire and rescue service is to see 4000 staff follow an apprenticeship by 2022. This equates to 2.3% of the workforce in the English fire and rescue services.

Whilst the targets and the levy payment percentage rules are the same for England and the Devolved Administrations, rules covering how the levy can be used in the Devolved Administrations are different to those in England. The following link clearly sets out the differences [How will the Apprenticeship levy and devolution work? - TLT LLP](#)

The government will regularly collect data from all sectors to measure progress.

It is critical that reliable data on apprenticeships is recorded by services to help establish a baseline for where we are now as a sector, so that we can plan where we need to be in the future and how we are going to get there.

Current Challenges

Fire and rescue services have an ageing workforce, and they are not maximising the diverse talent and potential of the wider communities they serve.

They each need to achieve a sustainable workforce to address the local risks they are expected to respond to. How services attract and train new recruits varies, and the retention of the on-call workforce presents a particular challenge. This locally driven approach means there is inconsistency in approach, and services generally re-train staff that move from other services rather than being able to acknowledge the training the new staff member has already undergone.

The Government drive to embed the trailblazer apprenticeships has placed an onus on the sector to utilise apprenticeships as best they can. However, there are issues with the apprenticeship model overall which are related to the very specialist nature of fire and rescue.

We no longer have a national training centre or college; we do not have current national exams or standards that apply, and all services generally train their own staff in their own training facilities, although some collaborative approaches exist.

Only those individuals with the right levels of experience, skills and current knowledge are appropriate to both teach trainee operational firefighters and assess their competence.

Therefore, the requirement for those providing training to become official training providers and the lack of an obvious End Point Assessment Organisation do present some challenges in the sectors ability to adopt apprenticeships compared to other professions where on the job training supported by a day a week at college is more fitting.

Delivery

The Apprenticeship Project is formed of a small team with appropriate governance to monitor progress and quality of work. The CPO provides the project management capability, and other team members are drawn from services, represent specific areas of interest, or provide subject matter expertise related to the project aims.

Whilst services will be responsible for the delivery of apprenticeships, the Apprenticeship Project team will coordinate activity and:

- Provide support and guidance for services as they implement and embed apprenticeships
- Coordinate the development of any further trailblazer standard apprenticeships
- Look at viability of establishing a sector led End Point Assessment Organisation approach

Development Approach

The approach the project team will take to the development of apprenticeships will:

- **Clarify what is in place already, using existing apprenticeships where available and appropriate** - assessing apprenticeships for new starters and to upskill existing staff from the fire specific or generic standards available.
- **Identify the gaps** in existing apprenticeship frameworks and standards, and form a plan to develop new apprenticeships where there is a need
- **Align apprenticeships to career pathways** – we will consider where apprenticeships can be aligned to our career pathways, to enable new and existing staff to progress their career with the fire and rescue service.
- **Look to collaborate where we can** – to ensure we understand what we need to do at different levels, working centrally, regionally and locally.
- **Look to partners** to explore the potential of using what exists in other sectors or the potential for collaboration on anything new.

DRAFT