

Update on Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority Apprenticeship Programme

Apprenticeship Training Agency:

As part of the approval of the Authority's apprenticeship programme in 2015, members opted to use the Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA) model for the recruitment of our apprentices.

The ATA is an employment agency for apprentices, which directly employs and manages individuals who undertake their apprenticeship whilst being placed into the workplace.

The flexibility of the ATA model means the Authority has a continuous talent pipeline being developed, and can decide at the end of the apprenticeship programme if the establishment can offer full time, substantive positions to the apprentices.

Our ATA is Encompass Select. The contract commenced in April 2016 and lasts for four years, with an optional one year extension.

As part of the development of the relationship with Encompass, it was identified that some dedicated resource was required to undertake learner progress reviews, apprentice and line management support visits, the necessary checks to meet funding requirements, and to provide welfare to the apprentices on station and in their various departments. A member of staff from the Authority's learning and development team has been seconded to Encompass to undertake this role on an initial one year contract. This support function has proven invaluable in the progress being made by the apprentices.

Current Establishment:

The original apprenticeship paper which went to the Executive Committee meeting on 29 July 2015, set out a three year Firefighter (FF) apprenticeship recruitment programme, recruiting 10 FFs per year. Based on workforce planning data, during the initial recruitment campaign it was identified that front loading in the first year would help meet future resource requirements and, therefore, 22 FFs were recruited during that first campaign.

New Apprentice Recruitment			
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
ICT		1	
Business Administration	2	3	
Workshops	1		
Firefighters	22	12	14
TOTAL	25	16	14
Leavers	4		

The total number of apprentices (including support services) compared to total headcount is currently 11%.

The recruitment of the most recent cohort of new apprentices was managed in-house through social media. This has been costed at £41.36 per applicant, compared to £649.28 per applicant previously when using a recruitment agency. This was accompanied by a 13.5 percentage increase in the number of applications received.

Leadership & Management Apprenticeships:

From June – September 2017, the Service piloted an Aspiring Leaders Pathway (ALP); a new personal development process which all staff were invited to apply for. This process assisted in identifying future leaders, replenished the development pools for promotional purposes, produced personal development plans which will aid each individual's development and signposted a range of additional opportunities including lateral moves and secondments.

In addition, one of the proposed outcomes from the ALP was that a number of staff members would be identified and offered the opportunity to pilot a Management Apprenticeship Programme, with the aim of having apprenticeships embedded across all levels within the organisation.

Management Apprenticeships blend leadership and management theory with on-the-job training to develop staff, which has a real and immediate impact.

There are five levels of Management Apprenticeships standards:

Level	Standard
3	Team Leader/Supervisor
4	Associate Project Manager
5	Operations/Departmental Manager
6	Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship
7	Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship

The Service is able to draw down funding from its levy (up to a cap which will depend upon the standard that is being trained against) to cover the costs of training, including English and Maths (if the individual doesn't already possess these), assessment and certification.

A growth bid of £60,000 was approved by members on 24 October 2016 to prepare for the introduction of the levy, and details of how it will be utilised and re-invested back into the Authority are below.

The current costs for the varying levels of Management Apprenticeships are:

Sector	Apprenticeship Standard	Level	Funding band maximum
Leadership & Management	Senior Leader Master's	7	£18,000
Leadership & Management	Chartered Manager	6	£27,000
Leadership & Management	Operations/Departmental Manager	5	£ 9,000
Leadership & Management	Team Leader/Supervisor	3	£ 5,000

The government has committed to top up an organisation's "levy pot" by funding any apprenticeships procured over and above their levy by 90 per cent, meaning the Authority will only need to fund the other 10 per cent if it spends more than the required levy.

The indicative costings to run a pilot Management Apprenticeship Programme require a tender process to be commissioned. This is due to the value of the contract that would be awarded to the Training Provider delivering the apprenticeship programme. Following the tender and appointment of Bucks College Group as the chosen training provider, the programme is due to commence in September 2018.

Notable changes to the Authority's apprenticeship programmes:

Since the 2016/17 recruitment, evaluations have taken place and a number of changes made to the recruitment processes. These changes have been implemented in an attempt to reduce the number of leavers, increase the number of applications, and ensure equality across the programmes we deliver.

This work is ongoing, and we are looking at ways to further improve the diversity of our applicants.

Driving Licence & Postcode Restriction:

To encourage applications from the local community, for the last two FF recruitments, we applied a postcode restriction that applicants must live within 20 miles of the border of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Training Agreements:

During 2018/19, we will be reviewing the option of introducing a training agreement for future apprenticeship recruitment, which will allow the Service to re-coup some of the funds invested in an individual should they leave to join another Fire and Rescue Service within a certain timescale. The training agreement is common practice across the Authority when investing in staff for other training costs, and so it is proposed that this is also considered for

apprenticeship training as the Authority funds the full cost of initial Firefighter training at the Fire Service College – circa £5k per person.

Collaboration Opportunities:

A current priority relevant to this update is to determine a collaborative approach to firefighter and apprenticeships recruitment across the three Thames Valley Fire Services.

Royal Berkshire are named on this Service's contract with the Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA). Therefore, if they wanted to recruit apprentices using the ATA model, they could do so with our provider and without having to go out to tender.

In addition, we approached both Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire to be named on the tender document for the provider of the management apprenticeship programme.

We have been heavily influential in the fire sector-specific trailblazer developments, working with other services, agencies and employers from the sector.

Scoping meetings have been held with Thames Valley Police, local colleges and other groups to improve networking and establish ways to improve the diversity of our applicants to all apprenticeship positions.

National Apprenticeship Week 2018

National Apprenticeship Week 2018 involved a vast amount of activity for the Authority, to promote awareness within the Community regarding apprenticeship careers across the Fire and Rescue Service, and this is detailed in Appendix 3.

On 19 April 2018, the Authority won a Public Sector Personnel Management Association (PPMA) Excellence in People Management Award in the category of "The Best Value Recruitment Campaign" for our 2016 apprenticeship recruitment. This was the result of a lot of hard work by the People & Organisational Development team to deliver a complex campaign against tight deadline. This category had the highest number of excellent nominees within it, and so to win is a real honour, and deserved recognition for the Authority and all staff.