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

**1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022**

**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 at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts** over the period **1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022.**

Although the target period is 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022, public bodies must report their progress in meeting the target. The target period is divided into reporting periods lasting a year each.

**Ashford Borough Council is pleased to publish progress made in the reporting period of 01.04.2021 to 31.03.2022**

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| **Data Period** | **1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022** |
| **Figure A -** The number of employees whose employment in England by the body (ABC) began in the reporting period in question. | **118** | **114.53 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.  | **5** | **4.95 FTE** |
| **Figure C -** The number of employees employed at the end of that period **31.03.2022** | **549** | **509.29** |
| **Figure D -** The number of apprentices who work for the body at the end of that period. **31.03.22.** | **10** | **10** |
| **Figure E -** Figure B expressed as a percentage of Figure A | **4.24%** | **4.32%** |
| **Figure F -** Figure D expressed as a percentage of Figure C. | **1.82%** | **1.96** |
| **Figure G -** The number of apprentices who worked for the body immediately before that period (31.03.21) | **5** | **4.89 FTE** |
| **Figure H -** Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period. – 31.03.2021 | **502** | **454.30** |
| **Figure I -** Figure B expressed as a % of Figure H. | **1.0%** | **1.08%** |

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**Section 2 – Apprenticeship Activity Return 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022**

**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 2017-2022 review period. A small number of apprenticeships commenced in this period in Housing and in Planning and Development. In addition within this reporting period we increased our establishment by 25% in order to meet the government’s target of developing a new Border Control Facility within the borough.  |
| **Tell us about any challenges you have faced in your efforts to meet the target** |
| We did not achieve what we set out to in this period as our focus understandably shifted to supporting residents in our community during the pandemic.With the majority of the organisation working from home throughout the 3 lockdown periods it was also challenging during 2021 to set up a model to support and mentor apprentices remotely. |
| **How are you planning to ensure you meet the target in future** |
| We are pleased that since April 2022 we have started a total of 7 apprenticeship starts. 4 of these are new employees on graduate level apprenticeship schemes within our planning and finance services. We have a module agreed to recruit to these on a 3 year rolling programme. 1 apprenticeship in our Port Health service, 1 in our Housing service and one we have transferred over from another authority.  |
| **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 plus 0.20 pence per hour which is a higher rate than the statutory Apprenticeship rate of pay. This has included an increase of our contribution, of 0.5 pence per hour in last year’s wage. |