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

**1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018**

**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 first reporting period.**

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| **Data Period** | **1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018** |
| **Figure A -** The number of employees whose employment in England by the body (ABC) began in the reporting period in question. | 65 total number  | 60.1 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. | **7** | **6.7** |
| **Figure C -** The number of employees employed in England that the body has at the end of that period **31.03.18.** | 461 | 417.2 FTE |
| **Figure D -** The number of apprentices who work for the body at the end of that period. **31.03.18.** | 9  | 8.7 FTE |
| **Figure E -** Figure B expressed as a percentage of Figure A**B/A x 100** | **10.8%** | **11.1%** |
| **Figure F -** Figure D expressed as a percentage of Figure C.D / C x 100 | **1.95%** | **2.08%** |
| **Figure G -** The number of apprentices who worked for the body immediately before that period (31.03.17) | 8 | 7.7 |
| **Figure H -** Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period. – 31.03.2017 | 446 | 401.6 |
| **Figure I -** Figure B expressed as a % of Figure H.B/H x 100 | **1.56%** | **1.66%** |

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**Section 2 – Apprenticeship Activity Return 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018**

**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 on employing an average of at least 2.3% of our employees as new apprentice starts over the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2021. Although we have not met this overall objective yet we believe that we are on track to meet this target.We have achieved what we set out to do in 2017 to 2018, namely to implement and embed the arrangements for the levy payment and extend the usage of apprenticeships at a higher level across the organisation.We were pleased to introduce a new level four qualification in May 2017 the Public Relations and Communications Apprenticeship (level 4).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 eight apprentices who were employed at 31st March 2017, four 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 four apprentices on a two or more yearlong apprenticeship programme and 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 reduced.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) but this is a longer term project which has not come to fruition. |
| **How are you planning to ensure you meet the target in future** |
| Further work is planned to consider how we can increase our apprentice numbers whilst also providing meaningful work opportunities to help the individual achieve their qualification. These objectives were built into our service plans for 2017/18 and 2018/19 and we will continue to have regard to the target in our 2019/2020 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. Our Apprenticeship Wage Allowance is greater than the statutory Apprentice Wage rate. Currently we pay apprentices the age appropriate National Minimum Wage plus 15 pence per hour (under 18 - £4.35, 18-20 - £6.05, 21-24 - £7.53, over 25 - £7.98) rather than the Apprentice National Minimum wage £3.70 per hour). |