



APPRENTICESHIP STRATEGY

2022-2026



'APPRENTICESHIP FIRST'

An Approach which supports our Workforce Planning,
Workforce Development and Succession Planning
Arrangements



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Introduction

our priorities, set out within our People Plan 2022-2026, is to:

‘Ensure that we have the right number of people and leaders with the right skills, values, and behaviours; in the right place at the right time, to deliver our organisational objectives.’

To help us achieve this, we are committed to the continued expansion of the use of apprenticeships as part of our approach to workforce planning, workforce development and succession planning.

Creating a workforce which is resilient and resourceful can only be achieved if we have a highly trained, engaged and flexible workforce and can continue to attract and retain the very best talent. We understand that apprenticeships can make a positive contribution to achieving that workforce by creating opportunities for people of all ages, to undertake relevant qualifications and/or re-training.

As a public sector organisation, we have a responsibility in helping to create these opportunities both as an employer and as a strategic leader in the community. The introduction of the apprenticeship levy, sought to provide the means to fund skills development across a broader range of sectors and skills.

Adopting a more strategic approach as to how we attract, retain and develop our workforce to meet our communities’ needs both now and in the future is vital. We believe apprenticeships are an integral part of this.

For us, this means that we have now included the use of apprenticeships not just as a development tool, but also a recruitment tool and as such forms part of our workforce planning, workforce development and succession planning arrangements.

Our ‘Apprenticeship First’ approach aims to support our decision making i.e.:

- **Workforce Planning** : Is a vacancy suitable for recruiting an Apprentice?
- **Workforce Development** : Is an Apprenticeship suitable to meet the needs within a development programme for existing staff moving to new role? (upwards or sideways moves)
- **Succession Planning** : Is a potential future vacancy an opportunity to invest in an Apprentice? (post over establishment and with no guarantee of employment by the Brigade at the end of the apprenticeship)



This document sets out our objectives to implement and embed the use of apprenticeships in our workforce arrangements. It is intended to be a dynamic document and as such, will be reviewed regularly so that we can respond to any local or national changes.

Strategy Aims

1) Use Apprenticeships to improve our recruitment offer

We will:

- develop new-entry level apprenticeship opportunities
- consider all vacant posts for re-signation as apprenticeships
- advertise posts, where applicable, as Apprenticeship programmes
- promote attainment of nationally recognised qualifications
- promote benefits of undertaking an apprenticeship with Cleveland Fire Brigade
- identify career pathways opportunities

2) Use 'Apprenticeship First' approach in workforce planning, workforce development and succession planning arrangements:

We will:

- maximise the use of apprenticeships to help build the skills and capabilities we require
- work with managers to map apprenticeships to critical skills and specialist posts
- identify the use of apprenticeships within our workforce and succession planning arrangements
- continue to use apprenticeships for 'in role' development e.g., leadership and management apprenticeships to develop our future leaders (supervisory, middle, and strategic)

3) Expand the use of apprenticeships in the roles of Wholetime Firefighter, Heavy Goods Vehicle Mechanics and Fire Engineering (2023-2026)

We will:

- work with an approved training provider to deliver an apprenticeship programme aligned to the apprenticeship criteria and to meet the role requirements as identified by the Brigade
- monitor capacity and provide support to those managers/teams which have an apprentice (new entrant or new to role)

4) Maximise the use of the Apprenticeship Levy funds as part of the annual training needs analysis

We will:

- continue to develop robust workforce plans which consider the use of levy funds to meet current and future skills needs
- seek advice from approved training providers to map our training priorities to apprenticeship standards and levy
- where required, use Government levy support scheme to meet any shortfall in the Brigades levy funds
- continue to work towards the Brigade becoming an approved 'Employer provider' which will reduce the amount spent from the levy to external training providers

Context

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a job with training, but the training must provide new skills and not just validate existing skills - it must push the learner on, it must progress them, it must build their overall skill level by the end of the apprenticeship significantly from where it was when they started. Some of the training must take place 'off the job' which has been set at 20% of the time that the apprentice works.

Part of the apprenticeship requirements includes English and Maths. Each standard will set out a minimum standard to be achieved in order for the apprenticeship to be completed - if the apprentice has not reached that level of qualification in these subjects, then the apprenticeship training must build this in and will usually be achieved through functional skills assessment undertaken by an approved training provider.

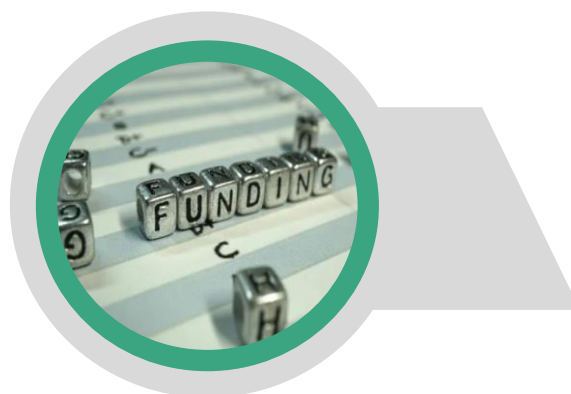
Currently there are over 500 different apprenticeships and at various levels; all of which have been developed in consultation with employers.

Each apprenticeship standard has a 'financial value.' There is a series of price bands for delivery of the various levels of these programmes starting at £1,500 per head and rising through 14 bands to £27,000 per head for Level 6 (Degree level) and above.

Driven by an ambition to address the shortages in skills, the UK Government introduced significant changes to the way in which apprenticeships are funded and delivered.

In 2017 an 'Apprenticeship Levy' was introduced by the Government, as part of the reform of apprenticeships. The levy requires employers with a wage bill in excess of £3m per annum, or who employ 250 staff or more to pay 0.5% of their annual pay bill into a levy on a monthly basis (calculated on number on wage bill each month).

For us in Cleveland Fire Brigade, this means that we must pay on average £5,840 per month into our 'levy pot' which we can then use to pay our apprenticeship training costs. (In year 21/22 a total of £71,710 was paid into the levy by the Brigade).



To encourage employers to engage in apprenticeships, the government puts an additional 10% on top of whatever the employer's levy contribution is. It is quite possible therefore for us to spend more than we pay in.

It is important to remember that the levy funds can only be used for development and training. The cost of salaries and any associated costs which support the delivery of apprenticeships will have to be funded by the Brigade.

In addition to levy payments, as a public sector organisation, Cleveland Fire Authority is required to comply with 'The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets (Amendment) Regulations 2021'. The regulations, originally released in 2017, were made under powers conferred by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

These regulations require all public sector bodies to publish their progress against the public sector target of 2.3% of the workforce being engaged in an apprenticeship programme. The number of apprentices and evidence to demonstrate continuous improvement in the recruitment of apprentices must be submitted on an annual basis to the Department for Education.

The Government considers the duty to 'have due regard' to the target to mean that in making workforce planning decisions, public bodies should actively consider apprenticeships, either for new entrants or as part of career development for existing employees. Organisations are also required to make their apprenticeship figures available to the public and recommend data is published on external facing website. The target for the fire and rescue service is to see four thousand staff follow an apprenticeship by 2022. This figure also equates to 2.3% of the workforce in the English Fire and Rescue Service. Currently, our Brigade is exceeding this target and as at September 2022 figures indicate that **3.36%** of our workforce are on approved apprenticeship programmes and we predicted this to rise to 6.17% by end March 2023.

From April 2022, the mandatory target set for public service employers was removed however, there is still the expectation that organisations will continue to gather and report on apprenticeship data. This seeks to demonstrate that the public sector is continuing to increase its commitment to apprenticeships. To drive focus and promote the identification and sharing of good practice across all sectors, the Department for Education will continue to publish data on an annual basis on all new apprenticeship starts, total numbers of apprentices against organisation headcounts. It is our intention to continue to monitor and report on our progress with regards to the use of apprenticeships through our performance management arrangements.



Governance and Assurance

Under our current arrangements with training of apprentices being solely undertaken by a training provider, we have only been required to register as a 'supporting provider' on the Governments 'Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP)'. This is a record of organisations that are eligible to receive government funding to train apprentices, and organisations can join if they are a training provider or a levy paying employer.

Our future ambition is to become an 'Employer provider' for the delivery of Firefighting Apprenticeship which means that we can train and deliver all aspects

of an apprenticeship programme in-house. As a levy-paying employer and an apprenticeship training provider, we will be subject to external scrutiny from approved agencies. This is to ensure we are using apprenticeship funding within the governing rules and that the training we provide meets the required quality teaching standards.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will monitor data to review how we are operating the funding system and managing funding claimed for apprenticeships, as well as ensuring the programme aligns to the required criteria and enables learners to be successful in meeting the apprenticeship standard.

In addition, all our training instructors hold relevant teaching, assessor, and instructor qualifications and as such are subject to external verification through the various awarding bodies.

Equality and Diversity

As an inclusive employer, we are committed to ensuring that we offer equal opportunities into employment. Every employee regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or belief, will be afforded the same access to development opportunities to ensure that they can fulfil their potential.

A specific Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken as part of the development of this strategy.

Our values and ethical behaviours underpin all that we do. We believe that by living them every minute of every day and demonstrating them, we can all contribute to developing our 'one vision, one team' approach and creating a constructive and supportive working culture that makes Cleveland Fire Brigade

..... a great place to work



Meeting current and future skills needs

It is important that the number of apprentices we have is aligned to our future skills needs and not just driven by the need to meet Government targets.

Apprenticeships can support our current and future workforce needs as they offer a wide range of career opportunities for all ages. We know we have an aging workforce and so adopting a more strategic approach to 'growing our own' will form a key part of our workforce and succession planning arrangements. Whilst we want people to work for us and stay with us throughout their career, we also are committed to the investment in our people which enables greater social mobility.

Apprenticeships can offer a vast range of benefits which include:

- Nurturing and growing our own talent
- Widening participation and access across the workforce
- Providing clear pathways to recognised qualifications
- Maximising return on investment from the Apprenticeship levy
- Enhancing our reputation as an 'Employer of Choice'

According to the National Apprenticeship Service, around 96% of employers surveyed had experienced benefits from employing an apprentice. 74% said apprentices had improved their product, 78% of employers said they had improved productivity, 85%

86% of employers said apprenticeships helped them develop skills relevant to their organisation, according to the National Apprenticeships Service. 78% said apprenticeships improved productivity. Apprenticeships contribute towards increasing employee satisfaction, reducing staff turnover, and reducing recruitment costs.

“Training your employees and growing your own talent is the most effective way to retain great people”

(Source: National Apprenticeship Service)

Adopting a more strategic approach to 'growing our own' future workforce will become increasingly important if we are to ensure we have the capacity and capabilities we need. Providing opportunities for existing staff to use apprenticeships, particularly higher-level apprenticeships, to gain skills and progress their career will further help to develop talent pipelines within the organisation.



Moving forward

said apprentices had helped to develop skills, and 73% said it had boosted staff morale.

Our apprenticeship strategy needs to be sustainable for the future. Importantly it will integrate apprenticeships as a fixed term opportunity for core training and development route for new starters in both operational and corporate roles (where appropriate) and 'internal movers' i.e., part of promotion development or career change.

We want to adopt an '**Apprenticeship First Approach**,' which will enable the brigade to adopt a strategic and long-term approach to accelerate apprenticeship recruitment and maximise levy spend i.e.:

- **Workforce Planning** : Is a vacancy suitable for recruiting an Apprentice?
- **Workforce Development** : Is an Apprenticeship suitable to meet the needs within a development programme for existing staff moving to new role? (upwards or sideways moves)
- **Succession Planning** : Is a potential future vacancy an opportunity to invest in an Apprentice? (post over establishment and with no guarantee of employment by the Brigade at the end of the apprenticeship)

An 'Apprenticeship First' approach does not mean that every vacancy or staff training programme will be an apprenticeship. This requires all managers to consider whether a vacancy can be offered as an apprenticeship opportunity.

It also requires all managers seeking to authorise staff training as part of

continuing development to consider whether it can be delivered via the use of an apprenticeship programme.

As part of our preparation arrangements for expanding apprenticeships, we will need to establish robust arrangements with regards to candidate support for on and off job training; support for line managers of an apprentice, as well as developing robust monitoring arrangements e.g., monthly financial checks which will be needed to inform decisions regarding affordability of an apprenticeship based on available funds, and performance indicators to enable monitoring of our performance against Government target for number of Apprentices employed.



Year 2022/23

In the first year of this strategy, we continue to deliver apprenticeships in leadership and management (all levels) as part of our core learning pathways for supervisory, middle and strategic management development routes. (aligned to NFCC 'Core Learning Pathways'), in addition to continuing to deliver an apprenticeship in fitness as part of our Health and Wellbeing arrangements.

To date, we have used the following Apprenticeships as a development route for existing staff (moving upwards or an additional skill):

- **Exercise and Fitness Level 2**

Delivered to 17 staff from across the Brigade who expressed an interest to become a Station Based Fitness Advisor. The value of this apprenticeship is £1,940 per candidate.

- **Team Leader Level 3**

Delivered to 14 Crew/Watch Manager and Corporate equivalent staff as part of their promotion development programme. The value of this apprenticeship is £4,500 per candidate.

- **Operations Manager Level 5**

Delivered to 16 Station Manager and Corporate equivalent staff as part of their promotion development programme. The value of this apprenticeship is £7,000 per candidate.

- **Chartered Manager (Degree) Level 6**

Delivered to 2 Group Managers as part of their promotion development programme. The value of this apprenticeship is £22,000 per candidate

Year 2024-2026

- **Senior Leader (Master's Degree) Level 7**

One Area Manager (due to commence Jan 2023) as part of their promotion development programme. The value of this apprenticeship is £14,000.

Apprenticeship Levy Funds of Sept 2022

Current funds	£152,864
Funds spent to date	£41,900
Estimated planned spending for the next 12 months	£72,160
Estimated funds entering into levy for the next 12 months	£76,270

The Brigade can view and download a summary and individual transactions per month or for a specific period. This enables us to forecast the funding available more accurately at any point in time.

The Head of Finance & Procurement currently reports the financial position of the levy as part of the annual Statement of Accounts, this involves a reconciliation of:

- employer levy including 10% Government top-up
- training provider claims
- expired levy funds
- transfer balances (if this option is taken up)

The Brigade's Training Department are responsible for monitoring the account to ensure that the training providers appointed to deliver the programmes are making claims from the levy in accordance with the contract i.e timescales for claims and amount per candidate.

Our workforce development, workforce planning and succession planning

arrangements have identified three roles as our focus commencing 2023.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:

Fire Safety Engineer (Level 6)

Anticipated to be delivered commencing January 2023:

- Levy funding available is £27,000 per candidate
- Duration: 60 months
- Requirement to hold or complete L2 Maths and English
- Programme is identified as a requirement within the Fire Safety Competency Framework which has been adopted by the Bridge
- Delivered through procurement of services from external training provider; block release required (Currently only Birmingham City university approved on Register of Approved Training providers (RoTAP))
- As this apprenticeship is part of a development programme for existing staff, pay rates will be in line with the candidates existing salary aligned to their post.

Part of development programme for a Station manager within department (Grey book) but also links to longer term succession planning



WORKFORCE PLANNING:

Operational Firefighter (W/T) Level 3

Anticipated to be delivered commencing June 2023:

- Levy funding available is £14,000 per candidate
Duration: 30 months (approx.)
Requirement to hold or complete L2 Maths and English
- Programme based on 14 modules (aligned to current NJC Role Map)
- Delivered through procurement of services from external training provider; Brigade delivering first 12 weeks (as per current Trainee Phase I course)

These will be people recruited into existing vacancies as Apprentices (16 per cohort of the next 3 years)

SUCCESSION PLANNING:

Heavy Vehicle Service and Maintenance (Level 3)

Anticipated to be delivered early 2023:

- Levy funding available is £15,000 per candidate
- Duration: 36 months (approx.)
- Requirement to hold or complete L2 Maths and English
- Delivered through procurement of services from external training provider; apprentice to attend off site

These will be two people recruited as part of succession planning and will be over-establishment requirements, and no guarantee of job with the Brigade on completion (subject to existing post holder status)

Paying Apprentices

For all apprentices who undertake an apprenticeship as part of their career development, then pay will continue to be paid at the level relevant to their post.

For all new entrants, we are responsible for paying the apprentice for their normal working hours and any training they do as part of the apprenticeship. We must pay at least the National Minimum Wage rate depending on their age and the year of apprenticeship training they are in.

The rates as of April 2022 are:

Apprentice	Under 19	19 to 20	21 to 22	23 and over
In 1st year	£4.81	£4.81	£4.81	£4.81
Have completed 1st year	£4.81	£6.83	£9.18	£9.50

In determining pay rates, the Brigade has used existing pay rates for new entrants, at both operational and corporate staff, to establish fair rates of pay which are in line or exceed the Government's suggested salaries.

Operate staff (regardless of age)	Rates
In line with National Living Wage April 2022	£9.50
In 2 nd year	£14.26
In line with development rate of the appropriate role being undertaken (e.g., Grade F Development)	
On completion of final assessment	£15.60
In line with competent rate of the appropriate role being undertaken (e.g., Grade F Competent)	

Operational Firefighter (Wholetime) at entry level:

Operational Staff (regardless of age)	Rates
First 12 weeks training programme	£11.05
In line with our Firefighter Trainee rate	
Week 13 to week 104	£11.51
In line with our Firefighter Development rate	
Evidence of competency through assessment at week *or beyond	£14.72
In line with our Firefighter Competent rate	

NB: Pay rates illustrated are as at 2021/22



Corporate Roles at entry level:

How it will work



IDENTIFICATION

Where a vacancy is identified to fill a vacant post or as part of succession planning:

- managers to consider whether a vacancy can be an apprenticeship

4

'Requisition' completed
suitability and details of
apprenticeship programme

- Head of Finance & Procurement to confirm if levy funds are available (or approval for investment where role is over establishment)
- Assistant Chief Fire Officer Strategic Planning & Resources to approve vacancy for recruitment, or to recruit over establishment

2

ATTRACTION

Advert must include:

- exact title of apprenticeship programme and level
- the training provider details
- duration of the apprenticeship programme
- working hours/training hours and locations
- hourly rate of pay during apprenticeship training
- if position is substantive vacancy or for the duration of the programme

3

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment will follow existing recruitment and selection processes regardless of whether vacancy is for apprenticeship or not.

ENROLMENT

Training department will be responsible for:

- gathering required evidence from apprentices to support registration e.g., Maths and English qualifications to meet key skills requirement
- registering apprentices

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DELIVERY

Training department will be responsible for:

- liaising with training provider
- informing apprentice of programme requirements
- providing/directing to all resources to support programme
- delivering relevant aspect of programme e.g., initial 12 week programme for Firefighter Apprentices

6

END POINT ASSESSMENT

Training department will be responsible for:

- liaising with relevant training provider regarding content and timing
- work with training provider to develop mock assessments/ final assessment
- re-arrange any re-sit if apprentice fails (only one resit allowed)

After the End Point Assessment (EPA)

Successful Candidates:

What happens next

If the apprentice successfully completes their apprenticeship, which includes if they needed to complete Maths and English key skills and all End point Assessment criteria, the apprentice will be awarded with a Certificate of Achievement (this will be automatically claimed for by the provider conducting the EPA).

Their certificate will be presented to them by the Chief Fire Officer as part of the Brigade's 'Reward and Recognition' arrangements.

The apprentice will also be able to be deemed 'competent in role' and as such will be eligible for competent rate of pay and now continue to maintain their skills and knowledge as part of 'maintenance phase.'

Unsuccessful Candidates:

Where an apprentice has failed to meet the apprenticeship programme criteria, then Training Department will be responsible for working with the training provider/end point Assessor to arrange a re-sit. (Only one re-sit is allowed).

If the Brigade do not agree with the outcomes of the EPA, then the Training department manage the process for lodging a formal appeal.

The Brigade will ensure that full support is provided to the individual to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. There may be occasion when an individual has been unsuccessful in demonstrating the criteria to meet the apprenticeship requirements. In that instance, then the Brigade will make a judgement on the individual's suitability for continued employment by a review of all evidence of the individual's performance throughout the development period, and if required, this will then be progressed through the Brigades 'Capability Policy'.



Apprenticeship Strategy Delivery Plan

Action 1): Use Apprenticeships to improve our recruitment offer

Action 2): Use 'Apprenticeship First' approach in workforce planning, workforce development and succession planning arrangements

ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	PROGRESS
Embed apprenticeships into workforce and succession planning arrangements	SHoP	March 2026	
Map apprenticeship standards to roles	HHR	March 2024	
Engage with all departments to identify apprenticeship opportunities for new and existing roles	SHoP/HHR	March 2023	
Promote apprenticeships within appropriate recruitment campaigns, and all recruitment resources e.g., social media, internet etc	HHR	Jan 2023	
Continue to use apprenticeships as part of development programmes for future leaders	ShoP/HT&A	Dec 2022	

Action 3): Deliver Firefighter, Heavy Goods Vehicle Mechanic, and Fire engineering apprenticeship programmes

ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	PROGRESS
Work with procurement team to create procurement process to make selection of training providers simple and effective	HT&A	Dec 2022	
Work with providers to identify, develop and deliver suitable programme from entry through to competent Firefighter status, Mechanic, Fire Engineer	HT&A/Head of Dept	Sept 2023	
Agree with the training provider those aspects of the apprenticeship which the Brigade will deliver to ensure employees are trained appropriately in core skills e.g., Firefighter Phase I	HT&A/Head of Dept	Sept 2023	
Build into the programme key stages so that progress is monitored and managed which supports individuals to be able to achieve competence in role	HT&A/Head of Dept	Sept 2023	
Ensure that the Brigade continues to be registered on the 'Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers – as a' Supporting provider'	HT&A	March 2023	
Work towards the Brigade becoming an 'Employer Provider' on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers	HT&A	March 2026	

Action 4): Maximise the use of the Apprenticeship levy funds as part of the annual training needs analysis

ACTION	LEAD	TIMESCALE	PROGRESS
Develop an 'Apprenticeship Levy' monitoring tool so that tracking of available levy funds is immediately available	HF&P	April 2023	
Establish a system for the monitoring and reporting of the use of the levy, as part of workforce planning and training needs analysis	HT&A	Feb 2023	
Establish performance indicators to monitor the number of apprentices aligned to government minimum target	SHoP/HR&P	Feb 2023	
Establish the process for accessing additional levy funds to meet any shortfalls in the Brigades levy fund	HF&P	Dec 2022	





September 2022