**Government Apprenticeship Reporting – 2021 / 2022**

**Reporting Period**

1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Organisation

Organisation Name: Sefton Council

**Number of Employees who work in England**

Number of employees who were working in England on 31 March 2021 5890

Number of employees who were working in England on 31 March 2022 5966

Number of new employees who started working for you in England between 1 April

2021 and 31 March 2022 824

**Number of Apprentices who work in England**

Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2021 170

Number of apprentices who were working in England on 31 March 2022 148

Number of new apprentices in England between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 59

**Reporting Percentages**

Percentage of apprenticeship starts (both new hires and existing employees who

Started an apprenticeship) as a proportion of employment starts between 1 April

2021 to 31 March 2022 7.16%

Percentage of total headcount that were apprentices on 31 March 2022 2.48%

Percentage of apprenticeship starts (both new hires and existing employees

Who started an apprenticeship) between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 as a

Proportion of total headcount on 31 March 2022 1.00%

The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017 introduced a target for all public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England to employ an average of 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts over the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021. As one such organisation Sefton Council believe in the value of apprenticeships and the opportunities for skills development, employment progression and social mobility they provide, and as such we are fully committed to delivering our cumulative target by March 2021.

We are working both as an organisation and collaboratively with the 5 other Local Authorities within the Liverpool City Region and the Combined Authority to implement effective apprenticeship strategies across the city region for the benefit of our employees, the wider community and local businesses.

**Questions**

**1. What actions have you taken this year to meet the target? How do these compare to the challenges experienced in the previous year?**

The Corporate Apprenticeship Team have undertaken the following tasks to support the Council to achieve the 2.3% Public Sector Target:

* Recruited new apprentices within various departments across the Council and actively engaged the workforce to promote apprenticeship qualifications.
* Actively targeted Assistant Directors by attending Departmental Managers Meetings to raise awareness of either recruiting a new apprentice or to identify staff conversions.
* Held Briefing sessions for existing workforce – lunch-time events with flyers, supported by Training Providers.
* Held Elected Members Meet & Greet events to showcase an apprentice’s journey with Sefton Council.
* Created and circulated flyers to schools to promote apprenticeships for existing staff.
* Further information on apprenticeship training is available on the Council’s intranet pages.
* Active promotions during National Apprenticeship Week and Learning at work week.
* Attendance at Primary school bursar meetings and School Head Teachers meetings to reinforce apprenticeship opportunities.
* Targeted schools on an individual basis to raise awareness of apprenticeships.
* Identified a budget for departments to access for apprenticeship salaries.
* We are working both as an organisation and collaboratively with the 5 other Local Authorities within the Liverpool City Region and the Combined Authority to implement effective apprentice strategies across the city region for the benefit of our employees, the wider community and local businesses.
* Worked with Corporate Communications to continue the high profile of Apprenticeship and Skills in the organisation.
* Reported through the Learning & Development Board as to progress around actions.
* Attended the Local Government Association Apprenticeship Action Group sessions to share skills, knowledge, expertise and learning from others. This included solutions to engage and retain apprentices with a particular focus on school engagement.

**2. What challenges have you faced this year in your efforts to meet the target? How do these compare to the challenges experienced in the previous year?**

The Council has experienced many ongoing challenges since the introduction of the levy. Some of which have not changed and have become more problematic. Covid-19 has also had an impact on the recruitment of apprentices due to lockdowns and home working. These are:

* The Council has taken the decision to utilise the YPO portal to identify Training Providers, Colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who can deliver the required standards. Procurement is still a challenge because of the amount of newly approved standards available. This is a national issue.
* Due to the ongoing reduction of funding from Central Government the Council is working within a reduced financial framework.
* We are balancing focusing on more of the existing workforce which in turn is having an impact on their capacity and resources available within the Council. There is a considerable amount of work involved in ensuring a successful programme at all levels.
* Schools are facing funding issues which has a funding which has meant some schools have not been able to utilise the levy.
* It would be helpful if we could use part of the levy to pay for salaries given the need to make further budget reductions.
* 20% off the job training – this is sometimes a cause for concern to departments in the ability to meet this requirement due to lack of resources available.
* Home working has impacted on the recruitment of apprentices – many managers were working from home during the pandemic which created a number of challenges. These included induction, training, ongoing supervision and daily management tasks.
* Training providers moved to online delivery which caused some issues with ICT for example, the lack of cameras and microphones to enable online engagement with assessors and other scheduled workshops.
* Face to face visits were not carried out with apprentices and were moved to online support via Zoom and MS Teams. For some learners this presented some challenges as they found this transition difficult.
* A full time working from home environment wasn’t suitable for all apprentices. Living alone, living at home with family members or working within a confined space presented some challenges for apprentices in terms of their Mental Health and Wellbeing. Support was put in place to signpost apprentices to the relevant support services and permission was sought for office time to alleviate some of these issues.
* Training providers, colleges and EPAOs were unable to attend workplaces and carry out training and EPAs. This led to contracts being extended and financial implications on the Council’s apprenticeship salaries budget, therefore this led to further restrictions on recruitment.

**3. How are you planning to meet the target in future? What will you continue to do or do differently?**

The Council will continue to do its upmost to recruit apprentices and engage the workforce, we will:

* Continue to work closely with Liverpool City Region Local Authorities to share best practice, undertake joint procurement exercises and build cohorts.
* Map out apprenticeship routeways across the Council to support succession planning and workforce development.
* Continue to promote apprenticeship opportunities to our existing workforce.
* To monitor new standards which meet the Council’s Strategic Priorities/2030 Vision to ensure we develop a 21st Century Public Sector workforce.
* To continue implementing our Apprenticeship Strategy which includes our overall approach and how we will increase apprenticeship activity.
* Identify apprenticeship opportunities as part of a workforce planning activity/succession planning
* Actively promote apprenticeships with Assistant Directors/Senior Managers.
* Develop opportunities to utilise higher level apprenticeships in support of skills needs, raising skills and aspirations.
* Continue to support and develop the pathway programme which supports care leavers into apprenticeships.
* Promote and work in partnership with Council Maintained Schools to maximise the levy spend.
* Identify progression routes for apprentices to gain valuable skills and knowledge within Local Government.
* Targeted recruitment within departments to promote new standards such as the Social Work Level 6, Occupational Therapy Level 6, Senior Leader Level 7 (schools specific) and Coaching Level 5 etc.
* Showcase the apprenticeship programme through good news stories, case studies, videos, etc.
* Attend careers/job fairs, skill shows and events which raises awareness of apprenticeships.
* Look at an ‘apprenticeship first’ approach for all vacancies and redeployment opportunities.
* Continue to map in our internal training to the standards.
* Continue our existing good work.

**4. Do you have anything else you want to tell us?**

Apprenticeships within the Council are seen and valued as high-quality pathways to successful careers, providing opportunities for new and existing employees to develop and which assist the Council in meeting its current and future skills needs. Also providing opportunities for existing staff to utilise apprenticeships to gain skills and progress their career will help to develop talent within the organisation. Apprenticeship and Skills are highly valued within the organisation.