

Apprenticeship Strategy for the corporate workforce to April 2021

Nationally, the government is committed to developing vocational skills and increasing the quantity and quality of apprenticeships in England and has committed to an additional 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020. To support this, the government introduced a number of apprenticeship reforms in 2017 which are relevant to Suffolk County Council. The two significant areas of impact were the introduction of government targets for public bodies with more than 250 staff and the apprenticeship levy for organisations with a pay bill in excess of £3m per year.

As a large Local Authority, Suffolk County Council is subject to both the public body target and the apprenticeship levy payments and is committed to embracing the reforms in order to provide, high quality apprenticeship opportunities across the organisation.

Aims

Our aims are to:

- Increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities offered since the reforms were introduced in 2017 and work towards our public body workforce target for apprenticeships.
- Provide accessible entry level opportunities into career pathways across the organisation
- Utilise apprenticeships to develop and upskill existing staff.
- Ensure the range and level of apprenticeships offered are aligned to our priorities and workforce development plans.
- Work with learning providers to ensure a high-quality experience for apprentices we employ that lead to high levels of success rates.
- Use the opportunities around apprenticeships to support wider partnership working.
- Be an ambassador employer in Suffolk for apprenticeships.

How we will do this

In order to achieve our aims, we will:

- Monitor progress against the public body targets and have planned activity around apprenticeships each year.
- Ensure processes are in place to consider every vacancy as an apprenticeship opportunity.
- Incorporate the opportunities of apprenticeships into our learning offer for staff.
- Work with schools and partners to raise aspirations and promote the Council as an employer of choice.
- Work with partners across Suffolk and the wider public sector to look for opportunities to learn from others experience and collaborate on apprenticeship programmes.
- Provide an opportunity for other organisations to apply for a transfer of our apprenticeship levy funds in order to support a wider increase in apprenticeships across the county.
- Ensure we have a clear apprenticeship pay policy in place that relates to the relevant job or career pathway being worked towards.
- Work with organisations and partners who support those who are distanced furthest from the labour market, helping them to address and overcome obstacles to securing suitable and sustainable employment through apprenticeships.

Our Wider Priorities

Apprenticeships form part of the Council's wider aspirational work programmes that also include graduates, interns and work experience, all providing opportunities for young people to access meaningful encounters with the world of work. Apprenticeships also contribute to our wider [organisational plans and priorities](#) in a number of ways.

Priority - Inclusive Growth

Suffolk needs to improve its economic productivity, levels of educational attainment and build more homes, ensuring that everyone benefits, including people who are vulnerable and facing disadvantage

Apprenticeships contribute to this priority by:

- supporting raising aspirations for young people in Suffolk,
- supporting aspirations to increase the number of people with degrees,
- creating entry level opportunities into skilled jobs and career pathways,
- supporting the growth of the apprenticeship provider market in Suffolk, and
- creating solutions to skills shortages that are essential to the growth agenda.

Priority - Health, Care and Wellbeing

Caring for Suffolk's vulnerable residents, enabling everyone to live long, healthy and fulfilling lives is one of our top priorities. Thriving families and communities and thriving economies support each other.

Apprenticeships contribute to this priority by:

- providing more accessible opportunities for care leavers, and
- creating targeted apprenticeship programmes in skill shortage areas in social care.

Priority - Efficient and Effective Public Services

At a time of diminishing resources, increased demand, and changing customer expectations, we need to change the way that we operate to meet our customers' needs and balance our budget.

Apprenticeships can contribute to this priority by:

- contributing to the development of a skilled workforce,
- creating opportunity to increase management and leadership capabilities,
- supporting the development of clear career pathways,
- increasing productivity and innovation, and
- supporting the reduction of skills shortages in the longer term.

Progress against the public body target

Public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England have a target set by Government, to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts over the period of 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021.

While the organisation acknowledges that there are a range of challenges in meeting the target it remains committed to working towards it and progress is shown on the [apprenticeships page](#) of our Jobs and Careers section on www.suffolk.gov.uk.