



Department  
for Education

# **Meeting the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target**

**Statutory guidance for bodies in scope of  
the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target**

**Revised February 2018**

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# Summary

## About this guidance

This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education which accompanies the regulations bringing into effect the Public Sector Apprenticeship Target. Public bodies within scope of those regulations should have regard to this guidance when considering how they have regard to the target and how they report their progress towards meeting the target.

## What legislation does this guidance refer to?

This guidance refers to 'The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017' which were made under powers conferred by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This guidance has been updated to reflect amendments made to these Regulations by the Apprenticeships (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2017, which come into force on 31 March 2018.

## Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for:

- All public bodies in scope of the target; with a few exceptions, all public bodies with 250 or more staff in England as of 31 March in each of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 are within scope.
- This includes schools, local authorities, central government and arms-length bodies, NHS organisations, the armed forces, and emergency services, together with anyone else who may be in scope of the target.

## Main points

- Public sector bodies in scope of the target should appropriately demonstrate in their returns that they have had regard to the target.
- Public sector bodies should provide their returns in line with the reporting arrangements described in this guidance.

## Having regard to the target

Prescribed groups and public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England have a target 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. Bodies in scope must have regard to the target.

The Government considers the duty to ‘have regard’ to the target to mean that, in making workforce planning decisions, public bodies should actively consider apprenticeships, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff. Apprentices are only considered as ‘new apprentices’ who will count towards the target, in the year in which they begin their apprenticeship.

Public bodies should use the Apprenticeship Activity Return (see pages 8-9) to explain how they have had regard to the target. This may include describing actions they have taken to challenge obstacles preventing them from meeting the target, for example:

- a relevant framework or standard is not currently available but the organisation has been involved in developing new standards and has plans for individuals to start on these;
- an organisation has a large number of part time workers whose Full Time Equivalent (FTE) makes it difficult to meet the numbers of apprentices needed and/or due to the number of hours they work are not eligible for apprenticeships. However the employer is taking steps to employ apprenticeships within those roles which are eligible for them. They are also permitted to report FTE alongside headcount in their Data Publication return (see page 7).

The Government would also encourage public bodies that are looking to establish further apprenticeship standards to engage with the Institute for Apprenticeships to establish these.

## Grouped Bodies

Following consultation two groups have been prescribed in the regulations for the purpose of responding to the target. The bodies in these groups are collectively in scope – they are set a single target which covers all bodies in their respective group. These groups are ‘Transport for London and its subsidiaries’ and ‘Government Departments and those bodies listed in Schedule 1 of the Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017’.

There was no clear support in consultation for other groupings. Therefore the target will apply individually to all other bodies in-scope; they will each have an individual apprenticeship target which they must have regard to.

## **What must a public body do to have regard to the target?**

Prescribed groups and in-scope bodies should demonstrate that they have actively considered apprenticeships, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff.

## **Where the target has not been met**

It may be the case that a body believes it has been having regard to the target but yet is failing to meet the target set. As such, all bodies should use the Apprenticeship Activity Return (see pages 8-9) to explain how they have sought to have regard to the target and any factors they feel have hindered their efforts to meet the target. These explanations should be of sufficient detail to evidence the body's actions, in particular by:

- providing evidence which identifies where a body has actively considered apprenticeships, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff;
- identifying where an organisation, in attempting to have regard to the target, has encountered and attempted to overcome challenges in employing apprentices, as outlined in the previous section.

There may also be some circumstances where a body which has not met the target is able to highlight mitigating factors which demonstrate its commitment to apprenticeships, therefore demonstrating that regard has been had to the target. For example:

- an organisation employs a higher proportion of apprentices on two or more year apprenticeship programmes; and,
- an organisation is planning a major recruitment the following year which would bring their average number of apprenticeship starts up to or beyond the target.

## **Interpreting 'ordinarily work' in England**

Regulations identify that an apprentice can only be counted towards the targets if 'they ordinarily work in England.' Whether an apprentice ordinarily works in England is determined by a number of factors, but generally the determining factor is where the apprentice is based. This might be determined by reference to:

- the location in which the apprentice ordinarily starts and ends the day;
- where the apprentice lives.

## Interpreting those in scope

Almost all public bodies with 250 or more staff in England will be in-scope of the target. The number of staff working for a public body is determined by its headcount on 31 March in each of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

A public body with 250 or more staff working for it on any of those dates will be subject to the target for that coming year.

The primary legislation defines a public body as:

- a public authority or;
- a body or other person that is not a public authority but has functions of a public nature and is funded wholly or partly from public funds.

This is with the specific exception of; the BBC, Channel Four, The House of Commons and House of Lords and the Post Office Ltd., as well as all their associated subsidiaries. Also out of scope of the targets are charities, FE colleges, Universities, housing associations, housing trusts, independent schools, and financial bodies which are partly state-owned (such as RBS).

Provided they meet the headcount criteria above, academy trusts and multi academy trusts will come within scope from 31 March 2018. These academy trusts are not required to provide an annual return on progress towards the target for apprenticeship starts between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. They will need to do so for the first time from April 2019, for starts between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019.

Police forces are required to include police officers within their headcount when calculating their target from 31 March 2018.

## Providing returns to the target

Bodies in scope of the target are required to provide an annual return of two parts, detailing amongst other things their progress towards the target, to the Department for Education.

### Content

As established in the primary legislation and the regulations, bodies in scope must provide the information identified below. In response to queries where the Council/Local Authority (LA) is the employer for schools and fire and rescue services, each LA may choose to show the information required for these organisations separately within their Returns.

#### Return Section 1 - Data Publication

The Data Publication includes several figures which will enable the Government, the public, and wider stakeholders to understand each body's headcount and the number of apprentices they employ, and then use that information to assess the progress a body has made towards meeting the target.

The information required is:

**Figure A:** The number of employees whose employment in England by the body began in the reporting period in question.

**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 includes employees who were already working for the body before beginning their apprenticeship, as well as new apprentice hires.

**Figure C:** the number of employees employed in England that the body has at the end of that period.

**Figure D:** the number of apprentices who work for the body at the end of that period.

Public bodies are also required to provide two percentages in order to give context to the other figures. These percentages do not reflect the progress a public body has made towards the target:

**Figure E:** Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure A.

**Figure F:** Figure D expressed as a percentage of figure C.

If the public body is in their first reporting period they must also provide:

**Figure G:** The number of apprentices who worked for the body immediately before that period.

In addition, the Apprenticeship Activity Return (Return Section 2) requires public bodies to send the following figures, which will help identify their progress towards meeting the target, to the Department for Education. Public bodies could also consider providing these figures in the Data Publication:

**Figure H:** Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period in the target period; and

**Figure I:** Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure H

## Return Section 2 - Apprenticeship Activity Return

The Apprenticeship Activity Return includes both information on a body's progress against the target and information to assess actions taken towards, and challenges faced in, meeting the targets.

The return includes quantitative and qualitative elements:

### Quantitative

- Headcount on the day before the first day of each reporting period in the target period; and
- **Figure B** in Return Section 1 (the number of apprentices who began to work for the body in the reporting period in question and whose apprenticeship agreements also began in that period), expressed as a percentage of headcount on the day before the first day of the reporting period in question.

This will enable the Government to assess the progress a body has made towards meeting the target.

### Qualitative

- Action that the body has taken to meet their apprenticeship target (i.e. how it has 'had regard');
- If their target has not been met then specific further evidence may be required. This may include an explanation of why the target was not met, actions the body has taken to overcome the challenges it has faced and/or mitigating factors which demonstrate the body's commitment to apprenticeships;



- Information about action the body proposes to take to meet their future apprenticeship targets; and
- If the body considers that a future target is not likely to be met, an explanation of why that is so.

In calculating their headcount public bodies should include the following staff, as at 31 March in each year they are in scope:

- those members of staff on the body's payroll, including apprentices, on whose behalf the public body makes National Insurance Contributions. This will include:
  - o permanent members of staff;
  - o members of staff who have a fixed-term contract;
  - o those who work full-time as well as those who work part-time;
- other members of staff who are not described above who have a fixed-term contract;
- staff who are on maternity, paternity or adoption leave;
- staff who are on sick-leave or any other type of extended paid leave;
- apprentices employed by the public body through an Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA); or
- employees on secondment or loan only if your organisation is paying for the majority (more than 50 per cent) or all of their wages.

They should not include:

- those who are employed through employment agencies;
- those who are working on a zero-hour contract;
- bank staff;
- employees in sub-contracted organisations who are not paid directly from the payroll; or
- those on career breaks.

## Format

Bodies in scope are required to publish the Data Publication. Government is not being prescriptive about where the information should be published but it must be easily accessible to the public, for example on the internal and external facing website of a public sector body in scope. It must also be sent to the Department for Education.

Bodies do not have to publish the Apprenticeship Activity Return. However they must send this information to the Department for Education.

Most bodies will send their Data Publication and Apprenticeship Activity Return to the Department for Education through their Apprenticeship Service account. If you are a levy paying organisation, you should make sure you are registered on the Apprenticeship Service to submit your annual return. If you are unsure how to do this, please contact the National Apprenticeship Service Support Service on 0800 015 0600 (option 1 then option 2) or email [helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk](mailto:helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk).

The Civil Service, Armed Forces and any non-levy paying organisations will not send their returns through the Apprenticeship Service. We are setting up an electronic mailbox for the receipt of returns from these bodies. For the form to complete and details of where to send it, please contact the National Apprenticeship Service Support Service from April 2018 on 0800 015 0600 (option 1 then option 2) or email [helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk](mailto:helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk).

## The Target and Reporting Periods

The Target Period is from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021. Throughout the Target Period, public bodies must have regard to the target and report their progress towards meeting the target.

However, it is important to note that there may be cases where a public body is not within scope of the target for the entirety of the Target Period. This will be the case if a body's headcount falls below 250 on any of the days on which headcount is determined (i.e. 31 March in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020).

For example, if a public body has 250 or more employees on 31 March 2017, but this falls below 250 employees on 31 March 2018, they will no longer be in scope of the target in 2018/19.

The Target Period is divided into four Reporting Periods lasting a year each.

As established in the Regulations, the targets will be measured as an average from 2017/18 to 2020/21. Public bodies must provide their Data Publication and Apprenticeship Activity Return for each of the following Reporting Periods where they are in scope:

- 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018
- 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019
- 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020
- 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

As explained above, they may fall in and out of scope during the Target Period if their headcount falls below or meets/rises above 250 people.

Reports for each year in which a public body is in-scope will be due within six months of the end of each Reporting Period. This is known as the Response Period and during this time in-scope each body must publish the Data Publication and send both that and the Apprenticeship Activity Return, to the Department for Education. The deadlines for these returns will be:

- 30 September 2018
- 30 September 2019
- 30 September 2020
- 30 September 2021

As explained above, provided they meet the headcount criteria, academy trusts and multi academy trusts will come within scope from 31 March 2018. These academy trusts are not required to provide an annual return on progress towards the target for apprenticeship starts between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. They will need to do so for the first time from April 2019, for starts between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019.



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