



**MEETING: HR COMMITTEE 2 OCTOBER 2023**

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**SUBJECT: APPRENTICESHIP PROVISION**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY) AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY**

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**1. Summary**

- 1.1 This paper will provide Fire Authority with a summary of the progress within the Service's apprenticeship provisions and give an overview of the recent Ofsted inspection.

**2 Introduction and background**

- 2.1 TWFRS were first approved on the Register of Apprenticeship Trainer Providers (RoATP) to deliver apprenticeships as an employer-provider in November 2019. In-house delivery of the Emergency Contact Handler apprenticeship commenced in January 2021. Once the contract with New College Durham came to an end in December 2022, the in house Level 3 Operational Firefighter apprenticeship commenced in February 2023.

**3 Ofsted Monitoring Report**

- 3.1 In July 2022 TWFRS had their first Ofsted visit, this was an initial monitoring visit for new apprenticeship providers. The monitoring visit was conducted following the guidance within the Department for Education Further Education and Skills Handbook – Point 62, with a focus on the following themes –
- How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?
  - What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?
  - How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?

- 3.2 Using the three themes above we were assessed against the following progress judgements –
- **Insufficient progress:** progress has been either slow or insubstantial or both, and the demonstrable impact on learners has been negligible.
  - **Reasonable progress:** the provider's actions are already having a beneficial impact on learners, and improvements are sustainable and are based on the provider's thorough quality assurance procedures.
  - **Significant progress:** progress has been rapid and is already having considerable beneficial impact on learners

3.3 The inspectors were complimentary of the welcome received by all TWFRS staff they met during the visit and were pleased with the progress we have made so far. This was the first time the inspectors had visited a FRS to inspect the Emergency Contact Handler apprenticeship standard.

3.4 The inspectors were extremely impressed by the Control apprentices and the manner in which they handled calls, the approach to the callers, the gathering of information from the caller leading to the dispatching of the resources to deal with the incident. One inspector stayed until after 2000hrs listening to and watching one of the Control apprentices take calls, and couldn't speak highly enough of their professionalism of the individual and the whole team.

3.5 The final report, which is on the Ofsted website with a confirmation that we achieved **Reasonable Progress** in all three themes.

3.6 Link to Ofsted report - [Ofsted | Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority](#)

3.7 Link to Ofsted Education Inspection Framework - [Education inspection framework \(EIF\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

#### **4 Bringing the Level 3 Operational Firefighter apprenticeship in house**

4.1 Following on from the monitoring visit last year the first in-house Level 3 Operation Firefighter trainee course started on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023. All apprentices joining the Service as trainee firefighters will be enrolled onto this apprenticeship standard moving forward.

4.2 Many of the training staff in L&D and BTC have completed the Level 3 Award in Education and Training which has support the development of the initial 14 weeks trainee course for apprentices to be developed and brought up to date.

4.3 L&D continue to work in partnership with BTC to ensure that paperwork, lesson plans, risk assessments and other elements of due-diligence are in place should we need to present this to Ofsted. L&D have completed the Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan for the apprenticeship

provision and this will be given to the Apprenticeship Governance Group on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 for approval and then monitored throughout the year.

## **5. Full Ofsted Inspection**

5.1 In August 2023 TWFRS had their first full Ofsted inspection, this inspection took place over 3 days from Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Friday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2023. This visit focused on the Level 3 Operational Firefighter apprenticeship as this was the only live apprenticeship standard at the time of the inspection.

The visit was conducted following the guidance within the Department for Education's Further Education and Skills Handbook – Part 2, Point 211, with a focus on the key judgement areas -

- Quality of Education
- Behaviour and Attitudes
- Personal Development
- Leadership and Management
- Apprenticeships
- Safeguarding

5.2 Using the key themes above we were assessed against the following judgements –

- Grade 1: Outstanding
- Grade 2: Good
- Grade 3: Requires Improvement
- Grade 4: Inadequate

5.3 TWFRS were graded as follows –

- Behaviours and Attitudes – Good
- Personal Development – Good
- Leadership and Management – Requires Improvement
- Safeguarding – Effective
- Apprenticeships – Good
- Overall Effectiveness – Requires Improvement

5.4 This was the very first time the inspectors had visited a FRS. In the report inspectors stated that apprentices benefit from a positive culture, apprentices enjoy their learning and value the knowledge and skills that they quickly acquire and that leaders, managers and instructors place a high focus on apprentices' mental well-being. Due to the mechanisms that Ofsted use, although the Service was found to require improvement in just one area, it meant that the full report indicated that the service requires improvement, albeit the other areas demonstrated that we are good and effective.

5.5 The key area that were identified for improvement as part of the inspection included under the heading 'What does the provider need to do to improve?' –

- Assess apprentices' starting points and progress accurately and use this information to support apprentices to learn at the pace at which they are capable.
- Maintain a through oversight of the quality of the whole provision so that instructors know what they do well and what they need to do to improve and can access professional development opportunities to develop their teaching practice.
- Provide governors with sufficient detail about the quality of education so that they can hold leaders and managers to account.
- Support instructors with their work-life balance so that they are able to carry out their roles efficiently.

5.6 Now that the full inspection has been completed, with the overall effectiveness grade of requires improvement we will receive a full inspection in 12 to 30 months from the publication of the report. We will likely have a monitoring visit before the full inspection between 7 and 13 months after the publication of the report.

5.7 Link to Ofsted report - [Ofsted | Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority](#)

5.8 Link to Ofsted Education Inspection Framework - [Education inspection framework \(EIF\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## **6. Next Steps following the inspection**

6.1 The L&D team have developed the Quality Improvement Plan to act as an action plan of key improvements that need to be made within the apprenticeship provision across the service. This plan identifies the actions, how we plan to make improvements, responsible person, date expected to complete and progress made towards the action.

6.2 The next course of trainee firefighters due to be enrolled on the Level 3 Operational Firefighter is due to start in February 2024 which will implement some of the actions.

6.3 The Service is due to start offering the Level 3 Community Safety Advisor apprenticeship in October 2023 with 3 individuals due to start.

## **7 People impact Assessment**

7.1 To date we have had successful results in the End Point Assessments for Level 3 Emergency Contact Handlers and Level 3 Operational Firefighters.

7.2 Level 3 Emergency Contact Handler out of 4 individuals who went to EPA 3 achieved with Distinction.

7.3 Level 3 Operational Firefighter out of 92 individuals who went to EPA all achieved with at least a Pass and 15 achieved with Distinction.

## **8 Conclusion**

- 8.1 The Ofsted inspection has given clear actions for areas for improvement to focus on before the next inspection.
- 8.2 The Service is confident that the apprenticeship scheme is effective and will make the necessary improvements in those areas highlighted by Ofsted. The TWFRS apprenticeship scheme continues to produce highly skilled and safe Firefighters to protect their communities.

## **9 Financial Implications**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

## **10 Equality and fairness Implications**

- 10.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

## **11 Health and Safety Implications**

- 11.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **12 Recommendations**

- 12.1 Members are recommended to:
    - a) Note the content of the report
    - b) Receive further reports / updates as appropriate.
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