

Apprenticeship strategy

A strategy that sets out the apprenticeship provision required to support workforce development, organisational performance, and career progression in Merseyside Police.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Leadership, development and learning Productivity Training and professional development
Organisation	Merseyside Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2025–27 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Merseyside Police
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Region	North West
Partners	Police Education Government department Private sector

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	April 2019
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults General public Workforce

Aim

The aims of Merseyside Police's apprenticeship strategy are to:

- ensure that the workforce has access to high-quality learning opportunities that develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to meet current and future policing demands
- deliver high-quality apprenticeship provision through effective governance, quality assurance and learner support
- address skills gaps and support workforce planning objectives
- maximise the use of the growth and skills levy to provide cost-effective learning and development opportunities
- create clear career development pathways for police staff and officers at all levels of the organisation
- promote a culture of continuous learning and development across the force
- support the development of current and future leaders through leadership and management apprenticeship programme

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of Merseyside Police's apprenticeship strategy are to:

- increase internal progression and promotion opportunities for employees who complete apprenticeship programmes
- enhance employees' knowledge, skills and behaviours through nationally recognised qualifications and professional standards
- improve employee retention, engagement and motivation by investing in personal and professional development
- strengthen organisational performance through improved competence, productivity and operational effectiveness
- improve the identification of organisational skills gaps, including those relating to leadership, quality assurance, and learning and development
- improve learner satisfaction rates through high-quality apprenticeship delivery and support
- increase managers' engagement in, and provision of, support for apprenticeship learners
- increase the representation of under-represented groups participating in apprenticeship programmes
- reduce organisational skills shortages in priority business areas
- reduce recruitment costs through the development and progression of existing employees

Description

Merseyside Police developed an apprenticeship strategy to fulfil the requirements for registration on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) and the Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register. Throughout the registration process, the force identified that apprenticeships were not being fully used as a strategic workforce development tool. While apprenticeship programmes had delivered positive outcomes in several areas of the organisation, there was no force-wide approach to ensure that apprenticeship activities were aligned with leadership, quality assurance, and learning and development priorities.

Planning process

The strategy was developed through a structured planning process led by the assessment and qualifications function within the force's people services. The planning process included:

- reviewing existing apprenticeship activity, learner numbers, achievement rates, levy expenditure, and programme performance
- analysing workforce data to identify current and future skills gaps

- mapping existing apprenticeship standards against identified development needs
- engaging with training providers to understand available programmes and delivery models
- consulting with departments across the force to identify development priorities and barriers to engagement
- developing a five-year apprenticeship plan aligned with workforce requirements and available funding
- establishing performance measures and governance arrangements to monitor delivery and outcomes

The purpose of the planning process was to establish a clear link between organisational needs, employee development, and apprenticeship investment.

Roles and teams

The development and implementation of the strategy involved the following roles and teams:

- Assessment and qualification manager – strategic lead responsible for the development, coordination and oversight of the strategy.
- Apprenticeship and qualifications officer – leads on the implementation of the strategy and manages the development of the apprenticeship offer. The post holder is also responsible for learner recruitment, stakeholder engagement, provider liaison, performance monitoring, and levy usage.
- Force control centre training and initial training teams – responsible for apprenticeship delivery as an employer-provider and for learner support. The teams also promote apprenticeship opportunities, support apprentices, and ensure that programmes align with organisational training requirements.
- Finance team – supports apprenticeship levy monitoring and is responsible for funding forecasts, financial governance, and apprenticeship cost calculations.
- Assessment and qualification governance board – provides strategic governance, external scrutiny and oversight.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion representatives – consulted on matters relating to the accessibility and inclusion requirements of the strategy.

Implementation

The force conducted a baseline review into the existing apprenticeship provision to establish:

- the number of current learners and apprenticeship programmes
- completion rates
- levy expenditure
- areas of good practice
- opportunities for improvement

Once the review was conducted, the assessment qualification manager developed an apprenticeship strategy, which included:

- identifying priority apprenticeship pathways
- establishing governance arrangements
- aligning apprenticeship activity with workforce planning requirements
- creating performance indicators and reporting mechanisms

The apprenticeship strategy was shared across the force through management circulation and staff briefings, workforce development discussions, and engaging with apprenticeship providers. Sharing the strategy across the workforce enables managers to understand the benefits of apprenticeships and their responsibilities in supporting learners.

The strategy has been embedded into existing workforce development processes through:

- integrating the strategy into the workforce planning activities
- identifying apprenticeship opportunities during performance and development discussions
- developing apprenticeship pathways linked to career progression
- improving the monitoring of learner progress and provider performance
- allocating apprenticeship levy funding to priority programmes

An assessment and qualification governance board meet on quarterly basis to monitor:

- levy utilisation
- apprenticeship participation and completion rates
- diversity and inclusion metrics
- provider performance
- organisational impact

Funding and approval

The strategy is funded through the growth and skills levy, used for approved apprenticeship training and assessment. Staff time for planning, implementation, stakeholder engagement, and governance is provided through existing learning and development, people services, and management resources.

The senior leadership team approved the development and implementation of the apprenticeship strategy. Following approval, responsibility for operational delivery was delegated to the learning and development function. Regular reporting was provided through established governance arrangements to ensure oversight, accountability and continuous review.

Overall impact

The strategy has established apprenticeships as a strategic tool for organisational learning, talent development, and workforce planning, rather than solely as a training activity.

There has been an increase in awareness of and engagement with apprenticeship opportunities. This has resulted in greater participation in professional development programmes and improved access to accredited learning pathways. Apprenticeship programmes are also becoming increasingly aligned with organisational priorities, enabling departments to address identified skills gaps while supporting individual career development.

Main outcomes

- Expanded apprenticeship opportunities across operational support, leadership, management, learning and development, assessment, quality assurance and professional services functions.
- Improved workforce capability through the development of knowledge, skills, and behaviours aligned with organisational needs.
- Featured in the Department for Education's Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers list on three occasions.
- Enhanced career progression opportunities for officers and staff through structured development pathways and nationally recognised qualifications. 87% of clerical apprentices have been promoted within a year.
- Greater collaboration between learning and development, people services and management functions. This has resulted in a more coordinated approach to workforce development.

- Improved equality of access to development opportunities, supporting Merseyside Police's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Strengthened succession planning by creating a pipeline of employees prepared for future leadership, specialist, and supervisory roles.
- Improved organisational resilience and workforce sustainability by investing in existing employees and building future capability.

Learning

- It is important to recruit and develop the appropriate roles and teams to lead and manage apprenticeship activity. The apprenticeship landscape is highly regulated and requires specialist knowledge of education, funding rules, quality assurance, compliance, and external governance requirements. Organisations looking to implement a similar approach should invest in experienced apprenticeship professionals.
- It is essential for the apprenticeship strategy to have strong organisational ownership and leadership support. Merseyside Police has found that apprenticeships are most effective when viewed as a strategic workforce development tool rather than simply a training opportunity. Securing support from senior leaders and managers has helped to increase engagement, improve learner support and align apprenticeship activity with organisational priorities.
- A significant lesson learned was the importance of effective manager engagement. Experience has demonstrated that learners are more likely to succeed when managers understand apprenticeship requirements, support protected learning time and actively encourage the application of learning in the workplace. Early engagement with managers helped to reduce barriers to participation and improve learner outcomes.
- Implementation also highlighted the importance of robust performance monitoring and data analysis. Monitoring participation, achievement rates, levy usage, and learner feedback enabled informed decision-making and helped identify opportunities for continuous improvement. The collection and analysis of equality, diversity, and inclusion data also provided valuable insight into participation trends and areas where further promotion and support may be required.

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