

## DURHAM CONSTABULARY

### Introduction

Since 2012, Durham Constabulary has offered a highly successful apprenticeship programme attracting new entrants to the organisation, and more recently offering apprenticeships to existing staff. At the outset the Assistant Chief Officer initiated conversations with the Human Resources team with the intention of attracting local young people to work in the constabulary. HR decided with the support of their training provider, to establish their own apprenticeship scheme. In the last five years this has gone from strength to strength, largely due to the excellent partnership arrangements in place.

Attracting young new talented apprentices into the constabulary has helped to shift the age profile of the force, with the vast majority of young apprentices going on to secure either permanent or temporary contracts. In addition, apprenticeships have provided another training route for developing and upskilling existing staff to meet workforce needs and skills gaps.

From an initial cohort of ten apprentices in 2012, regular recruitment of individuals to the apprenticeship programme has meant that the constabulary has had approximately 76 young apprentices since the scheme began. Currently, there are 25 apprentices working across a range of teams and completing apprenticeships in: Business Administration, Youth Work Assistant and Horticulture Work with the Durham Agency Against Crime, Motor Vehicle Repairs and Maintenance, ICT and Facilities Maintenance within Learning and Development.

87 existing staff have completed apprenticeships, with 34 still in training. The type and level of course include Team Leading Level 2 and Management 3, 4 and 5.

### Developing and implementing the apprenticeship programme

Following the decision to introduce apprenticeships, the constabulary began identifying training providers in the county who might be able to offer the greatest support in attracting young people, and contributing to the development of a robust apprenticeship scheme. Training providers were required to present how they would support the constabulary to meet their goals and Derwentside College were successful in their approach. The college worked closely with the constabulary for several months to inform and develop the now successful apprenticeship programme.

*“Develop a good working relationship with your training provider, because they’re an excellent source of support. With Derwentside College, it is the whole circle of support that they provide, for the whole ethos of apprenticeships whether that be information on the levy, legislation changes or training.” HR Manager*

*“Our main large-scale recruitment is in September. Last year we did an additional one in April and then, just yesterday we interviewed for two apprentices following a departmental request.”* Senior HR Officer

The college provides support on an on-going basis by drawing up and advertising apprenticeship vacancies based on information supplied by the employer, sifting applications to shortlist the best candidates and doing eligibility checks and initial interviews before selected individuals are put forward for formal job interviews.

Apprenticeship vacancies are open to all and the college supports the constabulary in attracting new recruits through hosting events, specific police career evenings, engagement with local projects e.g. the Durham Works project targeting harder to reach young people, and an annual awards evening where apprenticeship success is celebrated.

Cohorts of new young apprentices are generally recruited on an annual basis in September. The numbers recruited vary depending on the constabulary’s workforce needs, including: recruiting to vacancies in a diverse range of teams; and over several different geographical areas. This variety is seen as attractive to prospective apprentices.

*“Key to successful training is having very good assessors that are able to go out and deliver high quality, flexible provision. I think what sets us apart is that many of our assessors have been in management supervisory capacities.”* Executive Director Business Development, Derwentside College

A flexible approach to training is taken to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship, the needs of the apprentice and the team they are working in. Early on in the programme, apprentices would go to the college

one day a week, however, the constabulary soon moved to adopt in-house training on a protected time basis, which the college comes into deliver. This ensures that all apprentices following the same occupational apprenticeship can come together to share experiences, directed learning and gain support from other apprentices working in different teams and locations in the constabulary.

When appointed apprentices are offered a twelve-month employment contract or longer, relevant to the apprenticeship they are completing. Most (90%) have progressed into a substantive post within the constabulary. They are supported and encouraged to apply for vacancies by their managers and the HR team, with forward notification of opportunities

*“There is an example of an apprentice coming in at an entry level job and within a couple of months they secured a higher level position and have been identified as a potential supervisor or leader.”* Senior HR Officer

*“A successful apprentice in the HR department is flying now, doing further HR qualifications.”* HR Manager

included in the Force Bulletin, signposting to external vacancies, advice on applying for roles, completing application forms and mock interviews.

### **Adopting a holistic approach to apprentices**

All apprentices are treated exactly as other members of staff in a 'one employee' culture

*"A key aim is about helping someone to fit in, feel at home and that they are able to progress and flourish in their role."* Senior HR Officer

where apprentices work alongside staff of all levels including senior ranking and uniformed officers and managers, in an integrated and merged working environment. This helps the apprentice to see the wider picture and learn the value of the job they and others are doing.

When the programme was first introduced there was a lot of nervousness from existing staff about having young people in the workplace. The college helped to alleviate this situation by going into the constabulary to reassure managers and supervisors, explain the support that would be put in place and carry out mentor training. Within six months of starting the initial programme, feedback from supervisors proved the fears were unfounded.

*"Our supervisors and line managers are attuned to what is expected in terms of an apprentice, and how they can support them."* Senior HR Officer

Now, on an on-going basis line managers are informed about the support and guidance they need to put in place for the apprentice, what to expect from the college assessor and the apprentice, including how the apprentice will increasingly contribute as a valued member of the team.

Existing staff are offered opportunities to upskill via apprenticeship training, for example if they require management or supervisory skills as a result of an internal promotion. Several individuals including new managers, police constables and even detective inspectors have embraced this learning pathway. So far 87 existing staff have successfully completed an apprenticeship.

### **Benefits to the organisation and the individual**

Working in partnership with a knowledgeable and willing partner to build the apprenticeship programme was reinforced by the HR Team as being a critical factor in the success of the constabulary's scheme. Enthusiasm, responsiveness and a 'can do' attitude are continually mentioned when referring to partners at the college who clearly support the constabulary, on an on-going basis, with every aspect of apprenticeships. College recruitment services targeting young people are effective and save the constabulary time and money, as they know when individuals are referred to them, they will be seeing high quality candidates who are likely to be appointable to the vacancies on offer.

One of the key benefits of introducing apprenticeships into the constabulary has been the opportunity to increase the pool of young people coming into the police force, bringing in new talent and helping to shift the existing age profile of employees. It was stated that apprenticeships are providing a structured learning programme for both new and existing staff at all levels, with many taking up the leadership and management apprenticeship.

*“We have approximately 34 existing staff across the force who are currently benefiting from doing an apprenticeship.” HR Manager*

opportunity to increase the pool of young people coming into the police force, bringing in new talent and helping to shift the existing age profile of employees. It was stated that apprenticeships are providing a structured learning programme for both new and existing

Apprenticeships are seen to provide excellent job opportunities for young people to work in a diverse range of roles from Safer Neighbourhood Units to Scientific Support. The range of roles and potential for exposure to working in unique areas attracts a steady stream of applicants for apprenticeship positions. Apprentices are encouraged to shadow other staff, including supervisors so they gain knowledge of the whole department they are working in and can relate their work to the functions of the team and the wider organisation. Manager’s time invested in training is soon repaid as the apprentice increases their skills, knowledge and understanding of their role.

*“They will be exposed to things in the police service that they would never be exposed to anywhere else. So it is a fantastic opportunity for young people coming forward.” HR Manager*

*“Now, when something needs inputting, we ask our apprentice to do it. This frees up my time and other colleagues to do other things.” Line Manager*

*“Our apprentice has developed to being super confident in talking to people face to face and over the phone. Without a doubt he is an asset to our team. I do not want to lose him.” Line Manager*

### **Apprentice views**

Sam\* has found the apprenticeship (Level 2 Business Administration) has offered him a route into work which he had previously not considered, and one which he feels much better suited to than staying on full time at college. Sam feels the support offered from managers, the assessor and other apprentices is extremely beneficial and has included on-the-job training, portfolio building, pastoral support and help with applying for vacancies across the police force. The apprenticeship has provided a chance for Sam to be employed whilst still training and he

*“I’ve really, really enjoyed the apprenticeship and I think it is hugely beneficial for the experience I have gained. I think this is a great organisation and I would like to continue working here.” Apprentice*

understands there are further opportunities to progress to the next level, and secure a permanent position within the constabulary.

## Challenges

In the early planning stages of the apprenticeship programme, there was initially some resistance to bringing young people in as apprentices. Some of the managers were nervous about having young people in the organisation, as well as unsure of the level of support and guidance that they would be expected to provide. To overcome this, the HR team worked with managers to raise their understanding of apprenticeships and share with them what a line manager's responsibilities are to the apprentice. Managers were further supported by the partner college who came in to provide training for staff. The benefits of having young apprentices have been further reinforced by the on-going positive experience of managing and working with apprentices.

The constabulary faced a further challenge in some departments where apprentices could not be exposed to certain aspects of the role, resulting in there not being sufficient work to do. This situation was quickly resolved by moving the apprentice to another department to ensure that they were able to cover all elements of their apprenticeship, and subsequently proved beneficial for the apprentice as they gained further experience and knowledge of another area.

## Replicability

Durham Constabulary has grown a successful apprenticeship programme over the last five years. The key to this has been:

- **Partnership working with the training provider:** The successful partnership of the constabulary and the training provider (Derwentside College) has enabled the apprenticeship programme to grow considerably since its inception. The employer has benefited by finding and selecting a responsive and knowledgeable training provider who not only delivers high quality apprenticeship training, but adopts a positive 'can do' attitude.
- **Expanding apprenticeship opportunities to existing staff:** With a huge existing workforce apprenticeships are seen as an ideal training programme and career progression route for existing staff. Employees are made aware of opportunities and encouraged to develop their skills and ability through an apprenticeship route.
- **Holistic approach to young apprentices:** All apprentices are welcomed into the organisation and recognised, along with other employees, as valued members of staff. They are based in departments which share office space with staff at all levels of seniority, who provide them with support and encouragement as they complete their apprenticeship journey. Line managers provide guidance and on-the-job training, enabling the apprentice to develop. Every effort is made to encourage apprentices to apply for permanent vacancies ensuring that the talent that they develop is kept within the organisation.