



## Interpretation of the apprenticeship funding rules for On Call Firefighters

<b>Background</b>	<p>The NFCC Apprenticeship project recognised in 2018 that there was a need to understand if the Operational Firefighter apprenticeship standard could be made accessible to all firefighters irrespective of their duty system. Working closely with Devon and Somerset FRS, who ran a small pilot of six on-call staff, enabled the required evidence to be submitted to the Education Skills Funding Agency.</p> <p>Negotiations with the funding team during 2019 resulted in an interpretation to the funding rules being granted in January 2020</p>
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>This guidance sets out to explain how the Operational Firefighter apprenticeship standard could be used to train new recruits or upskill existing staff wishing to become an on-call firefighter, and supports the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) 2017-2020 Workforce Reform Strategic Commitment – "Work with the FRS to utilise the opportunities available from apprenticeships."</p>
<b>Intended audience</b>	<p>Anyone who has a requirement for on-call firefighters.</p>
<b>Version and date</b>	<p>Version 1 – 14 April 2020</p>
<b><u>The process</u></b>	
<p>The apprenticeship model agreed with the government to train an on-call firefighter consists of the following key stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Stage 1 – initial assessment and recognition of prior learning</li><li>Stage 2 – initial recruit and induction training</li><li>Stage 3 – on-programme training</li><li>Stage 4 – work experience and employment</li><li>Stage 5 – the gateway process</li><li>Stage 6 – end-point assessment</li></ul>	
<b><u>The Operational Firefighter apprenticeship standard</u></b>	
<p>Design of the Operational Firefighter standard is the responsibility of the Trailblazer Group (<a href="https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/operational-firefighter/">https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/operational-firefighter/</a>)</p> <p>The apprenticeship standard is reviewed in accordance with the current guidance of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE)</p>	

## **Timetable**

The Department for Education have approved the use of apprenticeships for training of on-call firefighters and confirmed that fire services can use funds from their Apprenticeship Levy contributions to fund the training costs with effect from 1 January 2020.

## **What will a fire service need to do to ascertain whether on-call firefighter apprenticeships are suitable for their organisation?**

If a fire service has an on-call workforce, they could consider using the operational firefighter standard to train their new recruits, utilising the funds lodged in their digital apprenticeship service to subsidise the training and assessment costs.

The NFCC have agreed with the government that fire services who wish to use the apprenticeship should make sure the following are adhered to:

- I. Each fire service would conduct an assessment to ascertain if on-call apprenticeships are suitable for their organisation on a station by station basis
- II. Fire services should carry out a people impact assessment to aid their decision regarding on-call apprenticeships
- III. Each fire service would use their own selection criteria for determining which recruits may be suitable to employ as a firefighter apprentice
- IV. Apprentice on-call firefighters must be issued with both a contract of employment and apprenticeship agreement
- V. Apprentices to be issued with an individual learning plan
- VI. The fire service will need to agree with the on-call firefighter apprentice what level of cover they could provide. This information will assist in determining the length of the apprenticeship
- VII. Only positive employment hours will count towards the required on and off the job training and development. Stand by hours will not be eligible.
- VIII. Employers should ensure that the manager, the apprentice, and the training provider review progress on a regular basis. This could be in the form of an annual performance review, monthly 1-2-1 with the manager, together with a quarterly meeting with the apprentice's skills coach. A record of the event should be prepared setting out future training and development needs together with specific outcomes to be achieved in a given timescale.
- IX. The apprenticeship for an on-call firefighter should be as set out in these guidance notes. Any deviation from this model would need to be agreed by the sector and the government.

## **The On-Call Operational Firefighter apprenticeship model**

In order to establish a common approach, agreement upon the interpretation of the funding rules has had to be agreed with the Education & Skills Funding Agency. Provided that the on-call apprenticeship follows the principles below, the ESFA have agreed to support the apprentice and release funding to pay for their training costs:

- I. The on-call apprenticeship must last for a minimum period of 12 months
- II. It is assumed that a typical duration for the on-call apprenticeship will be between 24 – 48 months, depending on the operational needs of the station the recruit is based at, any accredited prior learning, the number of incidents and other activities the apprentice firefighter can and will attend
- III. The majority of the initial basic (foundation) and 'on programme' training will be completed by the on-call firefighter apprentice in the first 24 months of their employment. (An apprentice on-call firefighter will be expected to have benefited from at least 20% 'off the job' training and development throughout the duration of their apprenticeship period of service).

- IV. It is expected that the on-call firefighter apprentice will spend more than 20% of their time taking part in 'off the job' training and development in the first 24 months of their employment, but less towards the latter part of their period of service
- V. On-call firefighter apprentices will be expected to keep a record of their continuing professional development throughout the duration of their apprenticeship. (This could be in the form of an electronic portfolio or some other recognised method of recording). The hours spent on training and development should be recorded.
- VI. The length of the apprenticeship will be determined by the opportunities afforded the apprentice to practice their skills by attending incidents. An apprentice on-call firefighter will be expected to have completed at least 1560 hours of paid hours (a mixture of training and operational hours) to demonstrate the required skills and competence).
- VII. Details of all work experience and firefighter activities should be recorded in a workforce operational recording system, or some other recognised method. The records kept should include the hours of work spent carrying out specified operational activities.
- VIII. All training and development undertaken should be in accordance with the requirements of the Operational Firefighter standard and End-Point Assessment plan
- IX. On-call firefighter apprentices will be required to demonstrate they have the skills, technical expertise and behaviours to transition successfully to the End Point Assessment through the Gateway (details outlined in the End-Point Assessment plan<sup>1</sup> for an Operational Firefighter)
- X. Funding will be drawn down equally over the duration of the apprenticeship. The duration of the apprenticeship will be set out in an apprentice's individual learning plan, and could be different for each recruit dependent on their previous experience and activity levels of their fire station.
- XI. The On-Call Firefighter apprenticeship funding band is £12k, the same as a whole-time firefighter apprentice. The funding band rate may be adjusted should a new on-call firefighter recruit have any prior transferable skills or experience.
- XII. Some of the apprenticeship funding will be used to pay for the End Point Assessment. Employers should determine which end point assessment organisation they wish to use at the outset of the apprentice's apprenticeship. Included in the individual learning plan should be the name of the end point assessment provider chosen by the employer together with the cost to be paid. The balance of the funds should then be pro-rated over the duration of the apprenticeship period of service forecast.
- XIII. The model outlined to the government for the On-Call Firefighter apprenticeship includes the following activities in accordance with the Operational Firefighter standard and fire sector national operational guidance procedures and learning:-
  - Core skills training (initial basic foundation and on-programme training)
  - Operational activities supporting fire crews under the guidance of a competent firefighter
  - Attendance at drill nights each week
  - Completion of e-learning modules
  - Attendance at development training sessions
  - Maintenance of skill events
  - Support and taking part in exercises
  - Preparation and up-keep of a portfolio

### **Professional Membership**

On-Call Operational Firefighter apprentices will be able to gain membership of the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) on successful completion of this apprenticeship at technician level.

### **Frequently asked questions**

#### **If a recruit has taken part in firefighter training previously, can the employer still claim the full amount of grant of £12k?**

A training needs analysis exercise must be carried out by the training provider, in conjunction with the new recruit and the employer, to identify any transferable skills and prior learning before the apprenticeship on-programme training commences. The training provider will then consider if the apprentice is exempt from any elements of the Operational Firefighter standard. Funding will then be adjusted accordingly, dependent on the training left to be undertaken.

### **Benefits**

The perceived benefits of using the apprenticeship standard in this way would be as follows:

- A standardised approach to training of firefighters
- Training to a recognised national standard for firefighters.
- The ability for each fire and rescue service to draw down funding from the apprenticeship levy to pay for the training costs
- The ability for a firefighter trained to a uniform standard to transfer between fire and rescue services in other parts of the country, without the need for a lengthy induction or retraining programme.
- It provides fire and rescue services with the opportunity to collaborate, sharing resources and expertise.
- Adoption of apprenticeships may improve the diversity of the workforce by appealing to a wider pool of candidates.
- Apprenticeships for on-call firefighters will create a pool of talent and a skilled workforce who could then fill whole-time vacancies
- The completion of the firefighter apprenticeship provides a gateway to membership of the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) at Technician (TIFireE) level.

### **Further reading/guidance**

Further information on apprenticeships:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-richard-review-of-apprenticeships>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-guide-for-employers>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules>