

## Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital uses leadership and management apprenticeships in support of its ‘Fellows in Yellow’ volunteer service

### A case study

The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust in Stanmore, Middlesex is the largest orthopaedic hospital in the UK, employing in the region of 1,500 staff. The hospital provides a comprehensive range of neuro-musculoskeletal health care, from acute spinal injury or complex bone tumour to orthopaedic medicine and specialist rehabilitation for chronic pain sufferers.

At the heart of the hospital is a small volunteer services team headed up by Diane Young. Diane is the Involvement and Volunteer Lead and she works closely with the Involvement and Volunteer Coordinator Lisa Haig and the part-time Volunteer Services Assistant Keith Reeve.

Although a small team, they manage an increasing number of volunteers who support both the hospital staff and patients. Growing from only 10 people a few years ago, the current volunteer headcount is in the region of 180. The volunteers, known on site as “Fellows in Yellow” due to the distinctive yellow tops they all wear, are involved in a range of activities including escorting patients through the complex hospital site to reach their appointments, maintaining the 120 acre gardens, supporting patients and staff on ward, running the hospital radio station, carrying out errands for the clinical staff and generally supporting patients during their time at the trust.

#### Lisa and Diane are currently both doing management apprenticeships.

This short case study explores what it has been like, what they have learnt and offers tips for other volunteer service teams wishing to explore apprenticeships too.

Lisa’s level 3 Team Leader/Supervisor apprenticeship is now nearing completion.

As an Involvement and Volunteer Coordinator Lisa’s job is varied and she manages the day-to-day organisation of the volunteer services at the trust, co-ordinating between the volunteer and clinical and non-clinical teams, ensuring that everyone is clear about their roles and the activities they will be carrying out.

*“It’s a really busy job, many people in the trust know who I am as I go all over the site with the volunteers and interact with them and the clinical staff all day, every day.”*

There are 8 people in Lisa’s apprenticeship cohort from different parts of the trust, including both clinical and non-clinical staff.

#### Level 3 Team Leader/Supervisor

#### Apprenticeship

This apprenticeship is designed for people in a first line management role, with operational/project responsibilities or responsibility for managing a team.

Key responsibilities are likely to include supporting, managing and developing team members, managing projects, planning and monitoring workloads and resources, delivering operational plans, resolving problems, and building relationships internally and externally.

## Proving that apprenticeships are not only for young people, the majority of the current apprentices at the trust are over the age of 30.

Hawk, an external training provider delivers the teaching for the apprenticeship, running workshops and training sessions on the trust premises. The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust have included the management and leadership apprenticeships as an option within their overall training offer to their staff.

*“At first I didn’t even realise I was enrolled on an apprenticeship” says Lisa “We were given the opportunity to select the programme that looked right for our role. They were all listed under the trusts leadership programmes so whilst some of us are doing apprenticeships, others are doing different types of management courses.”*

It’s important when selecting an apprenticeship to make this direct link between the role needed and the knowledge, skills and behaviours outlined in the standard document rather than choosing training based purely on the academic or pay band level.

The level 3 apprenticeship has been challenging and there has been a lot to learn.

*“I’ve found maths the hardest and I’m yet to pass the functional skills which is a mandatory requirement of the apprenticeship. This has been frustrating. I’ve been getting merits and distinctions on all my other coursework and I’m worried that if I don’t pass the maths it could hold me back or even prevent me from achieving the full apprenticeship.”*

Lisa also finds it hard to quantify how the apprenticeship has impacted on her day to day work. Preferring experiential learning to class-based learning, Lisa worries that sometimes things have “gone in one ear and out the other”.

However, her line manager Diane disagrees and can clearly see the benefits.



*“There are so many things that Lisa does now that she would never have attempted prior to the apprenticeship. For example, she has gone from being a silent observer of the volunteer induction process to managing, and even improving it, completely independently.”*

Diane is really pleased with the overall progress that Lisa has made and the positive impact it has had on her work within the volunteering team.

*“She has worked really hard and she never gives up, even though the functional skills are proving difficult.”*

The training providers have taken a creative approach to off-the-job learning which has meant that Lisa has been able to take part in a wide range of different meetings and events that she would not otherwise have had access to. She has also been involved in the trust’s ‘reverse mentoring’ scheme where she is currently mentor to a senior executive.

***“It’s been really interesting and has given us both a different perspective.***

***I look forward to our sessions, we always leave the office and have a cup of tea while we chat about how things are going. It has made me realise how pressured their job is.”***

Diane began her own level 5 Operations/ Departmental Manager apprenticeship a few months after Lisa.

*“I was lucky that Lisa had already started. I’d seen how the apprenticeship was going for her, so I knew more about what to expect.”*

As the Involvement and Volunteer Lead, Diane’s role is strategic. She leaves the day to day management of the volunteer teams to Lisa and focuses on dealing with the more complex HR issues that may arise and raising the profile and awareness of volunteer services across the trust. Diane works with internal trust senior managers and external charities and other organisations to develop and enhance the volunteer services offer. Her team manages the recruitment process for all the volunteers in the trust, even if they are then operationally managed by other organisations such as the charity that runs the radio station.

As an apprentice, monthly workshops allow Diane to learn with and from the other 5 people in her cohort. Everyone comes from different parts of the trust. It’s been a real opportunity to break down the barriers and get to know other people in senior clinical and non-clinical roles.

*“It has really helped me to understand what they do day-to-day and to get to know them. It’s also been an opportunity to improve their understanding about volunteers in general, to help others in the trust see volunteering as an opportunity and a benefit rather than a threat to the existing workforce. I also feel that I have a new group of people that I could turn to for professional advice and support as and when required.”*

There is a lot to learn on the apprenticeship but the reflective element of the training has particularly appealed to Diane. She has discovered a great deal about the way that she and her team work. Some of the insights from the different management assessment tools have been thought-provoking

## Level 5 Operations/Departmental Manager Apprenticeship

This apprenticeship is designed for people who manage teams and/or projects as part of the delivery of the organisation’s strategy.

Key responsibilities may include creating and delivering operational plans, managing projects, leading and managing teams, managing change, financial and resource management, talent management, coaching and mentoring.

*“One of them felt as though they’d seen right into my soul! I really recognised myself in the results of that particular personality tool and it was an acknowledgment that I was in the right role for me”*

There have been some small quick wins too such as immediately implementing a simple strategy to sort her to do list more efficiently so that the important and urgent are prioritised.

*“Sometimes I wish I had a bit more time to reflect on and implement everything I’ve learnt but my role can be so busy that it can be hard to make the time. It would also be helpful to have more opportunities to bounce ideas off other people, outside of our immediate team.”*

Diane’s apprenticeship is mid-way through and she has started to look at how her learning maps to the apprenticeship standard to help identify where there may be gaps. Working with her mentor they will focus on areas where she needs to continue to grow over the coming year.

*“ I’ve had other management training experiences previously but nothing quite like this.*

*Everything relates directly to my role*

*which makes it so much more*

*effective and relevant.”*

# Top tips for others looking to implement apprenticeships in volunteer services:

- Potential apprentices would benefit from a general introduction to what apprenticeships are and what they entail before starting.
- It could help potential apprentices if they gain the maths and English requirements before they begin the apprenticeship so that it doesn't hold them up later.
- Apprenticeships are an excellent opportunity for developing existing staff. However, employers may need to bear in mind that it could have been a long time since the potential apprentice last did any formal education or training. Training in study skills, report writing, referencing or even short refreshers about grammar could all help the apprentices to get started.
- Clear guidance about what constitutes off-the-job learning and exactly how to record and map it effectively against the apprenticeship standard would be useful.
- Recognising that everyone has different learning styles is important. Sometimes shorter more frequent training sessions may be of benefit so that the learning can immediately be applied to the job.
- Exam practice for English and maths and mock end point assessments may help ease the pressure of the exam situations.
- Consistent mentoring and tutoring is vital. Both the apprentice and the mentor or tutor need to set the time aside and make a full commitment to the process.

## When asked what they would say to others considering an apprenticeship.

*“Volunteer services managers and coordinators are involved in so many different things at work. The opportunity to learn these skills is really valuable.”*

DIANE

*“Go for it! Go and do it – you won't regret it.”*

LISA