

ROYAL DEVON & EXETER NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

ASSISTANT PRACTITIONER & REGISTERED NURSE DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

The Royal Devon & Exeter NHS FT (RDE) has been delivering the Level 5 Assistant Practitioner (AP) qualification since 2006. Initially the programme of study was level 4 Higher Professional Diploma but this was replaced by the level 5 Assistant Practitioner Diploma offered by City & Guilds. The RDE were involved with the development of the new level 5 qualification along with other South West NHS Trusts. As part of the trailblazer group the RDE continued to be involved with the development of the AP Apprenticeship which includes the Level 5 qualification.

The RDE has Training Provider status and as such has developed an in house programme of study to support the development of its staff along the career pathway. We currently offer the Level 3 diploma through the Senior Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship which allows staff to develop locally through to Level 5 to the nursing degree if they so choose. The Trainee Assistant Practitioner Apprenticeship is a two-year, day release, programme which includes both work-based assessment and academic study and includes a level 5 diploma, maths and English at level 2 and End Point Assessment.

On completion of the Assistant Practitioner Level 5 diploma applicants can either secure a Band 4 AP post, or progress onto further study. This development opportunity is the Registered Nurse Degree apprenticeship (RNDA). Working with the University of Plymouth, recognition of prior learning (RPL) is used to allow the applicant to step onto year two of the Degree programme. Due to the programme content, RPL is 50% - allowing the applicant to complete their degree in 18 months.

The RDE has a workforce strategy that includes identifying where and at which level training opportunities and future roles can be established for clinical bands 2-4. Once numbers are allocated expressions of interest are requested for the AP and RNDA programmes. Liaison with the local HEI's around numbers and recruitment are discussed and adverts for EOI circulated with staff. Once applications are received the RDE completes an initial sift, checking qualifications and experience. Details of applicants are then shared with the University and interviews organised. These include both Trust and HEI representatives.

Once applicants are short listed and decisions are made, references from managers are requested. As this is an apprenticeship route, applicants are required to complete necessary paperwork to activate levy funding through the University, including DBS, OH, copies of certificates. Unconditional offers will only be given once these have been obtained.

The apprenticeship team will meet with the applicants to explain the apprenticeship requirements and answer questions. Good communication with both the academic team and the apprenticeship team are essential at this point.

The local HEI reviewed the delivery of the RNDA programme, moving subjects already covered by the AP to the beginning of year two. This allowed the AP to start later in the academic year, due to RPL, preventing unnecessary breaks and reducing costs and time for employer and individual.

Bronwyn Spencer – Joined the RDE with a NVQ L3 H&SC and worked in renal dialysis, she then progressed on to the level 5 diploma for APs in June 2017. After completing this diploma she progressed to the Registered Nurse Degree apprenticeship in 2019 stepping in to year two of the nursing degree.

“When I was 18 I went off to University to gain my Adult Nursing DipHE. I struggled with the theory side of the course and although I excelled in the practical side of this I ended up taking a sabbatical. During my sabbatical I returned to Devon and gained my level 3 in Health and social care. Instead of going back after completing the course, even though I had finally received the pass I needed to return I instead decided to get more experience within health care. I went on to get a Band 2 job within renal working on a ward and from there strived at learning new skills and pushing myself each time to get better. I got a band 3 job on the Dialysis unit and pushed myself to be competent at dialysis. I learnt more skills and continued to feel satisfied in my job. I was confident and achieving what I wanted to do, provide care and be that person they could talk to and trust when it came to their treatment. From there I pushed myself further and completed my Level 5 diploma for Assistant Practitioners through an apprenticeship, and gained a job on the Acute Medical unit.



I love my job and the feeling it gives me when I am able to get a patient discharged home happy and healthy. I'm proud of the job I do and showed that through the proud to care event. Now I wish to push myself further and prove to myself that I can finally achieve my dream. Over the two-year course of my level 5 I have shown that I am now capable of achieving the recommended grades and essay writing skills needed. I want to be able to turn around and say I did it, I didn't get lost and leave healthcare I worked round it and worked my way up, bringing with me all my skills.

I am currently studying to complete my nursing degree, having stepped in to year two of the course as I already have my Level 5 (Foundation degree). I have just completed the second year and I am doing well. I achieved good grades to complete year 2 and am looking forward to starting year 3 in a couple of weeks.”