



Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust

Case Study from ESFA

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As one of the largest mental health and disability trusts in England, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust provides mental health, learning disability and neurological care for people across the North East and beyond. Since introducing apprenticeships back in 2009, the Trust has recruited over 430 apprentices in a range of roles, with a recent increase of apprentices in healthcare standards. As the Trust's apprenticeship programme continues to grow, it's looking more closely at how apprenticeships can help with workforce and succession planning, meeting the skills requirements of the Trust and the NHS more widely, widening opportunities and retaining its staff.

Long term success

For Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust, apprenticeships have been part of the organisation for almost 10 years. Primarily used as a way to recruit new starters in business administration roles, the Trust's programme has since evolved to include both internal and external recruits, across a range of standards including nursing, pharmacy, finance, IT, communications, clinical practice and many more.

Having now trained over 430 apprentices, of which over 90% are still employed within the NHS (80% by the Trust, 8% by another NHS organisation and 4% still on an apprenticeship), the Trust is confident that apprenticeships work.

"Apprenticeships at the Trust have undoubtedly evolved over the past decade and, since the introduction of levy, their status has risen even further with more and more people seeing apprenticeships as an opportunity to grow their departments and develop their staff. "With the growing availability of specialist healthcare standards we feel confident in our investment in apprenticeships, particular in clinical areas, as a way to obtain the right mix of skills sets and set up career pathways for staff."

Annette Connor, Apprenticeships and Career Development Manager

Working with others

One key area in which the development of healthcare standards stands to have significant impact at the Trust is nursing. With nursing shortages a prevalent issue across the NHS, the Trust has been working with other Trusts in the region, alongside Sunderland University, to develop a nursing degree apprenticeship route – of which 30 of its existing staff are due to start in January 2019.

“This is a fantastic opportunity for us to help address nurse shortages, not just at the Trust but across the region. Having the nursing degree available will give our staff – the first cohort of which have already been supported in an apprenticeship at level 3 or foundation degree level – the chance to continue to develop and become NMC registered. Working with other Trusts in the area on this has also not only allowed us to share ideas and expertise but also resource. Going forward, we will have an Apprentice Education Supervisor in Practice (AESIP) who will have sole responsibility for nursing apprentices across the Trusts we work with and go further in establishing a region-wide approach to tackling this issue.”

Annette Connor, Apprenticeships and Career Development Manager

Retaining talent

Since introducing apprenticeships almost a decade ago, the Trust has a proven track record of retaining its apprentices – with 80% still employed within the Trust. To continue to retain this apprenticeship talent, the Trust has developed a process to transition apprentices into Band 2 development vacancies and put apprentices onto a career pathway in those roles. Another example of where this has already started to take place is in the Trust’s finance department, where administration apprentices are taken on to develop customer service skills and then supported onto a finance specific apprenticeship role and employment.

To support this further, the Trust is an accredited provider with an awarding body and also on the ESFA main provider register to allow it to deliver its own apprenticeships and, consequently, offer more development opportunities for its staff from junior to senior roles.

“We are using apprenticeships as a way to think and act differently about Trust opportunities to encourage staff development and progression through different routes. In doing this, we will meet workforce and succession planning not just in terms of numbers but also skillsets.”

Annette Connor, Apprenticeships and Career Development Manager

Widening opportunities

As well as using apprenticeships to train existing staff, the Trust is also keen to use apprenticeships to continue to attract young people into the organisation and into healthcare more widely.

“For us, apprenticeships have always been about bringing a mix of people into our organisation. We do a lot of work going into schools and talking about careers in the NHS. There’s a lot of competition out there for young talent, but letting people know the options available to them is a great place to start.”

Annette Connor, Apprenticeships and Career Development Manager

The Trust is also a member of the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network and is committed to working more closely with schools with high black, Asian and minority ethnic populations, as well as offering 12-week internships to young people with additional support needs.

Looking forward

With apprenticeships forming a big part of the Trust’s workforce plans going forward, the organisation is keen to see the development of further apprenticeship standards in clinical areas, such as Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy, and in management roles.

“We see apprenticeships as a big part of our future and as more standards become available this will only increase what we can offer to our staff as an organisation and help us obtain the skills we need.”

Annette Connor, Apprenticeships and Career Development Manager

And with healthcare apprenticeships a big focus for the Trust, the Trust hopes apprenticeships can help continue to provide and retain the talent it needs.

“Our experience of apprenticeships over the last decade has brought much to the organisation and, going forward, we hope that it continues to provide us with the talent and skills we need to provide quality patient care.”

Annette Connor, Apprenticeships and Career Development Manager