



Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Case Study from ESFA

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Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust serves a population of almost 500,000 people across West Sussex. Having supported the apprenticeship agenda since 2011, the Trust has seen positive results from recruiting apprentices in areas such as retention, addressing skills gaps and developing young talent. Since the introduction of the levy, the Trust is looking to develop this work further, opening up apprenticeship opportunities to upskill existing staff and develop career pathways.

Opening up opportunities

Apprenticeships have been part of Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust since 2011. Traditionally, business administration, pharmacy and healthcare support have been at the core of the Trust's apprenticeship programme. As such, these apprenticeships have been primarily used as a way to bring young people into the NHS and grow its own talent.

However, following the introduction of the levy, the Trust has rapidly expanded its apprenticeship offer – in some cases up to degree level – in standards across accounting, operations, IT, management, cardiac physiology and surgical care. As of April 2018, the Trust had around 90 staff (both new and existing) enrolled on its apprenticeship programme and has had a further 50 since then – steadily working towards achieving its public sector target of 2.3% of its workforce being apprenticeship starts.

“We’ve been engaged with apprenticeships for a number of years now, running a successful and effective programme for young people as a way to grow our own local talent. Following the introduction of the levy, we’re delighted that we’ve been able to open up and expand our offering to our current workforce – clinical areas in particular are where we really hope to see a difference in the skills and talent we develop.”

Joanne Hauffe, Learning and Development Nurse/ Widening Participation Lead

Developing career pathways

Developing career pathways for employees has always been a key focus for the Trust. As such, the recent and growing expansion of the Trust's apprenticeship offer has had a significant impact upon the perception of apprenticeships across the Trust, encouraging managers and departments to review alternative pathways to get the skills they need.

“The apprenticeship message is changing. Since the introduction of the levy, we have more and more managers and department heads coming to us with requests for new standards and levels. People are really starting to see it as a credible option not just to develop young people but to help them upskill and boost their careers.”

Joanne Hauffe, Learning and Development Nurse/ Widening Participation Lead

Degree and higher apprenticeships in particular are opening up opportunities for those who previously may not have had the prior academic qualifications or the financial means to access further study. This looks to have most considerable impact on the Trust’s nursing programme, but also in key clinical areas where there are nationwide skills shortages – such as cardiac physiology – where the Trust are enrolling three of its staff on a level 6 programme in September 2018.

“There is certainly a growing demand for higher and degree apprenticeships within the Trust. However, we’re keen to make sure we continue to have a good mix to allow multiple entry points for people to gain additional skills.”

Joanne Hauffe, Learning and Development Nurse/ Widening Participation Lead

Retention

One primary benefit which apprenticeships have historically brought to the Trust is in improved retention rates – something which the Trust hopes to continue as its programme expands.

Already, in 2016/17 90% of those who completed an apprenticeship stayed on in the Trust – a significant improvement from 67% in 2015/16 when its programme was less diverse.

“Apprenticeships can improve our retention rates in several ways. We can support and develop those who live locally and build a more local workforce. Equally, by offering more and more opportunities to progress and upskill we’re able to invest in our staff in the long-term and retain a high quality and highly skilled workforce.”

Joanne Hauffe, Learning and Development Nurse/ Widening Participation Lead



Resource developed by the
Education and Skills Funding
Agency

Hosted by Skills for Health on
HASO which is sponsored by
Health Education England



Education & Skills
Funding Agency



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Looking ahead

The Trust is keen to embark on the next generation of its apprenticeship programme. With plans to continue to expand, the Trust hopes to retain its diverse offer, providing opportunities in the NHS for people, whatever stage in their career.

“Apprenticeships have opened up opportunities across more and more of our departments. They’ve changed the way our teams work and have inspired existing staff to keep on progressing in their careers. We hope to see more standards developed in areas such as Occupational Therapy and continue widening opportunities for people to embark on a career within the NHS.”

Joanne Hauffe, Learning and Development Nurse/ Widening Participation Lead