

Gloucestershire Integrated Care System - Case Study

Procuring the Level 5 Assistant Practitioner (Health) apprenticeship standard

1. Who was involved?

The three NHS trusts within the Integrated Care System (ICS) decided to procure for the Assistant Practitioner apprenticeship. None of the trusts were currently offering the apprenticeship and didn't know how popular it would be and what cohort sizes would be for each individual trust, it therefore made sense for us to join all of our learners together.

- Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (Acute Care)
- 2gether NHS Foundation Trust (Mental Health)
- Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust (Community Care)

2. What types of organisations? How many?

Although we had three NHS trusts working together we all work in different ways and had different requirements, be it mental health, acute care or community care.

3. Did you have to build a group from scratch or did you base it on something that already existed?

The cohort and programme were built from scratch with the assistance and input from each trust's apprenticeship team, clinical professionals and our chosen learning provider Hart Learning Group. During the later stages of procurement we asked for some of our clinical professionals to sit in on the presentations from potential providers, this was great because they were able to ask specific questions

regarding the training that would be provided in their area of interest such as Podiatry and Physiotherapy.

Following presentations from 3 learning providers, all three trusts met once again to make our final decision on who we thought would provide the best programme. Luckily this was a relatively short meeting, and no one was against making the final call to select Hart Learning as our preferred learning provider. It may seem strange for a group of NHS trusts from Gloucestershire to select a learning provider based over 120 miles away, however, for us they provided the best package for the following reasons:

- Flexibility for provision wasn't a problem. We wanted a mix of face to face and online delivery of learning.
- It was felt that Hart Learning really understood that we were three different organisations who all had different needs.
- The learner journey was clear from the outset and it very much felt like the learners' experience and enjoyment of the course was at the forefront of Hart Learning's mind.

We met with the North Hertfordshire College team from Hart Learning to discuss start date, our delivery preference and how the programme would run. It was great to have everyone in the same room and to put names to a face. With the provision plan discussed and additional questions answered the enrolment date was agreed. All apprentices were successfully enrolled on Wednesday 15th May 2019.

“I think this is an excellent opportunity to support staff through a career progression who are not able to access a foundation degree through ‘normal’ channels and then if successful continue onto a degree course. Podiatry has been highlighted as a vulnerable AHP profession nationally and this will give us a way of growing our own whilst supporting the service. At present there is a big gap between a band 3 Podiatry assistant and band 5 Podiatrist and the assistant practitioner role is able to fill that gap and also upskills that member of staff.”

Tina Craig, Professional Lead for Podiatry – Gloucestershire Care Services

4. What is it like to be involved in a system-wide approach like this?

This was very much a joint project and although some individuals arranged meetings, booked training rooms, or liaised with the provider as one point of contact we were all very aware that we had the same end goal which was to have a well-structured, organised and effective programme that would provide the best learning experience for all of our apprentices.

These roles will support service users whilst undergoing rehabilitation to help maintain their well-being and independence and stay well in their own homes. In this way these roles directly support a key part of our health and care system plan in delivering safe quality care services.

5. Which apprenticeships have you already procured and which are you now working on? What are the next priorities?

Having successfully procured for the L5 Assistant Practitioner we are now starting to plan joint procurement for Healthcare Assistants and Business Administration. We are also looking to procure for the Level 7 Advanced Clinical Practitioner with the aim to start a cohort in January 2020.

6. How did you work out the apprenticeship figures and agree them between the different organisations?

Luckily we weren't restricted on how many

<https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/>

each trust could enrol onto the apprenticeship and we were originally aiming to have a minimum cohort of 4. We have now successfully enrolled 7 onto the apprenticeship.

7. What help was available to you? And what was most useful and why?

Help with the procurement was available from Simon Dennis (Talent for Care Programme / Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust). The HASO website proved to be very useful when planning clinical pathways that include the Assistant Practitioner Standard and as a general 'go to' for information. Each Trust apprentice team shared their knowledge and experience from previous programmes as well as speaking with the industry professionals like Sarah Marcello (Apprenticeship Relationship Manager, HEE) and Richard Daulton (National Account Manager, NAS).

8. Did you have any issues or do anything that didn't work – is there anything others can learn from you about what not to do?

The most difficult thing was to get everyone together at the same time in one place, with such busy schedules! If we were to do the whole process again we would plan all meetings in advance so that everyone was available. Throughout this recruitment we found ourselves scrabbling around for meeting rooms that were available at the good time for everyone to meet.

“There have been some challenges. The recruitment process was quite daunting to begin with (we had 70 applicants)! However, Ann Duignan and Vicky Dufton from the apprenticeship team at 2gether NHS Foundation Trust were extremely supportive and helped out with the interviews thankfully. It is feeling very positive currently and we believe we made the right decision to create this new post.”

Jayne Robinson – Occupational Therapy Departmental Manager – 2gether NHS Foundation Trust

9. What is next for the group? Does it maintain it's standing to carry on working on procurement or does it fold? Does it cover other apprenticeship-related activities?

As the cohort progresses all trusts will communicate on a continual basis with regards to the progress of learners and how the delivery is working. Regular meetings will be scheduled to meet with the learning provider to provide feedback and receive updates. We will definitely be looking to procure together in the future.

10. What has been the best/most positive thing(s) about taking this approach?

The three trusts have learnt the importance of being very clear with the learning providers as to what you want and expect from the training they deliver and also what communication is expected from them with regards to learner's progress.

It was great to sign a contract with a learning provider that was new to us all. We believe that this helps to eliminate any pre-judgement of how the course will run from previous experiences.

It was beneficial to work as one big team and it felt good to work together and build a programme that we felt happy with. All we need to do now is wait and see how it progresses!

"It has been a really useful addition to the Therapy department having this brand-new position, which covers Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Health & Exercise practitioners. With the remit of the role being very clear, it is understood by the wider team, supported by all staff and valued by service users. It feels empowering having the AP in the team, who is learning about the unique skills of each profession – this is helping to make the team more cohesive. Plus, we know that we are investing in, and growing, a Band 4 for the future who can stay within the team."

Jayne Robinson – Occupational Therapy Departmental Manager – 2gether NHS Foundation Trust

The Apprentices



Meg one of the apprentices who started with Gloucestershire Care Services as a Level 2 Apprentice Health Care Assistant and then secured a substantive post as a Podiatry Assistant says about the opportunity:

"I chose this apprenticeship because I feel as though it will get me that one step closer to where I would like to be in my career. I am far off, however this apprenticeship has given me the chance to show my skills and to help me to the top of the banding which is what I want to achieve within the next few years. I believe it can also improve my skills and knowledge. It is a big test and will be a very big achievement when I get to the end. I am very fortunate to have this opportunity."