

Preparing for the Removal of Frameworks

How Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust are using the customer service practitioner apprenticeship to prepare for the removal of the level 2 business administration apprenticeship

The Challenge

The government has committed to move away from apprenticeship [frameworks to standards](#) by 2020. The last date for new starts for all remaining apprenticeship frameworks will be 31 July 2020. All starts from 1 August 2020 will be on new, employer-designed standards.

On the majority, employer led Trailblazer groups have been successful in designing new apprenticeship standards to fill the place of the retiring frameworks, however employers were left disappointed in June 2019 when the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education rejected the proposal for the level 2 business admin apprenticeship standard. The level 2 proposal was deemed *“not sufficiently distinct from other similar occupations such as the level 3 business administrator, where there were ‘several areas of overlap’, and the level 2 customer service practitioner, where there found some similarities with the knowledge, skills and behaviours”*¹.

Considering this outcome, the challenge to NHS employers is now identifying an apprenticeship that can be used in the place of the level 2 business admin apprenticeship framework whilst lobbying continues for this vital entry point into the NHS. For those with the lowest levels of prior attainment or workplace readiness the level 2 business admin remains a fundamental tool for social mobility for developing future NHS workforce.

What they did

At [Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#) (LTHT) there was concern about the impending removal of the level 2 business administration apprenticeship. The level 2 apprenticeship had been used as a pipeline to a range of roles, including ward clerk, receptionist, business support, administrative assistant, and roles in HR and finance.

However, by working closely with [Leeds City College](#) the Trust was able to utilise the [Customer Service Practitioner](#) apprenticeship to still offer a pipeline to entry level jobs in the Trust. Through close

“The customer service framework mapping was rather seamless, as the learners were already undertaking very customer focused roles, whether directly or indirectly”

¹ <https://feweek.co.uk/2019/06/28/ifa-rejects-level-2-business-admin-apprenticeship-leaving-employers-disappointed-and-upset/>

collaboration with the College, the Trust was able to map its existing business admin apprenticeship to the customer service standard, without losing the administrative focus that was required for some departments.

The level 2 customer service apprenticeship has been used across a range of roles across LTHT

“Initially when we introduced the apprenticeship there was some confusion from learners in administrative roles about why they were undertaking a customer service apprenticeship, however once it was explained that the “customer” wasn’t always a patient, learners were able to identify the wide range of customers in the NHS service; and we now no longer get that question”

within clinical and non-clinical settings, such as: procurement, finance, occupational health, HR, radiology, referral and booking services and outpatients, with a number of learners rotating across multiple areas to gain a variety of customer service experiences.

The success of the apprenticeship has been in understanding that the “customer” is not always a patient. Several learners on programme are not in typical patient facing roles, instead their customer is often another colleague, other internal teams

and external organisations. This wide array of settings and experiences allow for the apprentice to achieve their competencies even without direct patient contact.

Outcomes and Successes

LTHT now have 48 customer service apprentices on programme, with the first cohort on track to complete and go through end point assessment. Future cohorts of learners are also planned throughout 2020.

Learners who have completed the programme have been successful in gaining employment, moved into more senior roles or been able to progress onto the level 3 Business Administration apprenticeship standard.

The programme has also been successful in demonstrating the positive impact of end point assessment (EPA) with learners

“The Customer Service apprenticeship has enabled our learners to gain effective communication techniques, they tackle patient interactions with ease”

welcoming the validation that comes from an external assessment – apprentices have said they found EPA an opportunity to showcase their work and gain feedback and recognition from outside their college and employer.

LTHT are satisfied that the customer service apprenticeship provides an alternative to the level 2 business admin apprenticeship and have high levels of learner satisfaction on the programme. It is recognised however that a dedicated business standard at level 2 would be of added benefit to the NHS and other sectors.