

Cornwall virtual health and social care academy – Case study

As a peninsula, Cornwall faces some specific workforce challenges, as a large and mostly rural county, surrounded by the coast. There are shortages of key healthcare professionals, and the NHS Trusts have been struggling to recruit and retain suitably qualified staff.

In response to some of the challenges, several partner organisations in Cornwall, including Royal Cornwall NHS Foundation Trust, Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Kernow Health CIC primary care training hub, Cornwall Council, local Universities and Further Education Colleges have been working together as part of a Community of Practice to allow them to recruit local people and train them to fill the vacancies in their organisations. A virtual Health and Social Care academy is in the process of being launched as a follow on from the collaborative work that has already taken place.

Alan Jervis from Cornwall Partnership FT and Paul Jeffrey from Kernow Health CIC outline the Cornwall approach:

1. What problems does your Virtual Health and Social Care Academy solve?

The strategic approach in Cornwall has differed slightly from other parts of the country, as many NHS organisations are actively promoting their local areas as a good place to live and work.

In Cornwall, the approach has been to promote a “grow our own” approach to local people, who are already established in the region and train them to become our future workforce, and to offer opportunities for people to fulfil their career aspirations in their own region.

The Virtual Health and Social Care Academy concept is evolving and will build on these foundations.

2. Who have you recruited on to your current apprenticeship programmes?

All the staff currently on Nursing Associate apprenticeships are existing members of staff, and who would not have had the opportunity

to progress without the apprenticeship. Each employer has made the commitment to support the development of their employees, by offering them the opportunity to work and study under this apprenticeship programme. These staff have remained on their current salaries for the duration of the training and have been asked to remain loyal to the organization, as part of their training agreement for a period of time once qualified.

As at end December 2018, 48 apprentices are on the Nursing Associate Programme who are expected to become registered Nursing Associates. An estimated 50 new starts are also expected during 2019. Of these, it is anticipated that a number will continue their training to become registered nurses.

Over 20 staff from Cornwall Partnership have been recruited to the full Nursing Degree Apprenticeship. We can now provide a clear pathway to a registered professional with various entry and exit points utilising Apprenticeships.

3. How are you funding the training?

The training costs of the apprenticeships are funded either by the apprenticeship levy or co-investment, which is the government apprenticeship funding for non-levy payers. Each employer is continuing to fund the salaries. Backfill for the learning time has been accounted for by offsetting these costs against vacancies in the organization's establishment.

4. What are the key benefits?

Retention of our existing staff, by offering opportunities that had not previously been available to them. This allows our staff to grow their careers and remain loyal to the NHS Trusts and the region. By recruiting and retaining local people, we are also able to provide a better level of consistency and continuity of care for patients across the whole of Cornwall.

Also, having Nursing Associate apprentices in the workplace, who are already valued members of the team has allowed their learning to become embedded quickly throughout their training, meaning that over time there will be a reduction in the need to use agency staff to fill gaps.

5. What advice would you provide to other collaborations?

Good communication between the partners is key. You need to ensure that there are good relationships between the employers, the apprentices and the training providers. The process is evolving, building on the good relationships and trust across partners, which allows you to build across all partners.

“It’s really exciting to be able to support our existing staff to reach their full potential. We are committed to continuing our collaboration in order to respond positively to the challenges we face in the county.”

– Alan Jervis, Head of Education and Training, Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

