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

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE AN APPRENTICESHIP LEAD

We spoke with Lisa Ferris (Apprenticeships and Careers Team Manager), about what it's like to implement healthcare apprenticeships at Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - covering Gloucestershire Royal Hospital and Cheltenham General Hospital.

Lisa has been involved and worked within the team for over 6.5 years. Her job involves day to day management of a team of 5 working on apprenticeships, careers and work experience.

Her role focuses on helping to attract and develop a workforce with the skills, knowledge and competence necessary to deliver safe patient care and to enhance the quality of service delivery.

Working collaboratively and cooperatively with others to increase awareness of education and its benefits and by raising aspirations and achievements of staff and delivering the apprenticeship strategy in both the professionally and non-professionally qualified workforce.

1. What is your organisation's approach to apprenticeships?

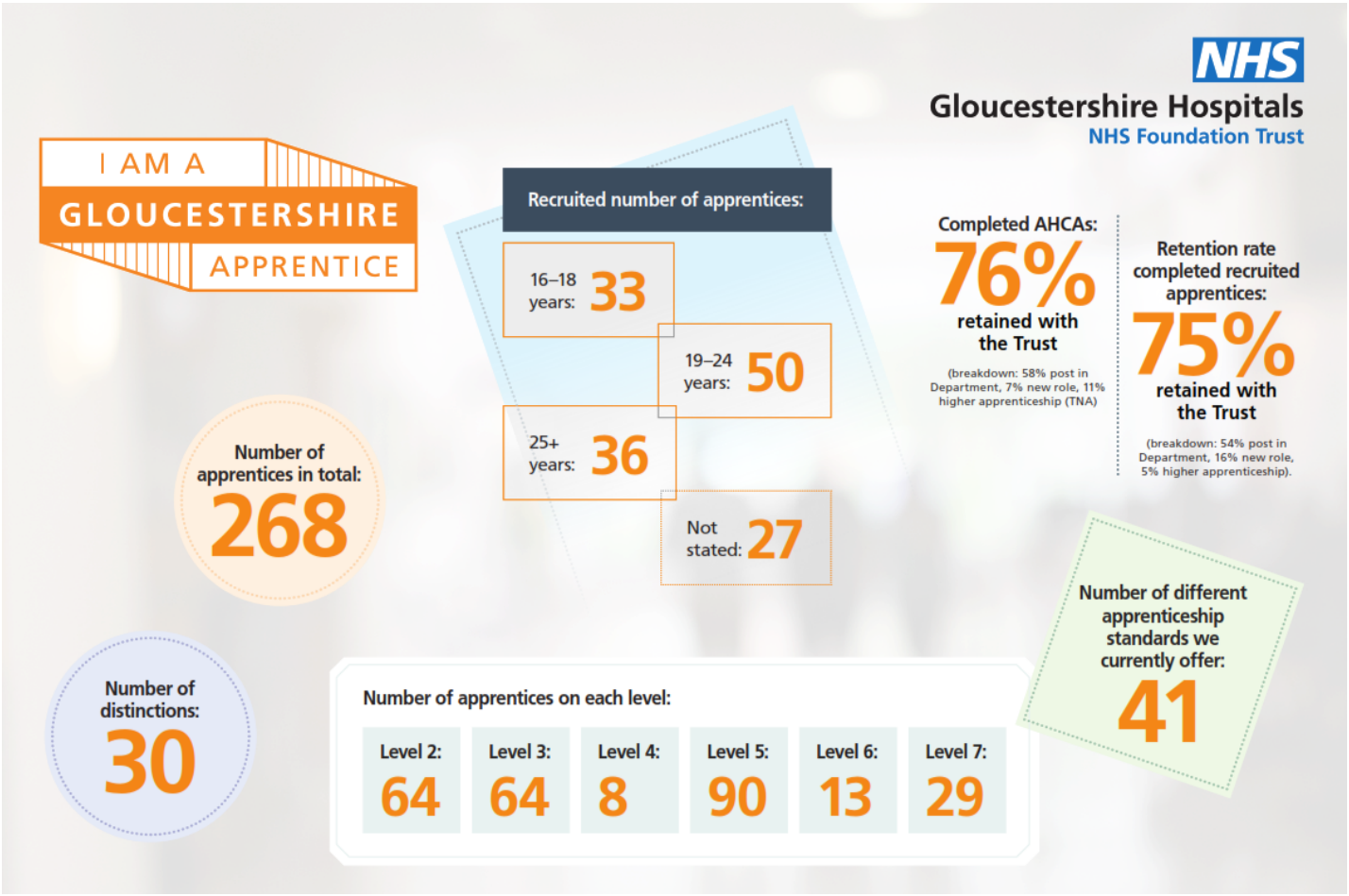
I feel engagement is key to working with our existing workforce, ensuring they feel equipped with having new apprentices and existing members of staff that will mentor and induct them well. We are always looking for new and different areas to offer apprenticeships in and work with our Divisions to make them aware of apprenticeship standards available.

One of our key messages to young people when engaging with schools and colleges is that "we are more than Drs and Nurses", ensuring they know of all the different job roles within the NHS and the opportunities for apprenticeships within these areas. We have had a lot of success stories and case studies of progression and we promote these; which helps with any department that is new to apprenticeships that may have reservations.

We also work within our ICS on a lot of projects to ensure we have a clear NHS message, joined up approach and share good working practice. When attracting recruits from schools/colleges, we focus on the message of "so much more than Drs and Nurses".

2. Which apprenticeships do you deliver?

We are always looking to expand and offer new apprenticeships at all levels. We work with all departments and teams to make them aware of any new standards that are released. We have just recruited an apprentice to our Library undertaking the Library, Information and Archive Assistant apprenticeship which is a new one for us.



3. Which providers and EPAOs are you partnering with?

We have previously used or are currently partnered with:

University of West of England, University of Gloucestershire, Hart Training, Lifetime Training, Aston University, Skills Training UK, Adult Education Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire College, Open University, First Institution Bristol, Cirencester College, Coventry University, Bradford College, CSR Group, Staffordshire University plus more!

4. What steps have you taken so far to move towards setting up the apprenticeships?

We are involved and support with the recruitment, engagement and induction of our apprentices. It is essential they have a good induction and experience of our Trust. We ensure they know who their mentors are beforehand; they undertake a shadowing day before joining getting to know their team and their area. Knowing the smells, sights and atmosphere of a hospital together with things such as knowing where the staff room is and comfortable in the knowledge there will be a friendly face on the day they start. These simple things go a long way to help the apprentice settle in and feel part of the team.

5. What has been the hardest part?

Having such a large Levy pot to spend! Although we are getting closer to our 2.3% target by using transfers and attracting good applicants. As well as offering degree level apprenticeships for recruited and existing staff to train and retain our workforce and "grow" and fit in with the NHS People Plan.

Some areas are reluctant to take on young people straight from school, but we have worked hard to eliminate this barrier by showing they have life skills even at that age and are like "sponges" to learning and can bring great ideas through fresh young eyes.

6. What has been the best part?

So much to say! For me personally, seeing each person develop and grow is amazing. Seeing the younger apprentices become nurses or work their way up through to Band 2, 3s, 4s and higher is testimony that apprenticeships work for us and them. Seeing young people who have not achieved so well at school and were under confident; who go on to flourish. The highlights so far have been:

- Knowing I am helping to make a difference.
- We have 100% 1st time pass rate and our retention rate is around 85% with around 10% going to FE – ie staying at our Trust to work.
- Knowing staff recommend friends and family to our apprenticeships - this is one of the top reasons why they applied.
- Having developed and improved an in house mentoring course so the mentee and mentor have the best possible tools to ensure the best experience.
- Being shortlisted for the BAME large employer of the year.

I could go on and on; every day I love my job. I drive into work and join my work family to deliver Best Care for everyone. It's difficult to describe what satisfaction you get from working in a job you love – but I came across the following phrase ***"working hard for something we love is called passion"*** which I feel sums it up.

7. Can you tell us about your mentorship programme?

I developed and deliver an in house mentoring course. It's aimed at any staff member who mentor, buddy up with or work alongside apprentices. It covers the role of the mentor, the role of the mentee, learning styles, the apprenticeship standard and EPA and Top Tips. It's a 3 hour course and is interactive with group work, videos to watch and sharing experiences (good/bad) in a confidential environment.

The feedback to date has been very good. We encourage our apprentices that stay with us at our Trust after completing their apprenticeship to become our mentors as they are best placed as "been there" and "done it". I feel they are in prime positions to offer support as they have been in their shoes.

Feedback quotes from evaluation forms:

"Very relevant, worth attending."

"Relevant – good information which I can take back to work place"

"It helped me very much."

This really is a key element for apprenticeships to work out well. I see this as a bit of a fostering relationship where they may need a "comfort blanket" to be there, and then the mentee can slowly release off and let the apprentice fly and develop.

8. What steps have you taken to reach the wider community?

As a team we feel it is so important to engage and have regular communication with our local schools, colleges and training providers. We send out a weekly bulletin via email to our local secondary schools and colleges as well as Career Advisors with news, latest opportunities available and updates.

I set up a twitter account for apprenticeship news, events and latest vacancies; this is available to anyone, existing staff and the wider community. Sharing success stories is a great way to show the pathways and progression our apprentices have taken. We recently produced a work experience leaflet as we were unable to offer work experience due to Covid restrictions. We felt that young people still needed to be engaged with careers and opportunities.

9. Do you have any tips for other apprenticeship leads?

- Keep engaging with existing staff and managers - don't take no for an answer when trying to get them to recruit a new apprentice.
- Build a social media presence to reach as many audiences as you can.
- Set up a mentoring programme and ensure each apprentice has a nominated mentor/buddy.
- Engage with schools and colleges (weekly email with news and events etc) - take ex apprentices back to make it real that they can see a student.
- Career clinics held for existing staff and promoting apprenticeship opportunities for them is a good way of engaging that staff group to undertake a qualification.

10. What are the next steps for you?

I have recently been successful in securing a Band 7 post as Head of Department. I am undertaking the Level 5 Operations / Departmental Manager apprenticeship. I'm looking forward to helping develop and work with the team to recruit more apprenticeships in our Trust. Being able to assist creating a workforce fit for the future as well as giving existing staff apprenticeship opportunities to retain and build their careers is top of the agenda.

11. Anything else?

We take 3 key events – National Apprenticeship week, Healthcare Science Week and National Careers week to help and support with engagement with schools, our current workforce, and potential apprentices of the future (pupils) and anyone looking for a career change to promote our Trust.