

Meet the Mentor

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Rachel Smith

Rachel is an Early Years Careers Advisor at Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and is currently mentoring 2 apprentices completing the Level 2 Customer Service apprenticeship.

Rachel, tell us how did you become a mentor?

I have worked with apprentices previously, and now I line manage my apprentices.

What kind of individual support do you give the apprentices?

I support the apprentices daily as we work as a team. We have meetings/ catch ups to ensure they are set up and confident with what they have planned on the day.



We also have regular catch ups about their apprenticeship work, this could contain any sort of help that is needed depending on what stage they are at. Sometimes it's just a casual catch up so they let me know how they are getting on!

How have you benefitted from being a mentor?

The team I work in has gained a very knowledgeable and adaptable apprentice. She is an asset to our team and I personally gain a lot of pride in seeing my apprentice grow and flourish in the work place.



How has your organisation benefitted from the apprenticeship programme?

One of my apprentices has learnt many roles within our team, so in turn she has learnt to adapt and be flexible, a great skill for her to take forward into her future career. We often forget she is an apprentice as she is treated as a member of our team.

What have been your biggest challenges whilst being a mentor?

The beginning of the apprenticeship journey I feel is the most challenging, as leaving the comfort and support network of education means it can be quite a shock when entering the workplace. As well as learning basic tasks of the job, I believe most of my efforts go into supporting the apprentice to grow in self confidence and believe in themselves.

And your biggest successes?

Seeing one my apprentices grow from a shy, quiet, slightly under confident individual into someone who now is full of confidence and has a positive outlook on life and work. She has interviewed for permanent roles and has now moved into a Band 4 position which is fantastic!

What do you hope to do next?

Keep repeating this process for more young people. The transition into the work place can be tough when leaving school. I see the apprenticeship as a bit of a half way house for this, so they still have lots of support and guidance but in a professional working environment.

It is a significant investment in time, but more apprenticeship places will help the young people to transition into rewarding and fulfilling careers.

What tips do you have for people wanting to become a mentor?

Ensure you give them your time and this needs to be regular. You must be able to give them honest feedback so they continue to learn and grow as an individual and an employee. I believe you must be genuinely passionate about their success.