

## FUNCTIONAL SKILLS PROVISION

### Nottingham University Hospitals Trust

#### **Why did you start supporting colleagues in numeracy and/or literacy and/or digital skills? What wider challenges were you looking to address?**

We link in with our staff, in a variety of ways, from virtual workshops to face to face drop in sessions (pre pandemic), to talk about their development and the opportunities we have for them to progress internally.

We have also begun to work in partnership with our Union colleagues, sharing information about our organisational offer and their Union learning course offer together.

From undertaking this wide variety of activity we found that staff who wanted to progress faced a barrier if they didn't have their Maths and English GCSE at the right level, or functional skills.

To enable our staff to progress and attain their chosen career we needed to make sure we offered them opportunities to bridge that gap, otherwise our internal progression opportunities would be out of reach.

Additionally, Nottingham attainment from school has been noted as weak, and to recruit from our local community we needed to offer new recruits opportunities to progress, and undertake training that would see them able to achieve their career aspirations.

It is also a factor in offering apprenticeships to our staff to enable their progression. Of course, you can undertake your Maths (M) and English (E) functional skills at the same time as the main course. But we found that this was very challenging for staff, and their managers, in a number of ways.

Firstly undertaking everything all at once, when maybe you haven't been in education for a few years, seemed a stretch. We feel that offering staff the ability to do their Maths and/or English first and regain those study skills will mean a more positive re-engagement with education.

## **What different types of support do you currently signpost to and/or have in place?**

We felt it important to offer a variety of provision to staff, to meet their own requirements and circumstances, both in work and outside of work.

To enable this we have reached out to providers of functional skills across our patch, and have created a list of all of them, and their offers.

We utilise BKSb, alongside four “bricks and mortar” providers, so that our staff can either undertake their study remotely, or when face to face classes resume, in person. This will see a mixture of online, remote live, remote recorded, and in person lessons in future. Where staff can choose the method that suits their needs, which will enable them to achieve their learning goals.

We have found that offering M&E functional skills has seen an increase in awareness of additional needs, with staff being identified for the first time in their learning journeys. We can then offer support from Access to Work and other internal support systems.

Offering this range also allows us to partner with a variety of providers to increase capacity across the system, with the information on all providers being shared with everyone. Our providers can also gauge demand and add additional provision as needed.

## **How have the interventions above helped you as an employer?**

Engaging with staff around learning is a positive experience. Staff want to develop and progress, and we want to offer them what they want and need. This allows us to make positive relationships with staff who will probably stay with us for a significant amount of time.

We know from our apprenticeship offer that staff retention increases, when progression opportunities are offered, and M&E provision links into this. If staff cannot get onto the first rung of the ladder, so to speak, then we will lose staff to other more aspirational organisations.

We have also forged a different relationship with our Union colleagues. Of course, we need to link in with them around a number of issues that can be challenging, but balancing that with a wholly positive interaction changes the dynamic of the whole relationship. That is good for all parties involved.

By engaging around a variety of learning opportunities we are enabling our talented staff to grow and develop and stay with us. We then have opportunities for new recruits to come in at entry levels, allowing us to train those staff in the “NUH way”, supporting our quality care and our organisational strategy.

## What results have you seen from investing in functional skills?

I cannot say I know any of this statistical stuff, it's anecdotal. Unfortunately the breadth of work I am involved in doesn't allow me to delve deeply into this. I could generalise but I don't think that would be helpful.

## What has been the best thing for you about offering support for functional skills?

Knowing that we are enabling staff to learn, develop and seek out the career opportunities that they aspire to is the best thing about developing our provision, from M&E functional skills upwards.

