Skills for Health Healthcare Apprenticeships

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

MEET THE CHAIR DIAGNOSTIC RADIOGRAPHER TRAILBLAZER

We spoke with Maria Reynolds, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, who is the chair of the Diagnostic Radiographer Trailblazer group.

So, Maria, please tell us a bit about your day job?

I am the Imaging Practice and Education Lead at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust.

This entails:

- Taking a strategic overview of the education and training required for the current workforce as well as future workforce needs
- Providing a structure for education and training which evidences all imaging staff competences to ensure high quality diagnostic radiography provision
- Managing the training budget, sourcing and securing any additional funding which might be available

Why did you take on the Chair's mantle?

In 2017, I was involved in producing a recruitment and retention strategy, which included the aim of utilising apprenticeships as part of a long-term workforce development strategy. The passion I have for and my belief in apprenticeships meant I was continually asking questions about the Trust's involvement in apprenticeship development and so when nominated by colleagues to be the Chair of the Diagnostic Radiographer trailblazer, I didn't hesitate.

"In my opinion, apprenticeships provide an excellent opportunity for employers to take control of shaping the future workforce – so let's do something about it!"

Who was involved in the group?

Members of the trailblazer group were wide ranging and included both the NHS and our private partners, large and small employers from across the country (imaging and service manager leads), HEIs, the Society and College of Radiographers. There was also representation from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and Skills for Health.

The Diagnostic Radiographer standard has now been approved for delivery. On reflection, what would you say were the main challenges?

- We started the development process at the same time as the IfATE were making some changes to their processes and systems and often it seemed as if the goal posts were changing. This, however, didn't inhibit our development of the standard.

- Being sure we were doing the right thing, in light of the fact that we had the responsibility for developing a national standard on behalf of the Diagnostic Radiography profession

- Developing the EPA

What achievements are you most proud of?

"I'm particularly pleased with the wide-ranging engagement of the profession in the consultation process. On a personal level, my confidence has grown and I'm proud of the fact that we got to the end!"

Having got to the stage where the standard is ready for delivery, my biggest fear is that we don't take the opportunity to utilise the apprenticeship and realise the impact that it could have for developing and sustaining the workforce.

What tips do you have for other trailblazer Chairs?

I would say, plan ahead and utilise the expertise around you ie other trailblazer members, the IfATE Relationship Manager and Skills for Health. Set out your expectations of the group at the beginning and realise that it's an all-consuming commitment whilst the standard is being developed.

What challenges do you foresee for organisations implementing the Diagnostic Radiographer degree apprenticeship standard?

I think getting employers on board and finding the money for a salary will be a challenge. There will be an increasing need for innovation and creativity to ensure there is sufficient capacity to support apprentices within the workplace. For HEIs, I feel the biggest challenge will be the production and delivery of a course within the funding band allocated.

Do you have any top tips for others considering implementing this apprenticeship?

Ensure you have a sound understanding of what having an apprentice within your organisation means i.e. you are aware of the infrastructure required to support apprentices within the workplace.

“Start discussions with HEI contacts as soon as possible.”

* Diagnostic radiographers use the latest technology to look inside the body in different ways. Using a range of imaging technology and techniques to work out what disease or condition is causing a patient’s illness, including: x-ray to look through tissues to examine bones, cavities and foreign objects, fluoroscopy to see a real time image of the digestive system, CT (computed tomography) which provides views of crosssections of the body etc.

Download the the standard and EPA here.