

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE AN APPRENTICESHIP LEAD



We spoke with Liz Claridge, about what it's like to implement healthcare apprenticeships at Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

The trust employs 4,500 staff providing acute and emergency care to the community of Chesterfield and North Derbyshire. Liz's day job involves managing a team of staff who deliver onsite training for the Care Certificate induction to all new patient facing support staff to ensure they are prepared to care for the patients. Their team works in partnership with external education providers to ensure all their apprentices are getting good quality on-site support throughout their apprenticeship. Liz's role also includes sourcing new apprenticeship opportunities which will help with the development of their workforce and make good use of the levy.



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

As an NHS organisation we pay into the apprenticeship levy approximately £600,000 per year and are eager to make the best use of this funding to support our staff's development and young people from our local community to 'get into' work through apprenticeships and support our role as an 'anchor' organisation. The trust has a long standing commitment to 'grow our own' which is evident within our Trust's strategic objectives 'to look after our people' and 'support our communities'. The trust's People Strategy builds on this further with specific objectives to develop apprenticeships at all levels as part of our recruitment, retention, leadership and upskilling strategy.

The trust's 'Grow Our Own' group is responsible for implementing the growth of apprenticeships and monitoring the quality of learning and impact. Within our People Strategy we have key performance measures which relate specifically to apprenticeships including; levy spent, withdrawals, achievements and end point assessment results.

We also use our levy funding to upskill our current people through higher level apprenticeships to enable them to develop the skills to deliver new services as these change, and promote retention through career development. Within the organisation's education centre we have a specific team, the 'Staff Development and Apprenticeship team', who deliver, coordinate and lead on the apprenticeship agenda.

Apprenticeships can be commissioned internally or externally. Internally differs from the external process as external positions need to be advertised via our website, applicants will then need to be interviewed and the candidate who matches the job criteria the best will then be selected. For internal applicants it is usually the employee themselves who will reach out to the apprenticeship team to enquire about current apprenticeship opportunities. For all apprenticeships the manager, the candidate, the training provider and the apprenticeship team need to be involved. It is the apprenticeship team's role to add new apprentices to the Digital Apprenticeship Service account and to liaise with the training provider to enrol the apprentices on the programme.

2. Which apprenticeships do you deliver/are you planning to offer?

We currently do not solely deliver any apprenticeships as we are not on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) but we work very closely with our education partners to help with the delivery of assessment and support of our clinical apprentices particularly on the level 2 and 3 Healthcare Diplomas and apprenticeships.

We also offer onsite support in partnership with the University of Derby 2 days per week to ensure the nursing associates are well supported and monitored. We offer a wide range of apprenticeship opportunities within our organisation. After healthcare qualifications, the largest uptake in apprenticeships is in business administration but we also support our staff on degree apprenticeships e.g. Leadership, H.R and recently Nursing. We plan to support staff on the new degree apprenticeships like Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Diagnostic Radiography.

3. Which Training Providers and EPAOs are you partnering with?

We currently use the below list of training providers:

- The Sheffield College
- The University of Derby
- Kaplan
- Chesterfield College
- BPP University
- Birmingham University
- The Procurement Academy
- Sheffield Hallam University
- The University of Sheffield
- JTL
- Nottingham Trent University
- Bradford College
- Manchester University

We also use other providers via the tendering and procurement process if we cannot find the right apprenticeship programme with the above providers.

4. What steps have you taken towards setting up apprenticeships?

We currently co-deliver the Healthcare Support Worker and Nursing Associate apprenticeships with two other training providers and have found learners feel much more supported as a result of this. Other apprenticeships such as business and administration etc. are still being delivered via the training providers however; we do have incredible mentor and supervisions arrangements in place. Tutors and assessors regularly contact our apprentices and set up plans to ensure they are on track for completion and learners are aware that if any problems occur they can contact either the college or the apprenticeship team directly.

Our selection process for apprenticeships is decided by each department depending on the programme. We have to make applicants aware of our values and that if they do not currently have Maths and English Level 2 or equivalent then this will need to be studied alongside the programme.

5. What are your apprenticeship numbers like?

We currently have 179 apprentices on programme here at the Chesterfield Royal. We have had over 80 achievements within the past year with very little withdrawal rates. For 2021/22 we plan to increase both start and achievement rates by advertising apprenticeships further in the trust to ensure all departments in the hospital are aware of apprenticeship opportunities. We also would like to encourage small organisations such as pharmacies and GP's to take us up on our levy transfer offers. Our assessor's commitment to our learners shows particularly within the Healthcare apprenticeships where we have achieved a 100% End-point-assessment pass rate with 24% passing with Distinctions.

6. What has been the hardest part?

The hardest part must have been the impact of Covid. We were keen not to delay the progress on the apprenticeships and our team were very flexible in their approach to ensuring assessments and support still took place when colleges were not able to deliver learning on site. Also to prevent end point assessments (EPA) being delayed we purchased a range of laptops and had the EPA software downloaded onto them so that the exams could take place remotely within our education centre when colleges closed. This was a very stressful time but the team all pulled together between working clinically to support colleagues in practice and trying to get the best outcome.

7. What has been the best part?

When I first came into this role 6 years ago there were no development prospects for our support staff available, without them having to leave their jobs to directly apply to university. This was not always financially viable for most of our support staff. This was a shame as they were very able and competent individuals. As the availability of apprenticeships has broadened to include roles like Assistant Practitioner, Nursing Associate and now Nursing and Allied Health Professions degree apprenticeships this has widened access to development for many more people within our organisation. The best bit is watching them realise their potential and achieving their goals. That makes my job worth doing.

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

- Don't take things too personally. It's rewarding when apprentices succeed but sometimes this does not happen and this can be disappointing when you have put in a lot of effort to support someone.
- Ensure you meet with education providers regularly to ensure you are aware of learner's progress and take action to support any apprentice who is struggling or failing to perform as they should be.
- Always be approachable and encourage your apprentices to speak to you about their concerns and be a good listener.
- Have a good team around you - I could not function without mine they are fabulous.
- If you make a mistake, don't be too hard on yourself it's a steep learning curve and you are learning new things all the time.

9. What are the next steps for you?

Next steps are to apply to be on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. We have been wanting to do this for about 2 years but Covid got in the way when the register closed. We will continue to source new apprenticeship opportunities as they arise and use them to develop our staff.

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about?

We are working in partnership with other organisations in our local STP and Joined up careers to improve recruitment, retention of staff and reduce vacancies particularly in social care. We have piloted a 15 month rotational apprenticeship for Healthcare Support Workers where the apprentices have a placement in 5 areas across health and social care whilst carrying out a level 2 in adult care.