

Darren Avery

Level 5 Human Resources (HR) Consultant / Partner

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You can access the standard [here](#).

Individuals in this role will use their HR expertise to provide and lead the delivery of HR solutions to business challenges, together with tailored advice to the business in a number of HR areas, typically to mid-level and senior managers. They could be in a generalist role, where they provide support across a range of HR areas – likely to be the Core HR option; or a specialist role, where they focus on and have in depth expertise in a specific area of HR – likely to be Resourcing Total Reward, Organisation Development, or HR Operations. Whichever of these is chosen, they will have a good grounding across the whole range of HR disciplines as this is contained in both of the qualification options included in this standard.



Meet Darren Avery, Strategic Workforce Development Manager - Apprenticeships, at London Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

Darren recently completed his Level 5 Human Resources (HR) Consultant / Partner apprenticeship. We spoke with Darren about his experiences as an apprentice, keep reading to find out more.

1. Why did you decide to do the Level 5 HR Consultant / Partner apprenticeship?

I started my career in the NHS at GOSH (Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust) as their Apprenticeship Lead in 2016. I was based in the HR & OD (Human Resources and Organisational Development) Department. Coming from an FE (Further Education) and apprenticeship background, I felt it appropriate to get a professional HR qualification and CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) membership. I looked into what I'd need, how I could do it and there were a few routes available to me including the apprenticeship route which was attractive as it would be funded by the apprenticeship levy with no cost to myself. The apprenticeship option included the CIPD qualification, and I thought it would be good practice for me to do the apprenticeship, given my new role in implementing apprenticeships across the Trust. I thought it would be good to lead by example and complete the apprenticeship. I joined London Ambulance Service NHS Trust in 2020 as the Strategic Workforce Development Manager – Apprenticeships.

2. What do you think are some of the common myths around apprenticeships?

There is the perception from some that they are not for professional roles or are poor quality compared to the traditional routes. Also, that existing staff can't do apprenticeships and that they are just for young people or new recruits. There is a lack of understanding that apprenticeships now offer career pathways and progression from Level 2 to Level 7 and that you can do degrees or master's as part of an apprenticeship. Also, the lack of understanding of how apprenticeships work in reality mean that some people think it is better to just do the standalone qualification but the apprenticeship gives the opportunity to put your learning into practice in the workplace.

3. What do you think are the benefits of implementing apprenticeships in an organization?

I think they help with retention as the staff feel supported and developed. The peer to peer learning that the apprentices get from other apprentices across the NHS and other sectors is invaluable too. Working with a good quality apprenticeship provider means that you can have a bespoke, contextualised programme and the provider will work with you to ensure there is ongoing support to the apprentices which increases staff satisfaction and morale.

4. You were involved in the development of the Level 7 Senior People Professional apprenticeship. Why did you want to be involved and how did you find the process?

So obviously, having completed the Level 5 HR Consultant / Partner apprenticeship and gaining CIPD membership I was keen as an individual to ensure that people who already have the Level 5 could progress. There is the non-apprenticeship route but having an apprenticeship available just seemed like a good progression opportunity and a good opportunity to support NHS staff in HR, OD, and L & D (Learning and Development) roles. That is why I became part of the Trailblazer Group. Developing the L7 Apprenticeship was a lot of work, but it was a really good learning experience.

Working with other employers from different sectors to develop a standard was very rewarding. I felt I was contributing to the future proofing of the People Professions. The standard was launched in January 2021 and London Ambulance Service NHS Trust have been involved in the joint procurement with pan London Trusts and are going to offer places on the cohort starting soon with University Of East London.

5. Do London Ambulance Service NHS Trust offer the L3 People Professional apprenticeships?

Yes definitely, we have apprentices on all levels now and use the People Profession apprenticeships to offer career pathways and progression opportunities. We use the Level 3 HR Support as an entry point and a way to achieve the recognised qualifications needed and it offers a great route into the People and Culture Directorate. Previous apprentices have completed the Level 3 and moved into more senior roles and then enrolled onto the Level 5 and now have the opportunity to do the Level 7 programme at a later date. We have found that this approach gives the apprentices fantastic learning opportunities. As part of their apprenticeship programme, they move outside of the department they work in, and they get to shadow and support colleagues in other areas of the wider directorate. So that's a good opportunity for them and benefits the organization.



[Click here for further information about the Level 3 HR \(Human Resources\) Support apprenticeship standard.](#)

HR Professionals in this role are typically either working in a medium to large organisation as part of the HR function delivering front line support to managers and employees, or are a HR Manager in a small organisation. Their work is likely to include handling day to day queries and providing HR advice; working on a range of HR processes, ranging from transactional to relatively complex, from recruitment through to retirement; using HR systems to keep records; providing relevant HR information to the business; working with the business on HR changes.

6. What would you say to anyone considering doing a HR apprenticeship?

Go for it! It's a great opportunity and there is lots to learn. You will get to put the knowledge and skills you learn straight into practice in the workplace. You will get insight into other areas of the People Professions too. I really enjoyed my apprenticeship.

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