

NHS PROPERTY SERVICES LEADING THE WAY IN THE NHS ESTATES AND FACILITIES APPRENTICESHIP CHALLENGE

NHS Property Services - "Apprenticeship Journey"

NHS England & NHS Improvement and Health Education England have launched a new NHS Estates and Facilities Apprenticeship Challenge to support the greater use of apprenticeships in estates and facilities. This challenge is for NHS employers and wholly owned subsidiaries to create 1,000 new apprenticeships starts in 2022/23.

NHS Property Services (NHSPS) are delighted to be a part of the challenge and have already made headway in training apprentices across a wide range of disciplines. To ensure they delivered on their purpose, a key strategy was introduced in 2020: **To Get, Grow, and Keep Great People**. A significant factor that will make a positive impact is investing and developing in their apprenticeship strategy. They believe apprenticeships contribute to a highly skilled workforce, engage and enable their colleagues and enhance their brand.

NHS Property Services has been piloting apprenticeships since 2018 and have seen 18 achievers since 2018. Before 2020 apprenticeships were requested on an ad-hoc basis with relatively low numbers. However, in line with the 2020 academic year, they ran an internal campaign to recruit two cohorts of apprentices, which saw a considerable increase in their committed levy spend from approximately £14,800 to £250,000. Also providing the opportunity for some colleagues to progress their career upon apprenticeship completion.

NHSPS Apprenticeship Strategy three-year plan

Year 1 (2020/21)

- ▶ Recruit two internal cohorts of apprentices within their Operations function
 - One cohort of Level 3 Plumbing and Domestic Heating apprentices (development opportunity for existing colleagues from the Maintenance Assistant/Maintenance Operative teams).

NHS PROPERTY SERVICES LEADING THE WAY IN THE NHS ESTATES AND FACILITIES APPRENTICESHIP CHALLENGE

- One cohort of Level 2 Facilities Services Operative apprentices (as part of their internal Stepping Stones development programme).

Year 2 (2021/22)

- ▶ Recruit two internal cohorts of apprentices within their Operations function
 - One cohort of Level 3 Hard FM (Facilities Management) apprentices including plumbing, heating, electrician and air conditioning skillset (development opportunity for existing colleagues from the Maintenance Assistant/Maintenance Operative teams).
 - One cohort of Level 2 Facilities Services Operative apprentices (as part of their internal Stepping Stones development programme).
- ▶ Trial small numbers of external Hard FM apprentice recruitment.
- ▶ Trial small numbers of external apprentice recruitment across professional services including PR and Communications.
- ▶ Trial small numbers of leadership & management apprenticeships ranging from Level 3 to Level 7.

Year 3 (2022/23)

- ▶ Carry out external recruitment campaign with investment into additional headcount for 19 Hard FM apprentices across the country in a variety of Level 2 and Level 3 skillsets.
- ▶ Work with all functions across the business to convert vacancies into apprenticeship opportunities including Finance, Data, People Team, Surveying and Health & Safety.

NHS PROPERTY SERVICES LEADING THE WAY IN THE NHS ESTATES AND FACILITIES APPRENTICESHIP CHALLENGE

- Offer tailored leadership and management apprenticeship opportunities to their leadership population from Level 3 to Level 7, linking them to transitional programmes and mentoring opportunities.

Learning and Development (L&D):

NHSPS believes this is the best approach to ensure success, especially in these uncertain times. They invest in different types of apprenticeships. Firstly, they have their Stepping Stones programme, where they run an internal programme in collaboration with an external training provider who delivers the Level 2 Facilities Services Operative.

Apprentices not only have support from their line managers, they also have help from the L&D team, who reach out to them every six weeks to discuss progression and provide both coaching and mentoring.

The internal portion of the course focuses on personal skills e.g. communication and offering resilience; therefore, apprentices gain more than specialist knowledge. The programme is open to their front-line colleagues including receptionists, maintenance assistants, caretakers, domestic assistants and administrators. The programme has seen a number of colleagues promoted to Team Leader and Supervisor roles. The programme's primary purpose is to allow colleagues to be the best version of themselves.

The Learning and Development (L&D) team keeps in contact with all the training providers for all apprenticeships to ensure they meet all requirements and ensure they are continuously supported. They work with line managers and run various meetings to ensure they are kept up to date and upskilled to provide support. The L&D team remain in contact with apprentices so that communication is continuous and appropriate support is offered. Line managers attend progress reviews with colleagues and the training providers, ensuring support.

NHS PROPERTY SERVICES LEADING THE WAY IN THE NHS ESTATES AND FACILITIES APPRENTICESHIP CHALLENGE

NHS Property Services - "Our apprentices"

In total, NHS Property Services currently have 98 apprentices, age ranging from 20 – 59, male and female, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds in the following areas:

- Facilities Services Operative – Level 2
- Property Maintenance Operative – Level 2
- Building Services Engineering – Level 3
- Gas Engineering Operative – Level 3
- HR Support – Level 3
- Installation Electrician and Maintenance Electrician – Level 3
- Learning & Development practitioner – Level 3
- Learning Mentor – Level 3
- Plumbing & Domestic Heating Technician – Level 3
- Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heat Pump Engineering Technician – Level 3
- Team Leader/Supervisor – Level 3
- Facilities Manager – Level 4
- Public Relations & Communications Assistant – Level 4
- Operations and Departmental Management – Level 5
- Chartered surveyor degree - Level 6
- Senior Leader – Level 7
- Data Science – Level 7

Success stories:

Here are just a few examples of their success stories that align to their people strategy to get grow and keep great people and show the diversity of courses and accessibility to colleagues at all levels. Diversity of Hard FM apprentices is something NHSPS have really promoted during this year's first ever external recruitment campaign. They have attended the National Apprenticeship Shows across the country and involved their existing apprentices in the recruitment campaign.

NHS PROPERTY SERVICES LEADING THE WAY IN THE NHS ESTATES AND FACILITIES APPRENTICESHIP CHALLENGE

Success stories:

Callum joined NHSPS as a Maintenance Operative and applied to complete a Level 3 Gas Engineering Operative apprenticeship. During the summer, he joined in on a tour of England, attending Apprentice Assessment Centres where NHSPS recruited 19 new Hard FM apprentices. Callum shared his experiences with the candidates who had applied for NHSPS vacancies. He also spoke about his apprenticeship experience on Instagram, which helped with their attraction and recruitment campaign.

"If you're considering an apprenticeship, then consider no longer. The best advice I can give is to go for it. The feeling of achievement at the end is worth the hard work ten times over and not to mention the doors it will open for you. It demonstrates numerous skills to your employer and the progression that comes with it can lead you into a career path to set you up for life."

Callum Anchors

Nicola was on the pilot Stepping Stones apprenticeship programme, she was a caretaker and whilst working towards her Level 2 Facilities Services Operative apprenticeship she was promoted to Team Leader. Another opportunity came up to move into a Maintenance Assistant role (focusing on plumbing) - she is now their first ever female Hard FM apprentice (all within the last 15 months).

Harry is Multi-Skilled Technician working in the North-West region who TUUPED into the company as a combustion technician with skills in building fabric, plumbing and basic electrical. Harry is now part of "Aspiring Managers" which is a 9-month long programme that gives colleagues from all backgrounds a chance to prepare for the next role whilst going through blended learning, leadership courses and coaching sessions. Harry is looking forward to expanding his skill set through the programme and eventually mentoring other colleagues that want to learn new skills down the line.

NHS PROPERTY SERVICES LEADING THE WAY IN THE NHS ESTATES AND FACILITIES APPRENTICESHIP CHALLENGE

Success stories:

Along with Nicola, Shelley Denton is part of NHSPS' women in construction initiative. She started in August 2022 as an apprentice plumbing and heating engineer. The initiative aims to encourage women from both within NHSPS and beyond to get into construction roles as well setting up potential apprentices with mentors already in these types of roles. Shelley is already getting stuck in with a wide range of skills, from gas and plumbing to working with electricians and she hopes to help out with the mentoring scheme in the future.

This is probably the most rewarding part of their Leadership and Development strategy, because it supports their approach to social mobility, they're impacting on colleagues' career opportunities and providing access to qualifications they may never have thought about pursuing before.

Get Grow Keep

Chelsea Foster, Learning and Development Programme Manager, NHS Property Services said.

"In order to provide opportunities to people from all backgrounds, we don't just look to external candidates, we use apprenticeships to upskill colleagues that are in the business and through our stepping stones programme we deliver training in conjunction with our external providers to build confidence and other useful skills."

Suzanne Jones said,

"I am proud of what we have achieved over the last 2 years and it's great to see NHSPS making such a positive contribution to the NHS Estates and Facilities Apprenticeship Challenge and we look forward to growing our apprenticeship offering over the coming months and years. We're working on our next three years' strategy and things are really exciting!"

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Get Grow Keep

Martin Steele, CEO, NHS Property Services,

“We want a reputation for delivering high-quality services and putting the customer at the heart of everything we do. We engage, enable and empower colleagues to appropriately challenge existing practices and lead the business to greater success. We have created a culture of continuous learning. Our programmes open the door for many talented people within the business to develop new skills and broaden their knowledge and experience.”

About NHS Property Services

NHS Property Services are a government-owned company which exists to help the NHS get the most from its estate, ensuring it is consistently fit for purpose so that healthcare professionals can deliver excellent patient care.

Their portfolio is one of the largest in the UK, comprising more than 3,000 properties with 7,000 tenants across England. At a total value of more than £3bn, this represents about 10% of the total NHS estate. Their properties range from listed buildings through to state-of-the-art integrated health campuses.

They have unrivalled depth of experience and breadth of skills in every area of property, with over 6000 colleagues. Ranging from Property Management experts making the right estate decisions, so the NHS is fit for purpose now, and in the future. Through to their dedicated facilities management teams working on the frontline to keep buildings clean, safe, and compliant ensuring the best possible environment for all their customers and their patients.

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