

FEATURED APPRENTICE - CONNOR GUTSELL

LEVEL 2 PRODUCTION CHEF

Meet Connor Gutsell, a Production Chef apprentice at West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust.

What apprenticeship are you studying and what does the study involve?

I am studying the Level 2 Production Chef apprenticeship.

How did you get into your current career?

I have worked in the NHS from leaving school. My neighbour, who also worked as a chef in the NHS, originally recommended the NHS, working in the kitchens as an NHS catering assistant. I was a catering assistant for four years, also working through COVID-19. Then an opportunity arose on the chef side within the trust and I jumped at it as I have always cooked. During COVID-19 especially, I cooked a lot at home. I joined the apprenticeship programme and have not looked back!

What's a typical day like?

On a 06.30 - 14.30 shift I do a lot of 'mains' work. I will come in and set the breakfast (e.g. porridge) out and get all my ingredients ready for evening meal. I will cook then serve lunch. While the porridge is being served I will start to cook using a bratt pan (large pan, almost the size of a table - to serve 250 - 300 portions). Then I will do a special evening meal, we do specials everyday of the week. Anything from noodles, burgers or curries. We have it on a rota. We have mountains of recipes, always something new!

Challenges, timing is always a challenge. On a Friday for example, we fry fresh fish on top of what we normally do, there is always extra stuff. Timing is vital in our line work with set meals times. We have to be ready to go at the exact required timings. I try not to burn anything as the pot wash staff don't appreciate that!

Some of the myths are that NHS serve poor food but the truth is if anything is not up to standard, we don't serve it! We are lucky, lots of people like our food. On several occasions, while on a break other staff have come to me and said they really enjoyed the meal they have had.



CONNOR GUTSELL
Production Chef apprentice

What are you most proud of, where do you see yourself heading?

We are unique as we are doing ALL our college work in work and the tutor will come to the hospital. I like the practical experience and learning on the job. There is a lot of college work to do, but we are mostly in the kitchen practicing. The tutors are very helpful and give us as much support as they can.

I am most proud of the fact that once I am qualified I can put back into the NHS Trust. I believe food is medicine and a way to help people get better. It's adding to the community. West Suffolk Hospital is very community based.

What advice would you give to some considering your role or area of work?

Don't presume it's easy and that all we do is use a microwave or reheat food! That is so not the case – everything at my hospital is cooked fresh on the day and by hand. It's a great job but a important job that carries responsibility.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LEVEL 2 PRODUCTION CHEF APPRENTICESHIP STANDARD.](#)

