

APPRENTICESHIPS AT LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST

London Ambulance Service (LAS) have been an employer provider since 2018 and decided to apply to the Register of Approved Training Providers (RoATP) so they could create and deliver apprenticeship programmes for their own staff, that are specific to their organisation and aligned to their workforce needs. To date they have had over 500 apprenticeship starts.

Darren Avery the Strategic Workforce Development Manager for Apprenticeships at LAS says:

“A benefit of being employer provider is that we can plan our capacity accordingly and not have any potential quality issues with external apprenticeship providers. By delivering our own apprenticeship programmes we've got full control over the curriculum aligned to the apprenticeship standards and it allows us to maximise our levy pot to fully utilise the funding available.

We are able to employ staff with sector and NHS expertise to deliver the education programmes and have access to all the necessary resources from a quality and compliance perspective too. We believe this has enabled LAS to create high quality apprenticeship programmes that really work for us as an employer but also for all the apprentices that go through these programmes. Up until recently LAS only delivered the Level 4 Associate Ambulance Practitioner which allowed us to create a career pathway via the apprenticeship route up to the Level 6 Paramedic Degree Apprenticeship.

We have now introduced a new apprenticeship programme, the Level 3 Ambulance Support Worker which will provide an additional entry point and talent pipeline. We will continue to work in partnership with University of Cumbria, who deliver the degree apprenticeship, to ensure we can maximise the opportunities for career progression via the apprenticeship route”





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Undoubtable proof that LAS deliver high quality apprenticeship programmes is the outcome of their Ofsted full inspection in March 2022 which graded the overall effectiveness of their apprenticeship provision as Good.

They achieved Good in all areas of inspection:

- The quality of education - Good
- Behaviour and attitudes- Good
- Personal development - Good
- Leadership and management – Good
- Apprenticeships – Good

This is a great achievement especially given the challenges LAS faced during the pandemic. Their initial monitoring visit from Ofsted in August 2019 found them to be making reasonable progress against all of the key themes and they have maintained the high quality of their provision with the aim of Outstanding at their next inspection.

When asked about how they got Ofsted ready, Darren had this to say “Be prepared! There was quite a big gap between our inspections due to the pandemic and inspections being delayed but we knew we couldn’t rest on our laurels and had to continue to have quality and compliance at the forefront of our delivery.

The initial monitoring visit had identified some potential areas of focus and improvement which we used at the basis of our quality monitoring and improvement plans. In preparation for the full inspection, we worked very closely with all the apprentices to get their feedback and to ensure that they were progressing to plan.

We, like all the other NHS providers and being on the frontline, did have lots of issues with staff getting COVID and being off, some long term, some short term plus many being redeployed. We had lots of delays beyond our control and so we focused on each individual apprentice so they were fully supported, and they knew what they had to do to achieve. We had weekly meetings which focused on progress to ensure we would be ready to articulate this at inspection. We made sure all staff involved in delivery were fully briefed around what to expect at the inspection. Many were experienced in education delivery but had not been in scope of Ofsted before.



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We had regular Comms being shared and a group of senior stakeholders from different parts of the organisation met regularly to ensure there was strategic governance in place. This was really important and worked so well when we had the full inspection as this group met at the end of each day and I felt fully supported as the nominee. Given the shift patterns of LAS and the fact that our apprentices work all over London, there were some challenges on the day with logistics and access to apprentices but by being so well prepared we were able to mitigate these, and the inspector had access to all the apprentices they wanted to speak to. With both the Level 3 and Level 4 apprenticeship standards we deliver, we have planned very thoroughly and taken the time to make sure we really get it right. If we expand our offer in the future, we will undertake the same curriculum planning to ensure we maintain quality. I am also an active member of the NHS England Employer Provider network which has proved invaluable in terms of networking with other NHS providers and access to support and expertise!"

Further evidence of the success of LAS's Apprenticeship Programmes have been the number of awards they have been winning!

Darren says "We were the 2022 London Winners and National finalist for the National Apprenticeship Awards for Recruitment Excellence in our apprenticeship programme. I was very pleased about this as it recognised our efforts towards widening participation and access to our apprenticeship programmes for the local community.

We now have a tried and tested route to become a paramedic via the apprenticeship route and you don't need any clinical experience or qualifications to apply. This allows us to attract a more diverse workforce which represents the communities we serve. What we've done with the apprenticeship is created a new talent pipeline in addition to the traditional routes.

We also won Employer of the Year (Macro) at the AAC Apprenticeship Awards in March 2023 which was a great achievement in a tough category, and it is because we go above and beyond to support our apprentices. We've got really good success rates of getting people through their apprenticeships and achieving good outcomes at endpoint assessment with distinctions and merits.

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We've got a programme that doesn't just give them a qualification or give them a role. It gives them a career and an opportunity to progress. It is really important for us as an organisation to work with our local community to help to address our workforce needs, and to create a diverse workforce and particularly one that represents London to deliver better patient care. There is a clear link in terms of delivering quality apprenticeships and education and improving patient outcomes."

Darren goes on to say "We also won a Community Award in Newham for our programme which recognised our work with the local community as well as a Greater London Authority Award and recognition from the London Mayor which we are incredibly proud of! Also, we shouldn't forget the top Department for Education's Top 100 apprenticeship employers and LAS were the highest ranked NHS employer in the country. We hope to expand our work with the GLA further and are waiting for outcomes on our funding bid to support our high ambitions in terms of the numbers of Londoners that we want to recruit into frontline roles over the next three to five years. We are creating a new programme to tackle the barriers into employment and apprenticeships that many Londoners face, particularly the maths & English requirements, and employability skills. We plan to support and engage with individuals that without this support wouldn't be able to work for us. We are aiming for 50% to come from a black and minority ethnic group, we've got a certain percentage around disabilities, young people, older people. Largely they'll be unemployed people and the programme will offer qualifications and job coaching to enable them to progress into careers within LAS. This will give us another new talent pipeline to progress into apprenticeships whilst maintaining our quality provision"

