

# LEEDS COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST



**We spoke to Rachel Pontefract, Head of Clinical Developments for AHPs (Allied Health Professionals), at Leeds Community Healthcare NHS trust. She spoke about the trust's experiences of offering apprenticeships.**

## **Briefly describe your organisation**

We provide a wide range of person-centred healthcare services within a Community setting for Children and Adults, working closely with wider partners including social care and voluntary sectors to optimise outcomes. We support patients and their families and carers to understand and manage their health conditions and provide support where it is needed – whether that be ongoing care of acute health needs or long term conditions, rehabilitation, preventing admissions to hospital, supporting discharges home, providing dignified palliative and end of life care.

## Currently which apprenticeships do you offer?

We currently offer the following apprenticeships:

- Level 3 Senior Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship standard
- Level 5 Assistant Practitioner (Health) apprenticeship standard
- Level 6 Occupational Therapist (Degree) apprenticeship standard
- Level 6 Physiotherapist (Degree) apprenticeships standard
- Level 7 Advanced Clinical Practitioner (Degree) apprenticeship standard

## What benefits have apprenticeships brought to your organisation?

Apprenticeships help to build the workforce of the future, improves staff morale and hopefully improve retention of staff. It improves the quality of care we can deliver to our patients and enhances the skill sets of our staff.

## What has been your proudest achievements for your apprenticeship programmes?

Pre-registration degree apprenticeships for occupational therapists and physiotherapists have been recently re-established within our Trust. We have currently got a small group of AHP apprentices who are currently well into their 2nd year of the occupation therapist (OT) and physiotherapist (PT) degree apprenticeships and really enjoying the experience. We have a number of staff who are due to hopefully enter the programme in September, with more who are planning this into their future career pathways. I am really proud that we have been able to offer this to our staff and support them on their journeys. We have a brilliant apprenticeship team who support any new apprentices and the teams that support them along the way.

We recently held an apprentice celebration day for the first time in our Trust this year which was an uplifting and inspiring celebration of hard work undertaken by other apprentices in our Trust. I look forward to the day our current cohort of budding OTs and PTs receive their registration and hopefully stay on to progress their careers with us.

We are also proud to have provided an opportunity for 4 Physiotherapists to undertake the Advanced Clinical Practitioner degree apprenticeship at Leeds Beckett University and look forward to seeing how this shapes our workforce going forward.

## What would you say to other organisations considering employing apprentices?

I would say go ahead and support this within your organisation. It takes effort and organisation but if you approach this as a team it really is worth it to see staff develop and grow. Learn from others who are already more established and further along the pathway and share what works well to help make apprenticeships a success. Make sure the staff undertaking apprenticeships are supported and understand the challenges ahead. Learning alongside working helps staff to embed their skills and knowledge more quickly as they are using them within their daily work from the beginning, so this is a real benefit to the programme. It offers an alternative career pathway for those who may not have been able to follow the traditional path.

