



Date 7<sup>th</sup> July 2024

## **Evaluation of The Higher Development awards within The Black Country AHP & Nursing Faculty**

### **Background:**

System lead AHP Support Worker with Black Country AHP & Nursing Faculty working alongside program lead Lucy Davies and Rachel Andrews head of learning and development within The Dudley Group identified the lack of personal development and leadership training for AHP Support Workers. The strategic aim for AHP Support Workforce to upskill with impact to supply pipelines and improve retention.

System lead AHP Support worker was already aware of a successful pilot of The Higher Development Award (HDA) [The Higher Development Award | NHS England | Workforce, training and education \(hee.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/workforce-training-education)

The plan was to meet with local further Education provider Dudley college to coproduce an offer for initially AHP Support workers across The Black Country.

System Lead AHP Support Worker through the systemwide AHP Support Worker focus group sensed checked learning needs of AHP Support Workers. It was identified from the group that often staff support teams through change and do have difficult conversations but feel less equipped to do this as they have no training to do this.

Dudley College completed a bid to the West Midlands combined authority to pilot the HDA Course within the Black country and developed The HDA Level 2 & Level 3 courses, details within flyer [The Higher Development Awards Flyer](#) , funding was received for an initial X6 cohorts at level 2 and level 3.

**Aim:**

The courses are free to anyone living within the West Midlands Combined authority open to Clinical and Administration staff across AHP, Nursing and Midwifery. Consisting of one day per month for each course, to include level 2 functional skills English, additional study leave will need to be negotiated if learners wish to also complete Level 2 Math's functional skills, this will also still be funded.

The courses aim to increase staff confidence in learning for staff who may have been out of formal learning for some time offering an opportunity to obtain functional skills level 2 Math's and English if required this was not mandatory element of the course.

The course also aims to provide staff with a CPD (Continuous professional development) which currently support staff and administrative staff cannot access CPD funding as this is ringfenced for the registered workforce.

**“The Higher Development Award (HDA) is a personal and professional development program that enables clinical and non-clinical support workers.**

**“Be the best and acknowledge potential”.**

**It is free for employers and support staff. The program enables workers to improve patient outcomes and understand leadership and decision-making skills across work settings.”**

**Outcomes:**

A series of information webinars was delivered in conjunction with Dudley College to raise awareness of the courses available with Dudley College. This gave staff and managers a chance to answer queries, and Dudley College would follow through with enrollment onto the prospective courses.

The system lead AHP Support Worker has also worked with Worcester University, as it was identified the entry criteria for the level 5 Assistant Practitioner AHP Pathways was to demonstrate recent level 3 learning within 5 years. Worcester University have mapped the course content and in conjunction with established employer partners, have agreed the HDA Level 3 course can be accepted as an alternative entry requirement onto the Level 5 Assistant practitioner courses across AHP & Nursing pathways.

This will demonstrate the commitment to widening participation for career progression entry routes to higher education institutes. This is not the sole purpose of the HDA course, but in fact an added benefit and should not be the only reason staff can access this course.

System lead AHP Support Worker has developed a FAQ (Frequently asked questions document) to support promotion of the HDA course with flyers produced by Dudley College. There have been some challenges with sharing learner information from Dudley college and system lead AHP Support Worker. Crucial planning in advance cohort start dates, System lead AHP Support Worker continues to work in partnership with Dudley College promoting the courses throughout the Black Country ICS and wider to share learning and promote what has been achieved within Dudley ICS.

**Current Course Breakdown:**

HDA Level 2	Functional skills
5	5

HDA Level 3	Functional skills *
26	1

Total enrolled since April 2023 – March 2024	HDA L2	HDA L3	
The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust	2	8	
The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust	0	3	
Sandwell and West Birmingham Trust	2		
Walsall Healthcare NHS	0	3	
Black Country Health Care	1		
Overall Total enrolled			31

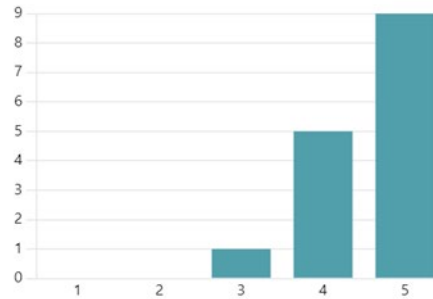
\*12 remaining enrolled on L3 course, trust, and functional skills information not yet available from Dudley College.

Evaluation and feedback from learners who have completed the course to date:

Feedback from staff who have completed the course 14 responses received so far.

Overall confidence in leaderships skill since completing the course:

4.53  
Average Rating



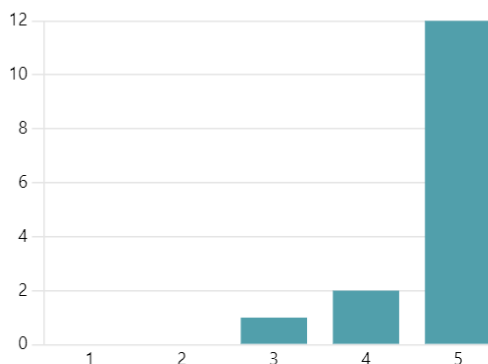
Examples of how this course has supported your development and growth:

4 respondents (27%) answered **given me more confidence** for this question. ...



Overall rating of the HDA course:

4.73  
Average Rating



Achievements or career aspirations since completing the course:

*"Yes, a personal achievement in going back to education after 20 years."*

*"Began the course as a band 3 supervisor and now I am a band 5 Manager. My hope is to further my qualifications and do a level 5 course to have a greater understanding of Leadership and Management."*

*"I have become the improvement champion for our team."*

*"Following my work for the Governance director I have now been asked to support the chief nurse as well with 3 members of staff to help provide admin support."*

*"Began the course as a band 3 supervisor. I now line manage a bigger team as a band 5 manager."*

Feedback on anything else to be included on the course.

*"All the topics covered where relevant to working in the NHS and good communication within a team."*

*"Enjoyed it that much I wish it could have been longer."*

*"Would have been great to have had other lecturers come in to give real life examples. Sharing best practice. Possibly some more group exercises, as we learn from each other."*

*"More time to cover the math's qualification."*

Only one respondent commented re difficulty with the time taken to complete work outside of college.

### **Conclusion and recommendations:**

The HDA aims to equip support workers with skills, techniques, and knowledge to improve their personal confidence often with a staff group who may have been out of formal education for a while. Enhancing digital, presentation skills and functional skills if required. The service improvement element of the course, gives support workers closet to the issues confidence to take forward their ideas, taking learning back to the workplace and embedding small changes with impact. Learners benefit from an increase in confidence developing within their roles and making improvements to their service areas.

The HDA aligns with key aims in the NHS people plan published in 2021 [NHS England » Our NHS People](#) and the Black Country ICB joint forward plan [Joint Forward Plan was published in July 2023 \(blackcountryics.org.uk\)](#) . Ensuring the unregistered workforce have opportunity to develop to their full potential.

System lead AHP Support worker continues to work in partnership with Dudley College and the ICS Communications team, to develop promotional resources. Highlighting the benefits to staff and services attending these courses. Continue to promote these courses with the unregistered workforce across the ICS.

Ensuring Staff and team leads are aware of these opportunities, linking with systemwide apprenticeship collaborative group to share the opportunity with staff who may be considering an apprenticeship. These courses aim to fill the gap in CPD (continuous Professional development) for the unregistered workforce, release potential and can also prepare staff for apprenticeships with functional skills if they so wish.

Continue to work with Dudley college to streamline onboarding process and sharing of information in a timely manner. To ensure cohorts are filled and staff can request study leave in advance ,to support staffing rotas.

Lorraine Allchurch

System Lead AHP Support Worker