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Carefully designed vocational programme: University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust

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Brief description

The University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (UHSFT) has a good vocational training programme that is carefully designed to meet the needs of workplace managers, and responds to organisational change. Partnerships are very strong and used successfully to develop learners' skills and provide progression to employment and higher education.

Overview – the provider's message



'Our role is to square the circle between the workforce, progression and career development. When we design our programmes, we meet with managers to discuss learners' job roles and career progression routes, and we structure the training around this. The pace of change is so great that we need to ensure our training programmes are flexible enough to enable us to adapt and respond quickly to new circumstances.

Many of our healthcare assistants are not ready to start a nursing degree at the end of their apprenticeship. When we introduced our foundation degree, we mapped it into the first year of the nursing degree to enable them to join the second year of the degree. We also included a work-based training element so we could badge it as a higher-level apprenticeship to appeal to a wider group of learners. Where we cannot deliver what managers need, we work in partnership with local providers. It is

important to be a good customer to your partners – we try to be clear about what we need from the provider to help our learners successfully gain skills and progress.’

Anita Esser, Head of wider healthcare teams education

The good practice in detail

A clear line of sight to work

The Centre’s apprenticeship programme has a clear line of sight into work and is viewed primarily as a development programme rather than training or a qualification.

- The starting point for all new programmes is a meeting between the Centre team and the workplace manager to find out their needs and what they want the learners to be able to do at the end of the programme.
- The Centre team builds on this through meeting each learner and their manager to ensure the programme and the units they select are the right ones for the job and their development.

Where evolving job roles at UHSFT mean that the existing units of qualifications do not suit some learners’ development, the Centre team creates local competencies, develops units and approaches Skills for Health to gain accreditation. For example, in UHSFT’s eye unit, the Centre team has met the head optometrist to look at suitable qualifications for ophthalmic assistants. They reviewed the job roles, activities at work, the current qualifications and selected those that ‘fitted naturally’, to group into a qualification, and optional units the Centre would need to develop. The intention is to pilot the programme and, if it is successful, approach other hospitals to offer it nationally and develop into an advanced-level apprenticeship.

‘We would rather take this approach than picking something off the shelf that does not meet fully the needs of workplace managers or learners’ development needs’.

Anita Esser

The dual professional

Assessment was previously carried out by peripatetic assessors but the Centre managers found it difficult to know what each apprentice was doing and the workplace managers saw training and assessment as an activity that was carried out by someone else. Workplace managers, therefore, now take responsibility for all the learners in their team, whether they are ere graduate-trainee nurses, work-experience students or apprentices. This meant refocusing priorities to ensure all staff needing it, received support and training.

To meet this challenge, the Centre set up a training, support and assessment network for each apprentice to ensure that they can make good progress through their qualification. In addition to the well-qualified team at the Centre, each apprentice will typically be allocated:

- a workplace assessor who plans and assesses their competence in each unit. Some workplace assessors are previous apprentices who have chosen to take assessor qualifications
- qualified staff in their ward or office who act as witnesses and have been trained to provide accounts of apprentices' competence in completing specific tasks or roles
- a mentor who works the same shifts as the learner and supports their on-the-job training and development.

Most healthcare assistant apprentices work shifts, which makes it difficult to plan training and assessment in the workplace. However, the Centre holds a list of all UHSFT's nurses and their qualifications and experience in mentoring, assessment and teaching which they use to find suitable alternative people to support apprentices - should this need arise. It also enables the Centre team to see where trained assessors are working should an apprentice need training or assessment for a specialist area of work.

Accessing industry-standard facilities and resources

UHSFT has a wide range of very specialist on-site resources, particularly within the clinical skills training centre. However, the Centre has found that using members of the public to act as simulated patients is particularly effective and powerful for teaching apprentices good communication skills.

- Staff brief and train the members of the public for specific roles, such as playing patients with dementia or those refusing to take medication.
- They also recruit specific client groups, such as people with learning difficulties and children.



The apprentices have found that the simulated patient role-plays are very realistic and that the activity has helped them develop confidence in dealing effectively with different service users and to reflect on how they can improve their communication skills.

UHSFT is increasingly using more technology for areas, such as patients' records, shift rosters and personnel functions. Apprentices in some roles do not routinely use computers, but through using the virtual learning environment, online mandatory training and electronic assessment they have gained confidence in using technology.

Escalators to higher-level vocational training

UHSFT had clear progression routes for nurses but not for staff members in bands 1 to 4. The Centre team devised a progression chart for workplace managers to discuss these bands

with staff during appraisal and to provide straightforward guidance about future careers and the development they would need to take.

The Centre developed its foundation degree to provide a [progression route](#) for band 4 staff onto the nursing degree.

- The foundation degree is run collaboratively with the Southampton Solent University.
- University lecturers deliver most of the core subjects while UHSFT's clinical experts deliver the specialist topics, in subjects such as cardiology and radiography, which often form the optional units.
- The foundation degree has been carefully designed to allow learners to progress onto the second year of the nursing degree offered by the University of Southampton. It is in its second year and many of the first cohort of learners are now intending to progress onto the nursing degree.

All learners on UHSFT's foundation degree have progressed either from the apprenticeship or National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes.

To help them with the step change from the advanced-level apprenticeship to a foundation degree the Centre team introduced a case study apprentices describe and follow the patient journey before they arrive on their ward

This gives them greater understanding of patient care beyond their own role by investigating the stages for: admissions; pre- and post-operating theatre; and the operation.

Apprentices are encouraged to research these topics and challenge assumptions made in published materials. They become more confident in using and questioning what happens in the hospital and academic research.

Vocational skills learners

Apprentices complete an employment and personal learning and skills (EPLS) project as part of their programme. They are encouraged to research topics that help them develop in their role.

‘I was a champion for end of life care when I completed my project and wanted to research a topic that would be useful for my job role and the ward. I chose the Liverpool Care Pathway, which was very topical at the time and in a lot of national newspapers. The project was really interesting and relevant. Since then, I have been promoted and now work in the community.’

An intermediate level apprentice, who was a healthcare assistant on a ward for older people, speaks positively about her project

The two-way street

The Centre’s partnerships were reported as being good in the recent [inspection report](#).

One particularly successful partnership is the Solent Skills Development Zone (SSDZ) apprenticeship programme, a joint venture between Southampton City Council, Jobcentre Plus, local colleges and employers such as UHSFT.

- SSDZ apprentices have a two-three week **pre-employment course** run by a local college before applying to work at one of the partner employers.
- Since the SSDZ apprenticeship started, UHSFT has recruited more than 30 unemployed people onto a **one-year contract** while they complete the intermediate-level apprenticeship in administration, healthcare or pharmacy.
- Almost all have been taken on permanently at the end of their programme and many have progressed onto the advanced-level apprenticeship.



The colleges benefit from collaborating with UHSFT on different types of openings for apprentices in the NHS and the Centre supports local people from unemployment to permanent posts.

One of the SSDZ apprentices said, ‘I was unemployed but wanted to work in healthcare. The apprenticeship gave me the opportunity to work in the National Health Service while gaining a qualification. I love the job and the ward I work on, but it has been hard at times and I fell behind at one stage. The whole team, my manager, assessors and head of NVQ all met with me to agree very strict targets. They pushed me to achieve and gave me good development feedback which worked because I achieved, am now employed and looking at what I can do next.’

The Centre’s team recognises that there are times where they need to source expertise from outside. The patients’ services centre was established during a recent period of organisational change, and when the team met workplace managers they soon realised that the biggest development need was for call centre training.

They researched potential providers for this, and approached a local college.

The programme has been very successful and the Centre is now drawing on the college's expertise in initial and diagnostic assessments and functional skills support.

The partner college's flexible approach to delivering function skills through half-day release, one-week intensive and/or individual/paired tuition sessions works particularly well around apprentices' work patterns and their preferred learning styles.

Provider background



The University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust's (UHSFT) apprenticeship programme is delivered through The Vocational Skills Centre (the Centre). The Centre is located within Southampton General Hospital. The head of wider healthcare teams education manages the apprenticeship programme and is supported by a team of coordinators, tutors and

specialist practitioner assessors in wards and departments. The apprenticeship programme is part of an initiative to widen participation in learning and training among staff on pay bands 1 to 4 within UHSFT. Staff in these pay bands undertake roles in areas such as portering, administration, housekeeping, pharmacy and healthcare. The centre no longer holds its own Skills Funding Agency contract, but is a subcontractor for Skills for Health and Southampton City College. UHSFT has approximately 70 apprentices.

Background

It's about work... the summary report of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) highlighted characteristics and features of outstanding vocational teaching, learning and assessment. These are in line with the criteria for judging the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Ofsted's *Common Inspection Framework for FE and skills 2012*, but also focus on the additional, distinctive processes of design and delivery which characterise excellent vocational provision.

The case studies in this set were compiled in response to the CAVTL report which highlighted the importance of ensuring a 'clear line of sight to work' on vocational programmes.

The Education Training Foundation has been asked to take forward the recommendations from the Commission's report.

Other examples in this set

Barking and Dagenham (employability): www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140003

Barking and Dagenham (motorsport): www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140004

Bridgwater College: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140005

Exeter College: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130259

Foxes Academy: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140006

Hull College: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130258

Leeds City College: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140007

People and Business Development Ltd: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140009

Wendy Shorter Interiors: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140010

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

To view other good practice examples, go to:
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice