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NORTHERN LINCOLNSHIRE AND GOOLE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

HOW THE TRUST USED THE LEVY TO EMBED APPRENTICESHIPS

Background

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust (NLGFT) employs around 6,500 members of staff. The trust provides acute hospital services and community services to a population of more than 350,000 people across north and north-east Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire.

In the 12 months leading up to the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, NLGFT began to look at how apprenticeships could be managed more centrally, and how employment policies and procedures could be changed to better support entry level apprenticeships.

Cuts to funding and continuous professional development (CPD) budgets added further impetus to expand apprenticeship programmes.

How the trust did it

First steps

The trust's head of people development had a clear understanding of the financial implications the introduction of the levy would have, and therefore this was a key driver to implement change. On top of this, the setting of public-sector apprenticeship targets and cuts to staff development budgets added further incentive for the organisation.

Briefings were prepared and presented to board members to gain support at a senior level, and a working group was set up to look at the policies and procedures around employment.

Apprentice contracts were changed to include a requirement to pass the academic element of the course and those recruited are asked to commit to remain at the trust for a period of time equal to the length of the apprenticeship.

The head of people development met with a training provider and together they developed an innovative and robust entry level apprenticeship scheme for roles in business administration. It was agreed to start by rolling out

apprenticeships in business administration, and management and leadership as these were identified as key priority areas for the trust.

Staff engagement

Reaching out to current staff through engagement was key to the success of the programme. This process started at the top: senior leadership teams were engaged and offered information about what was available, and how apprenticeships can help with workforce planning.

To overcome the myths about apprenticeships and challenge some of the perceptions held by staff, information sessions were offered to professional groups. These were positively received and helped to further embed apprenticeships in teams.

While having multiple programmes across a range of disciplines has helped to embed apprenticeships across the organisation, NLGFT has overcome a number of challenges as part of this journey

Career confidence course

As part of the wider programme, NLGFT developed an eight-week career confidence course to engage those not in employment, education or training (NEET) and introduced a traineeship model to prepare them for an apprenticeship.

To help widen participation and access to the course a package of support is offered to those taking part. Job Centre Plus (JCP) and the training provider supply suitable clothing and the trust offers a hot meal for lunch and access to counselling and support to help address any personal issues.

The first two weeks of the course is classroom based and looks at work-based skills and the group's aspirations. This is followed by six weeks work experience within the trust where the training provider stays in touch to pick up any issues.

Those successful on the course are offered an apprenticeship and help with the transition into work, JCP continues to provide financial support and the apprentices have access to a food bank until they are paid.

Over the last two years the trust has appointed 35 apprentices from the programme, some of whom were facing homelessness when they started the course.

Creating a talent pool

NLGFT introduced a new recruitment process to create a pool of apprenticeship ready individuals which has vastly reduced the time it takes to recruit. Managers looking for an apprentice contact the pool and candidates are put forward for an interview.

For candidates who are seen as having potential but may not have the required experience or skills, the trust has introduced a range of exercises and scenarios which it uses to assess their values. These include: a murder



mystery scenario, a desert island exercise, and a question and answer session that explores confidentiality.

Those who are not yet ready for an apprenticeship are referred on to the career confidence course. Those who are considered ready are offered an interview and then put into the talent pool for apprenticeship vacancies.

Embedded coaches

To help address the challenge of how the trust delivers the 20 per cent off-the-job training, a monthly full-day session delivers learning to the apprentices in a classroom setting at the trust. It has been identified that this makes it easier for managers to release staff from their day roles.

An added benefit is that the coaches get to know the apprentices' line managers, and are able to share any concerns as well as offer feedback on progress.

As part of its contract with the training provider, the trust negotiated that a coach attends each month and spends at least two hours with each apprentice to assess their practice onsite.

Feedback from managers suggests they have seen an improvement in apprentice practice and they feel the learning and training being offered is more credible and tangible.

Getting flexibility from training providers

A further challenge for the trust has been in supporting training providers to move from a one size fits all model of delivery.

The head of people development created a tendering process that has achieved added value from programme delivery by negotiating additional elements to their training packages. This made the programmes more relevant, compared to traditional development schemes.

For example, as part of a level 3 apprenticeship programme for clinical leaders and ward managers, the trust removed the NVQ element and replaced it with bespoke workshops based on the trust's training needs analysis for managers which includes a 360-healthcare leadership tool, ACAS difficult conversations, mental health first aid, etc.

Outcomes

- Development of an apprentice talent pool to support recruitment.
- Bespoke programmes that align to trust priorities.
- Talent coaches attend internal training to gain an understanding of job roles and how to better support the learners.
- Clinical apprentices share training facilities and courses ensuring consistency between assessors and tutors.
- A quality assurance process has been established with providers to monitor learner progress.

- 180 staff commenced an apprenticeship programme in 2017/18 across 26 different programmes, from level 2 to 6, with the trust spending over £40,000 each month from its levy.
- By building a strong relationship with the training provider, the trust has been able to negotiate and develop programmes that meet the needs of the organisation and provide a better experience for the apprentices.

Next steps

The trust is looking to develop a 12-week traineeship model that allows applicants to have a phased introduction to the trust and ensures they are ready for the return to practice course, particularly if they have been away from nursing and/or university study for some time.

Conclusion

NLGFT has developed apprenticeship programmes that are aligned to its workforce supply strategy and embedded them as a workforce development tool. The number of opportunities the trust offers has increased, improving the supply and retention of staff, and widening participation.

As a result of its efforts, apprenticeships have become embedded across the trust, and are now offered at all levels, in a range of departments. This has enabled the trust to achieve its public-sector apprenticeship target.

Find out more

For more information about how Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust used the apprenticeship levy to help embed apprenticeships please contact Rachel Maguire, head of people development, via rachel.maguire@nhs.net.

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