

Supporting Apprenticeships in the Health Sector

A briefing for trade unions



Supporting Apprenticeships in the Health Sector

A briefing for trade unions

The numbers of apprentices are growing rapidly in the health sector. With the help of funding from the Department of Health, apprenticeships increased from a low starting point to over 8000 by the end of March 2010 and with continuing strategic health authority support to Trusts since then, the overall numbers are still going up. NHS Trusts are beginning to see apprenticeships as an important new addition in their learning and development toolbox for pay bands 1-4. Trade unions have a key role in helping to deliver these apprenticeships and this leaflet sums up the background and the benefits.



“Trade Unions support apprenticeships for young people and adults because they provide them with additional high quality learning and development opportunities across the health sector.”

Dave Godson, UNISON, Chair of Apprenticeship Project Group

What is an apprenticeship?

The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE) published in January 2011 sets out three categories of apprenticeship frameworks at intermediate (level 2), advanced (level 3) and higher apprenticeships (levels 4 & 5). What is legally required in all apprenticeship frameworks at these three levels now includes a competence qualification (what you need to do) and a separate technical knowledge qualification (what you need to know) OR an integrated qualification which combines competence and technical knowledge elements.

These qualifications must be underpinned by National Occupational Standards, and be included on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) or be a higher education qualification for levels 4/5. Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships commonly take one and two years to complete respectively. All frameworks should indicate progression routes into and beyond the framework, and must also:

- ◆ Specify the number of QCF credits that an apprentice must attain

- ◆ Include Functional Skills qualifications in Mathematics and English and if relevant, Information and Communications Technology
- ◆ Include Employee Rights and Responsibilities (ERR), which cover employment rights, health and safety, equality and diversity and knowledge about progression routes available. Understanding of the role of trade unions and professional bodies can feature here
- ◆ Cover Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS), which are: independent enquiry; creative thinking; reflective learning; team working; self management, and effective participation
- ◆ Have a minimum number of 280 Guided Learning Hours (GLH) which will be a mix of ‘on the job’ and ‘off the job’ training, with a minimum of 30% of the total or 100 hours whichever is greater ‘off the job’ learning. All GLH have to be delivered within contracted hours.
- ◆ For union representatives the SASE provides a very useful checklist of mandatory standards against which to benchmark the quality of apprenticeships delivered in the workplace.

Apprenticeship frameworks available in the health sector

There are currently over eighty in use in the health sector supporting over 100 occupations. The full range of frameworks suitable for the health sector is available at www.apprenticeshipframeworksonline.semta.org.uk

They cover job roles as diverse as anatomical pathology technicians, chefs, clinical information staff, cleaners, healthcare assistants and maternity support workers. General occupational areas where frameworks from outside the health sector are suitable for use include customer service and call centres, IT, construction, engineering, administration, finance and management, transport and vehicle maintenance, and estates.

General occupational areas where external frameworks are suitable for use in health care include customer service and call centres, IT, construction and engineering, administration, finance and management, transport and vehicle maintenance and estates. For more information go to www.apprenticeshipframeworksonline.semta.org.uk

The benefits of apprenticeships

For apprentices

- ◆ They provide a better development and learning opportunity than stand alone NVQs did*
- ◆ Apprentices apply their learning to their new skills and vice versa
- ◆ Apprentices 'earn as they learn'
- ◆ Newly recruited apprentices get a worthwhile career in health care
- ◆ Apprentices get a recognised and transferable high quality qualification
- ◆ The quality of learning and employment terms for apprenticeships are underpinned by legal standards.

The vast knowledge I have gained has benefited me at work and made me want to continue learning.

Karen Wharton Senior Clinical Support Worker, Lister Hospital

For employers

- ◆ They can help plug emerging skills gaps and shortages
- ◆ They help renew an ageing workforce
- ◆ They provide new workers with the skills and aptitudes needed across a wide range of roles
- ◆ They help meet Trust quality and productivity requirements under QIPP
- ◆ They help meet Trust social responsibilities and build links with local communities
- ◆ They can help reduce clinical negligence claims and insurance premiums.

...people become more effective in their job role and are able to deliver more and understand why they are delivering.

Anita Esser Head of Wider Healthcare Teams Education, Southampton University Hospital Trust

For unions

- ◆ They provide learning and development opportunities for existing members
- ◆ They provide an opportunity to organise and recruit new entrants to the workforce
- ◆ They provide an opportunity to ensure new entrants are properly treated and trained
- ◆ They allow potential for growing the next generation of union activists and leaders.

The RCM believes that apprenticeships, if introduced appropriately, can be an effective means of raising the skill levels and knowledge of Maternity Support Workers.

Denise Linay Employment Relations Adviser, Royal College of Midwives

Funding

Over 50% of the 8000 new health apprenticeships started in 2010 were adult learners. Many more would take advantage of local apprenticeships if there were funding available. Government funding levels and eligibility to support training costs are subject to frequent change but the underlying principle is that for apprentices aged under 19 when they start, the government will pay all of the training fees. For older apprentices (19+) the government will pay about half of the fees and expect employers to pay the rest. The government will co fund the costs for over 25s without any level 2 or 3 qualifications. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) may be involved in funding if the framework contains a foundation degree. For up to date funding information go to www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Your Strategic Health Authority may also provide funding to support Trusts with the costs of apprenticeships, including backfill.

How apprenticeship delivery works

Skills for Health has the crucial role of issuing apprenticeship frameworks although any organisation such as an employer or trade union can develop new apprenticeship frameworks which do not duplicate an existing framework and for which a clear need can be demonstrated. A wealth of information, tools and useful employer guidance on all aspects of apprenticeship delivery has been produced and this is available at www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/apprenticeships

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), part of the Skills Funding Agency, promotes apprenticeships in England, helps manage apprenticeship funding and provides a vacancy matching service. For more information about the NAS go to www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) provide advice and funding to help Trusts provide apprenticeships. SHAs will be abolished in April 2013 and replaced with local employer led networks of education and training. Unions will need to work with these networks to ensure that apprenticeships continue to be commissioned and delivered in partnership.

Apprentices often go to the local Further Education (FE) College or other learning providers to undertake 'off the job' learning. Some health sector employers with assessment centres, provide the training themselves or work in a partnership with these learning providers.

The role of employers

- ◆ Developing a corporate vision for apprenticeships as high quality development and fast track career progression firmly grounded in workforce planning
- ◆ Employing the apprentice on the going rate for the job – agreed with staff side
- ◆ Providing a contract of employment and ensuring that there is an agreement negotiated between the employer, apprentice and learning provider which meets the standard
- ◆ Ensuring that recruitment and selection procedures are free from discrimination and encouraging recruitment from disadvantaged communities
- ◆ Ensuring there is a training plan in place-linked to KSF reviews and plans where possible
- ◆ Providing a safe and healthy working environment

*The new qualifications framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), has been available since 1 January 2011. Certificates and Diplomas have replaced the Health and Health & Social Care suite of NVQs.

The employer's role cont'd

- ◆ Ensuring team leaders and supervisors understand what the apprenticeship is all about and what they need to be doing to support it
- ◆ Being aware of the SASE and making sure these standards are met and applied in the Framework
- ◆ Agreeing satisfactory access and resources for the learning provider to undertake learning and assessments, as well as putting in place effective liaison with mentors and supervisors.

The role of trade unions

As well as working in partnership with Skills for Health, employers, local education and training networks and the NAS to promote apprenticeships, trade unions also have their own specific and unique contribution to make which includes:

- ◆ Encouraging employers to support apprenticeships, especially fully employed ones, as part of future workforce learning & development strategy
- ◆ Training union learning representatives to support apprenticeship growth
- ◆ Promoting apprenticeships that tackle job segregation and reach out to the disabled and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities
- ◆ Ensuring where it is used that apprenticeships are embedded within the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) – both the core and specific dimensions and Personal Development Reviews and Plans
- ◆ Ensuring that apprentices enjoy competitive pay and conditions and effective health and safety standards in the workplace
- ◆ Getting apprenticeships on the agenda of joint negotiating bodies and any workplace learning forums or working groups set up to discuss learning & development issues for pay bands 1-4.

Find out more

This leaflet has been produced by the national health unions and funded by Skills for Health. If you want to find out more about apprenticeships there is more comprehensive and detailed guidance about apprenticeships available at www.getbetterskills.co.uk

For more information about the project contact tony@getbetterskills.co.uk

Some first steps for trade unions

At Regional level

- ◆ Find out what the SHA, NAS, Skills for Health and employers are doing about apprenticeships and what funding and support is available
- ◆ Find out what your union is doing about apprenticeships nationally and regionally
- ◆ If the regional Social Partnership Forum (SPF) has not had a discussion about apprenticeships and trade unions, consider including this on the next agenda and as a first step suggest holding a regional workshop using a partnership model to raise awareness and begin joint action planning
- ◆ Consider developing SPF sponsored best practice guidance for employers and unions to use regarding the delivery of high quality apprenticeships in partnership
- ◆ Engage with emerging employer

education and training networks and encourage these to invest in learning for pay bands 1 - 4 in general and apprenticeships in particular.

In the Workplace

- ◆ Contact the Trust apprenticeship or training lead and find out what apprenticeships are being delivered or planned to be delivered
- ◆ Propose holding a joint staff side employer awareness raising and action planning workshop organised on a Trust or health economy basis as appropriate
- ◆ Include apprenticeship strategy on the agendas of Joint Negotiating and Consultation Committees, and other learning or social partnership forums set up in the Trust
- ◆ Review any workplace learning agreements to ensure they adequately cover apprenticeships.

The business case

Many of the UK's leading companies, including British Gas, Compass Group PLC, BT and BAE Systems invest heavily in apprenticeships because they 'pay their way'.

Research demonstrates that where there is significant investment by employers in apprenticeships, the returns to employers are equally significant.

In the health sector, the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) supports the case for Maternity Support Worker (MSW) apprenticeship programmes by citing a number of benefits including a more rounded learning experience than NVQs have provided, the ability to

recruit locally, the provision of tailored competences that allow staff to effectively support qualified midwives, and the opportunity to spread innovative approaches to service delivery, by designing apprenticeships flexibly to suit a range of roles.

The RCM also sees apprenticeships as a way of providing an effective development route for existing staff and a potential recognised career pathway for new staff with limited formal education but with talent and enthusiasm. Apprenticeships can also train staff to a high standard where a new role is developed or an existing role expanded.

For the full specification for standards in England go to www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Partners/SASE.aspx

For information about the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the new qualifications replacing NVQs go to [www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/about-us/news/qualifications-and-credit-framework-\(qcf\)-transitional-qualifications](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/about-us/news/qualifications-and-credit-framework-(qcf)-transitional-qualifications)

Useful national trade union contacts:
www.unionlearn.org.uk
www.unison.org.uk
www.rcm.org.uk
www.rcn.org.uk
www.unitetheunion.org
www.gmb.org.uk
www.miphealth.org.uk