SOUTH TEES HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
EMPLOYING FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS WORKFORCE SUPPLY CHALLENGES

The organisation
South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is the largest in the Tees Valley, serving 1.5 million people across Middlesbrough and the surrounding areas. The trust currently has a workforce of over 9,000 and is one of the largest employers in the north east of England. Its goal is to deliver excellence in patient outcome and experience.

Background
In 2013, Middlesbrough was highlighted in the media as having an above average NEET population (those aged 19-24 not in employment, education or training). This was heightened by local industry employers closing at that period.

The trust recognised the need for a community-driven solution to supporting NEETs in the area and developed the Prospect programme in partnership with Jobcentre Plus (JCP). The Prospect programme enables users of the JCP service to access opportunities to get back into the workplace through a structured programme of learning and vocational experience.

The programme
The programme offers 12 weeks of real work experience, where candidates join a department and experience day-to-day delivery of a role. During this time candidates learn new skills, discover what the average day looks like and receive robust training. Half a day a week, the learners
also attend review sessions and complete employability modules that equip them with the knowledge they need to move into employment.

For both parties to get the most from this opportunity, the Prospect programme closely matches its placements with the needs of the trust, particularly those areas where Prospect support can add value to operational challenges.

Following the success of these placements, managers from across the trust feel they can rely on Prospect learners, and see them as an investment in their workforce. Because of this increased awareness, more departments from the across the trust are looking to participate in the programme, which is now viewed as an integral part of their workforce supply strategy.

Prospect has a broad entry criteria, in response to local needs and talent pools. This has led to the programme attracting a diverse range of people from the local community.

To help promote the programme, the Prospect team regularly visit their local JCP and inform job coaches about the broad range of NHS employment opportunities. Through this relationship, JCP endorses the NHS as one of the biggest and most diverse employers in the local area.

**Early learnings**

- The Prospect team received a high volume of enquiries from applicants through JCP. By working closely together and establishing clear roles, JCP were able to answer the majority of queries and offer more relevant support.
- Some programme candidates’ expectations did not match the reality of the jobs they were assigned. The trust learnt it was crucial to clarify the scope of the candidates’ roles in the induction week.
- A shortage of review meetings and contact hours between learners and the Prospect team meant small issues were not dealt with, leading to drop outs. To help, they now run weekly individual review sessions, which have been positively received by learners.

**Outcomes**

With a community-driven and focused approach to their workforce supply strategy through the Prospect programme, South Tees have established an 86 per cent employment rate for learners. Since January 2014 the trust and its programme has provided work experience to 222 unemployed
people from the local community, with over 191 moving into full time employment.

Following the success of the initial Prospect programme, it has now grown from four cohorts a year, to new cohorts every eight weeks. They have also received over 200 applications for each new cohort, from people who have been referred to the programme by Jobcentre Plus, or by friends and family of past learners.

**Top tips**

- Establish a strong working partnership with your local JCP.
- Engage with the local issues affecting your community.
- Collaborate and engage with internal departments to ensure your work is well understood as part of a workforce supply strategy.
- Measure and record outcomes accurately and consistently, so they can be used as a positive advert for your programme.

**Further information**

For more information please contact the Widening Participation and Learning team at [widening.participation@stees.nhs.uk](mailto:widening.participation@stees.nhs.uk).

**Contact us**

NHS Employers  
2 Brewery Wharf  
Kendell Street  
Leeds LS10 1JR  
Published April 2017  
© NHS Employers 2017  

[www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org)  
[enquiries@nhsemployers.org](mailto:enquiries@nhsemployers.org)  
[@nhsemployers](https://twitter.com/nhsemployers)  
[NHS Employers](https://www.linkedin.com/company/nhs-employers)  
[www.youtube.com/nhsemployers](http://www.youtube.com/nhsemployers)