NORFOLK AND NORWICH UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

INTEGRATED HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE APPRENTICESHIP

Background

The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust [NNUH] consists of the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and Cromer and District Hospital, with some services available at other sites across Norwich. The trust sees almost a million outpatient appointments, day care procedures and inpatient admissions annually.

Led by local health and social care partners, the integrated health and social care apprenticeship was developed to establish a collaborative approach to recruiting apprentices into the care sector.

Piloted over a year, the programme was designed to deliver an apprenticeship that would support participants wishing to pursue a career in either health or social care.

First steps

The programme was developed jointly by the local health and social care partners to provide a broad understanding of the different roles and responsibilities that exist in both health and social care.

The aim was to create an innovative apprenticeship programme that would enable apprentices to gain knowledge and transferable skills, while experiencing the different systems and cultures across the care organisations.

Participants started with a two week clinical induction adapted from an existing programme for health workers to include a social care perspective. This was followed by two six month placements offered in a community care setting and on a hospital ward.
How they did it

In partnership with their local social care providers, NNUH agreed to pilot eight integrated health and social care apprenticeships using a model adapted from previously run successful programmes. Health Education England (HEE) supported the pilot with funding which paid for the apprentices – the first of their kind in the region. This integration model was seen as a key element to enabling the different organisations to gain a much broader understanding of how each other works.

City College Norwich (CCN) was engaged to develop a suitable apprenticeship framework. It was agreed to use the Level 2 Health and Social Care framework with some additional optional units added, including end-of-life care and dementia.

The programme combined practical skills with theoretical knowledge that gave an understanding of the systems and cultures of the different care organisations. Agreements were put in place outlining how the work placements would be supported.

The apprenticeship programme was promoted through the Norfolk and Suffolk care newsletter distributed to care providers, stakeholders, individual employers, and voluntary and community based groups.

A joint panel of health and social care representatives interviewed the candidates using value based questions, which enabled those applicants with little practical experience to discuss skills they had developed in school or college. For some unsuccessful candidates alternative opportunities were offered, for example, a work placement with a social care employer.

Apprentices on the programme were supported by mentors and received regular visits in their work placements by staff from both NNUH and the college. This helped to monitor progress and meant that any concerns were quickly responded to.

The challenges

One of the practical challenges was in administering the programme across the large rural area that is covered by the trust. Regular meetings with the apprentices and their social care managers had to be pre-planned to ensure the time was used effectively. When things came up unexpectedly the logistics of being able to get to site visits occasionally caused problems.

Some of the apprentices found the transition from health to social care settings quite difficult. This was often down to a lack of understanding of what the different roles involved, what participants thought they would be doing in the different settings, or the shift patterns they were expected to work.

This was addressed by moving the apprentices around to find out which setting and culture suited them best. However, this was time-consuming for those planning and coordinating the placements.
One of the key messages to others looking to offer integrated placements would be not to underestimate the amount of work involved in managing this process. While other local trusts have used an apprenticeship training agency (ATA) to run their programme, to mixed effect, NNUH did not consider using this model as they felt they had the expertise within the organisation to deliver the programme effectively. Their advice to others looking into this model would be to ensure that the ATA fully understand and appreciate the ward environment, and the type and level of work involved for the role.

**Outcomes**

The underlying theme running through the integrated apprenticeship programme has been the person-centred approach at its heart. The programme aims to support partner organisations to achieve their health and social care outcomes, while enabling those in receipt of care to lead the lives they want.

One of the key learning aims was that the apprentices would come to understand the importance of respect for the patient and that this can be achieved by taking a holistic approach to care - seeing people at different levels of health and social care - and through working in a collaborative way.

The apprenticeship programme not only provided an alternative route for learning, but also gave the apprentices a hands-on understanding of working within different care settings. By combining practical skills with theoretical knowledge, they gained a broad understanding of the different roles and responsibilities in both sectors, and valuable experience of the working cultures.

Overall, the pilot was seen as a success with only one apprentice not completing the programme. From those who qualified, one secured employment in a care home while the others are now employed within the NHS across a range of disciplines including gastroenterology, dementia care, women’s health and rehabilitation in the community.

The mentors who supported the apprentices also reported how they enjoyed the experience and felt they gained from it themselves. As well as accessing a mentoring course that enabled them to develop their skills, the experience motivated many of them to look at their own practice and consider further development.

**Conclusion**

Integrated apprenticeships offer both health and social care employers the opportunity to grow and develop a workforce with the skills that both sectors need for the future, and reflect the changes being made to service delivery. They also help to meet the statutory requirements placed on local authorities to promote integration and collaborate with key partners.
While the programme piloted by NNUH provides a model for the future, engaging and involving social care partners from the beginning was crucial in developing a programme that worked. This enabled everyone to be clear about the role the apprentices would play in each of the organisations and how they would be supported.

Following an evaluation of the pilot a business case was written that outlined the benefits of the programme to the organisations involved. For employers looking at how they can get the most from the apprenticeship levy arrangements, this model could be utilised in future.

NNUH see apprenticeships as a key element in the recruitment and retention of their staff in the future. With key policy changes on the horizon in relation to how apprenticeships will be funded, successful programmes can benefit organisations, their employees, and patients and residents alike.

**Key learning points**

- The sharing of best practice across health and social care builds an awareness of the pressures that each sector faces and enables understanding and tolerance.
- The Care Certificate works as an excellent passport across both sectors.
- Apprentices appeared to fare better if they worked in social care before coming into an acute setting.
- Working closely with the wards and the care homes involved enabled better management of the placements.

**Find out more**

For more information about how Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital developed the integrated apprenticeship programme please contact:

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