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BRIEFING

USING YOUR APPRENTICESHIP LEVY

Introduction

Apprenticeships provide individuals with the technical skills that employers need to provide high quality services and patient care. Apprenticeships can also encourage a culture of organisational learning, both for individuals and the departments they support.

The number of available apprenticeship standards in healthcare is rapidly increasing and includes higher and degree level apprenticeships, making them an excellent means of recruiting, developing and retaining staff.

In April 2017, a levy was introduced for all employers in England with a pay bill of over £3 million to fund apprenticeships. The levy is a government-managed pot which is paid into every year, and can be drawn upon to fund apprenticeship training.

Since its introduction, the levy has provided an opportunity for the NHS to significantly scale up its approach to embedding apprenticeships across organisations.

To gain maximum value from the levy, employers in the NHS are considering where they can use apprenticeships to address significant supply challenges, improve skill mix and diversity, and develop the existing and future workforce.

How are employers using the apprenticeship levy?

Building career pathways to develop the workforce

Training apprenticeships can be cost effective and can reduce overall training and recruitment costs. On top of this, apprentices tend to be loyal to the organisations that invest in them, improving staff retention rates.

Apprenticeships also provide a structured alternative career pathway to full-time university study. For example, in September 2017, a degree level nursing apprenticeship standard was approved and employers are now offering these to new and existing staff as way of developing the nursing workforce.

Consider apprenticeship recruitment when suitable vacancies arise.

Case study

Career pathways from traineeship to registered nurse

The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust has developed a career pathway for nursing staff. This has helped the trust to exceed the public sector apprenticeship target of 2.3 per cent quite significantly.

The pathway can start on completion of a six-week traineeship. Those who successfully complete a traineeship are guaranteed an interview for a level one apprentice clinical support worker role. Staff are then given the option to progress along the career pathway through apprenticeship levels 2 to 6, until reaching a Band 5 nurse role or a level 6 degree in nursing and Nursing and Midwifery Council registration. New and existing staff can also join the career pathway at any entry point, provided they have the core requirements for the role. They can also stop or pause at any point on the career pathway.

This pathway has been so successful, that the trust is now looking to create similar pathways for business and admin and pharmacy. Proposals are also in development to extend the career pathway to help nurses train towards the advanced practitioner level (Level 7 apprenticeship).

See here for an [illustration of the nursing career pathway](#).

Becoming the training provider

Some organisations are becoming apprenticeship training providers, which allows them to deliver training to their own staff or that of another employer.

There are many benefits to becoming a training provider. It enables organisations to design and deliver the content of the 'off the job' training which apprentices will receive, giving employers the ability to make sure the apprenticeships include everything your organisation requires.

Employers who become providers can also help improve the quality of apprenticeships by widening the market and increasing the options for delivering high-quality training which will help to raise professional standards in healthcare.

Case study

Training medical technicians to meet workforce supply challenges

North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) offers up to 145 apprenticeships a year including level 4 ambulance associate practitioner apprenticeships.

The apprenticeship has been developed in partnership with all ten English ambulance trusts through the National Ambulance Network for Ambulance Services group.

The apprenticeship was developed as a replacement for an internal training programme and NWAS decided to apply for employer provider status to continue to deliver the training. The trust has forecast maximum spend against its annual apprenticeship levy as well as ensuring the public sector target of 2.3 per cent apprenticeships is delivered in this financial year.

The trust credits this to the development of a clear delivery model and strategy supported by the trust board and joint partnership council, which has helped NWAS to determine how it could best use the apprenticeship levy while addressing future workforce needs through internal delivery of the ambulance associate practitioner apprenticeship.

NWAS is committed to increasing the number, quality, diversity and level of apprenticeships available within the organisation and aims to do this by improving career engagement, information advice and guidance, workforce development and ensuring the ambulance service continues to represent an attractive health career opportunity to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Offering higher and degree level apprenticeships

Apprenticeships can help to develop a skilled, motivated and qualified workforce. With more higher and degree level apprenticeships becoming available, employers are beginning to look at how they can use these to develop and up-skill the workforce at all levels.

Case study

Management apprenticeships for multi-disciplinary cohorts

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust recognised that providing level 6 leadership and management apprenticeships in their trust could provide opportunities to address a number of workforce challenges including:

- an organisational need to support managers and leaders to do their roles well, particularly those in clinical leadership roles
- a gap in black and minority ethnicity (BAME) staff in senior roles
- improving staff retention – as those on the apprenticeship will stay in the trust for a minimum of three years while gaining the qualification.

In collaboration with Henley Business School, the leadership and management apprenticeship was made available to all staff and has attracted a multi-disciplinary cohort of 45 staff including consultants, nurses, and corporate services. Being affiliated with such a prestigious school was key to attracting the interest of staff onto the leadership and management apprenticeship.

The trust also specifically targeted BAME groups to encourage uptake of the apprenticeship. Around a third of the cohort is made up of BAME staff.

The trust already had an existing relationship with the business school and worked with it to co-design the innovative apprenticeship which has been contextualised for the NHS. The trust is also working with the business school to flexibly provide off the job training so that it is more deliverable for the trust.

Royal Berkshire will track the outputs of offering leadership apprenticeships against staff experience, career progression, staff retention and senior appointments of BAME staff within the organisation.

Using apprenticeships across a range of disciplines and departments

Offering apprenticeships in a variety of settings can help you to develop a flexible, multi-skilled workforce with transferable knowledge and experience.

As confidence and knowledge of how apprenticeships can benefit organisations increase, employers are looking at new and innovative ways that they can use apprenticeships in all department areas from clerical and administration apprenticeships, right through to plumbing, engineering, project management, nursing and healthcare science roles.

Case study

Using apprenticeships across a range of disciplines and departments

The apprenticeship levy was the key driver for changing training provision at Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust. A working group was created and a paper was presented to the board on the apprenticeship agenda and the impact of the levy to gain support at a senior level.

The trust started with rolling out apprenticeships in business administration and management and leadership, as these were identified as key priorities for the trust as part of its improvement activity.

Apprenticeships have now been introduced across a range of disciplines within the trust including estates and facilities, data analysis, chartered management, customer services, human resources, engineering, pharmacy, and allied health professions and apprenticeship recruitment is considered when suitable vacancies arise.

Hosting apprenticeships across the organisation in this way has supported service redesign and embedded apprenticeships as a key workforce development tool.

How can I use the apprenticeship levy in my organisation?

- Share this briefing with your operational managers.
- Establish a working group to build an implementation plan to take this forward.
- Review organisation wide workforce planning and cross reference with the list of apprenticeships on the [Skills for Health healthcare apprenticeships](#) (HASO) website to see what apprenticeships could be used to fill vacancies in your organisation.
- Profile successful apprentices within your organisation and externally through local media and social media.
- Identify departments who would like to host an apprenticeship post.
- Consider apprenticeship recruitment when suitable vacancies arise.
- Consider becoming a training provider. Read the [Education and Skills Funding Agenda guidance](#) for further information.

Further information

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