

OCTOBER 2017

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## **SANDWELL AND WEST BIRMINGHAM HOSPITALS TRUST RECRUITING LOCALLY FOR THE FUTURE**

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### **The organisation**

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust is one of the largest integrated care providers in England, serving around 530,000 local people and employing over 7000 staff. The trust is split across three sites including Sandwell General Hospital and City Hospital.

### **Background/The challenge**

The trust wanted to help tackle local youth homelessness and make use of disused buildings on trust grounds and within the region. To support this, the Live and Work apprenticeship programme was established in 2014. The objective of the programme was to give young people at risk of, or facing homelessness a chance to complete an apprenticeship without the worry of losing current accommodation or having to find and retain new permanent living accommodation.

The establishment of the Live and Work programme was reflected in the trust's newly formed Public Health Strategy which focused on both public health and local regeneration. As part of this strategy, the trust was keen to make use of its disused buildings to bring some of the region's 24,000 long term empty properties back into use.

### **How they did it**

Live and Work was initially funded by Health Education England (HEE), and following a successful bid to support the programme the trust also partnered with local youth homelessness charity St Basils. In its first year, the programme offered young people aged 16-24, and who were identified and nominated by St

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Basils, a five-week employment training programme and a guaranteed interview for an apprenticeship.

In partnership with a local regeneration company, St Basils then began to refurbish the trust buildings into suitable accommodation for the second cohort of apprenticeships. This meant the trust could offer an added bonus to its apprenticeship programme for an otherwise untapped pool of candidates and simultaneously help address a local solution to regional homelessness.

The recruitment process began with an informal interview with the nominated individuals to learn more about their situation, history and aspirations. Criteria for the programme meant that to be accepted, young people must be homeless or at risk of homelessness. St Basils consider whether the individual can live largely independently before putting individuals forward for the programme. By going through this process, the trust ensures that individuals starting the programme are suitable for appointment to a specific post on completion of the apprenticeship. Candidates are also required to have achieved entry level 3 in both maths and English, although the trust can support those who do not have these qualifications to get them.

During the programme, the trust and St Basils work together to offer each candidate both personal and employment support. St Basils offer personal mentoring, continued contact and support in their home life. The trust offers learning and employment support to ensure each individual stays on track and gets the most out of their apprenticeship. In the ninth month of the programme, apprentices are able to access [The Learning Works](#), a hub which provides apprentices with a selection of training and development opportunities available to them run by the trust, local council and Jobcentre Plus.

Once individuals have completed the 12-month apprenticeship, they can apply for jobs within the trust and are offered support to do this. Those who are not successful at interview initially, but are appointable are offered a role when a suitable vacancy becomes available.

The trust is currently refurbishing a second empty hospital building to support the programme further. This second trust building will provide living accommodation for apprentices who complete their first placement and then move onto paid employment within the trust. St Basils also offers accommodation for apprentices once they move into paid employment outside the trust.

## Challenges


- Challenge: Apprentices not having financial access to suitable clothing or materials needed for a job interview.
- Solution: St Basils was able to offer clothing so apprentices could be ready for interview.

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“It would be great if more companies and organisations could take on more young people in these situations. It really helps them”

St Basils

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- Challenge: Apprentices may not have had easy access to documentation they needed.
  - Solution: St Basils helps candidates with accessing documents, both physically and financially.
  - Challenge: Apprentices may have criminal convictions which the team needed to consider.
  - Solution: The widening participation team at the trust would consider each situation on a case by case basis. Many convictions such as small thefts in the past would not be a barrier to appointment for a number of roles.
  - Challenge: Tackling community and workplace prejudice and stereotyping towards those on the programme.
  - Solutions:

The local community was given information on the programme plans and given the chance to ask questions.

The programme now has a central application process for any apprentice, regardless of their living situation, rather than a separate one for those seeking to live on site. Staff have also been shown the positive outcomes apprentices on the programme achieve.

## Outcomes

The trust recognised the positive outcomes of the programme both for the trust, the individuals taking part and on the local community. Because of this, it has continued to deliver the programme following the withdrawal of HEE funding.

The programme has now widened its collaboration with departments across the trust, including roles across health and social care, business administration, customer service and healthcare support services. This has further opened up the opportunities available to apprentices and helped tackle the prejudice and stigma around homelessness within the organisation.

The project has supported 27 apprentices and 22 have been recruited into the trust to date. All 27 have either moved into paid employment, further or higher education or undertake bank work within the health sector. Apprentices within the trust are actively encouraged to stand as ambassadors, offering advice and support to the next generation of applicants. The widening participation team at Sandwell explained that the success of the programme has meant that the apprentices are commonly seen as being a credit to their teams.

## First steps

- ✓ Explore whether your estates and facilities team have access to any disused properties within your organisation that you could offer candidates facing homelessness.
- ✓ Join up with your apprenticeship team to scope any collaborative programmes you could create or support.
- ✓ Establish a partnership with a local homelessness charity.

## Top tips

- ✓ Establish expectations of workplace behaviour at the beginning.
- ✓ Don't write off those with a criminal conviction – have open conversations early on.
- ✓ Place tackling local issues at the heart of organisational strategy.

## Further information

For more information please contact Helen Colbourne, Centre Co-ordinator, Widening Participation Team, Learning & Development Department  
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## Contact us

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