

Appendix F: The Blackburn with Darwen Council Integrated Apprenticeship Programme

Background

In 2016, as part of the work programme of the One Workforce Steering Group, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council developed, funded and piloted an integrated Apprenticeship programme in health and social care. For this programme, the Local Authority worked in partnership with Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust and Blackburn College. The latter providing the Apprenticeship qualification using the Apprenticeship Framework in Health and Social Care level 3 as developed by Skills for Care and Skills for Health.

The 24-month programme was designed to promote innovation and cross-sectoral learning across health and social care by providing apprentices with two different placements, one at the local NHS Foundation Trust and the other in a social care setting. It was also felt that the programme would bring additional benefits to the apprentices in terms of larger professional networks and opportunities to specialise at a later point in their career whilst taking with them the cross-disciplinary experiences.

To find candidates, the Local Authority used social media to advertise as this was deemed the most appropriate approach to reach potential apprentices. A local training provider also advertised the Apprenticeship programme. Initially it was difficult for the Local Authority to find suitable apprentices as it was felt that the ideal candidate needed to be able to travel independently and have experience and a real desire to care for and interact with service users. During a second round of recruitment, competency based interviews were employed which helped in finding suitable candidates. Two apprentices were subsequently recruited – both in their early 20s with some experience of social care.

The apprentices commenced the programme in June 2016, equally dividing their time between social care and NHS placements. The apprentices were supported by regular meetings with the teams they were working with, by formal and informal supervision with their manager as well as through a peer support function with other apprentices. The apprentices were also offered support by the Local Authority's HR department who worked with the placement managers to review and measure the challenges and successes of these Apprenticeship opportunities.

Challenges

This scheme differed somewhat from other Apprenticeships that the Local Authority supports, in that apprentices are required to work more independently in different settings including people's own homes. Therefore, policies in regards to lone working had to be altered and additional risk assessments had to be undertaken.

Recruiting suitable candidates posed a difficulty and the Local Authority recognises that some young people might have a limited understanding of health and social care which makes it difficult for them to enter such a profession. This will form part of the planning going forward for the local areas with Local Authorities, the Pennine Lancashire health partners and colleges.

Key achievements

The Local Authority and Lancashire Care Foundation Trust view this Apprenticeship programme as a success as both apprentices have made great progress and have received very positive feedback from their placements. The apprentices themselves value the opportunities provided and state:

"I love being able to go out in the community and help the service users where and when they need it, and if they don't need anything then just to have a chat with them and see how their doing."

Laura (apprentice)

"Everyone has been really good at taking their time out to help me learn and understand anything that has troubled or confused me, which has led me to learn various roles. Strengths have included the freedom to shadow and learn from whatever adult social service team is relevant to my role, as well as up at health with the NHS. Got to see and do lots of good work with many different professionals, such as OT's, PT's, nurses support workers etc."

Luke (apprentice)

Sustainability

The Local Authority is currently evaluating the programme and is keen to undertake further work in terms of health and social care integration. This should provide a combination of opportunities for existing staff to train using one of the new Apprenticeship standards with relevant modules. As part of the health and social care integration work, the Local Authority and partners have participated in Solution Design Events to look at new models of health and social care as well as the workforce of the future with a focus on achieving further integration. Both apprentices were invited and contributed well to these events to share their experiences and offer suggestions for improving practice.



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