

News Release

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Skills for Health urges employers to grasp apprenticeship opportunity

Skills for Health has welcomed the increased uptake of apprenticeships within the health sector – but says more employers should be taking advantage of the opportunities they offer.

Chief executive John Rogers said: “The increase in apprenticeship numbers is great news but this is only the start. There are many more health sector employers who could also benefit from an apprenticeship scheme and I urge them to grasp the opportunity.

“For example, the sector has an ageing workforce, with 73 per cent of staff over 35. There is an urgent need to recruit and develop new talent. Apprenticeships offer a flexible and affordable way to do this, with 100 per cent training funding available for apprentices aged 16 to 18, 50 per cent funding for those aged 19 to 25 and limited funding for those over 25.”

He added: “They also offer employers a way to unlock talent in their local communities, while giving young people the chance of a fulfilling and rewarding career.”

The Department of Health last week announced that the NHS in England had exceeded its aim to recruit more than 5,000 apprentices during the last 12 months – a five-fold increase.

Speaking before the NHS Apprenticeship Conference held on 25 February, Health Secretary Andy Burnham said: “I am delighted that we have hit the target to create an extra 5,000 apprentices... We must do all we can to provide high quality routes into jobs so that we can ensure we have a highly skilled and highly motivated NHS workforce for future generations”

Skills for Health is actively promoting the take-up of apprenticeships within the health sector, and offers a range of materials, advice and guidance to help employers implement successful programmes. These include new online

resources, including details of over 80 different types of apprenticeships now available within healthcare.

The resources also provide video testimony from employers who have experienced first-hand the benefits that apprenticeships can bring.

These include Yorkshire Ambulance Service Locality Manager Paul Palfreeman, who said; "Patient care has definitely improved since we have taken on the apprentices. They're answering the calls quicker, we're speaking to the patients much more regularly, we're keeping them informed and we're developing the staff as we go along."

Hereford PCT Training Centre Administration Manager Helen Pryce said: "Taking apprentices has had a real impact on the department as a whole because they can come in and they can offer valuable support, they bring with them enthusiasm, they've very keen to learn and it helps our team ... to provide a more efficient services.

NHS Herefordshire Qualifications Manager Sharon Hempton-Smith said: "There would be a shortage of nurse trainees if we didn't have the apprenticeship route ... they are at least 40 to 50 per cent of the entry into nurse education."

University of Leeds, Yorkshire and Humber Lead for Pharmacy Gill Risby said: "It brings to us a lot of skills that we wouldn't always expect. Younger apprenticeships come with a wealth of IT skills that some of our longer-standing employees won't have."

NHS Herefordshire Interim Managing Director-Provider Services Richard Carroll said: "It's been a great success for us and it's very positive to see young people coming on in leaps and bounds having been given the opportunity."

For further information on the health apprenticeship resources available from Skills for Health, visit www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/apprenticeships

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Notes to editors

1. Apprenticeships are part of a national programme of government-funded training to raise the skill levels of people in employment. An apprenticeship is a framework of nationally-recognised qualifications that are a mixture of work-based training and education. The

frameworks, which are managed by Sector Skills Councils, give learners the opportunity to achieve vocational, work-based qualifications; learn the practical skills and knowledge necessary to carry out specific work roles; and progress within specific careers and educational pathways.

2. Apprenticeships can help employers:

- Deliver a more efficient service
- Add to their workforce skills mix
- Develop workforce diversity
- Improve patient care
- Address corporate responsibilities

Apprenticeships can help employees:

- Gain valuable experience in the healthcare sector
- Increase their confidence in the workplace
- Earn while they learn
- Take advantage of a range of career opportunities

3. The Health Apprenticeship video 'Apprenticeships – What's in it for me?', is available to view on the Skills for Health website at

<http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/apprenticeship-video>

4. Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK healthcare sector, encompassing the National Health Services, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations. Its purpose is to help develop solutions that can deliver a skilled and flexible workforce to improve health and healthcare.