NHS Apprenticeship PROMISE
IF YOU DO ONE THING TODAY...

My Apprenticeship has... helped me to earn while I learn

Abby Mawdsley

Cadet (Apprenticeship) in Business and Administration

Skills for Health Academy North West, supported by Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

After leaving school with a clutch of GCSEs and A-levels, 18-year-old Abby Mawdsley decided not to go to university like the majority of her friends. She had been offered a place on a business studies degree at Manchester Metropolitan University but turned it down after gaining a place on the Business and Administration Cadet (Apprenticeship) programme funded by NHS North West and supported by Skills for Health through its North West Academy.

Abby's decision to follow the Apprenticeship route was driven by her feeling that she would gain vital experience for her future career. "I thought that if I went to university I would get into debt and even if I got a degree at the end of it, I still wouldn't be guaranteed a job. With the Apprenticeship there's no debt involved, and I'm still getting a qualification, as well as the experience I need at the same time," she says.

Building qualifications

When Abby enrolled in the Apprenticeship, she spent six weeks at Liverpool Community College completing an induction programme, which gained her a City & Guilds qualification in employability skills. Now she is working towards a BTEC Level 2 in the Principles of Administration and ultimately a full Level 2 Apprenticeship in Business and Administration. Abby had already achieved GCSE passes above grade C in English and Maths; however those who do not possess these qualifications are able to do this during the course of their Apprenticeship.

She still attends college every Friday, but spends the rest of her week working at the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. She is currently on a 16-week placement with the Learning and Development (L&D) team, where she is mentored by Tracy Carter, an L&D Administration Assistant and supported by her Academy Co-ordinator. After this, she will complete another 16-week placement in the Human Resources (HR) department of the hospital.

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"I thought this would be good experience to put on my CV," Abby says. "I wanted to get an understanding of HR and L&D before I decide which field to move into." She is gaining experience by making bookings for training courses, setting up rooms, organising course materials and using a database to record who has attended each course.

Work shadowing

The L&D and HR departments have really welcomed Abby into the workplace, enabling her to shadow different roles on different days of the week, so she can gain an insight into each of them. She has also had regular catch-up meetings with her Co-ordinator

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at the Skills for Health Academy to discuss her progress and how she is coping with the demands of the programme.

Abby was attracted to a career in the health sector because she wanted to "give something back", and she believes the NHS will offer her a wide choice of employment opportunities. Once her Apprenticeship is completed this summer, she is keen to move into a job within the sector. From April, she will be referred to the Skills for Health Academy's Employment Progression Programme, which will help her plan her next career move. Abby will continue to have access to this for a further six months after her Apprenticeship is finished.

She is confident that the experience she has gained at the hospital while completing her Apprenticeship will help her to find a job. She says: "My Apprenticeship will work in my favour because I can say I have a year's experience in a healthcare environment – getting to see lots of different job roles with different people."

Learning by doing

Abby has faced some challenges in working across so many different departments but has overcome these by ensuring she prioritises her tasks so she is not letting anyone down. She has also found that she can relate more to the Business Administration theory she learns while at college, as she is often carrying out those tasks on a day-to-day basis. She is able to use evidence from her work placement to count towards her final coursework and is gradually building up her portfolio.

A few of her friends have also gained places on Apprenticeships, and support her decision to choose this route rather than attend university. She is able to continue living at home and still earn some money, whereas many of her friends at university are struggling with living expenses. "I would definitely recommend it," she says. "In the current climate you might get a degree, but lots of people struggle to get a job because they've got no experience. This way I'm earning some money too."

My Apprenticeship has given me…

- access to vital experience to further my career
- a view into potential career avenues
- support to search for permanent employment once I have completed my Apprenticeship.

What Apprenticeships mean to our Trust…

"Our Apprenticeship scheme is well embedded at the Trust and has the full support of the Executive team and every departmental manager. It is seen as a key factor in training the full range of clinical, non-clinical and ancillary staff – so they are supported in developing the key skills and attributes required for their roles, and also rewarded with a range of essential qualifications. As a Trust, Apprenticeships ensure that we can achieve our patient experience vision by offering the best possible quality of care."

Steven Colfar, Clinical Education Manager, Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust