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

My Apprenticeship has... transformed the way I see myself

Linda Evans

Apprenticeship in Team Leading

Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust

Apprenticeships help many people make a positive career move, but in the case of Linda Evans, the skills she has developed on hers could ultimately help someone to save a life.

Linda has worked as a Secretary in the Speech and Language therapy unit of the Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust since 2000, and one of the most rewarding aspects of her job is the support group she runs for neck breathers. The group, known as The Accord Club, helps patients who have lost their voice boxes, predominantly as a result of surgery to treat cancer.

As the group's leader, she has campaigned across the Trust for greater awareness of the needs of neck breathers, particularly around resuscitation. Since they are unable to breathe through their nose or mouth, traditional 'mouth-to-mouth' resuscitation techniques do not work. Linda also offers a vital support lifeline to her group, many of whom have suffered terrible blows to their self-confidence because of the surgery.

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Building skills

She had already trained as a facilitator through the hospital's Excellence through Leadership Programme. However, when the opportunity arose for her to gain a Level 2 Apprenticeship in Team Leading, she hoped this would help to build on what she had learnt. Her Apprenticeship required her to use her experiences with the support group to build a portfolio of evidence of her leadership skills.

"My Apprenticeship has helped me to identify the skills I was already using and learn a lot about myself and my capabilities," she says. Linda admits that she suffered with her own self-confidence issues after experiencing a brain haemorrhage some years ago, and gaining her Apprenticeship has left her pleasantly surprised at what she can achieve. "I came out of school at 15 with no qualifications and when I joined the health service I didn't have much confidence after my own surgery. I had been told at one stage I might not walk again," she adds.

New challenges

Linda was supported on her Apprenticeship by the training provider Total People, and assessors would come into her support group meetings to observe her interacting with the patients and gain evidence of her team leadership skills. While Linda found the leadership skills side of her Apprenticeship

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came naturally because she had been working with these groups for some time, one challenge she did not enjoy was having to complete her Key Skills qualification in Application of Number. "Maths was not my strong subject at school, but I had a good friend support me and help me through past papers, and I passed with flying colours," she says.

Linda has recently begun a Level 3 Apprenticeship in Management, again with Total People. She hopes gaining this Apprenticeship will help her to gain a more senior role in her Trust and build upon her existing leadership skills. She would also like to expand her network within the hospital by helping other areas to start support groups. "The best part of my job is the project work and coming into contact with patients, so I'd love to work on other projects like The Accord Club," she says.

Confidence boost

Her persistence in raising awareness of neck breathers' concerns around resuscitation has also paid off. Information on how to resuscitate neck breathers is now included in all CPR training delivered at the hospital. Linda believes that without her Apprenticeship, she might never have had the confidence to take her concerns to the highest level in the Trust or deliver presentations to a variety of staff about how to recognise and support a neck breather.

Linda says the whole experience has been a 'great journey' for her and has completely altered how she views herself. "Doing my Apprenticeship has made me happier with myself because I feel that I have made a difference. I'm not a doctor or a nurse, but when I retire it will be satisfying to know that I was behind that small change," she says.

My Apprenticeship has given me…

- the chance to make a difference to people's lives
- a way of recognising my existing skills
- the confidence to progress in my career.

What Apprenticeships mean to our Trust…

"Apprenticeships have become a fundamental part of the way we develop staff within the Trust, and a great opportunity for those at bands 1 to 4. Whether staff are enhancing their skills or moving onto new roles, Apprenticeships add up to a more competent workforce – one that's more efficient, productive, confident and able to provide a better quality of care and service. The number of apprentices we have is constantly growing, which is seen as a real positive throughout the Trust."

Steven Hughes, Vocational Training Manager
Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust