

Inspection of University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

Inspection dates: 11–14 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) runs apprenticeship courses for healthcare providers in Leicester and the surrounding area. Almost all apprentices work for UHL or Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. At the time of the inspection, there were 238 apprentices.

The majority of apprentices follow nursing associate apprenticeships at level 5. Smaller but significant numbers of apprentices study level 3 team leader, level 3 business administration, level 2 customer services or level 2 healthcare support worker courses. Very small numbers of apprentices study other healthcare-related courses at level 3 or level 5.

A few apprentices also study functional mathematics and English qualifications via subcontracted courses at Leicester College.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices rightly feel very positively about the new skills, knowledge and behaviours that they develop through their studies. They enjoy their learning, attend classes at high rates and, in most cases, value the impact their studies have on their career development. They benefit from high professional expectations, and adhere to these very well.

In the large majority of cases, the provider's staff work closely with apprentices' line managers. This ensures that line managers fully understand the purpose and requirements of the apprenticeships. In a few cases at level 2, the link between teachers and line managers is less clear. This means that there is not a strong enough link between what apprentices learn in lessons and their practical activities at work.

Apprentices develop the skills and confidence to take on important new responsibilities at work. For example, team leader level 3 apprentices independently chair meetings and conduct appraisals. Those that study level 5 nursing associate apprenticeships evaluate complex situations more effectively. They apply these skills to the new responsibilities they take on at work.

Apprentices feel safe when they study. Inspectors agreed that they are safe.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have developed a curriculum that meets the needs of the healthcare profession well. They have selected and adapted courses to tackle local and national skills shortages in nursing and healthcare assistant roles. Leaders work effectively with external organisations such as The Nursing and Midwifery Council to prepare apprentices well for the demands of working in challenging healthcare settings.

Teachers cover topics that are highly relevant to apprentices' needs. For example, level 5 theatre-specific trainee assistant practitioners develop substantial knowledge of anaesthetics, infections and patient care. As a result, apprentices perform more effectively at work. Teachers also place a considerable focus on the broader skills that apprentices need. This includes a focus on difficult patients and scenarios for level 2 customer service apprentices.

In the large majority of cases, teachers plan well-structured lessons. They build upon the learning that apprentices covered in previous modules, and use discussions to explore topics in greater depth. At level 5, teachers assess apprentices' knowledge early in each new module to check their understanding. They amend subsequent teaching based on the results of the assessments to ensure a focus on areas where apprentices lack knowledge.

Apprentices at all levels develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to perform well at work and progress in their careers. High numbers of apprentices gain distinction grades. The large majority remain in sustained employment or go on to further study at the end of their courses. Although the small number of apprentices that study functional English at Leicester College achieve their qualifications at high rates, the rate of those that achieve functional mathematics is too low.

Leaders ensure that apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive helpful support. For example, apprentices with memory difficulties get extra help to break down tasks and plan their academic work schedule.

Leaders place a heavy focus on apprentices' personal development, such as supporting apprentices to live healthy lives. Leaders devise activities to help apprentices understand the diverse local population that they serve, the importance of equality at work, and fundamental British values. Despite this, a significant minority of apprentices have limited knowledge of these values.

In most cases, apprentices benefit from useful on- and off-course careers guidance. Level 2 healthcare support worker apprentices value how careers discussions with their teachers and exposure to different workplace activities help them to gain permanent roles within hospitals. In a minority of cases, apprentices at level 3 do not receive sufficient careers advice.

Leaders are unwavering in their focus on improving the quality of apprenticeships. They have tackled issues well, such as reducing the previously high numbers of apprentices that left their courses early. However, during quality assurance activities leaders do not focus enough on the effect of teaching activities on apprentices.

Governors have a valuable array of experience, for example substantial knowledge of safeguarding and further education. Leaders' attempts to introduce a single board of governors have been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have advanced plans in place to introduce a new and more efficient structure.

Leaders provide appropriate training and development activities for teachers. This includes training on teaching skills, but also a focus on teachers' mental well-being to help them cope with stressful and upsetting scenarios that they discuss with apprentices.

Teachers' remote classes are not always as effective as face-to-face lessons. Senior leaders do not ensure that teachers have access to up-to-date computer equipment to help them teach online lessons. As a result, apprentices cannot fully participate in their online classes.

Teachers do not use apprentices' starting points consistently well to plan teaching. This means that a few level 2 apprentices with strong academic skills move through theory activities at the same pace as less confident peers. They rightly feel frustrated by this, and recognise that they could learn new topics at a faster pace.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff with responsibility for safeguarding are vigilant to local risks. They ensure that staff at all levels benefit from comprehensive safeguarding training and updates, and that this is well contextualised to local safeguarding issues such as knife crime and county lines.

When apprentices report safeguarding concerns, staff report and record these appropriately. This includes a risk rating to help them determine appropriate next steps. Staff are particularly vigilant about the safeguarding of apprentices under the age of 19.

If apprentices need to work in an unfamiliar part of the hospital, as part of their training, staff ensure that they carry out appropriate safety checks.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should focus more closely on the impact of teaching activities on apprentices during quality assurance activities.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers have access to good-quality computer equipment to support their online teaching.
- Teachers should use apprentices' starting points effectively to plan courses.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58442
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Contact number	0116 258 7520
Website	www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk
Principal/CEO	Richard Mitchell
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Leicester College

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the senior learning and development manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

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