

Inspection of Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Inspection dates: 23 to 26 November 2021

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

Information about this provider

The Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is an employer provider in the north east of England. The trust began delivery of apprenticeships as an employer provider in 2017.

At the time of the inspection, there were 34 apprentices on the level 2 healthcare support worker standard, 26 apprentices on the level 2 customer service practitioner standard, 52 apprentices on the level 3 team leading/supervisor standard, 18 apprentices on the level 3 business administrator standard, seven apprentices on the level 3 senior healthcare support worker standard, and five apprentices on the level 3 payroll administrator standard. The trust has one subcontractor, Gateshead Council, which provides training in English and mathematics.

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

Apprentices demonstrate very positive attitudes to their learning. They are proud to be apprentices and to work in an organisation that cares for people. Apprentices acquire the skills and experience that quickly enable them to become trusted and valued members of their teams. As a result, they move rapidly into full-time work and take on additional responsibilities such as working in COVID-19 vaccination clinics in health and administrative roles.

Apprentices benefit greatly from the wider opportunities for personal development available to all employees in the trust. Business administrator apprentices, for example, carry out additional training to improve their digital skills. Healthcare support worker apprentices attend useful workshops on dementia care, through which they learn how to interact and communicate better with patients who are living with dementia.

Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They understand the risks that they may face at work and in their home lives. They are provided with useful information about how to recognise the signs of domestic abuse so they can keep themselves and their patients safe. Apprentices know how to report concerns and have confidence that their tutors and managers will act quickly and appropriately.

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

Leaders have a clear commitment to apprenticeships that enable young people across the region to gain their first role working in the NHS. They have carefully selected apprenticeships that provide the education and training that their existing employees need in order to develop their skills and advance their careers. For example, the business administrator apprenticeship enables both new and established employees to fulfil important business roles across the trust, and provides a well-defined route for career advancement.

Leaders and managers work well with most workplace managers to identify the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to be able to contribute effectively as employees. The ambitious level 2 healthcare support worker apprenticeship curriculum provides apprentices with a broad range of practical learning and placement opportunities across general and specialist clinical departments. As a result, apprentices improve their awareness of the needs of different hospital wards and increase their knowledge of medical conditions, illnesses and disabilities. This helps them to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of patients in their own care.

Leaders recruit well-qualified and clinically experienced tutors and assessors who have up-to-date vocational experience. Apprentices also benefit from teaching from members of hospital staff who are experts in their field. These representatives from across the trust impart useful information about their experiences within their

specific disciplines, which apprentices value. For example, finance managers teach level 3 payroll administrator apprentices the theory of budget planning and how to reduce costs in the delivery of domiciliary care without adversely affecting the quality of care being provided.

Leaders have invested in teaching spaces and resources across the trust to enable them to provide good-quality apprenticeships. They ensure that apprentices are taught in fit-for-purpose educational environments such as simulated wards.

Apprentices are rightly appreciative of the professional and personal support that they receive from their tutors. Most apprentices benefit from individualised training and career plans that match their experience, abilities and aspirations. There is a clear link between what apprentices learn in their training sessions and what they do in their job roles.

Managers and tutors take care to ensure that apprentices who declare or who are identified as having additional learning needs are well supported. For example, apprentices who have difficulties with written language get the help and support they need to improve their learning following dyslexia screening.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have a clear oversight of the strengths and areas for development of the apprenticeship provision. They hold managers to account effectively for the performance of apprenticeships through a workforce development committee. Leaders have recently appointed a quality coordinator to take forward actions identified for further improvement.

Leaders take great care to provide information and guidance that help staff and apprentices maintain and improve their mental health and well-being. They have recently invested in a purpose-built well-being facility for the use of all employees of the trust.

Apprentices benefit from highly personalised careers information, education, advice and guidance based on their career aspirations. From interview, and throughout the apprenticeship, managers and tutors ensure that apprentices know about vacancies and receive the support that they need to prepare for interview.

Leaders work successfully with the subcontractor to ensure that the very few apprentices who struggle with English and mathematical skills are supported to catch up and prepare for functional skills qualifications.

A few apprentices do not benefit from the off-the-job training to which they are entitled. Workplace managers who take on responsibility for new departments and inherit apprentices are less sure of the requirements and expectations of a line manager of an apprentice. As a result, a few apprentices do not receive sufficient support from their managers and must use their own time outside work to complete their assignments. In addition, a few workplace managers do not fully understand the need to enable apprentices who progress into other roles during their programme to continue to receive off-the-job training.

A few tutors do not use assessment well enough to check apprentices' understanding and development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Consequently, a few apprentices are not able to use assessment feedback effectively to improve their work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have ensured that staff know and understand the trust's safeguarding policy and processes. Staff take immediate and effective action when a safeguarding disclosure is made to ensure that apprentices are safe. They immediately report safeguarding concerns and disclosures to the safeguarding team using the correct notification and risk escalation forms. Staff ensure that apprentices understand how and to whom they should report concerns about sexual abuse and harassment. Apprentices are assured that leaders and managers would take their concerns seriously and take swift action.

Apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding, including keeping themselves safe online, particularly when using social media at home and for work purposes. They are provided with helpful information that increases their awareness of local safeguarding issues, such as the increase in the spiking of drinks in public bars. Apprentices are made well aware of the dangers and signs associated with radicalisation, extremism and terrorism.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all workplace managers understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring that apprentices can access their off-the-job training entitlement.
- Ensure that tutors and assessors improve their use of assessment and subsequent feedback to support apprentices in identifying what they need to do to improve their work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276531
Address	7–8 Silver Fox Way Cobalt Business Park Newcastle upon Tyne NE27 0QJ
Contact number	0191 203 1443
Website	www.northumbria.nhs.uk
CEO	Sir James Mackey
Provider type	Employer provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractor	Gateshead Council

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality assurance coordinator, 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.

Inspection team

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