

Inspection of Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 July 2023

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

Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) began teaching apprenticeships in January 2020. All apprentices complete standards-based apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, there were 20 apprentices on the level 2 health care support worker apprenticeship. There were 14 apprentices on the level 4 mammography associate apprenticeship. There were fewer than five apprentices on the level 3 community health and wellbeing apprenticeship and also on the level 3 business administration apprenticeship. All apprentices except one are over the age of 18.

The Trust works with three sub-contractors: Community Matters teaches level 3 business administration and level 3 community health and wellbeing apprenticeships. In Health Jarvis teaches level 4 mammography associate apprenticeships and Runway Training teaches functional skills. At the time of the inspection, 19 apprentices were studying functional skills in English or mathematics.

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

Apprentices thoroughly enjoy the practical training they receive while they work in a range of hospital wards and doctors' surgeries across the Trust. Most apprentices attend and participate well in taught sessions. They enjoy sharing their experiences and listening to their peers. However, a few apprentices' punctuality and attendance at taught sessions are not high enough.

Apprentices develop their confidence, resilience and character during their training. For example, apprentices deal with patients who have recent diagnoses of life-changing or life-threatening illnesses with high levels of empathy. Apprentices show the values of respect expected by the Trust when dealing with patients and their care needs. They complete allocated duties diligently and maintain patient dignity.

Apprentices quickly gain new skills and knowledge. For example, level 4 mammography associate apprentices learn about radiation protection and quality control of the images. Level 3 business administration apprentices learn how to deal with challenging patients. As a result, apprentices quickly become effective in their roles, and some take on additional responsibility.

Apprentices receive effective careers advice and guidance. They discuss career opportunities in their frequent reviews with their managers and tutors. Apprentices are aware of their career development opportunities within the Trust and the wider NHS. Tutors and managers advise apprentices about suitable degree programmes to support their future career aspirations.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including while working online. Apprentices have close supervision from staff and managers while working on the wards to protect themselves and their patients. Apprentices learn about the importance of general data protection, which they apply when accessing confidential patient records. Most apprentices have a good understanding of the threats posed by radicalisation. However, a small minority of apprentices taught by subcontractors have a limited understanding of the threats posed by extremist views.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for choosing the apprenticeship standards they teach. They are ambitious to provide world-class teaching and care. The apprenticeship standards they offer provide pathways to careers within the NHS that are locally and nationally in high demand. Leaders are committed to widening participation. For example, the level 2 healthcare support worker apprenticeship teaches apprentices the essential entry skills, knowledge and behaviours required to develop their careers within the Trust.

Leaders and tutors plan and teach the curriculum to make sure that apprentices build essential knowledge and skills over time. For example, early in the programme,

tutors teach level 2 health care support worker apprentices basic life support, duty of care, and infection prevention and control. As a result, apprentices follow correct processes and gain the trust of patients when seeking consent to undertake a range of care duties.

Tutors and managers plan effective off-the-job training that complements the on-the-job training apprentices receive. For example, tutors teach level 4 mammography associate apprentices about ethics and legislation, which apprentices apply to practical screening activities in the workplace. Tutors use real-life experiences to help apprentices remember their learning. As a result, apprentices quickly become valued members of staff.

Tutors and managers support apprentices effectively. For example, apprentices benefit from frequent progress reviews with their managers and tutors. During reviews, tutors focus effectively on apprentices' well-being and the progress they are making. This contributes positively to most apprentices being on track to achieve and most are successful in completing their training.

Tutors do not always use the results of their assessment of apprentices' knowledge and skills at the start of the programme effectively to plan a personalised programme for apprentices. For example, a few apprentices have gaps in their mathematics and communication skills. Tutors do not always tackle these knowledge gaps. As a result, a few apprentices do not achieve their qualifications by their planned end date.

Leaders have a thorough understanding of the quality of apprentices' training and use this to make continuous improvements. For example, leaders have taken effective actions to improve apprentices' understanding of the final assessment. Tutors now plan final assessment sessions into the curriculum, discuss high-grade criteria with apprentices and provide them with practice papers throughout their training. Apprentices are well informed about their final assessment, and many achieve high grades.

Leaders provide effective professional development for staff. They support tutors to achieve the level 5 teaching and coaching apprenticeship. Leaders and tutors meet quarterly to review the progress of apprentices and to provide helpful training. For example, they sample the quality of reviews and provide training on how to coach apprentices. As a result, tutors and staff feel valued and supported to develop professionally in their roles.

Leaders do not have good enough oversight of all their subcontractors. Leaders meet with subcontractors monthly to review the progress of apprentices and set action plans to improve it. However, leaders' oversight of the quality of and participation in English and mathematics classes is not good enough. For example, too few apprentices attend or complete the English and mathematics online curriculum set for them. As a result, in a few cases, apprentices make slow progress and a few do not complete their apprenticeship by their planned end date.

Leaders have put in place effective governance arrangements. Governors are highly skilled in business, health and safeguarding. The steering group challenges leaders on key outcomes and the experience of apprentices. For example, following the new provider monitoring visit, governors provided good challenge for leaders to improve their quality assurance processes. However, improvements in the English and mathematics curriculum have been too slow.

Leaders care about the well-being and workload of their staff and apprentices. For example, apprentices value their managers' frequent checks on their well-being while on shift and following challenging situations on the wards. Leaders provide apprentices and staff with a range of well-being resources, such as exercise classes, reduced gym membership, and physiological and financial well-being resources. As a result, apprentices feel valued and they are proud to work for the Trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture of safeguarding and ensure effective arrangements are in place for safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding is built into the recruitment process to ensure candidates are aware of the importance of keeping patients, colleagues and themselves safe at all times.

Leaders have suitable and effective safeguarding policies and procedures in place. Leaders sit on several local authority safeguarding boards to ensure they are aware of the risks associated with the communities they serve. Leaders take appropriate steps to analyse and respond to local risks associated with radicalisation.

The lead and deputy safeguarding leads are appropriately trained for their roles. All staff have up-to-date knowledge. They complete a range of safeguarding refresher training, such as modern slavery and violence against women and girls, at frequent intervals.

Leaders and managers carry out the necessary checks to ensure that new staff are suitable to work with apprentices and patients.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should improve the progress and achievement of their apprentices' English and mathematics skills.
- Leaders and tutors should use the results of their assessment of apprentices' knowledge and skills at the start of the programme to plan training programmes that tackle any gaps in apprentices' knowledge.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that they track apprentices' attendance and punctuality accurately and put in place appropriate actions to improve them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2626882
Address	1st Floor Roy Shaw Centre 3-5 Cressy Road Greater London NW3 2ND
Contact number	0207 794 0500
Website	www.royalfree.nhs.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Crystal Akass
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Community Matters In Health Jarvis Runway Training

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of apprenticeships, 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

Paul Manning, lead inspector
Kanwaljit Dhillon

His Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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