Inspection of Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
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 Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) is a main provider based in the Wonford site Exeter, working across various Trust sites. The Trust began training apprentices as a directly funded provider in April 2021. It continues to use other providers to train clinical and non-clinical apprentices across the Trust, as it did before April 2021. The 32 adult apprentices studying the team-leading apprenticeship at level 3 are mainly based in Exeter, and a few are working in East or North Devon. The Trust works with the South West Association of Training Providers Ltd (SWATPRO) as a subcontractor that provides most of the functional skills training, data collection and external quality assurance.

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

Apprentices thrive in the deeply embedded culture of learning that leaders have created. They are well supported by their tutors and line managers in an environment that values the training and skills that apprentices bring to the organisation. Apprentices apply their new knowledge to the workplace very well and gain extra responsibilities because of the training they receive. Almost all have been promoted because of studying the apprenticeship, many while completing the programme. However, a few apprentices do not know enough about additional qualifications or courses they might undertake next.

Apprentices enjoy their training and find studying the apprenticeship interesting and suitably demanding. They rightly recognise the benefits of studying to further develop their skills and career options. Leaders place the development of apprentices' confidence at the heart of the curriculum. Apprentices build their knowledge of team-leading theories and techniques alongside learning vital communication and social skills. For example, tutors teach a comprehensive programme of confidence-building activities, such as presentations, that increase in complexity to add a greater depth of knowledge and challenge. Apprentices build their communication skills securely, and an increase in resilience supports their learning of the curriculum and the development of wider work skills. However, apprentices are not always set sufficiently precise targets by tutors and, as a result, they do not always know how to improve their work.

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

Leaders have a clear purpose for the apprenticeship they offer. They ensure that apprentices become capable, confident leaders who put patient care and safety first. They are progressive, forward-thinking and continuously looking for ways to learn about and improve their provision. For example, leaders created a quality improvement group that includes both clinical and non-clinical colleagues to harmonise training practices and promote the ethos of compassionate leadership across the Trust. Consequently, tutors teach apprentices about the most up-to-date values and practices across the wide variety of departments that they work in.

Leaders have developed effective and productive links with local further education colleges and civic partners, such as Exeter College, Petroc, and Learn Devon, to widen apprentices' participation and remove barriers for those who want to join the apprenticeship. For example, leaders recognised that many apprentices were put off by the requirement to study functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics to complete the programme. Leaders, therefore, worked with partners to create a pre-apprenticeship programme to enable potential apprentices to study for and gain the essential English and mathematics qualifications before joining the apprenticeship. This has reduced the risk of apprentices being overwhelmed by the volume of work required when studying the apprenticeship and has increased the potential talent available to the Trust.

Leaders and tutors have devised a thoughtful curriculum that is well designed and sequenced. For example, apprentices learn about organisational governance early in their studies and develop a good foundational understanding of legislation, and the NHS rules and policies that they need to apply during their work. They move on to learn about building and motivating teams and then how to manage themselves before reflecting on how they have developed and considering their next steps. As a result, apprentices incrementally develop their technical knowledge and practical skills to make them effective team leaders.

Apprentices swiftly develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours because of the training they receive. They relate this new learning to their current roles and apply it successfully to their job roles. For example, apprentices learn about the Kubler-Ross change curve and, as many of them have gone through significant change within their workplace, use this new knowledge to help them to recognise how their teams cope with change. Consequently, they better support their teams through what can be an anxious time.

Leaders carefully select additional qualifications for apprentices to study, enhance their skills and better prepare them for their job roles. For example, leaders added a coaching and mentoring qualification to the start of the apprenticeship to teach apprentices how to support and guide their teams through cultural challenges. As a result, apprentices learn to have coaching conversations with confidence, and make use of theoretical frameworks to support their teams effectively and become good role models. Apprentices also study the NHS level 3 Edward Jenner leadership course to increase the consistency of leadership across the NHS.

Tutors are well qualified and possess the necessary expertise and experience to teach apprentices effectively. They use their skills well to enliven learning and teach sessions that are interesting and interactive. For example, tutors make effective use of group activities so that apprentices learn from each other's experiences of working across the Trust. Apprentices gain insight into the application of their new knowledge and skills beyond their workplace and of how different departments work.

Leaders provide effective additional learning support to apprentices with identified support needs. For example, apprentices use laptops and tutors make useful adaptations, such as providing voice-overs to online presentations, to enable apprentices to study outside of learning sessions. As a result, apprentices with additional learning needs achieve at least in line with their peers.

Leaders make skilful use of Trust staff's expertise to provide apprentices with a rich programme of guest speakers. For example, Trust executives share content with apprentices on their work, such as organisational culture and strategy, and Trust professionals teach masterclasses on mental health, managing stress, inclusion, carbon literacy, the NHS charity and volunteering. This adds important context to the personal development curriculum and encourages apprentices to develop further their talents and interests.

Line managers ensure that apprentices shadow leaders within their department and across the Trust. For example, apprentices attend budget meetings that are not part of their current role. This gives them valuable insight into the work of the Trust and enables them to learn from a range of new environments and scenarios. In addition, apprentices are provided with additional responsibilities to, for example, lead team meetings or lead team reflections. These on-the-job activities are coordinated well with off-the-job training to ensure that apprentices practise the skills they need to be successful in their job roles.

Expert tutors support well apprentices who study functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics through online learning and weekly face-to-face drop-in sessions. For example, tutors use practice and repetition techniques to enable apprentices to consolidate learning and secure new knowledge and skills in their long-term memory. Leaders robustly oversee the subcontracted provision provided by SWATPRO. They use frequent quality improvement meetings to discuss the progress made by each apprentice and to devise and monitor action plans so that they make good progress in achieving their functional skills qualification. As a result, apprentices are confident that they will successfully achieve their qualifications, allowing them to complete their apprenticeship. All apprentices have passed their functional skills exam on the first attempt.

Leaders reflected positively on the previous Ofsted new provider monitoring visit and took swift action to resolve the weaknesses highlighted by inspectors. For example, leaders recently created the Apprenticeship Quality and Compliance Advisory Committee, made up of senior leaders from both inside and outside of the Trust. The committee provides leaders with valuable support and offers effective external scrutiny of the remedial actions taken. However, the full impact of the committee's oversight is yet to be realised.

Leaders recently developed their literacy and numeracy strategy to develop further the skills of apprentices who have already achieved their functional skills qualifications, or equivalent. Tutors work alongside a literacy and numeracy coach, using information about apprentices' starting points to identify and fill gaps in their knowledge. For example, tutors identified that apprentices had knowledge gaps in space and shape. The coach worked with them to devise a learning session where apprentices needed to facilitate an office move, something they are highly likely to experience in their job roles. As a result, new apprentices develop their literacy and numeracy skills well. However, as this approach is relatively new, its full impact is yet to be experienced by all apprentices.

Leaders place high value on promoting career pathways both inside and outside of the trust to apprentices. They use their extensive network of contacts across the health and social care sector well to promote potential opportunities for most apprentices. Apprentices are supported by tutors effectively to pursue their career interests through, for example, shadowing those undertaking higher-level apprenticeships.

Leaders have recently improved their development plans so that apprentices receive more in-depth feedback from their tutors and line managers on how well they are developing their personal and social skills. Most apprentices meet frequently with the 'career navigator' to identify the Trust masterclasses that will help support their development. As a result, most apprentices know what opportunities are available when they complete the apprenticeship.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- The provider should improve target setting for apprentices so that they know what they need to do to achieve their curricular goals.
- The provider should ensure that all apprentices, including those who have previously achieved their qualifications, continue to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2691317
Address	RILD Building Wonford Site Barrack Road Exeter Devon EX2 5DW
Contact number	01392 404 825
Website	www.royaldevon.nhs.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Sam Higginson
Provider type	Employer provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	South West Association of Training Providers Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of apprenticeships, future careers and widening participation, 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

Sarah Alexander, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Judy Lye-Forster	His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted

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