

Apprenticeships at RJAH

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Apprenticeships can be an excellent way of attracting new talent, reskilling existing staff and tackling skills shortages and the new levy system funding eligibility has replaced a number of complex funding rules which have previously been a barrier to apprenticeship training. This means a broader range of both new and existing staff in the workforce are now able to access fully funded apprenticeship training.

This document aims to provide the answers to some frequently asked questions about apprenticeships.

What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a genuine job which incorporates skills development, technical knowledge and practical experience, through a work-based training programme. They are available to anyone over the age of 16 and enable learners to demonstrate their competence while gaining a recognised qualification and earning a wage.

It is important to note that employment is a fundamental part of an apprenticeship and an apprentice must be employed in a job role with a productive purpose. In addition, the minimum duration for an apprenticeship is 12 months and the apprentice must spend at least 20 per cent of their time on off-the-job training.

On completion of the programme an apprentice should remain with their employer where a job opportunity continues to exist. Where this is not possible, they must be supported to seek alternative opportunities.

What are the key elements within an apprenticeship?

Vocational qualifications (NVQs), on-the-job training, Functional Skills: English, Maths and IT and employment rights and responsibilities (ERR)

What are technical certificates?

A technical certificate is equivalent to five good GCSE passes (level two) or two A-level passes (advanced level). Examples: City and Guilds, Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE), Education Development International (EDI), Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT)

What does an apprenticeship involve?

Apprentices must have a contract of employment, which is long enough for them to complete their training programme, and an apprenticeship agreement which forms part of their employment contract. This is in addition to the learning agreement which describes the learning programme.

Apprenticeship agreements are written statements outlining the particulars of employment, including hours of work, holiday entitlement, rate of pay etc. At the Trust, we provide this via an offer of employment letter.

Is there an upper age limit for the person I recruit or train as an apprentice?

No. This recognises that many people will have to adapt their skills during the course of their working lives and an Apprenticeship will often be the best route to achieving this.

How old do staff have to be to enrol onto an apprenticeship?

Learners must be aged 16 to 64 years and have left full time education

How long does an Apprenticeship last?

It will last at least a year and up to four years in some occupations requiring high level specialist skills.

Are Apprenticeships available for existing staff?

An apprentice doesn't have to be someone new – one of your current staff could be an ideal candidate for an Apprenticeship. This is a great way to upskill and nurture the talent already in your department / team.

The apprenticeship reform has also led to the introduction of higher level and now degree level apprenticeships i.e. level 6, Bachelor's degree and level 7, Master's degree. This means an apprenticeship can be taken at any point in an employee's career and will better enable individuals to develop new skills and progress in their career as well supporting the Trust with service provision in the future and ensuring staff are competent and able to deliver services in the future.

For existing staff, a job analysis will need to be undertaken to see if there is enough scope within their existing job role to enable them to fulfil the competency requirements of the apprenticeship. If there is scope within the job role, an apprenticeship can be undertaken as a development opportunity however the job role **will NOT be re-banded under Agenda for Change** and the employee **will not receive any additional pay** even if they develop more competencies.

What about staff who do not have much experience or qualifications. Are they eligible to enrol onto an apprenticeship?

Yes! No experience is necessary, but they must be aged 16 to 64.

How have apprenticeships changed under government apprenticeship reforms?

The government apprenticeship reforms have been designed to improve the quality, relevance and accessibility of apprenticeships. In summary:

- Modern apprenticeships must enable the apprentice to become fully competent and therefore ensure broad exposure to all aspects of the role/occupation for which they are undertaking the apprenticeship.
- Apprenticeship standards (outlining core knowledge, skills and behaviours) and associated assessment can now be defined by employers in 'Trailblazer' groups, based on the needs of their future workforce.
- Revised funding eligibility replaces a number of complex funding rules which have previously been a barrier to apprenticeship training. This means a broader range of

both new and existing staff in the pharmacy workforce will be able to access fully funded apprenticeship training.

What levels of apprenticeships are available?

There are a range of apprenticeship levels that lead to different qualifications, and they typically take between one and four years to complete. The table below shows how apprenticeship levels compare to other types of qualifications.

Apprenticeship level	Level descriptor	Equivalent qualification
Level 1		5 GCSEs graded D-G
Level 2	Intermediate level apprenticeship	5 GCSEs grades A*-C NVQ level 2 Key skills level 2 BTEC first diploma and certificate
Level 3	Advanced level apprenticeship	2 A/AS levels (any grade) NVQ level 3 Key skills level 3 BTEC Diplomas, Certificates and Awards
Level 4	Higher level apprenticeships	Certificate of higher education (first year of bachelor's degree) NVQ L4
Level 5		Diploma of higher education Foundation degree (second year of bachelor's degree)
Level 6		Bachelor's degree
Level 7	Higher apprenticeship routes are being developed	Master's degree

How do the government apprenticeship reforms affect NHS Trusts?

From 1 May 2017, NHS Trusts are subject to a monthly levy of 0.5% of their pay bill. This money can only be claimed back by the organisation to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment.

In addition, NHS Trusts are being monitored against the government public sector apprenticeship target of 2.3% of employed staff enrolled as new apprentice starts over the period of 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021.

What happens if the Trust uses up all of the levy funding?

The levy is paid by the Trust via PAYE monthly and can be claimed back by the organisation to pay for apprenticeship starts that month. Once this has been used up, further apprenticeship starts that month will need to be paid for on a co-investment basis; whereby the government pay 90% of the training cost and the organisation pays 10%.

There is no cost to the Trust for drawing down directly from the levy but once this funding has been used up, the Trust will need to adopt a co-investment model with divisions, despite it costing less for the organisation as a whole.

Competing workforce development priorities within organisations will impact upon funding availability. Potential for a high levy spend on degree-level apprenticeships i.e. Nursing,

carries a risk that that ability to take up apprenticeship training will be affected for other staff groups in Bands 1 – 4.

Therefore, the Trust will need to work with divisions and individual departments to consider their forecasted apprenticeship starts so that the organisation can plan and prioritise how the levy will be spent each month and to balance out starts across the year if necessary.

What costs will the levy cover?

It is important to note that funds in the digital apprentice account can only be used towards the costs of apprenticeship training and end point assessment and that the Trust can only use an approved training provider and assessment organisation.

Funds cannot be used on other costs associated with apprentices or wider training effort, for example, wages, statutory licences to practise, travel and subsidiary costs, managerial costs, traineeships, work placement programmes or the costs of setting up an apprenticeship programme.

How is RJAH managing the Levy and apprenticeships?

The Trust Apprenticeship Lead (the Training Manager and Training Advisor with support from their Finance Lead) will be centrally managing the Trust levy expenditure in accordance with the government funding policy. They are managing all aspects of apprenticeships; including ensuring compliance with apprenticeship funding rules, reporting against related targets and procurement of apprenticeship training provision and assessment through single and/or multiple contracts.

For further information about apprentices, please contact the HR/Training Team on ext 4470 or via email to: training.enquiries@rjah.nhs.uk