

Pushing the framework boundaries at Milton Keynes NHS Foundation Trust



“It’s an exciting time and I have every confidence in this group of people”

Helen Botwood Pathology Support manager at Milton Keynes NHS Foundation Trust began exploring apprenticeships with Sue Coombs the Training and Development manager way back in November 2009.

After much interest from her staff in a Laboratory Technician apprenticeship, the search was on to get the training the department wanted.

The Challenge

The lab support technician is one of a number of specialist frameworks that has been devised for the health sector, the challenge to Helen and Sue was finding a training provider that could meet their needs, deliver quality learning provision in a flexible demanding environment and most importantly within a specific budget.

Many discussions and meetings were held with providers, which included a teleconference call using a mobile phone on hands free. The final decision was made and TDR training was selected as the most suitable provider.

TDR is a Training Provider that works primarily in the science and engineering sectors, delivering Young Apprenticeships, Apprenticeships and Adult Learning and Training. They mostly work sub-regionally, from Northumberland to Durham.

The first boundary pushed, 230 miles outside of TDR’s usual area of operation

In order for the learners to be fully aware of what they were about to commit to, Linda Croudace (Manager of Science Faculty) and Ian Young (Managing Director) from TDR made the journey to Milton Keynes in order to explain the full requirements of the apprenticeship scheme. This meeting had a great response and 6 of the original 8 interested learners were signed up.

Second boundary pushed, this was the first ever Lab Support Technician framework to be started in NHS South Central

Induction Training

On the 30th April 2010, some 6 months after initial enquiries, the day had finally come.

Angela, Tina, Zoe, Amanda and Gary commenced their induction training with Linda and her 2 assessors Simon (an industrial chemist) and Mike (a microbiologist)

Christine the 6th learner starts shortly

The induction covered

- Health & Safety
- Equality & Diversity
- Individual Learning Plan
- NVQ Requirements and assessment processes
- BTEC Requirements and assessment processes
- Instruction on the use of the e-portfolio



This particular framework will take an estimated 18 months to complete, on completion these learners will be awarded, the NVQ Level 3 LATA a work based competency qualification that is based on National Occupational Standards, plus a BTEC National Award in Applied Science (Medical Science)

To receive their Apprenticeship certificate they will also have to complete literacy and numeracy assessments and an employment rights and responsibilities booklet.

The Journey ahead

The apprenticeship programme that has been designed for this particular group has taken into account the needs of the department, needs of the learner and the logistics involved.

Over the next 18 months each candidate will work with their manager, department and each other to gather evidence for the NVQ and complete assignments for the BTEC. Each candidate will undertake and use the following:

20 assessor visits and up to 4 internal verification visits

Formal review of each candidate's progress every 12 weeks

Use an e-portfolio system for the NVQ and BTEC elements of the apprenticeship, this will allow:

- Daily contact with the assessor if required
- Email facilities back to the centre
- Assessment planning
- Uploading of assignments and evidence
- Candidates and manager progress monitoring
- Access to BTEC Training materials
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Third boundary pushed- the ability of all to learn once again



“It has been 8 years since I was in main stream education”

“I want to learn more about working in the lab and the apprenticeship scheme was the best way to do it”

“I want to be more knowledgeable and improve on my communications and confidence”