

# Apprenticeships in Primary Care Information Pack



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for health and  
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## Hello from the Health Education England Talent for Care Team

This booklet has been produced by Health Education England (HEE). Health Education England supports the development of Apprenticeships in the Health Sector as part of Talent for Care.

Find out more about Talent for Care and Widening Participation [here](#)

### What is this booklet about?

This booklet outlines the benefits of apprenticeship qualifications in primary care support roles and showcases the impact of apprentices within the work environment. There are a broad range of profiles covering medical administration, business administration, customer service, healthcare and team leading.

### How does this booklet benefit me?

It will give you an insight into some of the different apprenticeship qualifications that could enhance your general practice. You will hear stories from other practices, both from an employer and apprentice perspective, and we hope it will help you

understand how an apprentice can add real value.

### What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is on the job training leading to a national qualification, available for both new and existing staff. Anyone over the age of 16, who is not in full time education, can apply to be an apprentice. There are different levels of apprenticeships, from intermediate and advanced to higher and degree levels. This enables employers to select the most relevant framework for the requirements of the job role and the apprentice's previous experience, and to provide a clearly defined progression pathway for apprentices.



## Apprenticeships in Primary Care

Apprenticeships are used to develop the skills and knowledge of both new and existing employees and typically combine on-the-job training at an employer's site with off-the-job training provided by a training organisation.

The reasons why employers engage with apprenticeship are varied but often include maintaining or improving future skill levels in the organisation, improving service quality, improving productivity, improving the employer's ability to attract good staff and bringing new ideas into the organisation.

### Apprenticeships in primary care

Apprenticeships in primary care can be used to develop new and existing staff in both clinical and non-clinical roles.

Apprenticeships can be used to develop skills in administration, customer service, and in specialist back-office skills, such as finance and IT. Apprenticeships are also available for roles such as:

- Optical assistants
- Healthcare assistants
- Practice Managers
- Team Leaders
- Dispensing assistants
- Dental nurses
- Dispensing and pharmacist assistants
- Pharmacy technicians

### Is there funding available?

Training apprentices can be cost-effective, leading to lower overall training and recruitment costs. Non-levy paying employers can access 90% of the apprenticeship cost through government funding. For information about how the apprenticeship levy works visit the Government [website](#) or [Healthcare Apprenticeship Standards Online \(HASO\)](#)

### Are there mentor/supervision requirements?

Apprentices may need some additional support, however, if planned right from the outset, you can minimise the impact this has

on team resources. Short-term additional support will deliver long-term benefits and help staff feel valued and committed to the organisation. Mentoring or supervising apprentices also provides a development opportunity for existing staff. Time given to support apprentices in the initial stages will reap rewards later on and help apprentices get up to speed more quickly.

### Thinking of hiring an apprentice, but not sure where to start?

Our apprenticeship experts provide free advice and guidance on all aspects of employing apprentices, including:

- Which apprenticeship programmes could benefit your organisation the most
- How to recruit an apprentice
- How much it costs to employ and train an apprentice
- Which training providers deliver apprenticeships in your area

### Where can I find other information about apprenticeships?

We have useful links to resources that will help you to find the right apprentice for you. For an electronic copy of this booklet, access to other apprenticeship stories and further information on recruiting an apprentice or placing an existing member of staff on an apprenticeship qualification visit:

[Healthcare Apprenticeship Standards Online \(HASO\)](#)



We've invested a lot of time and effort in our apprentice but it's paying off because we've been able to train her to meet our specific needs. I'd recommend this approach to other practices."

**Amanda, Clinical Manager**

# Case Study

## Surgery takes innovative approach to upskilling primary care workforce

West Heath Surgery works closely with the local GP provider organisation South Doc Services to deliver quality services across the area. It has found an innovative response to evolving patient needs by training an HCA to Band 4 in many of the functions that were formally carried out only by doctors and nurses. This has led to a redesign of the workforce across many of the services in both organisations.

### Why they did it

Several years ago, a change in NHS commissioning arrangements meant that health practices were given funds to procure their own phlebotomists, rather than being provided with one centrally. The West Heath team decided that instead of hiring a specialist to work just 8 hours a week, they would see what other skills this position could be equipped with and package it into a role to be based at their main surgery.

There was no specific NHS guidance, but West Heath Surgery discovered that nonregistered staff can be trained to carry out almost all primary care routine procedures (the exceptions were baby immunisation, travel vaccinations and cervical cytology). They decided to train a Health Care Assistant, who already had basic skills such as phlebotomy, to undertake more specialist functions such as ECGs, spirometry and ear syringing. The role grew as more and

The HCA is now trained in diverse functions such as B12 injections, chronic disease review examinations of patients, dressings, ECGs, ear syringing, flu, pneumococcal and shingles vaccinations, supporting further clinics such as anticoagulation, and monitoring. She also does NHS and new patient health checks.

### The results

The surgery now has a full-time Band 4 HCA who can take on many of the duties formerly carried out by registered staff. This has had a positive effect on the nurses and doctors, who are enabled to offer more complex and specialised support to their patients.

Patients are getting an improved experience, as they receive appointments and treatments more quickly, particularly for chronic issues such as diabetes, hypertension, and chronic kidney disease. The surgery is now also open 7 days a week, and an HCA is always available for routine procedures.

Primary care such as anticoagulation monitoring and hearing checks for audiology can be given at the surgery instead of in hospitals. The practice used to have 37 hours of nursing time per week and a part-time HCA. They now employ a full-time HCA and only require 16 hours of nursing time.

“ I started with a job on reception but now I have a vocation.”

### Grow your team

Apprenticeships can become an important element of talent management and retention activity. Employers often offer new recruits a fixed term contract as an apprentice and this helps them assess 'how the person performs under pressure'. Once they have completed their apprenticeship, apprentices are supported in either securing a job role within the surgery or with another employer.

#### How to plan, recruit and develop apprentices

##### Step 1

##### **Assess your workforce development need:**

identify the skills gaps of your workforce and their current qualification level relating to their role. Think about any vacancies that could be considered as a future apprentice role. Estimate how much funding you have to spend on an apprenticeship.

##### Step 2

**Choose apprenticeship training and assessments:** find a training provider who will offer the right apprenticeship qualification and assess your apprentice over the duration of their qualification.

Browse apprenticeship training and search for local providers at

<https://findapprenticeshiptraining.sfa.bis.gov.uk/>

##### Step 3

**Advertise a vacancy:** to recruit an apprentice or identify an existing employee, work with a training provider to help with advertising and shortlisting.

##### Step 4

**Provide ongoing support for the apprentice:** including, helping new apprentices to adjust to the workplace, nominating a member of the team to be the apprentices mentor, planning workload to provide the necessary opportunities to complete practical tasks in line with training goals. Also build in time for the apprentice to receive regular assessment / workplace reviews by the training provider.



# Apprenticeship Frameworks and Standards

Health Education England and Skills for Health are facilitating the development of several apprenticeship standards for use in the health sector

Employer-led steering groups (often referred to as 'Trailblazers') develop apprenticeship standards in line with guidance provided by the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA). The Institute put all proposals they receive out to a short two-week public consultation and their panels approve or reject the development at each of the following stages:

- Submitting a Proposal (previously known as Expression of Interest)
- Developing a Standard
- Developing an Assessment Plan for end-point assessment

If you need bringing up to date on why apprenticeships are changing or want to know more about the process for developing standards click [here](#)

## Apprenticeship Frameworks

As part of the government's drive to ensure apprenticeships are high-quality apprenticeship, **frameworks** are being replaced by employer-designed **standards**.

**Frameworks** were primarily qualification-focused. The main aim at the end of a framework was to have achieved a competency-based qualification, such as an NVQ or BTEC.

No new **frameworks** have been developed or issued since August 2014; instead employers from sectors ranging from fashion to health are coming together to design new apprenticeship **standards**.

However there are some frameworks still available for use such as:

- Business Administration Level 2
- Medical Administration
- Healthcare Support Services

## Apprenticeship Standards

The new **standards** are being developed by employer-led groups called Trailblazers. Apprenticeship **standards** set out the core skills, knowledge and behaviours apprentices need to be fully competent in a role

**Standards** are occupation-focused; they are not qualification-led. The learning happens throughout the apprenticeship, and the apprentice is assessed at the end. They need to prove that they can carry out all aspects of their job. They develop transferable skills and gain credibility too.

A full list of the new Apprenticeship Standards can be found [here](#). New Standards are being developed and approved all the time, so it's good to keep up to date.

# Apprenticeship Standards

### Healthcare Support Worker (level 2)

#### Entry requirements

Set by employer

#### Duration

12 to 18 months

#### Qualifications

- Care Certificate
- achieve level 1 English and maths (equivalent to GCSEs at grades D to G)
- take the test for level 2 English and maths (equivalent to GCSEs at grades A\* to C)

#### What apprentices will learn

- ✓ health and social care principles and philosophy - including duty of care, person centred care, promoting mental health and well-being and safeguarding and protection
- ✓ healthcare needs from prenatal to end of life care and bereavement support
- ✓ carrying out routine clinical duties - including checking blood pressure and temperature and helping people eat, drink and wash etc
- ✓ infection prevention and control - including waste management, hand washing and using personal protective equipment (PPE)
- ✓ carrying out non-clinical tasks - including cleaning, making beds and record keeping
- ✓ working within a team to agreed workplace standards, policies and protocols
- ✓ health and safety practices, standards and legislation within a healthcare environment

### Senior Healthcare Support Worker (level 3)

#### Entry requirements

Set by employer. Candidates will usually have previous experience as a support worker.

#### Duration

18 to 24 months

#### Qualifications

Depending on the specialism they choose, candidates will achieve 1 of these qualifications: \* level 3 diploma in clinical healthcare support \* level 3 diploma in maternity and paediatric support \* level 3 diploma in perioperative support \* level 3 diploma in mental health care Before taking their end-point assessment apprentices must: \* take the test for level 2 English and maths (equivalent to GCSEs at grades A\* to C)

#### What apprentices will learn

- ✓ principles and philosophy of health and social care
- ✓ complex and routine clinical duties and care plans
- ✓ patient assessment and coordination of care
- ✓ infection prevention and control
- ✓ team management, including delegating tasks, and training, mentoring and supervising colleagues
- ✓ supporting specialist senior healthcare support workers in their duties
- ✓ promoting health and well-being
- ✓ specialist skills: maternity, adult nursing, theatre, mental health



## Healthcare Assistant Practitioner (level 5)

### **Entry requirements**

Set by employer

### **Duration**

18 to 24 months

### **Qualifications**

- level 5 occupational competence qualification - for example a foundation degree, diploma of higher education or diploma for assistant
- Practitioners in healthcare Before taking their end-point assessment apprentices must: \* achieve level 2 English and maths (equivalent to GCSEs at grades A\* to C)

### **What apprentices will learn**

- ✓ health and social care principles and philosophy - including duty of care, person centred care, promoting mental health and well-being and safeguarding and protection
- ✓ healthcare needs from prenatal to end of life care and bereavement support
- ✓ higher clinical skills - including catheterisation, wound care and discharge planning
- ✓ case and risk management - including infection prevention and control
- ✓ team working - including supervising, teaching, mentoring and assessing other staff
- ✓ patient assessment and coordination of care - including implementing and modifying care plans
- ✓ health and safety practices, standards and legislation within a healthcare environment

## Nursing Associate (level 5)

### **Entry requirements**

Set by employer

### **Duration**

24 months

### **Qualifications**

- A regulated level 5 qualification such as a Foundation Degree or Level 5 Diploma of Higher Education delivered by an institution approved by the NMC to provide pre-registration nursing education.
- Apprentices must also achieve, if they do not already hold these qualifications, level 2 English and maths prior to taking their end-point assessment

### **What apprentices will learn**

- ✓ Supporting individuals with all aspects of care including daily living
- ✓ Performing and recording clinical observations including blood pressure, temperature, respirations, pulse.
- ✓ Undertaking clinical tasks including cannulation, venepuncture, ECGs
- ✓ Accurately recording nutritional and fluid intake.
- ✓ Ensuring the privacy, dignity and safety of individuals is maintained at all times.



## Registered Nurse (Degree)

### **Entry requirements**

Applicants must have achieved GCSE grades 9 to 4 (equivalent to A\* to C) in English and maths before starting this apprenticeship.

### **Duration**

48 months

### **Qualifications**

Degree in Nursing. Prior to commencement apprentices will have their numeracy and literacy skills assessed by the NMC Approved Education Institution to ensure the apprentice has the necessary skills at a minimum of Level 2 to meet the requirements of the programme.

### **What apprentices will learn**

- ✓ helping doctors with physical examinations
- ✓ giving drugs and injections
- ✓ cleaning and dressing wounds
- ✓ using medical equipment
- ✓ working with doctors to decide what care to give
- ✓ checking patients' progress
- ✓ advising patients and their relatives
- ✓ Registered nurse apprentices specialise in one area: adult nursing, children's nursing, nursing people with learning disabilities or mental health nursing

## Business Administrator (level 3)

### **Entry requirements**

Set by employer

### **Duration**

12-18 months

### **Qualifications**

Where a business administrator has not already achieved Level 2 English and Maths, they must do so before taking the end-point assessment.

### **What apprentices will learn**

- ✓ Skilled in the use of multiple IT packages and systems relevant to the organisation in order to: write letters or emails, create proposals, perform financial processes, record and analyse data.
- ✓ Making recommendations for improvements and present solutions to management.
- ✓ Maintaining records and files, handles confidential information in compliance with the organisation's procedures.
- ✓ Demonstrating ability to influence and challenge appropriately.

“ The practice nurse has been incredibly supportive since I started training. I've found shadowing her invaluable and very motivating”

### Customer Service Practitioner (level 2)

#### **Entry requirements**

Set by employer

#### **Duration**

12 months

#### **Qualifications**

None specified. Before taking their end-point assessment apprentices must: \* achieve level 1 English and maths (equivalent to GCSEs at grades D to G) \* take the test for level 2 English and maths (equivalent to GCSEs at grades A\* to C)

#### **What apprentices will learn**

- ✓ customer service principles and practices - including customer experience and feedback, internal and external customers, needs and priorities, targets and goals and right first time
- ✓ business principles and practices - including brand promise, core values, complaints process, internal policies and legislation and regulatory requirements
- ✓ customer service skills - including building rapport and trust, conflict management and influencing and reinforcement techniques
- ✓ communications - including interpersonal, tone of voice and verbal and non-verbal communications
- ✓ presentation - including dressing appropriately and using positive and confident language
- ✓ using customer service tools and resources - including those used to meet customer needs and measure, monitor and evaluate customer service levels

### Team Leader / Supervisor (level 3)

#### **Entry requirements**

Set by employer. Candidates will usually have 5 GCSEs at grade C (or above)

#### **Duration**

12 months

#### **Qualifications**

None specified. Before taking their end-point assessment apprentices must: \* achieve level 2 English and maths (equivalent to GCSEs at grades A\* to C)

#### **What apprentices will learn**

- ✓ team management principles - including team dynamics, motivation and managing resources and workloads
- ✓ leadership techniques - including coaching, decision making, role modelling and managing change
- ✓ performance management - including absence management, conducting appraisals, setting goals and objectives
- ✓ relationship management - including negotiation and networking skills and customer and stakeholder management
- ✓ communications - including active listening, chairing meetings, presentation and digital, verbal and written communication skills
- ✓ human resources (HR) and legal requirements - including equality, diversity and inclusion
- ✓ operational and project management - including planning and prioritisation, collecting, analysing and using data and risk management
- ✓ financial management - including controlling budgets, delivering value for money and governance and compliance

### Operations/Departmental Manager (level 5)

#### **Entry requirements**

Set by employer. Candidates will usually have 5 GCSEs at grade C (or above)

#### **Duration**

Typically 30 months

#### **Qualifications**

None specified. Before taking their end-point assessment apprentices must: \* achieve level 2 English and maths (equivalent to GCSEs at grades A\* to C)

#### **What apprentices will learn**

- ✓ operational management principles - including operational planning, contingency planning and continuous improvement
- ✓ business management principles - including business development, business finance, sales and marketing
- ✓ project management - including business change, prioritisation techniques and time, resource and risk management
- ✓ performance management - including achieving targets, delivering objectives and setting KPIs
- ✓ leadership and management techniques - including coaching and mentoring, delegation, decision making, recruitment and problem solving
- ✓ relationship management - including negotiation and networking skills and partner, stakeholder and supplier management
- ✓ communications - including active listening, interpersonal skills, report writing and digital, verbal, non-verbal and written communication skills

### Chartered Manager (degree)

#### **Entry requirements**

Set by employer. Candidates will usually have: \* A levels (or equivalents) or existing relevant level 3 qualifications \* English, maths and information communications technology (ICT) at level 2 Employers may consider prior relevant experience.

#### **Duration**

Typically 48 months

#### **Qualifications**

Apprentices will achieve a degree in management and business. Before taking their end-point assessment, apprentices must achieve level 2 English and maths (equivalent to GCSEs at grades A\* to C)

#### **What apprentices will learn**

- ✓ operational strategy
- ✓ project management
- ✓ business finance
- ✓ sales and marketing
- ✓ digital business and new technologies
- ✓ leading and developing people
- ✓ developing collaborative relationships

“ I was able to complete my studies at a suitable time to fit in with my work and personal life”

# Case Study

## Rural surgery recruits and trains clinical apprentice

A GP surgery near Salisbury has taken on an Apprentice Level 3 Diploma in Clinical Healthcare Support to help boost the healthcare support offered by the practice. The apprentice's activities include health promotion, ECG and blood pressure monitoring as well as phlebotomy and supporting the nursing team both practically and administratively.

### Why they did it?

Whiteparish Surgery reassessed its staffing needs when a Level 3 Healthcare Assistant vacancy arose. The practice wanted to be able to carry out more health checks as part of the NHS's Health Promotion initiative. The surgery is in a rural area and it's not always possible to attract candidates with the right qualifications.

### How they did it

- The surgery has a supportive, well-trained team and so there was no anxiety that an inexperienced starter wouldn't be welcome or unable to learn on the job.
- The chosen candidate had retail experience – which the Whiteparish team recognised as being helpful when dealing with patients – and a particular interest in social care.
- Whiteparish wanted their apprentice to learn as much as possible in the workplace, because she had no clinical experience; however, this meant that training needed to include all the basics, from how to personally dress correctly to infection control and waste management.
- The first twelve weeks were spent preparing the apprentice to work in three main areas – ECGs, blood pressure monitoring, and NHS health checks. After this time, she was able to work on her own, with continued support and supervision.
- The training provider supported the apprentice's formal education, with an assessor who provides the units electronically and meets with her about once a month to have either a professional discussion or an observation to ensure her quality of work.
- Whiteparish provides the learning environment with mentorship support in all the activities she undertakes, both clinical and administrative.
- By the end of the 18-month apprenticeship she will achieve a Level 3 HCA qualification.

### Benefits

- Employing and training an apprentice is proving a cost-effective way to fulfil workforce requirements and improve the service to patients.
- The Whiteparish team have benefited because the apprentice asks questions and challenges their thinking and ways of doing things.
- Patients have praised the apprentice's calm and quiet approach, and feel confident that she is properly trained and supervised.
- Whiteparish has been able to increase the numbers of health checks it carries out, and maintain an efficient service for ECGs and blood pressure checks which allows the trained Healthcare Assistant to develop her role in wound management and vaccinations.



# Top Tips

## For employers

Identify a good, local **training provider** – either through recommendations or searching online.

Having interviewed and selected a new apprentice – consider a **one week work trial** (prior to starting the role) so that they can see whether it is for them.

For a new apprentice, you could consider a **sliding scale salary** where their pay is increased on achievement of certain goals.

Consider a **young apprentice** to tackle an ageing workforce.



Provide a **work buddy** to help the apprentice with direction, questions and support.

Encourage **existing staff** to consider an apprenticeship qualification to help with their development and career progression.

## For apprentices

**Go at your own pace** – apprenticeships are adaptable and intended for all sorts of learners. The more comfortable you are with the speed and progression – the better you will understand and remember.



**Speak to other people** who have recently become an apprentice or are undertaking an apprenticeship qualification.

Speak to your **manager** about career development.

Ask for **feedback** on how you are doing – strengths and areas for development.

**Be confident** – believing in your ability will allow you to take on more responsibility and show what you have learnt!

For more information visit [Healthcare Apprenticeship Standards Online \(HASO\)](#)

Health sector managers in England can use this site to search for standards, respond to consultations and keep up to date with new developments.