THE SUSSEX HEALTH INFORMATICS SERVICE AND APPRENTICESHIPS

INTRODUCTION

The SussexHIS believes it has a vital and expanding role in the introduction and development of Apprenticeships within the Health Informatics arena. The future of IT within the NHS is secured and will only grow over the coming years. As more and more advances are made, demands for a high quality IT literate workforce will become part of the Health community’s workforce planning requirements.

THE VISION

Apprenticeships will become an integral part of the Workforce Planning strategy for the SussexHIS with the Customer Service framework being the cornerstone of Personal Development Plans. By supporting this approach there will be a constant source of innovative, committed and forward thinking staff with the professionalism to fully utilise the IT systems of the future and optimising patient care.

WHAT’S HAPPENING

We have Apprentices working within the Service Desk, Administration, Communications, Technical Support and Management areas, undertaking a variety of Apprenticeships such as Customer Service, Business and Administration, ITQ and Management. It is vital to have the commitment & support of the Line Managers & to ensure they are fully aware of what’s involved as their role is fundamental to the success of the Apprenticeship. Future plans will support expanding into other relevant Frameworks.

Ten current staff are in the process or have successfully completed their Apprenticeships. One comment from a Project Support Officer:

“The apprenticeship has helped me realise how much I do and the variety of work in my current role. I thought it was challenging as I had to spend a lot of time writing assignments and providing evidence to support my documents. I was pleased with my portfolio at the end as it shows all my skills which would help me to progress my career.”

We have also recruited via the Future Jobs Fund hosted by various local Councils (Brighton and Hove City Council, West Sussex County Council, Hastings Borough Council) which gives
employment opportunities to the young unemployed. This is a win/win situation with the Apprentice gaining valuable work experience as well as a Customer Service Apprenticeship. The SussexHIS will benefit from enthusiasm, new ideas, a commitment to do well and potentially a loyal and skilled staff member of the future. One Future Jobs Fund Apprentice said

“Informatics has made me consider the impact my career has on other people, both in the obvious sense of other staff within the company as well as the eventual goal of patient care”.

In all cases there were discussions with line managers before they took on the commitment of an Apprentice, it is vital to have the right outlook & mentoring/supportive staff to nurture the Apprentice when they start & to continue to mentor/coach them as time progresses.

We have one employer lead Apprentice who joined us straight from college at the age of seventeen, he is working within the Infrastructure department & has already received accolades; one of our customers said.

“Tom is an absolute credit to you. He is always very helpful and quick to respond. “

With the Future Jobs Fund initiative being withdrawn & further funding potentially limited we will need to ensure we access all supporting agencies & services to utilise their resources in the current climate. The intention however is still to continue to develop Apprenticeships for our existing staff some of which may wish to graduate onto Advanced Apprenticeships. We also see that forging links with local educational institutions is another route which will encourage students to think about Informatics as a career, thereby maximising the opportunities to as wide an audience as possible and optimising the benefits for the Apprentice, the organisation & ultimately the future of patient care.

CAREERS FAIRS

We were contacted last autumn & asked to provide stands for two Skills & Career Exhibitions; “Wiseup4Work” which was held at Fontwell Racecourse in October & “Your Future Your Choice” at Brighton Racecourse in November. As part of the Apprentices’ development & to enable them to work as part of a team, the project management & organisation of the event was handed over to them with the Apprentice Co-ordinators keeping a watchful but distant eye on everything.

The Apprentices decided amongst themselves what role they would all take & organised not only the materials, but the rota for attendance, Health & Safety at the events, resourcing & logistics. It
allowed them to gather some excellent evidence for their NVQ & to work as a team overcoming the differences in experience, backgrounds, locations & disciplines. They thought of innovative ways to engage the schoolchildren who would be attending (14-16 years old) & the competition was a great success. They talked to students about their experience of Apprenticeships, answering questions & handing out supporting information.

Their handling of the events was highly commended & they all willingly took part; naturally working to their own areas of skill. They reflected well on the SussexHIS & it was a valuable & rewarding experience for all concerned.