

Bitesize Case Study: Liverpool Clinical Laboratories Traineeship Programme - Widening Participation in Action

Voluntary Sector North West

This case study is one in a series of studies curated to capture best practice, and highlight innovations, from the joint Health Education England (HEE) working across the North West and Voluntary Sector North West 'Learning Matters' awards 2017. The awards are part of a cross sector adult learning campaign delivered for the health and care sector through a number of key regional partnerships and collaborations. The overarching theme of the awards is simple: lifelong learning is good for people, organisations and health.

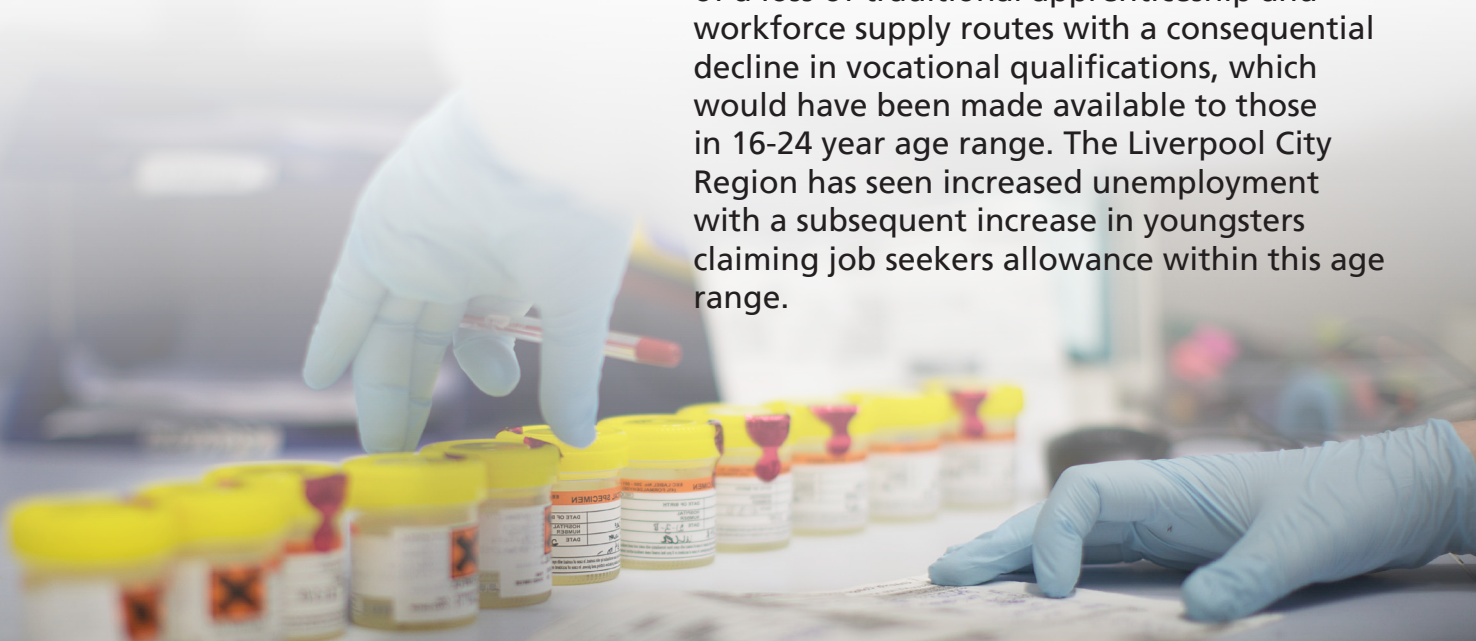
HEE Quality Standards met:

6 Developing a Sustainable Workforce

What was the issue or problem?

What did you set out to do?

The City of Liverpool and Merseyside Region has felt the impact over the last two decades of a loss of traditional apprenticeship and workforce supply routes with a consequential decline in vocational qualifications, which would have been made available to those in 16-24 year age range. The Liverpool City Region has seen increased unemployment with a subsequent increase in youngsters claiming job seekers allowance within this age range.



As well as the regional economic impact this has there is also a marked increase in anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. These are associated with the loss of self-esteem and social unacceptability. Unemployment is evidenced in the governments statistics published within the indices of multiple deprivation (Department for Communications and Local Government, 2015).

What did you do? What was the intervention or initiative?

The initial idea was developed in 2015 for Liverpool Clinical Laboratories (LCL) to develop a traineeship programme as an innovative way of enabling the team to create a sustainable workforce for the future. A central feature of the project is attracting participants from within the local community to directly support and implement the Widening Participation strategy. Implementation of the project to date has specifically targeted youngsters from Black, Asian and Chinese communities and those youngsters who would not otherwise have considered traditional routes to further education for a range of reasons and personal issues.

Further consideration for participation in the programme included students being the first generation to consider higher education who would be from low socio-economic groups, attending schools of low progression and those living in low-participation neighbourhoods.

The programme was developed with the help and assistance of Annette Pollitt, Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust Operational Department and Education Department, Liverpool in Work, Job Centres, Schools, Colleges and community groups with which close working relationships have been developed. Following expressions of interest the potential candidates are shortlisted and interviewed.

This enables us to assess individuals' interest in Science. Those who are suitable but who have not attained the standard required for Maths and English receive extra tuition in these subjects.

The total programme consists of a thirteen week course delivered in-house at the Liverpool Clinical Laboratories. Five weeks of taught sessions are delivered by Wirral Metropolitan College and eight weeks of work experience are delivered within the pathology departments of LCL during which they learn core skills attributable to healthcare science support staff working at Agenda for Change bands 2 and 3. Should any Healthcare Scientist Assistant posts become vacant whilst they are undertaking the traineeship, participants will be guaranteed an interview should they wish to apply for the post. Those who are unsuccessful at interview can choose to be placed on our staff bank or register as bank staff until further vacancies or opportunities become available to which they can apply.

On successful completion of the course they will gain a number of Level 1 and 2 qualifications from Wirral Metropolitan College and have the necessary level of academic learning and work-based skills to enable employment in healthcare science assistant roles within the division of life sciences.

The next three cohorts have full participation numbers. The project has been developed to ensure it is fully inclusive of the local community and one cohort is specifically dedicated to young people in the local community with learning difficulties.

Students successfully completing the programme will then have the opportunity to enter the healthcare science apprenticeship programme which is being developed following healthcare science apprenticeships at levels 2, 4 and 6 being declared available for delivery by the Department of Education onto our currently being developed apprenticeship programme.

To support the continued delivery of the project a champions groups was formed within LCL whose members represent all groups identified within the Widening Participation Strategy. The Champions group enables information concerning the programme, and the opportunities it provides, to be disseminated widely across the region reaching further into the community.

What were the Key Outcomes?

- Development of a LCL Traineeship Training and Competency Log allowing for consistency and standardisation across the placement departments and a clear requirement of what is expected from both the student and training officer/s.
- Students are required to work across departments providing a greater breadth of experience and a clearer understanding of our role within the healthcare system, patient and care pathways.
- Students have a specific and unique uniform which enables LCL staff to identify them as being part of Traineeship Programme which in turn ensures they have maximum opportunity to successfully complete the programme remaining supernumerary to service delivery.
- To ensure full support of students with learning difficulties LCL mentors/ Training Officers undertook a development session delivered by the college's Adult Learning support Team. The development prepares mentors/ Training officers around highlighting and giving guidance to support students with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities and what aids can be put in place. This included supporting deaf and/or hearing impaired students and a number of training officers have now been enlisted onto a sign language course to be delivered internally.
- The programme has been shared with other health organisations (via HEE and the North West Healthcare Science Network), as a means by which we not only involve our communities in healthcare but also in health education.

What were the lessons learned?

Students being aware of when substantive posts are to be advertised has been an issue. Systems have been implemented to address this. Alerts are now sent to mobile devices direct from NHS Jobs as soon as jobs are advertised as some of the closing dates to vacancies are triggered by a pre-set number of applications received.

The fact the students are young and from very different backgrounds has also highlighted the need for all our substantive staff to communicate with them at the appropriate level and to be cognisant of where problems may need to be addressed.

A small number of students have had serious issues with respect to time-keeping, attendance and commitment. LCL has worked with the college to implement a strategy to ensure these issues are now promptly addressed.

The greatest challenge has been the integration of these students into the workplace for the following reasons:

- The Liverpool Clinical Laboratories is an entity that has been in existence for just over two years involving a Joint Venture between the Aintree University Hospital Foundation NHS Trust and Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust pathology departments (two large city hospitals.) The current number of staff employed within the laboratories is nearly 600, ranging from bands 2-9. The merging of the two staff groups in terms of personnel, workforce planning, workload (plus the need for major transformation) has placed huge burdens on individual and departments which respectively deal with over 1.5million individual patient requests per year. The influx of more students (although small in number) had been received with some scepticism and a little resentment by those staff who believed their own developmental needs were suffering during this time of major transition.

- The programme is about investing in our community to achieve future sustainability. The drivers for change issued by the government and the Department of Health have allowed the staff to come fully on board with the programme. The lesson learnt here is about providing clear communication and effective leadership across all grades of staff. A key communication and leadership theme has been highlighting the advantages of developing local communities to become future staff and ensuring inclusivity of all staff in the development and delivery of the Traineeship students.

- Programme participants have provided feedback which evidences the contribution and input into their learning by all LCL staff but also by departments who initially had not wished to take on a trainee via the Traineeship; the departments are coming forward requesting a student from the next cohort which demonstrates a significant shift in culture and commitment.

The key learning is;

- Effective leadership
- Clear communication
- Equality and inclusiveness for all staff

References

Department for Communities and Local Government. (2015). *The English indices of deprivation 2015*. GOVuk. [Online] [Accessed 5th May 2017] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>

Level of award:

Winner - Widening Participation in Health and Care Award

Organisation:

Liverpool Clinical Laboratories
engaging across Liverpool City

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