Prime Minister Gordon Brown, together with 24 senior ministers making up the Cabinet, visited Southampton on 23 February 2009 to launch Apprenticeship week. During the launch the Government announced plans to create around 21,000 public sector Apprenticeships across England in 2009-10. This includes 5,000 more in the National Health Service and social care in areas such as customer service; dental nursing; health and social care; pharmacies; learning and development posts.

Ministers want the Government's commitment to drive up the number of public sector apprenticeships to lay down the marker to the wider economy of the need to create a new generation of skilled workers. Currently the public sector employs 20 per cent of the national workforce but offers fewer than one in ten apprenticeships. It also builds further steps towards the long-term ambition that one in five young people will do an apprenticeship by 2020 with 250,000 adults starting one.

Commenting on the 5000 new apprenticeships in the NHS and social care, Heath Secretary Alan Johnson said:

"Apprenticeships are an excellent way of creating a highly skilled, highly motivated and loyal workforce. We have already made a commitment as part of Lord Darzi’s Next Stage Review to double our investment in apprenticeships by 2012/13, but we aim to go further and faster and we are starting with an additional 5,000 apprenticeships across health and social care next year.

"Around 60 percent of NHS organisations have already provided apprenticeships, but we want to do more. We recognise that apprenticeships have a valuable role in some clinical areas, for example in support of pharmacists and dentists, but we want to explore this further and work with the professions to create new and exciting opportunities in other areas such as nursing."

The case for Apprenticeships
• Apprenticeships are the gold standard for getting the skills that are relevant, and there are good economic and social reasons for the Public Sector to employ Apprentices. They are a way of:
  • Developing the skills of local people;
  • Bringing young people into the workforce and a proven means of improving efficiency and productivity;
  • Involving the local community in the delivery of local services;
  • Training the organisation’s current workforce and growing the workforce of the future; and
  • Increasing staff morale, productivity and retention.
Many of the Trusts and PCTs will be working on carrying out the Skills Survey/Qualifications Audit that the Strategic Health Authorities have asked you to undertake. We are specifically asking you to collect data on the qualifications held by Bands 1-4 staff, and input the data into the Electronic Staff Record (ESR). There is no doubt that this activity is challenging as the administration of a survey requires much co-ordination and a variety of approaches to ensure staff are engaged in completing the survey, and of course the time taken to follow up non-responders and input the data into ESR.

However, once this data is collected it will provide a rich source of information that can be used for a raft of organisational and learning and development purposes. It will enable you to pull out which staff groups are eligible for Train to Gain funding (depending on the various criteria and emerging flexibilities) and therefore enable more accurate Workforce Development planning and budget management. It can also be used as an analytical tool with which to approach and engage with Service and Line Managers to identify for example the level of qualification for particular staff groups and compare this to mandatory training requirements (for example Basic Food Hygiene Certificates or NVQ Level 2 minimum).

Where mandatory and progression routes are not in place, it provides you with the evidence to support the need for this. It will also allow you to track progress against the Skills Pledge. Another challenge will be to embed the data collection of this information so that it is not just a snapshot, but provides an ongoing picture of qualifications of Bands 1-4 staff. We will support you throughout the process by sharing practice and experience across our region, and continuing to raise at senior level the need for this important piece of work. Through our regular Widening Participation meetings we will continue to cascade information to you all, but please feel free to contact Julia or Mike at any time with any specific queries.

You can contact Julia on 07500 127218 or at Julia.Bateman@nesc.nhs.uk. Mike is available on 07920 711159 or at mike.bailey@southeastcoast.nhs.uk.

### National Apprenticeship Service

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), announced last year, will be established in April 2009. The NAS will provide an end to end service for Apprenticeships that includes: Employer Services, Learner Services and an on-line vacancy matching system.

- Employer Services - supporting employers to:
- Raise their awareness and understanding of Apprenticeships and how they can be utilised in their business
- Develop and deliver Apprenticeship programmes for their workforce by providing information, guidance and facilitation
- Encourage and support them to use the on-line vacancy matching system
- Work with their Sector Skills Councils to develop an Apprenticeship Framework where one doesn’t already exist

### On-line Apprenticeship vacancy matching service

The newly created on-line Apprenticeship vacancy matching system means it’s never been easier to recruit apprentices and reap the benefits for your workforce. It is designed to provide opportunities to match potential apprentices with employers who have vacancies. It will track learners’ and employers’ progress through the system and identify where intervention is needed, whilst also recording information on Apprenticeships and the employers that offer them.

For more information visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk or call your JIF Partnership Manager who will link you up with a local NAS member of staff.

**Article by Lee Thomas, Skills Development Manager, Learning & Skills Council**

### New JIF Partnership Manager for South East Coast

Mike Bailey has been appointed as the Partnership Manager for the JIF Programme in the South East Coast Strategic Health Authority area. Mike’s appointment is for one year to cover Ellen Power’s maternity leave. Mike has been working as Lifelong Learning and Development Facilitator for South Downs Health NHS Trust in Brighton implementing Skills for Life, NVQ and apprenticeship programmes across the Trust. His role also involved designing and delivering training to staff on appraisals, supervision and the Knowledge and Skills Framework. Mike will be working with all the trusts across the South East Coast area to provide advice and guidance.

Mike is available on 07920 711159 or at mike.bailey@southeastcoast.nhs.uk.
The Oxfordshire Health Care Apprenticeship Programme was developed in 2000 to take local people who have the sensitivity and skill to become nurses through a nursing related access course that encompassed the needs outlined in the Making a Difference report. The course was designed to provide vocational training and a two-year clinical placement, in order for the apprentices to feel academically and vocationally prepared to enter their nurse training.

The original programme was a collaboration between the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust, the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, Oxford Brookes University and Abingdon and Witney College of Further Education.

Since the commencement of the programme the NHS involvement has widened to all Trusts in Oxfordshire. This includes the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust and also the Integrated Care Services. Other professions and specialties within the Trusts have also shown interest and commitment to the programme. The clinical teachers of the apprenticeship provide the vocational elements of this programme and manage the link between further education, higher education and the local health care Trusts.

The Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Programme uses the Access to HE (Diploma) Health Care route at Witney campus on a day release basis, which is when the apprentices are ideally released from their clinical area one day a week to attend college. The apprentices are employed by their trust as clinical support workers. The apprentices are then supported to move onto university, normally Oxford Brookes University.

Each year we have approximately 20 apprentices enter into university from our programme, predominantly onto the adult nursing course, and then also on mental health nursing and midwifery courses. We currently have 26 apprentices on our programme who are working in a variety of specialties. These range from theatres, children’s wards, specialist surgery, mental health, community hospitals and integrated care services. The apprentices’ ages range from 20-50 and have a variety of educational backgrounds.

The team has discovered through recruitment that many of our apprentices have always had a long term goal of becoming nurses or health care professionals in other fields but may never have had the opportunities to enter into university. Some apprentices may have left school at an early age, may have started a family or gone forward onto a different career path. Once they begin the course the apprentices’ self esteem and confidence is boosted beyond their expectations.

Each year in order to feedback to our key stakeholders and to evaluate the programme we send a questionnaire to the apprentices, their managers and mentors asking if they can see a change in practice, ability etc. The comments that we receive from managers and mentors are that these apprentices are now questioning practice and are good knowledgeable role models for other staff; they now consider the bigger picture rather than focusing on one area. They also feedback that they are more confident and are able to incorporate the theory they have learnt into the practice area. Some apprentices have fed back that this programme has been a ‘life changing experience’ for them and has helped them to achieve their life long ambition of becoming a nurse.

One gentleman, Bernie, who was on one of our earlier programmes is now a registered nurse. Before studying on our access course he had a variety of careers originally from a military background to then enter into the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust into the Facilities department as a hospital porter, then gained a position as health care assistant which was when he applied for our programme and then successfully achieved a degree in adult nursing with honours.

What works for our apprentices are that they are still employed whilst studying, and so are still receiving a wage in order to be able to afford to live in Oxfordshire and they are used to the economic climate here so less likely to move on. There are also good links, high levels of support and effective collaboration between their employing and supporting Trusts and also with Abingdon and Witney College and Oxford Brookes University that we feel makes the transition run smoothly from clinical support worker to student to registered nurse.

Article by Claire Evans, Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust
Southampton University Hospitals Trust (SUHT) has a very strong commitment to developing their bands 1 to 4 workforce, and have an NVQ centre facility to assist in the support of this. One of the benefits and successes of an in-house NVQ centre lies in the development of NVQs that are easily embedded in the workplace, and linked very closely to service delivery needs. Anita Esser, Head of Wider Healthcare Teams Education comments on the benefits of having an NVQ centre at the Trust; ‘It enables us to develop programmes of learning and assessment, and develop competencies in units that we need linked to the skills required of our staff to deliver the service. It enables us to have a flexible skill base from which we can develop our workforce needs. We are therefore able to be more in control of what we do.’ At SUHT, service managers are engaged to identify the skill requirements of the workforce, which then informs the development of the training programme within the NVQ centre. An in house pool of up to date clinical subject experts is used to deliver a lot of the training programme. “Developing the programme in this way and working with others within the Trust”, explains Anita Esser, “means that we can start and finish NVQ groups of students as we want, we can set the programme as we want, and we can structure it as we want”.

At SUHT, NVQs are used more than as a way for validating their staff’s personal competence and ensure their skills and competence are transferable. NVQ centres provide a training solution to the development of the workforce where training opportunities, particularly in some of the clinical areas that are unique to a particular healthcare setting such as peri-operative care where external providers in colleges are rare. In the development of an NVQ, it is important to ask; what workforce do you need to deliver the service you are commissioning and delivering? The NVQ centre plays a major role in the matching of individually accredited NVQ units to meet the skill requirement of the workforce. The competencies that underline the NVQ performance criteria and knowledge are useful for informing how to develop new skills and training opportunities in the form of NVQs. NVQs are therefore linked back to service and then from service to workforce. In other words, it is possible first, to identify the activities associated with the skills required, then to match these to the set of competencies that fits the best and relate to this at a national level to ensure transferability. The competencies can then be used as a currency enabling the progression link with other qualifications such as Foundation Degree curriculum. This provides the flexibility of developing structured career pathways for the workforce as required. For example, SUHT does not require all band 4 staff to have completed a Foundation Degree. The competencies currency works so that staff with an NVQ level 3 plus additional CPD units plus experience, are equivalent to a level 4 NVQ. “We are working with the University of Southampton to see how we can enable staff to progress more easily and with more confidence from the NVQ Level 3 in Health onto the Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care.”

Anita Esser explains the reasons behind developing an NVQ in Care (now Health); “We came on an evolutionary pathway from being a traditional education centre to being an NVQ centre and now the centre is embedded in the Trust. The reason why we
diversified into the NVQ in Care (Health) was because of workforce redesign and service delivery. We looked into creating a (novel) role between nurse auxiliary and a qualified nurse about 10 years ago. We developed a whole training programme based on what it was that we wanted our staff to do. We looked at NVQ competencies and fitted the activities that the nurses and ward managers needed and set up local pay and conditions linked to the job role. This was before Agenda for Change so it was a very early model of that sort of arrangement where people needed to demonstrate ongoing commitment once qualified.”

SUHT does not provide NVQs that are not clinically related. NVQs in for example, administration, are provided for externally because the external providers are better placed to deliver these. “In the near future we want to deliver apprenticeships in administration, and we are going to work with external providers to develop these. This programme may then be a combination of in-house and external training provision”, says Anita Esser.

Some of the recommendations from SUHT for setting up an NVQ centre at your Trust include knowing exactly why there is a need for setting one up. If there is a good relationship with an external provider that satisfies the needs of the workforce then there is no need to develop an NVQ centre. Anita Esser advises; “If you have something where you are looking at competencies and NVQs as a means for developing workforce and skills, and you feel you have the expertise in house in terms of clinical staff then it is worth setting this up”. It is however a lot of work in understanding NVQs, understanding awarding body quality assurance processes, and engaging people in the workplace to support this. Anita Esser also adds, “We expect people to move through the programme and into a role at the end of it. The desire to develop staff and put them on the programme is driven from a managers’ point of view and the manager therefore has a responsibility to ensure there is sufficient support in the workplace to enable the individual to achieve their qualification”. The centre offers personal tutors, and the centre staff meets line managers to discuss the trainees progress and assist in identifying concerns related to workplace learning and support. “A system for managing failure to progress through the NVQ should also be in place to ensure staff complete the course in a timely way and where they come up against problems an action plan can be agreed between the individual, the manager and the NVQ Centre”.

SUHT is an organisation committed to the development of their bands 1 to 4. They are now in the process of developing their NVQ centre into a Widening Participation Centre providing learning opportunities and career progression for all these bands, thereby acting as a single port of call for information on what Foundation Degrees, Skills for Life, Learning Accounts, NVQs (both internal and external), Apprenticeships and they hope to link to the 14 to 19 Diplomas in the future. They are working in partnership with the other public sector organisations and other education and training providers in a new project looking to provide cross organisational apprenticeships in the Southampton City area.

(Taken from an interview with Anita Esser, Head of Wider Healthcare Team Education and Dr Olga Zolle, Research & Development Manager, NESC)

Mary Moore, Lifelong Learning Facilitator at Hampshire Partnership NHS Trust writes - ‘We made a request for additional funding at the end of last year for some Customer Care Training and we were very fortunate that NESC were able to support us. We ran a five day programme with the course available at a range of locations (8 sessions in five days) and the provider, The Garnett Foundation were excellent and used theatre forum as a means of exploring issues around how and why people behave and act in a certain way. We have had some really positive feedback from staff and have also been pleased to have been able to link this in with some work we are doing as a Trust around values and behaviours that result from this.'
Hampshire Primary Care Trust Signs the Skills Pledge

On 19th December 2008 Hampshire Primary Care Trust officially signed the “Skills Pledge”, thereby encouraging and supporting development of staff with the opportunity to revisit their literacy, numeracy and language skills and work towards achieving relevant, valuable Level 2 qualifications. Pictured signing the Skills Pledge are Sue Harriman, Director of Clinical Excellence for Care Services and Richard Samuel, Director of Performance and Standards for Commissioning, in front of an invited audience of PCT staff and Emma Wilton, Widening Participation Manager and Julia Bateman, JIF Partnership Manager, both from NESC and Eileen Isted, Corporate Skills Broker for the PCT.

Julie Abdalla, Lifelong Learning Lead who organised the event said “I am delighted that Hampshire PCT is committed to ensuring their workforce receive the support for their learning and development which is necessary to keep their skills up-to-date.”

Southampton City Primary Care Trust’s staff rewarded for Hard Work

Over 75 staff from across the PCT were awarded certificates to celebrate their personal achievement by the former Chief Executive, Brian Skinner.

Ceri Connor, Learning and Development Manager said: “This is a fantastic opportunity for us to be able to reward our staff for all of their hard work and achievements. We are lucky to have staff who are committed to increasing their knowledge and skills and I would like to congratulate everyone who has worked extremely hard to achieve an award. This event demonstrates the PCT’s commitment to supporting the Learning and Development of staff.” The continued success of the PCT’s NVQ Centre was evident with so many NVQ and A1 award achievements, the attainment of these qualifications further enables our support staff to deliver a high quality standard of care to our patients, and support the clinical teams. A huge amount of work goes into the achievement of the NVQ and A1 both on and off the job by those who are undertaking them, their managers, colleagues, and the Centre staff.

Milton Keynes Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Sign the Skills Pledge

Milton Keynes Hospital NHS Foundation Trust are proud to announce the signing of the Skills Pledge. The Skills Pledge was delivered within a two-part project known as the Widening Participation in Education Project (Bands 1-4). The high level aim of the project is to target teams and individuals with learning opportunities supported by Train to Gain funding. Significant progress has been achieved in both part one and part two of the project.

Part One Outcomes

- We promoted a bands 1-4 bursary scheme funded by NESC - resulting in £22k funding, benefiting 49 members of staff (incorporating the UNICEF Breast Feeding Initiative).
- We engaged with wider Milton Keynes Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust stakeholders to support the project through a successful marketing/communications campaign both internal and external to the Trust.
- We completed the qualifications audit of bands 1-4 and entered all records onto ESR with a response rate of 35%.
- We gained Executive level support for the Skills Pledge.
- The Skill Pledge was signed by Jill Rodney at a Joint Consulting and Negotiating Committee meeting in December 2008. Our HR Director and various senior managers and staff who will directly benefit from the second part of the project were present.

Alex Benson (Deputy Director Facilities), Jill Rodney (Chief Executive), Joanna Matthews (Programme Manager) and Paul Sherratt (Estates).
Julia Bateman Meets John Denham On National Apprenticeship Week

Julia Bateman, JIF Partnership Manager for South Central, met John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, University & Skills and MP for Southampton Itchen at Apprenticeship Week. The event was held at the City Cruise Terminal, Southampton organised by SETA, The Southampton Engineering Training Association Ltd based at Millbrook, Southampton. The Apprenticeship Extravaganza was opened by Gavin Smith, Project Director of the National Apprenticeship Service, LSC and the audience were treated to a talk from John Denham on the importance the government puts onto Apprenticeships and their development within a skilled workforce. There was a short question and answer session which allowed people to ask the Minister questions before the guests visited the local provider stands, which gave good examples on how Apprenticeships were being achieved in the local area.

Skills for Life Roadshow - St. James Hospital 9th January 2009

Portsmouth City Teaching Primary Care Trust signed the “Skills Pledge” in the spring of 2008, which has committed us to actively encourage and support staff to gain skills and qualifications.

As part of our Skills for Life project the Learning & Development team ran a successful roadshow for our staff on the 9th January at St. James Hospital. This roadshow gave staff the opportunity to drop in and see what kind of courses and training were on offer from local colleges, educational providers, as well as our in-house training.

There were a range of well “manned” stands by very helpful staff who were able to answer questions and staff and visitors had an opportunity to get information on Skills for Life and Development programmes from four of our major local Colleges (Highbury, Portsmouth, South Downs and Havant), as well as advice about training available from the Essential Skills Unit, Union Learn, Next Steps and a local Learn Direct Centre. Our ICT department also had a stand where staff were able to try out the new “NHS Elite” programme as well as get details on the training available free of charge.

The roadshow gave attendees a good idea of what is available to them in terms of free training, and the variety of courses on offer. Staff were also able to learn more about the “learning accounts” available to them, allowing them to apply for funding to attend external courses.

The roadshow was an excellent first event and attendance was good. “We intend to run another large event this spring and also to run a series of ‘Travelling Roadshows’ for staff who were unable to get into the St James’ site”, said Jenny Ford.

Jenny Ford, Skills for Life Champion & Facilities Supervisor and Dee Muenchinger, Administrator at the Portsmouth City Teaching PCT roadshow
**HSSA Operational Group**

The HSSA Operational Group consists of the following members -

Lee Thomas, Learning & Skills Council
Chris Wintle, Skills for Health
Mark Bilby, Skills for Health
Emma Wilton, NESC
Julia Bateman, NESC
Julie Toulson, South East Coast
Mike Bailey, South East Coast
Cheryl Palmer, Skills South East Ltd

HSSA Operational meetings are held on the first Monday of the month. If you have any queries prior to meetings or you would like to ask any questions of the HSSA Operational Group or the HSSA Strategic Group then please contact Julia Bateman. (Details to the right)

If you would like to be removed from our distribution list please contact Jayne Gibson at Cynergy 01642 713211 jayne@cynergy.co.uk

If you would like to submit any articles for future newsletters please contact Julia Bateman (Newsletter Editor)

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**Useful links**

Department of Health -
www.dh.gov.uk

NHS Education South Central Website -
www.nesc.nhs.uk

Essential Skills Support Unit -
www.essu.org.uk

Train to Gain Website -
www.traintogain.gov.uk

Skills Pledge -
http://inourhands.lsc.gov.uk/employersSkillsPledge.html

Move On -
www.move-on.org.uk

Apprenticeship Website -
www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Skills for Health - www.skillsforhealth.org.uk

Apprenticeships in Skills for Health Website - www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/page/awards-and-qualifications/apprenticeships

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