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**SLT apprenticeships business case template**

**Version 1**

**January 2021**

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*This business case template provides guidance and draft text on the key things to consider when planning to develop new apprenticeship pathways. It is designed to be used as a guide that can be adapted to suit individual contexts. Please feel free to use the text provided and adapt it to your own local needs.*

1. **Introduction and programme summary**

This business case sets out the reasons, costs and benefits of utilising apprenticeship programmes to increase the number of speech and language therapists (SLTs) within the healthcare workforce and help to address the significantly high level of vacancies for this profession.

Allied health professionals (AHPs) and SLTs are essential for the development of integrated care pathways. Investment in primary care anticipates the need for significant expansion of AHP/SLT roles to meet population health needs, including prevention. AHP/SLT apprenticeships offer a real solution to help to bridge this workforce gap.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Start date |  |
| Length of course |  |
| Paid hours in learning (off the job) |  |
| Academic structure |  |
| Protected learning time in the workplace |  |
| External placements |  |
| Placement areas of practice required |  |
| Gradual competence development |  |
| End-point assessment (EPA) |  |

1. **How apprenticeships support priorities**

**B.1 SLT apprenticeships support national and regional priorities**

The NHS 2019 Long Term Plan mentions speech and language therapy specifically in two places, and recognises it as a profession in shortage and contains implications for speech and language therapy services in others. The [RCSLT briefing](https://www.rcslt.org/-/media/Project/RCSLT/note-on-the-nhs-long-term-plan.pdf) has more details. Furthermore, speech and language therapy has also been recognised as a profession in shortage by the Migration Advisory Committee and the Government has added it to the list of shortage professions.[[1]](#footnote-1) Local Integrated Care Systems (ICS) or Allied Health Professions (AHP) Councils may be considering the role of apprentices *[add in information from your own locality]*. Many ICSs have appointed AHP apprenticeship-leads to scope demand in the area. It is important that SLT requirements are fed into this scoping exercise.

**B.2 SLT apprenticeships support local priorities**

Apprenticeships help to develop clear career pathways for staff. Currently the only route is the traditional university-based route to qualification, which is not practical where people cannot travel away to university, whether due to family or other commitments. An apprenticeship offers the potential of progression to existing staff who may otherwise seek progression in other areas. Apprentices can offer a longer term, more sustainable solution to recruitment issues and staff turnover. They are likely to already have roots in an area when they start an apprenticeship. Apprentices are therefore perhaps less likely than other band 5 NQPs to move away to seek higher band posts after qualification.

AHP professions will qualify for the proposed health care visas that will be in place post-Brexit, from 1 January 2021[[2]](#footnote-2) in recognition of recruitment challenges for these roles.

**B.3 Diversity**

Apprentices can help to improve the diversity of a profession which is currently97% female and whose student population less ethnically and socio-economically diverse than that of the general student population. People have better experiences of care when the workforce mirrors the population. The NHS Employers website has a tool which helps to demonstrate what the potential imbalance is in your locality.

**B.4 Strategies to grow the workforce**

The key strands of any recruitment strategy are summarised below. Apprenticeships form a significant new opportunity to generate increased numbers of qualified staff.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| New graduates (traditional route) | This is traditionally the main source of new staff, but often the number of graduates does not meet the demand. HEE has a number of careers promotion activities in place for AHPs, however this initiative is not likely to result in increased capacity in the workforce for some time.  |
| Qualified staff from other trusts/organisations | Recruitment from other trusts occurs as movement of staff across the system is common practice, however the net benefit in terms of filling vacancies is low as the absolute number of qualified staff is insufficient.  |
| Overseas recruitment | Speech and language therapy staff from overseas will qualify for the proposed health care visa that will be put in place post Brexit. However, there are additional recruitment and training costs and potential retention issues associated with this approach. |
| Agency/bank staff | This remains an alternative option to filling vacancies. Despite the agency cap, this is still high cost.  |
| Apprenticeships | Starting apprentices each year will result in a regular source of graduates, grown from existing staff/the local community who are more likely to remain with the trust. |

**C. Cost/benefit analysis**

**C.1 Costs**

Apprenticeship training costs**:** This will be covered through an organisation’s apprenticeship levy fund if it pays into the Government apprentice levy pot via HMRC. Smaller employers with a pay bill of less than £3 million a year do not pay the levy and these will need to pay the training provider directly for training apprentices and will pay 5% towards the cost of training and assessing the apprentice. The government will pay the rest (95%) up to the funding band maximum. They will pay the funds directly to the training provider. There are detailed rules about funding available [on the GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-changes).

Apprentice salary: Please see paragraph 7.11 of RCSLT’s apprenticeship guidance. Some organisations have looked to an [Agenda for Change Annex 21](https://www.nhsemployers.org/tchandbook/annex-21-to-25/annex-21-arrangements-for-pay-and-banding-of-trainees) salary. Others have taken a different approach. Cost of living salary increases should be considered over the four years of the apprenticeship training programme.

It is proposed that the apprentice salary will be *[£XX]* per apprentice, costing the following per apprentice:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | TOTAL |
|  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cost per apprentice** | **Year 1** | **Year 2** | **Year 3** | **Year 4** | **TOTAL** |
| 1. Salary cost including on costs |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Backfill costs |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Vacancy budget |  |  |  |  |  |
| Net cost per apprentice (=1+2 minus 3) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total cost for INSERT NUMBER of apprentices |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Organisation based Coordinator INSERT  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Organisation based Clinical Educators INSERT  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total cost per apprentice |  |  |  |  |  |

NOTE TO ORGANISATIONS: Individual organisations will decide the apprenticeship salary individually. It is suggested that organisations include the rationale for the proposed salary. If the salary is not consistent with other degree apprenticeships provided by the organisation, then it is important to explain why the proposal is different. Organisations will also want to state whether the posts are supernumerary or existing ‘establishment’ posts.

Paid working hours while off-the-job: The programme is structured on the basis that individuals undertake key learning activities during paid working hours. This is referred to as off-the-job learning and includes: university day release and blended learning activities, experiential learning linked to academic study, placements and practice based learning, and protected learning time. During some of this time, the trust will need to organise backfill.

NOTE TO ORGANISATIONS: Organisations may take different approaches to backfill. If rotating placements are sufficiently organised this may reduce the need for backfill, but this is not guaranteed.

Staff supporting the programme: There are a range of different staff that need to be in place to support the programme from the organisation side: Apprentice line manager, Organisation based coordinator (organising work-based learning component), Practice based educators supporting practice-based learning through supervision (see Appendix B for more detail).

Summary of costs:NOTE TO ORGANISATION: Each organisation will compile this (or alternative financial modelling) in liaison with the organisation finance team. Different organisations will take different views on backfill costs and whether the job is from establishment or supernumerary will also have an impact. See Appendix C for costing tools.

**C.2 Benefits**

New source of recruits helping to alleviate staff shortages: The apprenticeship route opens up a new pathway to generate qualified SLTs.

A diverse workforce that reflects the community: Apprenticeships provide an opportunity for organisations to grow talent and develop a diverse, skilled and motivated workforce – both from existing staff and new entrants. They provide an opportunity for young people, school leavers and more mature people to enter the profession without the potential barrier of self-funding or taking out a student loan. This will increase the route of entry for people from less affluent communities and help to create a wider demographic of candidates who, with their roots in the local communities, can assist in the development of services which are attuned to local population needs.

Identifying staff with the right knowledge/values:Recruiting existing staff to the programme ensures that selected candidates demonstrate strong alignment to the organisation’s values. Internal applicants will also already be familiar and experienced with the organisation’s AHP services and systems.

Staff retention:Existing staff or new staff from the local community who are already based in the area are more likely to stay in post after qualifying.

Positive career progression employer: Organisations providing comprehensive staff training and career development opportunities are increasingly being viewed as the ‘employer of choice’.

Longer term financial savings, eg around agency savings or other costly recruitment:

NOTE TO ORGANISATIONS: it may be useful to include the estimated costs of covering vacancies via bank or agency.

An AHP-driven programme:The programme is integrated with existing roles in the workplace and supports employees to develop skills and knowledge that are directly relevant to job roles.

AHP Apprentices gradually increase competency and therefore ‘value’ in the workplace: By the final year apprentices will be able to undertake complex tasks (under supervision).

Increased service delivery: Increased ability to deliver services/contracts/quality due to increased skills of apprentices over time and increased number of qualified staff joining qualified workforce.

Benefit to apprentice:The staff member receives a salary as an apprentice and does not have to pay degree tuition costs. Many apprentices will take this saving into account when considering the apprenticeship salary offered.

1. **Recruitment of apprentices**

**D.1 Target apprentices**

Different organisations will have different strategies.

**D.2 Eligibility**

Individuals will need to meet the requirements of:

* The Apprenticeship Programme (See Appendix 1)
* The University
* The Government rules on funding apprenticeships, including those around residency in England.

NOTE TO ORGANISATIONS: It is expected that organisations will engage in further discussion with the university regarding recruitment plans and suitability and entry requirements, particularly for existing staff who may not have the required qualifications or evidence of recent academic learning. Organisations may need to consider establishing ‘pipeline’ training to prepare applicants to meet the entry requirements.

**D.3 Recruitment process**

NOTE TO ORGANISATIONS: Organisation to insert appropriate text: The recruitment process needs to be undertaken in partnership between the employer and the university, so that the latter can be assured that selected apprentices meet the entry criteria for the degree course as well as apprenticeship funding requirements. How this is arranged will depend on whether the employer is proposing internal or external recruitment. This clarity is essential so that the situation does not arise where the employer accepts a candidate, and the university is later unable to.

|  |
| --- |
| **Summary of steps in the process** |
| Organisation decision: numbers, salary, internal/external recruitment, etc. |
| Agree recruitment process with HEI |
| Organisation advertises opportunities |
| Applicants selected by organisation |
| HEI application and interview (may be combined with organisation interview) |
| Course start |

**Appendices**

1. **Apprentice information**

**Apprenticeship eligibility criteria**

In addition to the entry criteria for the degree programme, as set by the university, the following apprenticeship requirements must be met:

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| --- |
| **Suitability requirements as per apprenticeship rules**Individuals must:1. Have Maths and English GCSEs grade A-C or equivalent. If staff do not have these qualifications, you will need to consider how you can help to support them before starting a course.
2. Be fully committed to doing the coursework while working and able to plan how they will fit the course workload with their personal/family commitments. This will require a good understanding of what the course involves and what is expected of them.
3. Have the ability to undertake BSc degree level study progressing through learning at level 4, 5 and 6 or, if the apprenticeship is at master’s level, a 2:1 first degree is usually a requirement.

**Eligibility requirements relating to apprenticeship funding**Individuals must:1. Have a UK or EU passport or the right to work in the UK for at least the period of the training programme
2. Have lived continuously in the UK for the past 3 years
3. Be working full time (or minimum 30 hrs per week), have a contract of employment that runs for at least the period of the training programme and be on the company payroll.
4. Not already have a similar qualification to the degree included in the apprenticeship. In practice this is unlikely to be an issue for the great majority of candidates. There is no other degree that would provide the ability to apply for registration as a speech and language therapist with the HCPC.
 |

1. **Programme Detail**

**2.1 SLT apprenticeship training – learning off the job by year**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **At university induction** | **At university lectures, seminars, practicals** | **At workplace: Guided learning (protected learning hours)**  | **At workplace: experiential learning** | **External work placement/work- based learning** | **Total hours** | **Off-the-job hours (excludes experiential learning in workplace)** | **Off-the-job days (one day = 7.5 hours)** | **Off-the-job % of fte job** |
| TOTAL Year 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL Year 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL Year 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL Year 4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL ALL YEARS** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**2.2 Staff Supporting the SLT apprenticeship programme – summary of roles:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Organisation based staff** |
| **Apprenticeship line manager*** As an employee of a partner organisation, each apprentice will have an identified line manager. The role of the apprentices’ line manager will include:
	+ Support for day-to-day operational issues and service delivery,
	+ Regular supervision and appraisals in line with trust policy to monitor and support performance,
	+ Support development opportunities and personal development plan.

**Organisation based coordinators**In addition, each partner organisation will be asked to identify an organisation-based coordinator whose role it will be to coordinate and organise the apprentice’s experience for the work-based components of study within the organisation, and to liaise with the apprenticeship programme leader These responsibilities will be discharged through the following activities:* Planning, organising and coordinating the apprentice’s clinical experience in consultation with the apprentice programme leader, and clinical educators and clinical staff within the organisation;
* Being responsible for the day-to day management of the work-based learning;
* Liaising with the programme leader regarding progress and any changes or difficulties experienced at organisation level in relation to the work-based learning, and or an apprentice;
* Facilitating rotating placements (that are coordinated by programme lead);
* Ensuring that the content and delivery of the work-based learning are in accordance with the module handbook;
* Ensuring that the content, delivery and assessment of the work-based learning are regularly reviewed and kept up to date and proposing significant changes for validation when appropriate;
* Providing coordination for all clinical educators and clinicians in matters of teaching, learning and assessment related to work-based learning delivery;
* Monitoring and discussing apprentices’ clinical progress with clinical educators, and providing support and appropriate advice is given as necessary;
* Liaising with programme leader regarding attendance, progress and performance of apprentices;
* Participating in recruitment procedures related to apprentices; and
* The role of the organisation-based coordinator is pivotal to the apprentice learning experience. To support individuals in this role the university should provide monthly training and development sessions to individuals identified within this role.

**Practice-based clinical educators*** Learning in the practice setting is a major component of the training programme. In preparing apprentices to function effectively as new graduates, it is important to ensure that the learning and teaching activities that take place in the practice setting promote safe and effective practice, independent learning and professional conduct. Clinical educators adopting this role require training and support to ensure that their approach to supervision facilitates effective learning.
* Clinical educator courses provide training in facilitating learning and assessing student performance. They also provide a forum for clinicians to share experiences and strategies for problem solving.
 |
| **University staff** |
| **Programme leaders**SLT apprenticeship programme leaders are on their respective part of the HCPC register and are responsible for assuring the quality of the apprenticeship pathways by:* Being responsible for the day-to-day administration and management of the programme;
* Being responsible for the coordination of all modules of study contributing to the programme;
* Being the principal point of contact for all trust-based co-coordinators;
* Ensuring regular contact is made between academic staff and trust–based coordinators, and between the coordinators themselves arrange and facilitate and document tripartite meetings;
* Ensuring that all members of staff teaching the programme are familiar with the weekly/semester arrangements for apprentices;
* Ensuring that all members of staff teaching the programme have a copy of the student handbook providing details of the programme, both in the university and the NHS trusts in which the apprentices are employed;
* Ensuring that the content, delivery and assessment of each module contribute appropriately to the programme, and are regularly reviewed and kept up to date, and proposing significant changes for validation when appropriate;
* Liaising with the department lead concerning the physical and human resource requirements for the programme;
* Coordinating and advising academic tutors visiting apprentices on assessed placement; and
* Ensuring the wellbeing of the apprentice alongside the Trust based coordinator and the line manager.

**Visiting academic tutor*** A visiting academic will see all apprentices during their assessed practice-based learning blocks. The visiting academic tutor is the named university academic who supports identified placement areas and works closely with the clinical educator and apprentice to support the learning and assessment process, or where there are concerns regarding an apprentice’s progress during assessed practice. These members of staff are also responsible for monitoring the quality of the learning experience and conducting audit and quality assurance processes, in line with university and HCPC requirements and in partnership with placement colleagues.

**University apprenticeship lead*** Negotiates employer agreements with trusts.
* Checks on compliance with apprenticeship standards.
* Completes documentation as required, eg commitment statements.

**Admissions*** The university has overall responsibility for maintaining admission decisions onto the programmes. As part of the agreement between the university and employers, employers will need to demonstrate that they can support all elements of the programmes (for example agreed day release, self-directed study time, practice-based placements and qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning).
 |

1. [SLT shortage profession](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-shortage-occupation-list) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2 [UK's Point Based Immigration System, July 2020](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/899716/UK_Points-Based_Immigration_System_Further_Details.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)