

# THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMMES IN THE NHS



**NHS**  
Health Education England

**accenture**



# Executive Summary

**The findings from the business case, aggregated across the three participating Trusts, demonstrate that there could be an overall return on investment (ROI) of 2.5, indicating that for every £1 spent on employability programmes, Trusts could recoup that £1 alongside an additional £2.50 in financial and economic benefits.**

This document is an Executive Summary of a report produced by Accenture and commissioned by Health Education England. The report assesses whether delivering employability programmes has a ROI in addition to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) benefits, to NHS Trusts. Employability programmes are specific industry driven schemes that include an element of training and work experience, for people to develop essential skills, and possibly qualifications, that lead to increased opportunities of employment or apprenticeship in entry-level roles.

This report has been produced in collaboration with three Acute NHS Trusts, South Tees NHS Foundation Trust, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust and North Bristol NHS Trust. All three Trusts have a long and established history of delivering employability programmes and all three have provided data and insights in relation to individuals which have been hired through this route. The business case has analysed this data and compared it to Trust specific averages for comparable staff groups to calculate the potential benefits.

This report has found that there is a strong association between individuals hired via employability programmes and higher levels of staff retention, engagement and productivity, as well as lower levels of staff sickness and avoided temporary staff usage, relative to Trust average figures for comparable roles.

Employability Programmes can help solve multiple problems in the NHS. They can help Trusts tackle growing staff shortages, improve productivity, improve diversity and inclusion and attract a fresh generation of talent into the NHS. They can also be used as strategic tools to assist in the recruitment, training and retention of external apprentices, de-risking the hiring process and therefore helping Trusts to extract maximum value from the Apprenticeship Levy.

## Definitions and Scope

Before going into the detail of this project and its findings, there are some basic definitions of terms and scope which need to be outlined.

For the purposes of this report, an Employability Programme has been defined as “A specific industry driven scheme that includes an element of training and work experience for people to develop essential skills, and possibly qualifications, that lead to increased opportunities of employment or apprenticeship in entry-level roles.”

The Return on Investment (ROI) has been calculated by dividing the total undiscounted net benefits by the total undiscounted costs, as modelled in the business case. The overall, or aggregate, ROI has been calculated by incorporating the total costs and benefits, across the three participating Trusts, to the calculation above.

This project has been completed in collaboration with three Acute Trusts in order to collect and analyse data relating to individuals hired as permanent employees, or apprentices, through employability programmes. Individuals hired via these programmes go into a mixture of clinical, patient-facing roles, such as Therapeutic Care Assistant or Trainee Nursing Assistant positions, as



well as lab-based and admin and clerical roles. The data collected and analysed for this project is limited to Acute Trusts only, although the findings may be applicable to many other care settings.

## Why increase the number of employability programmes?

Health Education England has an objective of ensuring that the NHS has the right staff, in the right number, with the right skills, to provide the best patient care and service delivery. c.1,350 people participated in NHS employability programmes in financial year 2016-2017 and HEE has a goal of increasing this number, as well as their quality and consistency.

The NHS is currently facing numerous challenges, including ongoing financial and capacity constraints, increased pressure on domestic workforce supply and an increasingly ageing workforce.

**“Hiring via employability programmes is a very safe way of recruiting...people recruited through programmes have higher retention rates and are strong ambassadors for us as an employer.”**

Mags Bradbury, Associate Director of Inclusion and Community, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Within this context, employability programmes can help solve multiple problems. They can help Trusts tackle growing staff shortages, improve productivity, improve diversity and inclusion and attract a fresh generation of talent into the NHS. They can also be used as strategic tools to assist in the recruitment, training and retention of external apprentices, de-risking the hiring process and therefore helping Trusts to extract maximum value from the Apprenticeship Levy.

It is hoped that by demonstrating the potential return on investment, that this will help make the case for an expansion of employability programmes across the NHS, and help to gain buy-in from decision makers.

## What are the key findings from this report?

This report has found that there is a strong association between individuals hired via employability programmes and higher levels of staff retention, engagement and productivity, as well as lower levels of staff sickness and avoided temporary staff usage, relative to Trust average figures for comparable roles. Although the strength of this association varies by role type, it remains true across clinical, administrative and lab-based roles.

The findings from the business case, aggregated across the three participating Trusts, demonstrate that there could be an overall ROI to NHS Trusts of 2.5, indicating that for every £1 spent on employability programmes, Trusts could recoup that £1, alongside an additional £2.50 in financial and economic benefits.

**“The findings in the report are eye-opening. We always knew the programme was successful, but the thoroughness of the research really brings home to us the value of these programmes. The insight is really useful in helping to shape our future workforce strategies.”**

Dave Morris, Head of Learning and Development, South Tees NHS Foundation Trust

Further details of the findings, including specific costs and benefits of delivering the programmes can be found in the full report.



## Approach and Methodology

The three participating Trusts were carefully selected based on a series of Guiding Principles. These principles were that selected Trusts have delivered employability programmes over several years (c.5 years+), that they represent a variety of different geographical regions from across England, and that they, where possible, deliver programmes in a strategic way, taking a “pull” approach and linking employability programmes to their recruitment of external apprentices.

The analysis is based on data from three Trusts who are likely to be some of the most advanced Trusts in the country for delivering employability programmes. The ROI may be lower for Trusts starting their journey, though this should be seen as the stretch target. The findings from this report are based on a sample size of 300+ and in some cases may not be fully statistically significant. Therefore, additional factors, external to employability programmes, may also influence the relationship on outcomes and should be considered appropriately.

**“The findings vindicate our traineeship and sector based work academy roles... these findings will help us to persuade managers to take on trainees and support their development.”**

*James Orpin, Lead for Functional Skills, Careers and Work Experience, North Bristol NHS Trust*

In order to develop this business case, specific data, including retention, absence, career progression and time to hire information has been collected, where available, for all individuals these Trust have hired via employability programmes. This data has been compared to Trust average figures, for comparable roles and level of seniority, to calculate potential benefits. The data collected has been compiled into a forward looking, five-year, business case, in-line with Her Majesty’s Treasury Green Book guidance.



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