



The Sector Employability Toolkit for Health reaps benefits for employers, individuals and local communities

A key challenge for employers is to recruit motivated, job ready individuals to fill entry level posts, which traditionally are hard to fill. Even in times of rising unemployment, posts such as domestic and laundry assistants, catering staff and porters, can be difficult to recruit to when using standard recruitment procedures.

It's clear that a more integrated solution which can complement and strengthen employers' own recruitment processes is needed.

More than a recruitment process: a model that offers a route into employment

Skills for Health, in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus, has developed a Sector Employability Toolkit (SET) to meet this need. It was aimed at assisting individuals, especially the long term unemployed and other target groups, to move into initial entry level posts and consequently sustainable employment in the health sector. The SET comprises a good practice model and a range of contextualised materials for health sector employers to use and implement.

The SET was designed in consultation with health sector employers to support the delivery of a customised pre-employment training programme. Materials are based on the core dimensions of the NHS' Knowledge and Skills Framework and, therefore, national workforce competences. Following recruitment events successful candidates were offered a two weeks' off the job training programme, followed by a three weeks' work trial with a guaranteed interview for an identified vacancy.

Elaine's success story

The SET aims not only to provide the employer with a job ready employee who is competent and motivated to succeed but also to boost the employability of the individual. Elaine is one such recruit, and here's her story which illustrates the wide reaching benefits of this model for recruitment.

Since leaving school early to have her first child, Elaine has had many different jobs. As a lone parent, she needed to fit her work in with her family needs. This has limited her choices. She knew that, having left school with no qualifications, she needed to go back to college to complete some of her GCSEs, but she was unable to pursue this due to family commitments. Elaine wanted to achieve more, so when an adviser at Jobcentre Plus told her about the SET programme, she jumped at the chance.

Integrating structured learning from day one

Elaine really enjoyed the whole five week programme, including the taster of working in the NHS and its catering areas:

“ During the work trial I worked across all three areas of the catering department. For each day I had a timetable of where I would be working and who would be supervising me. Everyone was really helpful and made us feel a part of the team. We didn't just watch, we actually learnt how to do the job and then we did it! I really liked learning this way. By the end of the three weeks I didn't want to leave. ”

For Elaine, the most important part of the work trial was the feedback she got which spurred her on to do even better. At the end of the programme Elaine was offered a job as catering assistant, and the departmental managers, recognising her potential, were already planning how they would support her to develop her skills and achieve her goals.

“ Being part of this programme has given me a much needed confidence boost. My children are really proud of me. They knew how frustrated I was feeling before and now everything’s different. I hope I get the opportunity to do some qualifications in my new job. Now I can start planning things for me and my family. ”

Benefits of implementing the Skills for Health SET for entry level posts

For employers the SET provides:

- Employees who are more job ready than those starting employment through the traditional recruitment route.
- A route that offers recruitment solutions for jobs which can be hard to fill or where staff turnover is high.
- An alternative source of potential recruits from local communities with minimal resource implications.
- Employees with increased motivation and confidence.

For individuals it provides:

- A supportive route into employment for those who may find access to traditional recruitment processes difficult.
- An opportunity to try the job before committing to it and without loss of benefits.
- Increased employability skills, confidence, self esteem and motivation.
- Wider benefits– breaking the cycle of unemployment, parents providing a role model for their children, reducing benefit claimants, potential future career progression and pay rewards.

Conclusion

Independent evaluation clearly showed that the SET is a framework for best practice. It highlighted the overall strength of the SET as a flexible model that encourages organisations to explore the potential for a range of entry level routes within future workforce planning. Skills for Health is delighted by the results from the pilot sites in England and Wales and commends the SET as a flexible model for employers who want to increase opportunities for recruitment from their local community.

Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector (the National Health Service, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations). Our purpose is to implement solutions that can deliver a skilled and flexible workforce to improve health and healthcare.

Skills for Health has developed a bank of national workforce competences (NWCs) and National Occupational Standards (NOS) which describe the skills and knowledge required to carry out a task or function effectively. Competences are designed to underpin and be integral to accredited and non-accredited education and training programmes. Use our interactive guides to find out more about competences and how to use them at www.skillsforhealth.org.uk