

Case Study - Diane Williams - former Ambulance cadet (apprentice)

Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust



Diane joined the West Yorkshire Ambulance Service in the 1980s as part of what was then a two-year ambulance cadet scheme. This was the 80s equivalent of today's apprenticeship scheme.

Diane progressed to become an Ambulance Technician working as part of the emergency service and later qualified as a Paramedic. In the mid-1990s Diane became a Station Officer and then a Service Manager for the A&E service in the Leeds area. Over the past few years Diane has been in senior management roles, first as an Assistant Director for the non-emergency Patient Transport Service (PTS) working within their Communications Centre and now she has taken on the role of a Locality Director for the entire PTS across Yorkshire and the Humber.

"I knew that I always wanted to work with people. I had secured a place to undertake nurse training but I wasn't old enough to go directly into nursing so I joined the ambulance cadet scheme. It was intended as a 'stop gap' until I qualified for the nurse training course I was eligible for. I never went on to do my nursing. I loved the ambulance service so much. And, I am still here..."

Diane has been instrumental in supporting apprenticeship developments within Yorkshire Ambulance Service. She is an apprenticeship ambassador and has recently been sharing her experience and best practice of apprenticeship developments with other NHS organisations.

"Because of the opportunities I was given when I was 17, I wanted to give others the opportunity to do the same. We needed to broaden the profile of staff working in the service, and the apprenticeship scheme has allowed us to do this and has been really successful. The development of the apprenticeship roles has provided an opportunity for talented people to gain some work experience, to better understand what we do and to help them to choose the area they want to work in. It has also helped us to develop a better skill mix and enabled Yorkshire Ambulance Service to provide a cost-effective training pathway for new staff."

What as an employer do you look for in apprentice applicants?

"Although our staff need to have a general level of communication and numeracy skills we are not necessarily looking for academic qualifications. We need people who have certain personal qualities which include a willingness to learn and to develop themselves, and a caring disposition is vital. When selecting candidates, we look for individuals who can show they are interested in the opportunity and have taken the time to prepare for the interview, for instance by researching the job role and familiarising themselves with the organisation through the Trust's website."

What would you say to managers /service leads thinking about setting up apprenticeships within their service area.

“I would definitely recommend an apprenticeship. It means you have a 'home-grown' individual who learns directly from the people who are doing the job day in, day out. It also means they have a good grounding of knowledge and experience which gives them the skills they need to develop into future roles.”

For more information on the opportunities and apprenticeship scheme that is offered through the Yorkshire Ambulance Service visit the Trust's website:

http://www.yas.nhs.uk/OurServices/Yorkshire_Ambulance_Servi.html