

# Case study



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

## The importance of the *degree* in Senior Leader Degree Apprenticeships (SLDA)

Provider:  
University of Leeds

Date:  
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### Theme: Perspectives on the Apprenticeship Journey

Sector: Healthcare

Employers: Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Apprentices: Shaunty Mudd, Head of Specialist Rehabilitation, Rebecca Goodwin-Vickers, Head of Physiotherapy and James Ingrey, Business Support Manager at Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust, and Chris Hunt, Head of the *Kaizen* Promotion Office, Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust

#### Background

Many within the national media and skills sector press have assumed that the apprenticeship programme is used by private sector companies to educate their elite, with an MBA fully funded by the apprenticeship levy. In the University's experience, this couldn't be further than the truth.

The designated award within the University of Leeds programme, which combines classroom and online teaching with one-to-one coaching and taught in its triple accredited Business School, is an MSc. The majority of its employer partners are from the public sector, who want to support their (emerging) leaders in developing critical management and leadership skills and behaviours to ensure their organisations can evolve and respond to ever- changing local and national needs, and work more effectively in increasingly fast-paced work environments.

The Secretary of State has stated, 'I know the Institute and its board share my commitment for apprenticeships to support learners to develop and progress, and employers to build a talent pipeline and increase the productivity of their business.' The private sector employers who send their employees to undertake the MSc Senior Leadership Apprenticeship programme at the University of Leeds are made up of small-medium sized businesses, building firms, financial service providers, education providers and rail companies, all of which are using their levy to invest in their

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staff to increase the productivity of their businesses; in line with the Government's own Industrial Strategy. In the University's view the award title of MSc or MBA is more attractive because of the opportunity for employees to upskill and add value to the workplace *because* it brings academic knowledge to practice.

## The Challenge

A House of Commons Briefing Paper entitled 'Women and the Economy' by Brigid Francis Devine and Niamh Foley published on 4 March 2020 states that in 2019, a higher share of men than women were working as managers, directors and senior officials. Data from the Office for National Statistics shows that from January-December 2019, only 34 % of women are working as managers, directors and senior managers, compared to 64% men. Women make up 43% of apprentices on the University of Leeds Senior Leader Degree Apprenticeship programme and accessing this high quality training and achieving a master degree from a University who has an international reputation for delivering a business education programme to women (for example, through the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women initiative) can only be a benefit to their career prospects. Although the Senior Leader Degree Apprenticeship standard has been widely portrayed as an apprenticeship for the elite, from its own Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) data, 32% of the apprentices currently undertaking the programme with the University reside in low participation neighbourhoods, depicted in quintiles 1 and 2 data.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has deemed that individuals would not be significantly disadvantaged in the senior leader job market without such a master's degree qualification. However, both the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust predict a decline in employee engagement with the programme when the master's qualification is removed and state the master's qualification as an outcome of the programme adds significant value both for the organisation and the individual. Most job descriptions in the NHS for roles at band 8a and above require a 'master's level qualification or equivalent experience'.

## The Solution

The University in conjunction with its employer partners are looking forwards at the effects of continued investment. In hospital NHS Trusts, a team of senior managers who have all been trained to a master's level will develop their skills, bringing numerous positives to the organisation for example in change management leadership. As employers and levy payers they are recognising that supporting staff to train and develop through the apprenticeship system encourages loyalty to remain within the trust, and progress, and are witness to many positive course outcomes that have inspired success in machinery of government changes, finance and positive leadership behaviours at a time when change is constant within the NHS.

Feedback on the degree about apprentices' own leadership style is proving invaluable and although the apprenticeship provides a grounding in leadership and management, there are a number of optional modules perfectly pitched for professionals working in the healthcare sector. These have given apprentices the opportunity to practise case learning and gain a wider understanding of how senior leadership can address the major challenges facing the NHS and the sector. The off-the-job learning taken from the degree modules has allowed a number of heads of service to directly influence Trust strategy on-the-job, helped them to understand and evaluate the wider picture and changed their approach to all aspects of their day to day work.

Results reported by apprentices include quicker decision making, better strategizing, more reflective analysis, and a greater ability to share and articulate learning. Confidence in using evidence to make decisions and finding and reviewing the evidence is clearly giving benefits to the employer and service users in addition to the transdisciplinary nature of the network being built by senior leaders across the city region. This is a level of support never accessed by the cohort of senior leader degree apprentices before and it feels 'bespoke' to them.

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## Quotes

*“The Level 7 Senior Leadership MSc programme, using the Senior Leader apprenticeship standard, delivered by the University of Leeds provides the opportunity for senior colleagues from a range of different areas (clinical, medical, operational, administrative etc.) to come together and reflectively develop their leadership qualities. The apprenticeship route enables us to invest in these staff to attain a master’s level qualification, which might otherwise not be possible due to constrained training budgets - which often vary between departments / clinical areas...this apprenticeship helps our organisation develop, promote and plan for the future.”* – **Robyn Swain, Education, Learning and Organisational Development Manager, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

*“Should the Government take the decision to remove the master’s qualification from the Level 7 Senior Leader standard, we envisage that there will be no interest from our staff to undertake the apprenticeship. To date our staff, who have had the opportunity to undertake and complete apprenticeship programmes and come away with a qualification, have been grateful for the opportunity to do this.”* – **Michelle Wood, Apprenticeship Officer, Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**

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*"I was a little apprehensive about returning to study at this level, but I have seriously enjoyed every aspect of the course to date. The content, the online teaching, the support, the facilities and most importantly the learning; everything has been a pleasure. The degree apprenticeship provides a great challenge and learning experience, and I would thoroughly recommend it."* – **Chris Hunt, Head of Kaizen Promotion Office, Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust**

*"The course has given me a new appreciation of research and the importance of evidence-based decision making. I have been able to apply these learnings in my work. For example, I have made changes to ways I communicate change, ensuring that decisions are well-evidenced and communicated effectively to all stakeholders. This was particularly useful during a project I led to implement a new policy for call recording."* – **James Ingrey, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust**

*"I have already gained a promotion after completing half a module! Completing 'strategy' as our first module was perfectly timed in my interview preparation when applying for the Head of Physiotherapy at Leeds Teaching Hospitals. I will stay in this role whilst completing the rest of the course and have every faith that it will continue to make me better at my job."* – **Rebecca Goodwin-Vickers, Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust**

*"By supporting me to take the MSc Senior Leadership [Apprenticeship], Leeds Teaching Hospitals has supported my professional development as a leader. As a new Head of Department, having the opportunity to study leadership in depth will enable me to function better within my role."* – **Shaunty Mudd, Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust**

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This case study is commissioned by:

