

## Interview with Kelli Horner, Head of Business Engagement & Professional Studies

During the launch event of the Northern Skills Network manifesto for 2023, there was a discussion on manifesto priority number 2 – Supporting the recruitment & retention crisis across FE and Kelli from Kendall College kindly shared their approach to aligning industry to education. This approach was well received, so we have completed a follow up discussion to produce this blog to hopefully help support other organisations to do the same.

Kendall College recognizes the need for **greater alignment to the development of industry across their college**, in order to meet the ever changing worlds in which they offer apprenticeships and full time courses so they better match the realities of work. As a rural college it has historically been more difficult to recruit teaching staff from specific sectoral backgrounds and the college has found innovative approaches to gaining industry insight into the curriculum so their students can thrive.

Kendall College has an **open-door policy with their employers**, inviting them into the college and this has resulted in employers following suit. **Employers from a range of sectors are now inviting the college into the workplace to learn the latest techniques, trends, patterns and approaches** which can be then taken back to the college for curriculum development, design and delivery. The college also holds **industry insight days for the staff**, where they are encouraged to go back out into workplaces to gain valuable CPD and currency of their skillsets to pass back on to students and apprentices.

There are many opportunities available for industry & education alignment within the college, and the current staffing recruitment challenges are within electrical and accountancy at present, so these are being reviewed for employer support, but a successful case study to share involves industry alignment between the college and the NHS.

**A local NHS trust & the college came together to collaborate on developing a joined-up approach to meeting local skills needs within the NHS for the local area.** A key example of how this works is to support Pharmacy Technician apprenticeships.

Kendal College held discussions with the Lead Pharmacy Technician to review how the programme could be planned with a focus on the need for specialist teaching staff. This collaboration in the early stages identified that **staff within the Pharmacy team had demonstrated an interest in developing their future workforce by dedicating time towards the training of their own new recruits.**

The NHS Trust and Kendal College agreed to advertise for a specialist lecturer, this vacancy was advertised by Kendal College but a **joint approach towards the sharing and support of the vacancy resulted in a competitive interview process.** The vacancy offered a flexible approach for those interested in a training role and offered to provide fully funded qualifications including Certificate in Education and Assessment and Quality Assurance training. This encouraged a number of applicants from the Pharmacy Team who attended a formal interview at the college and completed a mini teach to demonstrate their experience whilst enabling a plan to match the applicant's knowledge and skills to the specialist topics required in the training programme.

The outcome was that **4 Pharmacy Technicians were offered casual hours to teach these specialist topics of the programme at college.** This was a pilot for the first year and successfully resulted in 2 Technicians being offered a 1 day per week contract and another continuing on a casual basis.

The NHS Training Lead was involved in the full process and supported the outcomes with the knowledge that the team would grow as they had a training provider to teach their future Pharmacy Technicians. **Both stakeholders benefit from this approach and the workplace had motivated staff who were supported with and committed to CPD whilst having a future workforce trained by specialists.**

The **programme is now in its 3rd year and has grown to support non NHS Pharmacy Technician Apprentices and 6 lecturers in place.** The NHS lecturers provide the technical expertise and hold a contract with the college 1 day per week to provide the teaching whilst retaining a contract with the NHS.

The success is due to:

- **Open and honest conversations at the early stages**
- **Joint recruitment campaign**
- **Flexi-working offer from both parties**
- **Consistent and quality training / coaching offered to new lecturers**

*Thank you for your time & contribution to the case study, Kelli Horner & Kendal College.*