

Real-life story - Lee Mallia

Lee's always been interested in helping people and would like to train to become a physiotherapist. Read how his clinical support worker apprenticeship is getting his career off to a good start.

Lee Mallia Clinical support worker, cardiorespiratory ward

Employer or university The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Salary range Unknown

How I got into the apprenticeship

One of my friends worked for the NHS and told me that apprenticeships were available. It appealed to me because I didn't have any qualifications and you don't need any for an apprenticeship at this level.

I'd always wanted to work in the police but, because I've got a 'pigeon chest', I was declined because I wouldn't be able to wear a protective body vest. But I've always been interested in helping people and wanted to work in a public service, so the NHS was the next thing for me to try.

What I do

I'm a clinical support worker so I help look after the patients, starting with making sure they're set up and ready for breakfast. I help them eat breakfast if they need help and help them get washed.

I tend to patients' general needs throughout the day, helping them move around and regularly turning the patients at risk of developing pressure sores. I carry out clinical observations too, such as taking patients' temperature and blood pressure, checking cannulations, and carrying out blood sugar checks before mealtimes for patients who are diabetic.

An important part of every day is keeping records of everything I've done for an individual.

My ward manager was made aware about my muscular dystrophy when I got the apprenticeship. I was given training about handling patients and my manager made sure I didn't move any patients on my own at first, but now I can do that myself. My disability doesn't stop me doing my job but I let my manager know if I need to take a short break.

If patients ask for help moving around, I try and encourage them to be independent and to do it themselves first. I think being disabled myself helps us both.

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break.

The best bits and challenges

The best bit of the job is getting to know the patients on the ward as individuals. Depending on where you work, you look after quite a few elderly patients who often have a lot of stories to tell. I know I make a difference just by listening and getting to know them.

The biggest challenge is not getting too attached to the patients. Obviously not everybody gets to go home from the ward so that can be tough, but it's important to realise it's part of the job and a hospital counselling service is available if things get too much. I've worked on the ward a year now and still find it difficult losing someone, especially if I've got to know them. But I'm told it gets easier over time.

Life outside work

I'm a people person and rarely without company. On my days off, I hang out with my friends and we do a bit of shopping.

When I am on my own, I like mountain biking which helps release any stress.

Career plans and top tips for others

Long term, I'd like to become a physiotherapist. I like the idea of being on a recovery journey with someone and having an input to helping them get better. My apprenticeship qualification will help me get a physiotherapy assistant job and put me on the path of what I want to do.

An apprenticeship in health is definitely worth the experience. If you have qualifications already but need experience, it's a way to do that and, if you don't have any, it's a way to get some. An apprenticeship is ideal because it covers everything.

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