

"It makes me feel good knowing that the equipment I fixed will go and help a patient get the treatment they need."

Hollie Owen

Apprentice Medical Engineer

Employer or university

Hereford County Hospital – Wye Valley NHS Trust



How I got into the apprenticeship

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I applied to HWGTA (or Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association) for an apprenticeship, and one came up with the Trust for a level 3 engineering apprentice. I went through the interview process and was offered the apprenticeship. I started off with the estate engineers working on building maintenance and then, after two years, moved into medical engineering, which is where I now plan to stay after I finish my apprenticeship.

Before starting my apprenticeship, I had no knowledge of medical engineering, so it has all been gained through work and their support by putting me on external training courses such as my electrical safety testing course. I've also had plenty of training on the job from my colleagues, who have been the best support network.

There are also prospects for me to continue further education after my apprenticeship.

What I do

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I repair and test medical equipment. This can be anything from finger pulse oximeters or a set of scales to a defibrillator or ventilator. No two days are the same. All equipment needs to be checked periodically to ensure it is working correctly, so we go out on the wards and carry out planned preventative maintenance.

Any equipment that needs repair comes down to us in the workshop, where we have all our test equipment and spare parts.

The best bits and challenges

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Being a woman in engineering can be difficult at times. The industry is still very much male dominated and you've got to face the stereotypes that people put on you just because you're a woman but it feels all the more better when I then go on to prove someone who doubted me, wrong.

I love the problem-solving. I find it very rewarding to diagnose the fault in the equipment, fix the problem and take it back to the ward. It makes me feel good knowing that the equipment I fixed will go and help a patient get the treatment they need.

Some of the equipment I've found is very intricate and there's a lot to it, I've just found a lot of practise and not being afraid of doing it wrong is how I've learnt best.

It can be tough when I can't find the fault or we don't have access to the right parts or have the required training as this means the staff are waiting longer and the equipment has to be taken out of use. This can sometimes be for weeks at a time. I can find it quite frustrating as it can affect patient care and cause people to be waiting longer.

Life outside work

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I volunteer as a leader with a Brownie group (part of the Girl Guiding Association), which is girls aged 7-10. Teaching them new skills, earning badges and inspiring their future. I do this one evening a week, and then occasionally, we do weekends and day trips away.

Career plans and top tips for others

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Once I finish my apprenticeship I plan to take on more complex equipment training. Looking at getting trained on repairing some of the higher risk equipment and learning as much as I can.

At some point in the next few years, I would also like to consider doing some sort of degree, possibly back through the apprenticeship route through the Trust.

In the future I would love to be team leader or manager of medical engineering.

It's a very interesting side to engineering I would never have thought of before. No two days are the same and there is such a variety of equipment we work on that there is something for everyone whether you're more electrically or mechanically minded. It is a very rewarding job as the work we do benefits patients and aids them in their recovery.

An apprenticeship is a really great way of getting your foot in the door. It allows you to learn all the hands-on training while still backing it up with written knowledge, all while being paid. I've found it also allows me to network with professionals in the industry who are always reaching out, offering support to help me excel in my career.

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