

Sian Grainger

Sorry for the slight delay, technical difficulties as ever, even a year in lockdown still hasn't got us used to all this Zoom and everything else, so our apologies for the slight delay. This is a first for us as well, we've never done sort of recruitment via this route before, but we've got a really exciting innovative and new apprenticeship program which we really wanted to talk about and share with you all. I've got a number of colleagues with me today from public sector bodies across Wales. I've got Emma Doolan, Ann-Marie Harkin currently with me and we're hoping that Darren Garwood from Gwent Police will be joining us shortly too. The Finance Skills Development Group has launched the All Wales programme and the programme, we'll go into more detail when Anne-Marie talks, but the programme is done by the Finance Skills Development Group and that's a group of public sector bodies from across Wales, who are looking to improve and enhance the finance skills across the sector. This programme is innovative, it's never been done before, it'll provide opportunities for you to look at how public sector finance works across every sector in Wales. We're going to talk a little bit about the programme, we're then going to go and have information provided about the opportunities from each of the sectors that are currently recruiting. We've got some videos and an extract of an interview that we've done with current apprentices. Hopefully this will provide lots of information for you, but we've got the Q and A box so please do ask lots of questions and hopefully that will allow us then to answer some questions during the course of the webinar. I'm going to start firstly by introducing you to Ann-Marie Harkin. Ann-Marie is an Executive Director at Audit Wales and Ann-Marie is also Chair of the Finance Skills Development Group. Ann-Marie would you like to tell us a little bit more about the programme and about the initiative generally.

Ann-Marie Harkin

Brilliant thanks Sian and good afternoon all. Thank you very much for joining us today to talk about this new programme. So I guess you're asking what is it all about? Well, it's a three year fixed term programme during which you would study for a qualification with the Association of Accounting Technicians or AAT. You'll be working within one of the public sector bodies participating in the scheme, and you will be part of a supportive and dynamic team and eligible as well for two six months secondments to other public sector bodies in Wales. So, you'll be based with one body and have opportunities to spend secondment, six month periods, with other public or public bodies in Wales. And you'll also during three years you'll have access to additional learning and development opportunities. And you'll have the support of a mentor or a buddy. That's usually somebody who's in the same role as yourself but with a little more experience. What we're also doing is we're developing a bespoke public sector learning module, which while you're learning will actually help you to learn lots more about the wider public sector. For example, how it's funded, what it looks like and the opportunities and challenges that it faces currently and going forward. Once you've obtained your AAT qualification, it's our aspiration that those of you who are interested will have an opportunity to go on to study for a professional accountancy qualification with one of the public sector bodies

participating in this scheme. So hopefully a great scheme. So what are the benefits of the programme? What do we hope that you would get from this? Well it's our hope that in developing the programme, we are helping to develop the next generation of finance leaders for public sector Wales. We see it as an innovative and exciting alternative really to university. It offers great long-term career prospects, an opportunity, as I've already said, to study for prestigious qualification, and interestingly it's an ability to earn money whilst gaining wide and varied experience across a range of public sector bodies in Wales. And as someone who spent her entire career of over 30 years I should probably say working in the public sector, I can only say that it's a great place to work, it's full of exciting opportunities and you'll be working with some absolutely great colleagues. I really cannot recommend it highly enough. And with that I think it's probably as much as I should say, only maybe to cover off a little bit about what you would be doing with Audit Wales if you were successful. So we're one of the participating organisations, and with us you would be working primarily to be well as to be an auditor. You'd be studying as we've already said for the qualification but you would get to spend your secondments maybe working with other parts other public bodies maybe with NHS Wales or with Gwent Police who hopefully you'll be hearing from later. You'll be working as part of a team and you would get wide and varied experience as an auditor across a range of public sector bodies. But hopefully an exciting prospect for all of you and with that I'll hand you back to Sian.

Sian Grainger

Thanks Anne-Marie. Welcome Darren, lovely to see you.

Darren Garwood

I made it at last, apologies.

Sian Grainger

It's absolutely fine, it's lovely to have you here. One of the things that we should most probably say about the programme is that it's an AAT programme that you'll complete on day release. So one day every week you would go out and you would study and then four days you'd actually be working. The training provider will support you as well. You'll have an assessor from the training provider who will review with you at least every sort of six to eight weeks how your progress is. You'll have conversations with your line manager about your development as well. So there is a wide support network in getting to the apprenticeship and getting through the apprenticeship, it's not that you sort of study for it and it's not a sort of a collaborative arrangement, it's a really tripartite arrangement between yourselves as does the employer and the college as well to get you through the AAT. We've done a short interview with some of our current apprentices talking about why they chose to become an apprentice. I think there are lots of opportunities for young people out there at the moment university is often a default. What we're looking at though is an alternative route to university where you can actually end up with a very very prestigious qualification and a really clear career prospects at the end. So we're now

going to play you a short extract from the interview that we had with a couple of our current apprentices.

Alex Swift

Do you want to start by saying why you chose to become an apprentice?

Alice Taylor

Yep, so I did A-level's in school. I wasn't really interested in going to uni. I'd done maths at A-level and I enjoyed that throughout so I started looking into apprenticeships based around finance, and yeah came across this one. I liked the idea of doing the professional qualification while working and yeah this. I was interested in doing an apprenticeship because you obviously are doing a job and that's going to give you loads of transferable skills for later on in your career.

Alex Swift

So were there were there any particular skills that any of you were particularly sort of hoping to pick up as you transition from education from your apprenticeship into longer term work?

Alice Taylor

Well I'd already had a part-time job so I did have like some teamwork skills and communication skills, but I guess it was just trying to develop those further than when you start like a proper job really.

Max Hanlon

For me, I'd definitely kind of say the same reasons as Alice. So practically I didn't really want to get into debt by going to university, but I wanted to be able to learn and develop as well as gaining my qualifications. I also feel that I am getting a different opportunity to learn by learning on the job with an experienced team as well as people in similar roles like mine while also learning from college, which I think is really valuable and not something that would 100% be happening if I was in university.

Sian Grainger

So that's just a little extract from some of our current apprentices that are talking about their reasons for joining in the programme. I'm going to introduce you to my colleague Emma Doolan from the academy Finance Academy NHS Wales. Emma's going to talk a little bit about the opportunities in NHS Wales. I'll come on and talk about the number of people who are going to be recruiting towards the end, but there are three main people who are currently actively advertising that's Audit Wales, NHS Wales and Gwent Police and all of the details for our roles, which are all very very similar roles because they're all All Wales apprenticeships, will be found but they all have to be found on the individual

websites, but I'll come back and I'll talk a little bit more about that towards the end of the webinar. Emma?

Emma Doolan

Thank you Sian. So if you choose to apply for the NHS you will be working alongside finance professionals, service managers, budget holders and clinicians. The NHS is an exciting and challenging place to work, and I can certainly vouch that no two days are ever the same. You could find yourself providing financial information to nurse managers, looking at benchmarking and efficiency measures, or be involved in supporting service change. All whilst considering value for money. The programme will include four lots of six-month role-based placements, to include aspects such as financial services, financial accounts, financial management, commissioning and costing. We will plan the placements to ensure that they support the work you were doing in college. This will really help to bring your learning to life and aid your understanding of accountancy. The NHS Wales Finance Academy has graduate and apprentice leads and learning and development leads in every Health Board and Trust across Wales, so you will always feel fully supported. Alongside this, you will have mentors and buddies to turn to. As Ann-Marie mentioned earlier, your buddy is likely to be studying, or recently qualified, so we'll be able to relate to how you are feeling and offer you help and advice. Furthermore, you will be a cohort of a group of apprentices and we will be planning events for you to get to know one another and you may be in college together too. In my opinion the unique aspect of this programme is the two six-month placements that you will undertake in a different public sector organisation to your host organisation. So, for example, if you were based in the NHS you could spend six months in Audit Wales, Gwent Police or a local authority. You will learn about how other public sector organisations operate and you will expand your network. I can guarantee you that these placements will be interesting and an invaluable experience for you. This programme really does offer you a fantastic alternative to going to university, with real and exciting career prospects. For example, the Director of Finance of Swansea Bay University Health Board was an A level entrant to NHS Finance and he is now leading a finance team in a Health Board with a budget of around £1.2 billion. But don't take my word for it, now we are going to hear from my colleague Rebecca Richards.

Rebecca Richards

Hello my name is Rebecca Richards and I'm the Director of the NHS Wales Finance Academy. And I started my career many years ago as an A-level entrant to a finance training scheme here in NHS Wales that offered me the opportunity to study for my professional qualification whilst also picking up experience working through many parts of a finance department. And upon successful completion of the scheme I was able to apply for many roles across South Wales and the NHS, culminating and being appointed to Finance Director across two different organisations for over 15 years. And here I am today as the Director of the NHS Wales Finance Academy proudly offering this similar scheme to one that I joined many years ago. I've had a fantastic career. I've worked with some amazing clinicians and managers who've had a real drive and passion to make

improvement for patients and the population of Wales and I've even been lucky enough to be able to showcase some of that work on the international stage. I really believe that the scheme that I joined all those years ago gave me a really strong foundation and confidence to be able to contribute to the success of some of the programmes I've been involved in. So, if you are interested in picking up a career that will allow you to use your finance skills to make a real difference to the patients and the populations of Wales then I really recommend this scheme to you.

Sian Grainger

Thanks Emma that was lovely and it was great to hear from Rebecca there as well. I'm going to introduce now Darren Garwood from Gwent Police. Darren, I think some of what Rebecca's background resonates most probably with your experiences as well doesn't it? I'll hand over to you now to talk a little bit about you and about the offering of Gwent Police. Thanks Darren.

Darren Garwood

Lovely, thank you Sean and good afternoon all. And as Sian said I'm Darren Garwood Pask, Chief Finance Officer to the Police of Crime Commissioner for Gwent on the smallest iPhone in the world speaking to you today, so hopefully I'm coming through okay, you can see me. So as Sian says, I'm going to briefly talk about my career journey to date and then importantly why a police staff role in policing is an excellent career choice. So in terms of my journey, the All Wales Public Sector Finance Apprenticeship Programme, if it was around in 1989, is something I would certainly have considered. Even though I sat and passed three A levels, I didn't want to go to university. My favourite A-level subjects were geology and history and not so much the math bit ironically, but I didn't want to pursue a degree or career in those fields. At that time, I wanted to start earning money, spend time with my mates and my girlfriend, and continue playing football for my local club. So I started work with the Welsh Government and was quickly and fortunately promoted into a role in their finance department. I enjoyed working with numbers and the whole mysticism of finance and accountancy. The dark arts so to speak. My lucky break came when I asked to be sponsored to study for my ACCA qualifications. The Head of Finance in the Welsh Government, which I owe a great deal of gratitude supporting me, and the rest is history. My first job in Welsh Government set the course my career in public service and is nothing more satisfying than delivering for the public we serve. I've worked in the NHS, the Environment Agency, Gwent Police and now the Office of Police and Crime Commission for Gwent, climbing the finance professional ladder each time. I've been exceptionally lucky in being given that initial break, which has led me here today. So the All Wales Public Sector Finance Apprenticeship Programme takes that need for luck away, it's our gift back to those aspiring Chief Finance Officers of the future. So secondly, why is a Police staff role in Gwent Police a good choice? Well I joined Gwent Police in 2005 with a view to spending two years there before moving on. 16 years later every day is a different day and every day is a school day. It's the most exciting job I've ever had 16 years on. Where else can you work simultaneous on local basis across Gwent, a regional basis across Wales and on a national basis in the UK. So the local

basis, if I just look at what we get up to in Gwent. You can make a real tangible difference to the communities you serve on a daily basis. You can help people who come to you in their moment of crisis and you can work with a multitude of other public sector partners, private sector partners and voluntary sector partners across Gwent on innumerable multitude of initiatives and issues. On a regional basis across Wales, you can collaborate with the other three Welsh forces to deliver better services for communities, such as our Joint Firearms Unit or our Joint Scientific Investigation unit. And you can work with Welsh Government and other devolved public services to deliver the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and make Wales a brilliant place to live work and visit. And on a national basis, you can work cohesively with the other police force in England and Wales to contribute to national security arrangements and promote cross-border working. You can work cohesively with the other police force in England and Wales to lobby the UK Government changes in legislation or ultimately get more money for policing. And all this means that it's a really exciting place to work in policing. Gwent Police is £165 million business around 1400 police officers, 150 police community support officers, and about 700 members of police staff. We have cars, motorbikes, helicopters, dogs, all really exciting stuff. But most importantly, when I see a police officer on the street or I hear the police siren from my office, it makes me proud, a very very proud finance professional. So I hope that gives you food for thought and without further ado, I'll hand back to Sian. Thank you very much.

Sian Grainger

I'm muted. Am I still muted? Nope. That's excellent thanks Darren that's inspired me to join the police if nothing else that was fantastic. We're now just going to talk a little bit about how to apply. As I said earlier, there are three main people who are actively recruiting currently, Gwent Police, NHS Wales Finance Academy and they are recruiting on behalf of all of the local health boards so there are nine vacancies within the NHS Wales. There are going to be five vacancies within Audit Wales, one of those is going to be in West Wales, one is in North Wales and three within our sort of South East Wales area and there's going to be at least one vacancy at Gwent Police. What we've tried to do as a collaborative body of partners together is to look at how can we make the application process as seamless for you as possible given that you've got a choice of organisations. So what we've done is we've all agreed on the same eligibility criteria and the skills that we're looking for. We're looking for people who are enthusiastic, committed, passionate about wanting to learn. But passionate about making a difference to public service. We all sit here as public servants of many years and we all feel very strongly about the need to ensure and maintain and improve our public services and we want the same for the apprentices that we're going to employ. You don't have to be numerate as Darren says, but you have to show a lot of aptitude around being comfortable with numbers. We'll train and support you with some of the sort of more technical skills but you need to be comfortable. You need to be a team worker, we've all heard stories about how much teamwork in is important to all of us you have to be a team worker. We all are looking for people who have aspirations, so we are looking for A level students and we are badging this very much as you've heard as an alternative route to a university role, with a very clear career progression hopefully onto a graduate programme to do ACCA, CIPFA or

ACA at one of the participating partner bodies. All of the application processes are basically the same. You will have to do a personal statement so we're hoping that you can write up one personal statement and just change Audit Wales, Gwent Police and NHS Wales and interchange and then cut and paste into each of the application forms. We've got slightly different closing dates but all the closing dates are in June. They start from the third of June and they move all through June and then assessment dates are in July and late June and early July. We're going to be starting you all right at the beginning of September. Lots of your induction you might be employed by each organisation, but lots of the induction will be done jointly. We want you to feel part of a cohort that extends beyond your primary employer and we want that specifically because you will be working at every other organisation as part of the process. So we want you all to feel that you are much more than just an Audit Wales apprentice or an NHS Wales apprentice, we want you to feel part of an All Wales programme. So there's going to be lots of joint activities, both to tell you about the scheme, talk to you about AAT in more detail, but also for you to get to know people and to really develop the networks across the public sector. The opportunity is exciting, we're really excited about it. We hope that that enthusiasm and excitement has sort of come across to you all this afternoon. Before I end the webinar I'll just ask my colleagues whether they've got anything else that they'd like to add before we come to an end? No? I can see that there's been a number of questions asked throughout the process. One of the questions that has been asked is around eligibility and I am sorry for those people who may be interested in the programme, but if you have got previous AAT experience unfortunately you won't be eligible for this specific programme. So I'm sorry about that, but I know that's one of the questions that's sort of been asked I think that's quite an important one to sort of cover off. Lots of details are available on our websites. All of the adverts also include contact details for people to get in contact with as well. So we hope you found that this webinar really useful. We hope that you found it interesting and all it leaves me to say now is, Diolch yn fawr. Thank you very much and goodbye.