

Shahajan Miah completed his Business Administration Apprenticeship through the Trust's Gateway Academy Apprenticeship programme in October 2017.

He had been placed in the London Procurement Partnership, hosted via Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust.

He says:

"I had a contact at the local job centre who knew about the apprenticeship programme and supported me to apply. I thought it was an excellent way of getting into the NHS. I had spent two years at university and was over £20,000 in debt, and I felt that I wanted to try something else.

The main concerns I had was my age. Most apprenticeships were only available to 16-24 year olds, and I was over this age bracket."

Shahajan attended and passed through the recruitment and selection process, and was accepted onto the programme in October 2016.

"I received immense support from my line manager and work stream lead, who were inspirational and gave me all the support I needed to succeed and learn. If I was unsure of anything, I would ask and they would only be too happy to oblige. They made me feel part of the team and I never felt like an outsider. That gave me the confidence to perform on the job. Small gestures go such a long way. On my study days, the tutors supported us by going through the workload and making a schedule when the work was due in.

The main challenges I faced were going into a new environment and settling back into a 9-5 job. I was nervous changing careers, but the support provided put me at ease very quickly.

The main benefit of doing an apprenticeship is that you get to build a network of contacts. Also you can work and study at the same time, the pace of learning and working is manageable and there is no stress involved. You get to work in real life situations. It was a bit like going back to school, but a school for adults, I assume.

I have learnt so many new additional skills, for example, Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint. I was okay with these before, but now believe I can interpret and do analysis of reports and a decent presentation to a higher level. I learnt about procurement and what it is, what it entails, and found that there is a market for professionals in the industry. I also learned a lot of other office duties, including diary management, reporting and minute taking.

I like to think I had a positive impact on the team. I think I showed them that I am capable of doing the work, someone they can rely on and someone that takes the initiative.

Right now, I am on staff bank working for the London Procurement Partnership in the Estates team. I would like to stay on and hopefully get this permanent placement and start working towards my CIPS qualification, which would be another great achievement.

Apprenticeships now are the best way of getting yourself into full time employment especially in blue chip companies and healthcare. Most big organisations are offering apprenticeships. The job market is very competitive and limited, with apprenticeships you can try as you learn.

Doing an apprenticeship in London has been wonderful, but the cost of living is high. Doing an apprenticeship can sometimes feel like doing double the work, because you are working full-time just like any other employee, but also must focus on the course study.

I hope that there will be some changes in apprenticeships salary, as it can be very low, and I feel that people will struggle to come on board, which will be a shame since it is a great scheme.

Overall, I had an excellent experience."

Shahajan also had the opportunity to work with Amanda Pritchard at the recent Business Planning launch on 2nd November.

He says of this experience:

“This event was one of the highlights of the year. I couldn’t believe I was paired up with Amanda Pritchard on the judging panel. She was so brilliant and made me feel at ease and comfortable, always asking me what my opinion was. I felt my opinion counted for something and meant something which is very self-fulfilling. Having those moments to spend with her is an inspiration in itself.

My favourite part was looking through all the directorates posters and presentations, seeing and learning about all the marvellous work they have done and are continually doing. Some of the stuff they have achieved over the last 12 months was truly amazing, and I loved listening to them as it was so inspirational.

What I learnt from this event is that in these difficult times, we have to look after our own NHS, working hard with others, building stable relationships is very important, now more than ever, if one wants to move forward in one’s career and help the Trust achieve its goals.

The Trust values mean more to me now than any time before, so thank you for letting me take part.”