

APHA launches first plant health apprenticeship scheme

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has launched an exciting new apprenticeship scheme as a non-degree entry route to becoming a professional Plant Health and Seeds Inspector (PHSI).

Please take a look – whether you're considering a change for yourself or have a family member or friend who'd be perfect for this opportunity, please spread the word.

PHSIs have a crucial role in maintaining and promoting a high plant health status in England and Wales. Their work is valuable to Defra group's overarching purpose of protecting and promoting plant health within trade, agriculture and the natural environment.

The PHSI role is physical, diverse and interesting, and includes: checking imports for the protection of indigenous plants and ecosystem; ensuring exports comply with current legislation which may include examination and certification of plants and planting material; organising emergency measures to control outbreaks of specified quarantine and non-indigenous pests and diseases; and carrying out crop surveys and soil sampling to prevent the spread of notifiable plant pests and diseases.

Ian Hewett, APHA Service Delivery and EU Exit Director, encouraged people to apply:

"I am pleased to support apprenticeship opportunities in this vital work area. As well as making an important contribution to maintaining biosecurity standards and trade flows following the UK's departure from the EU, apprentices are a vital part of our strategy to grow our future leaders and diversity within APHA".

What it's like being a PHSI: hear from APHA colleagues

Piers Harrington, Imports Inspector in North East London & Essex, shares his highlights:

"As part of a small team we plan and undertake inspections of fresh fruit, vegetables, plants and seeds as they arrive in the country. Ports and airports are fast paced environments that see a wide range of commodities passing through, and an equally wide range of potential pests and diseases. We also visit garden centres, commercial nurseries, glasshouses and farms to inspect plants as they are growing.

"The agency has staff from a wide range of backgrounds including those with scientific, horticultural or agricultural backgrounds among many others. However all the staff share the same enthusiasm for a role in which we can

play an active role against the threats to the horticultural and agricultural industries and wider environment both in this country and in others.”

A Plant Health and Seeds Inspector based at Heathrow, added:

“My main work as an inspector at Heathrow, is going out and about to all the warehouses (we call them sheds!) around the airport, all 41 of them! I carry out inspections of controlled fruit and veg, cut flowers, seeds and live plants and cuttings.

“Recent changes to legislation as a result of EU exit has meant I have had to learn new inspection methods and adapt to new requirements but I am excited about the future of plant health in the UK following our full withdrawal from the EU.

“I love the shift working which gives me four days off in a row every four days. Even though I work four 11 hour days, it goes so quickly as I am always kept active and busy with all my work.”

Benefits of an apprenticeship

The scheme is offering 30 apprenticeships in 22 locations across England and Wales.

This is a two-year level 4 apprenticeship which is the equivalent of a first year undergraduate degree. Apprentices will work alongside experienced staff, gain job-specific skills, earn a wage and get holiday pay. Throughout the programme, 20% of contracted hours will be allocated to focus on apprenticeship training. Following successful completion of the apprenticeship, there will be the potential for extension or permanency.

The application process

The scheme is open to internal and external applicants.

You don't need to have any previous experience but APHA is looking for people with an interest in horticulture and who are analytical and confident using data. You don't need a degree, but there is a minimum requirement for qualifications (please see the links below for more details).

Further information and how to apply for the apprenticeships can be found on Civil Service Jobs:

The closing date is Wednesday 26 August.

For further information about these roles not covered in the job adverts, please email PHSIJobs@apha.gov.uk.

More opportunities with APHA

PHSI is currently recruiting a number of roles with applications closing on Thursday 6 August. Find out more from the [news story](#).

To make sure you don't miss future opportunities, sign up for job alerts on [Civil Service Jobs](#), selecting APHA as the organisation.