

Principles for support and funding for the Nursing Associate apprenticeship in the Northwest of England (2025/26)

1. Introduction

Due to financial constraints, training grant numbers for employers supporting Nursing Associates has been capped. Please note, this does not limit the numbers of places available on programmes and is related only to availability of the training grant funding.

To ensure equity and fair share allocation of funding, we are introducing an Expression of Interest process. All health and care employers in the Northwest are eligible to apply.

2. Funding overview

Funding payable

Maximum total funding payable to the employing organisation to support learners to undertake the programme and maximum duration of programme and monthly payments can be found below.

	Yearly funding (£)	Maximum duration (months)	Monthly equivalent payment
Nursing Associate	£4161	24	£346.75

- The funding cited above is for the duration of the programme (up to the maximum programme length cited).
- Funding will be paid via the Education Funding Agreement Schedule to Trusts or by invoice (3 times per year) for primary and social care, private, Independent and voluntary organisations.
- Funding is only paid following confirmation from Education Providers of enrolment and continued attendance on the programme.
- Funding will cease or pause if the apprentice leaves the programme or takes a break in learning.

Payment Timeframes

- Payments will only be processed after validation has taken place, which may lead to a delay in receipt of first payments.
- Payments are made via an Education Funding Agreement (EFA), which replaced the NHS Education Contract in 2024/25.
 - All employers (both NHS and non-NHS) will require an Education Funding Agreement in place to enable payments to be made.
 - NHS Trusts will receive funding via the EFA schedule in February, July and November.
 - Primary and social care, private, Independent and voluntary organisations will receive invitations to invoice in February, July, and November.

3. Criteria

- The apprentice must:
 - Meet all the entry criteria for the apprenticeship award as set out by the Education Provider of their choice.
- The employing organisation must:
 - Be able to demonstrate the impact of the role development from the apprenticeship on service delivery and alignment to workforce planning needs.
 - Be able to confirm that, on successful completion of the award, the apprentice will be employed as a NA within the host organisation.
 - Ensure that all EoIs are supported at board/exec level or equivalent.

4. Scope

- In scope:
 - Apprentice salary support/backfill costs associated with off-the-job training
 - Apprentice travel and subsistence costs associated with the training programme
 - Any accommodation costs associated with off-the-job training
- Out of scope:
 - Support for Literacy & Numeracy training
 - Learning support payments
 - End point assessment (EPA) costs as these are included within the provider framework

5. Additional Information for Apprenticeship Programmes

Levy Transfers

- If you are **not a levy paying organisation** and you require a levy transfer to pay programme fees, you must contact the Northwest Widening Participation Team at the earliest opportunity on england.levytransfer.nw@nhs.net
- Levy transfers **are not guaranteed** and **cannot be implemented retrospectively** – they must be in place before the person begins their apprenticeship.
- You must not enrol a member of staff onto an apprenticeship where a levy transfer is required without confirmation that a levy transfer is in place.
- Transfers can only be used to pay for training and assessment for apprenticeship standards and only for new apprenticeship starts - this can include existing staff.

Employer Responsibilities

- Employers should familiarise themselves with the entry requirements of their preferred Education Provider.
- There are various apprenticeship rules that must be adhered to by the employer and the apprenticeship training provider. These include:
 - The apprentice must be employed with you.
 - The apprentice must be able to complete the apprenticeship within the time they have available.
 - Apprentices should not be asked to contribute financially to the cost of training, on programme or end-point assessment (this includes where the individual has completed the programme successfully or left the programme early).
 - Apprentices must not use a student loan to pay for their apprenticeship.
 - Apprentices must spend at least 50% of their working hours in England over the duration of the apprenticeship.
 - Apprentices must have the right to work in England and have an eligible residency status.
 - The job the apprentice is doing must have a productive purpose and should provide the apprentice with the opportunity to embed and consolidate the knowledge, skills and behaviours gained through the apprenticeship.
- As an employer you must allow the apprentice time to complete their programme of study and allow them access to opportunities to enable them to develop through their job role.
- As an employer you must ensure the apprentice has a suitable contract that covers the duration of their apprenticeship (including end point assessment).
- The cost of the apprentice's wages must be met by the employer.
- Apprentices must complete their apprenticeship (including any training) during paid working hours.
- Apprentices must spend at least 20% of their working hours doing on the job training.
- The apprentice must work enough hours each week so that they can undertake sufficient regular training and on-the-job activity - this is to ensure the apprentice is likely to successfully complete their apprenticeship.
- The apprentice must have appropriate support and supervision on the job, by the employer, to carry out their job role and their apprenticeship.
- Further information about employer and apprenticeship training provider responsibilities can be found on the Government Website: [ESFA Funding Rules](#).

Apprenticeship Resources and Information

- Further information about off-the-job training can be found by following this [link](#).
- [HASO Guides](#) (only open until the end of June 2025)
- [Apprenticeships in Primary and Social Care Information Pack](#)
- [How do I pay for apprenticeship training?](#)
- [How to reserve funding](#)
- [Department for Education: Apprenticeship funding](#)

6. Expression of Interest (EOI) Process

- Please note that to receive funding you **MUST** complete the EOI process as described in these Principles.
- Applying to an Education Provider and obtaining a place on an academic programme without completing the EOI process will not attract NHS England funding.
- For a timeline of the EOI process please refer to appendix 1.
- Incomplete EOIs will not be considered.
- EOIs must be completed by the deadline.
- EOIs should be for programmes available in region where possible, however other programmes in neighbouring regions will be considered as appropriate and with agreement.
- NHS England requires a single lead contact within each organisation to submit EOIs for service areas and to act as a key liaison for all enquiries. This is to ensure there has been appropriate scrutiny, effective workforce planning and alignment with provider service priorities and/or workforce development needs.
- Internal business cases, where needed, should be completed and approved prior to application where at all possible.
- EOIs should be made electronically via the link in the formal offer letter.

7. Funding Allocation

- We aim to utilise all available funding and support as many applications as our budget allows, but funding for places is limited. Please do not apply for more places that you require or can support within your organisational infrastructure.
- The funding, if awarded, is allocated to the applying organisation and not the student, therefore where a learner moves employment, the current employer must inform NHS England immediately. The new employer will need to directly assure NHS England that there is support for the student and that there will be an appropriate role upon qualification.
- Once all training grant funding is allocated, further EOIs will continue to be accepted, and added to a reserve list should additional funding subsequently become available.
- Where there are places that employers are subsequently unable to use, these will be offered to employers on a fair share basis, from the reserve list and will be dependent upon their ability to support additional starts within the financial year.

Appendix 1 – Expression of Interest Process Time Plan

Month	Activity	Responsible
April	Funding offer finalised	NHS England
6th May 25	Expression of Interest Process opens	NHS England
6th May 25 – 31st March 2026	Expressions of Interest submitted	Health and care employers
16th June 25	Expressions of Interest reviewed, and funding allocated.	NHS England
20th June 25	Organisations informed of outcome of funding allocation from initial EOIs	NHS England
July 25 onwards	Subsequent EOIs reviewed on a monthly basis and employers informed of outcome, adding to reserve list once all training grant funding allocated	NHS England
July onwards	Student details provided to NHS England	Health and care employers
July onwards	Evidence of students commencing programmes provided to NHS England.	Education Providers via Student Data Collection Tool
31st March 2026	EOI application process closes	NHS England