# South East Pathology Apprenticeship Training Grant Funding 2025/26

## Information for NHS organisations on how to access this funding, including the application process.

For any queries about this funding or details within this document, please contact the **NHS England South East Cancer and Diagnostic Programme,** part of the **Workforce, Training & Education Directorate**, [england.canceranddiagnostics.se@nhs.net](mailto:england.canceranddiagnostics.se@nhs.net)

**Key messages**

**2025/26 funding for the NHS England South East Cancer & Diagnostics Programme [part of the Workforce, Training & Education Directorate] has not yet been confirmed.** We are hopeful that funding to support pathology apprenticeship training grants will be available and we are therefore progressing with applications, which will be reviewed and provisionally approved subject to funding criteria and funding confirmation from the National Team.

This document details the 2025/26 funding offer for **Pathology Apprenticeship training grants** and is aimed at supporting the growth and transformation of the pathology workforce.

**This funding (once agreed)**

* Is available to support apprentices in the first year of their programme
* Should be used by employers to support and facilitate their learners completing a recognised apprenticeship training programme. Grants are intended to help the department with further training costs associated with hosting and supervising apprentices.
* Is to support healthcare science learners on an apprenticeship programme in Pathology and Life Sciences at Levels, 2, 4 and 6. This is based on 2024/25 criteria and is subject to change.
* Is offered to Trusts within the South East NHSE geography. Trusts based within the South West (Dorset and Salisbury) and East of England (Milton Keynes) should contact their equivalent NHSE Cancer and Diagnostics WT&E team for funding queries.

**Deadline for funding applications**

* The application window will open on 17 March 2025 and will close at 9am on 25 April 2025
* Applications will only be accepted via the online application form (link available below).

**Please note:**

* If approved, funding will be paid directly to employer organisations via the NHSE Education Funding Agreement Schedule.
* Funding must be spent and fully utilised by 31 March 2026. All chosen courses and education must start by 31 March 2026 also.
* If funding is available, further application rounds will be held in June/July and October 2025. This is to be confirmed and is subject to change.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

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| **Question** | **Response** |
| **Eligibility** | |
| Who can submit application | We are unable to accept applications from learners or prospective learners themselves. All applications must be submitted on behalf of a named or prospective learner, e.g. by a line manager, education lead, apprenticeship lead etc. |
| Can I submit a funding application if I don’t have a confirmed name for my apprentice or they have yet to be accepted onto an accredited apprenticeship programme? | Yes, applications can be submitted if details are still to be confirmed. If the application is approved in principle, funding would not be paid to the organisation until these details are confirmed. |
| When can I apply for this training grant to support my apprentice(s)? | Funding or specific criteria is not yet confirmed for these training grants. However, we are opening applications based on 2024/25 funding/criteria so that we are able to progress applications at pace if funding is confirmed.  Applications will open on 17 March 2025 and close at 9am on 25 April 2025. If funding remains available, further application rounds may be held in June- July 2025 and October 2025.  We are unable to accept applications outside of these application rounds. All applications must be submitted via the online application form (link below). |
| Which professional groups can utilise this funding? | Healthcare scientists |
| Can this funding be used to support apprentices in their Year 2 and Year 3 of programme [if applicable] | No, this funding is to support the apprentice in their first year of programme only. |
| When must the apprentice have started on their programme? | Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026 |
| Can this funding be used for courses which don’t finish in 2025/26? | Yes. A large number of apprenticeship programmes last longer than 12 months. The important date to note is that the learner must have started on programme before 31 March 2026. |
| Can the funding be used to support apprentices who have already received funding from NHSE via an earlier apprenticeship training grant? | No, this training grant is to support apprentices who start the first year of their apprenticeship programme between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. |
| Can I use the funding to support more than one apprentice? | No, the training grant is a nationally agreed amount that is to support an individual apprentice only. |
| Can I change the name of the funded learner who will be benefitting from the funding once this application has been approved? | No, if the original named learner is no longer able to take up the place on programme, the application will be withdrawn and closed. You will be able to apply for a new grant in the next application round if funding is available. |
| **Funding and financial management** | |
| What do I need consider? | Before any funding can be formally paid, assurance will be required that the organisation is happy to receive the funding and that this can be fully spent and utilised by 31 March 2026. Please link with your relevant finance lead to discuss and agree this, ideally before an application is submitted. |
| Has funding been formally confirmed for these training grants? | **No, formal national confirmation of funding for this training grant is still to be confirmed and is not guaranteed at this time.**  Applications are being invited but funding will not be confirmed until national funding is in place. |
| What is the funding period? | 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 |
| What is the funding available for this training grant? | A training grant totalling £10,612 [TBC – this is based on 2024/25 funding model and therefore may be subject to change in 2025/26]. Depending on the cohort start date, this training grant may be paid across two financial years. |
| How will this funding be paid? | The funding will be paid to the employing organisation of the apprentice via the NHSE Education Funding Agreement Schedule. |
| Can this funding be used to support ‘overhead’ costs | No, in line with other NHSE education payments we are unable to provide funding for any overhead additional costs. This position should not have a negative impact on the salary of the apprentice or on the quality of the training and supervision they receive. |
| Can funding be used next financial year if we cannot spend it this year? | No, all funding provided by NHSE needs to be managed in the year of issue, no deferral will be agreed. NHSE is not able to carry forward any commitments into the next financial year and any remaining balances would have to be withdrawn and lost to your organisation. There are no exceptions allowable and no agreements to defer can be made by anyone representing NHSE. |
| **Utilisation of funding** | |
| What is the aim of this funding? | These training grants are to support employers in meeting challenges in the pathology workforce by offering additional funded support to facilitate apprentices working with the NHS. |
| What **can** funding be used for? | Training grants should be used by employers to support and facilitate their learners completing a recognised apprenticeship training programme. The funding can be used flexibly and is intended to help the department with further training costs associated with hosting and supervising apprentices. This could include:   * Training expenses * Clinical supervision and mentorship * Travel and subsistence expenses |
| What **can’t** the funding be used for? | The funding cannot be used for the following:   * Course fees; course fees are covered by employer access to the apprenticeship levy * Apprentice salary: Training grants are not intended to cover salary costs of the apprentice which would need to be met by the employer. * Capital expenses including equipment |
| **Employer requirements of accepting this funding** | |
| Reporting | All reporting requirements, including updates against learner status, will be met. |
| Financial | All funding will be managed appropriately in line with individual organisation’s financial management and assurance processes. |
| Access to training | Managers will support their staff to access training and release them to attend |

**Overview**

## To support meeting challenges in the pathology workforce and to promote the tangible benefits apprenticeships bring to the NHS, NHS England have previously offered training grants for employers to develop apprenticeships in pathology and life sciences. We hope to be able to offer this funding in 2025/26; at this stage funding is still to be confirmed.

## Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes which are designed to help employers train people for specific job roles. At the same time, apprentices get a paying job with valuable training while they work towards a nationally recognised apprenticeship qualification. Apprenticeships can create skilled, motivated and qualified employees and, if used properly, can help to address skills shortages across the workforce.

The overarching aims of this pathology apprenticeship training grant funding offer is to:

* Support Trusts in developing the pathology workforce, particularly within healthcare science, and develop the pipeline of individuals along the career pathway
* Support existing staff to develop in their roles and along the career pathway
* Increase access to and provide new routes into pathology through supporting the apprenticeship pathways

**The funding offer**

To help grow and transform the pathology workforce, NHS England has previously offered a number of training support grants to NHS Trusts for those starting an apprenticeship programme. Whilst national funding guidance for 2025/26 pathology apprenticeship training grants is still be to be confirmed and so the below is subject to change, for 2024/25, pathology apprenticeship programmes were required to be in Pathology and Life Sciences at Levels, 2, 4 or 6. This could include apprenticeships in Life Science, Blood Science, Cellular Sciences, Infection Sciences, Point of Care Testing, Embryology as well as other relevant disciplines.

If funding is agreed, depending on the cohort start date, training grants may be paid across two financial years. If for any reason the apprentice needs to withdraw from or is unable to complete their programme, funding will need to be returned.

Payments will be made via the NHSE Education Funding Agreement schedule to the employing Trust and will not be made until an apprentice name and further details relating to their programme is provided.

Training grants should be used by employers to support and facilitate their learners completing a recognised apprenticeship training programme. The funding can be used flexibly and is intended to help the department with further training costs associated with hosting and supervising apprentices.

Training grants are not intended to cover salary costs of the apprentice which would need to be met by the employer. Course fees are covered by employer access to the apprenticeship levy.

This offer of application is open to NHS Trusts within the South East. Whilst a number of South East Pathology Networks work across geographical boundaries, Trusts based within the South West (Dorset and Salisbury) and East of England (Milton Keynes) should contact their equivalent NHSE Cancer and Diagnostics Workforce Training and Education team for funding queries.

To ensure that employers and apprentices can maximise the benefit of this training grant and the wider apprenticeship opportunity, please note the following:

* Apprentices must start their training programme between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026
* The chosen apprenticeship programme must be recognised by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education at level 2,4 or 6
* All funding received must be spent and fully utilised within the 2025/26 financial year, with appropriate financial assurance being required before any funding is transferred.

**How to access this funding**

As a reminder, **funding is yet to be confirmed for 2025/26.**

Trust pathology and healthcare science departments are asked to link with their relevant education and development teams to review this offer and to work up plans. Pathology Network Workforce Leads and Practice Educators may also link with their Trust colleagues as part of this work to ensure they are best placed to support uptake.

Please note that applications must not be submitted by individual learners themselves; all applications must be submitted on behalf of the named learner e.g., by a line manager / head of department / education lead etc.

If interested in applying for this funding:

* **Completion of online application** – Please complete an online application which can be accessed through this link – [Apprenticeship Application Form](https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/healtheducationyh/2025-26-round-1-nhse-se-cancer-diagnostic-funding-application-a).
* **Deadline** All applications must be through this online application form and must be submitted by **9am on 25 April 2025.**

All applications will be reviewed by the NHSE SE Cancer and Diagnostics Programme team [Workforce, Training and Education]. Depending on the number of applications, not all may be able to be supported. A review and prioritisation exercise will take place by the Cancer and Diagnostic programme team including other colleagues and Pathology Networks where required.

If you are unable to meet the 25 April 2025 deadline, there may be further application rounds in June – July 2025 and October 2025 if funding allows; details will be shared closer to the time.

**Expectations of organisations upon application of funding**

* If approved, all investment will be subject to reporting requirements (outlined below).
* If approved, that all funding is managed appropriately in line with individual organisation’s financial management and assurance processes.

**Reporting and monitoring investment**

NHSE South East are required to provide full details of the use of this funding to the national NHSE Cancer and Diagnostics programme, part of the Workforce Training and Education Directorate so that investment can be appropriately reported. Where funding has been used to support an individual, the national Programme team may keep a database of participant details (to include role, Trust, HEI/training provider).

Organisations receiving this funding will be required to provide twice-yearly updates (September 2025 and Feb/March 2026) relating to the status of each individual learner; a request will be sent directly to the Trust’s education team to facilitate this.

**Further Information**

The following websites provide in-depth apprenticeship information that may be useful to employers when considering apprenticeships in pathology and life sciences:

* Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education – <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/>
* Skills for Health – <https://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/>
* Healthcare Apprenticeship Standards Online <https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/>

**NHS England – NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (2023)**

The [NHS England Long Term Workforce Plan](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/nhs-long-term-workforce-plan-v1.2.pdf) was published in 2023, outlining the case for change for all NHS workforce to deliver more patient care than ever before. This plan focuses on three priority areas of Train, Retain and Reform, which aims to make sustainable progress on core priorities for patients.

**Who to contact if you have any queries on this offer?**

The NHSE SE Cancer and Diagnostics Programme - [england.canceranddiagnostics.se@nhs.net](mailto:england.canceranddiagnostics.se@nhs.net)