



# Nursing Associate Apprenticeship

# Welcome

The Nursing Associate apprenticeship, introduced in 2017, has seen steadily growing interest. This programme aligns with the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan's (LTWP) commitment to expanding and strengthening the healthcare workforce, particularly in primary care settings.

Primary Care Networks are utilising the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme to recruit student nursing associates, while GP Practices are utilising the apprenticeship route to upskill experienced healthcare assistants. This reflects the LTWP focus on workforce transformation, providing enhanced support to nursing teams and improving retention. It is an exciting time for nursing development in Primary Care, as these ambitions are being realised in practice.

This information pack has been created to provide all the details you need to develop a nursing associate apprentice. Please contact your local NHS England Primary Care School Learning Environment Lead to explore this fantastic training programme further and receive support to get started.



**Sue Clarke**

**Head of School of Primary Care (Training Hubs)**

**NHS England - Thames Valley and Wessex**



## The Nursing Associate role

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- The nursing associate is a bridging role between health care assistants and graduate registered nurses
- They work with people of all ages and in a variety of settings in health and social care
- They are registered and regulated by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). This means that nursing associates are individually accountable for their own professional conduct and practice

## Why has this role been introduced?

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The role was introduced in response to the Shape of Caring Review (HEE, 2015), to help build the capacity of the nursing workforce and the delivery of high-quality care. It will be a vital part of the wider health and care team and aims to:

- Support the career progression of health care assistants
- Enable nurses to focus on more complex clinical work
- Increase the supply of nurses by providing a progression route into graduate-level nursing



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# Benefits for Primary Care

As a response to the growing demands in Primary Care, general practice nurses (GPNs) are embracing some activities traditionally in the domain of GPs such as prescribing, treating minor illness and managing long term conditions. Nursing associates will be well placed to help with some of the routine work of GPNs. For example:

- ✓ Trained across all 4 branches of nursing: adult, child, learning disability and mental health
- ✓ Improved documentation skills
- ✓ Goal setting with patients
- ✓ Supporting patients to self-manage
- ✓ Understanding of co-morbidities and wider patient needs
- ✓ Asking the right questions to build understanding of patients
- ✓ Assessing and monitoring patients with long term conditions. This includes carrying out reviews with patients who have long term conditions



# What specific skills can a Nursing Associate provide in Primary Care?

The NMC has developed and published [standards of proficiency for nursing associates](#). These Standards provide a clear picture of what nursing associates know and can do when they join the register.

In General Practice, registered nursing associates are complimenting the nursing team across Primary Care Networks, examples include;

- Providing holistic care such as chronic wounds/leg ulcers
  - Lower Limb Management, including compression bandaging
  - Administer prescribed medications (including IM/SC) under PSD (this includes vaccinations)
  - Measurement of the ankle brachial pressure index (dopplers)
  - Long Term Condition Reviews (for example: Asthma, COPD, Diabetes and Hypertension **part 1**)
- Accurately undertake risk assessments, using assessment tools such as MUST, MMSE, falls assessment and NEWS2
  - Safeguarding, recognise and escalate signs of all forms of abuse
  - Recognise and escalate signs of self-harm and/or suicidal ideation
  - Assist patients to self-manage, understand their health concerns and support their wider health needs

# Role development

- Like other regulated professionals, nursing associates will continue to train and develop as part of their career pathway and are subject to re-validation in the same way as all other NMC registrants.
  - They can undertake additional training to develop their scope of practice throughout their careers. Funding is available for core general practice nursing skills and continuous professional development. Contact the [Thames Valley Primary Care School](#) for more information.
  - The qualification provides entry to the accelerated nursing degree apprenticeship - further supporting your nursing workforce retention.
  - Registered nursing associates can supervise and assess other Student Nursing Associates and Healthcare Assistants and supervise pre-registration nursing students following completion of NMC SSSA training.
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# Nursing Associate - developing further skills

With experience and further training your nursing associate can be developed to carry out additional skills, for example:

- Baby immunisation clinics
- Communication and consultation skills, including history taking in the context of person-centred care and partnership working
- Diagnostic tests
- Cervical cytology and HPV testing
- Ear care including irrigation
- Administering drugs in accordance with regulations

## **Beyond the parameters of registered nursing associate practice:**

Cannot make an initial assessment

Cannot independently change the plan of care or discharge from care

Decisions to make specialist referrals

Decisions to discharge an individual from a service

Administering medicines under a patient group directive

# Case studies for primary care

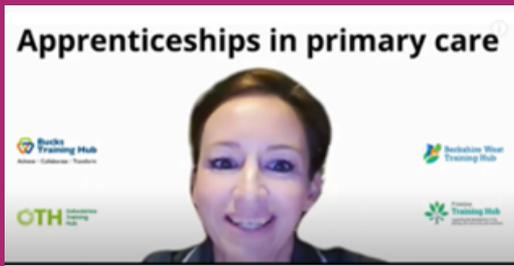
click on the images to find out more



Watch this [NHSE film](#) and learn about the work Nursing Associate, Adam Kalaher does caring for patients as part of the team at the Highfields Medical Practice in Leicester.



Vera Filipe completed both the nursing associate and registered nurse degree apprenticeship with her Practice in Slough



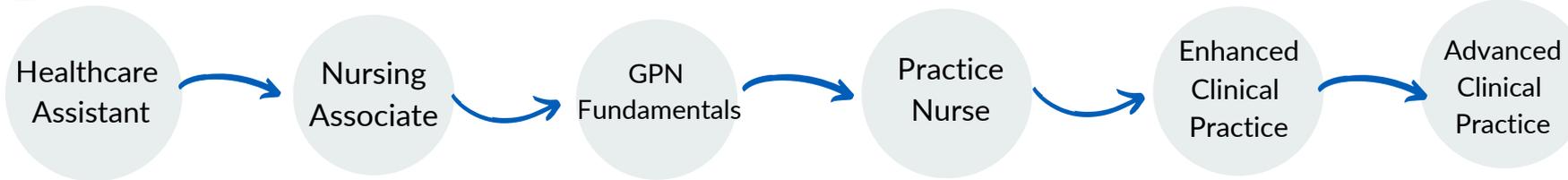
Watch this short clip with Lynsey Mitchell, registered nursing associate, talking about how she helps her nurse team in the Practice.

**Want to speak to another GP Practice about their experience?  
Please contact your learning environment lead to link you up.**

# Nursing workforce retention - why should Practices invest in this role?

1

'Grow your own' workforce – it's difficult to recruit experienced practice nurses, so develop your nursing team by utilising the nursing associate apprenticeship for your HCA or recruit a new student nursing associate using ARRS funding. After a period of consolidation, progress them onto an accelerated registered nurse degree apprenticeship - 18 to 24 months, for which ARRS funding is also available.



2

The role is a generalist position and as such can be shaped around the specific needs of the practice to meet the practice's population health needs. Your supervision and coaching will be key, as well as programmes such as the GPN Fundamentals and Preceptorship programmes.

3

With significant challenges to the recruitment and retention of our nursing workforce, the costs of investing in your staff should outweigh the potential costs of doing nothing.

# Making the case - return on investment

A good business case will consider your longer term strategy. How can this investment help with staff retention, support your busy nurse team to focus on more complex tasks, help you to better meet your population health needs? Is it providing upskilling for a local resident? Will you develop your NA into a registered nurse to ensure skills are kept within your Practice? Meeting local needs and retaining your staff leads to efficiencies and costs savings.

## Backfill costs or a return on investment?

Where Practices cannot utilise ARRS funding, costs of providing backfill can seem daunting. How much backfill do you require?

A Traverse Primary Care Nursing Associate research project (HEE 2019) found that even small Practices managed to participate in the programme without the need to recruit backfill. This was enabled by:

- Robust planning and scheduling upfront to minimise disruption –good communication between with the HEI and trainee is required
- SNAs' (Student Nursing Associate) patient facing work being rescheduled to the days when they are in
- HCAs were skilled-up to do some extra tasks to help plug gaps
- Practices can take a placement swap

## NHS England SNA funding can be used towards:

- Backfill where ARRS reimbursement is not being used
- DBS checks / health checks
- Travel to placements
- Uniform are often provided, but some HEIs require you to purchase these
- Unsociable hours - small payments may occur where placements include working unsociable hours, though these should be kept to a minimum
- Additional module costs - in the rare event that a module is failed after a re-sit attempt.

## Keep the end goal in mind

- Any good retention and development measures require a level of investment to yield benefits
- As your Nursing Associate's experience grows, they will be able to develop further skills
- SNAs can work on assignments that add value to your Practice
- SNAs' placements in other settings will allow them to pick up new skills and good practice

# Funding

With recognition of the need to increase the capacity of nursing roles within Primary Care, there is financial incentive and support available for practices to grow their nursing teams.

## Apprenticeship levy

Education fees are required by universities and are currently set nationally at a maximum of £15,000. The fees are paid via an apprenticeship levy. Most Practices are non-levy paying and have options to utilise a levy transfer or enter Government co-funding at 5%, meaning you will pay £750.

You will need to set up a [Digital Apprenticeship Service](#) account. See the [Resources](#) page for more information.

## NHS England employer support fund

Employers can receive NHSE employer support funds for a student nursing associate. At January 2026 this is set to £4,287 per year per SNA, with a total of £8,574.

For trainees working at least 50% of their practice time with people who have a learning disability and/ or are autistic, an employer will be eligible for a total funding sum of £16,116 over two years (£8,058 per year).

## Placement co-ordination

Most universities do not offer placement co-ordination. As an employer you may be entitled to receive up to £2.5k funding to cover the costs of setting up and co-ordinating placements.

## Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme

- The SNA role is part of the ARRS. A PCN can claim reimbursement for their salaries plus on-costs up to a maximum reimbursable amount in each year.
- PCNs can also claim for registered nursing associate whilst on training to become a registered nurse, via the top-up apprenticeship pathway.

# Supporting a SNA in Practice: Placements

**Placement rotations vary by University. The placement pattern you choose will be dependent on:**

- Your employee and business needs
- Your intentions about further development onto registered nursing where placement hours can be used towards accelerated programmes
- Longer placement durations make it easier to catch up with lost time resulting from sickness, annual leave or for staff working less than 37 hours

**Placement experience:** The Nursing Associate role is generic across all four fields of nursing. As such, SNAs, through their education programme, will benefit from experience within adult, children's, mental health and learning disabilities. Although SNAs are not specifically required to have placement experience within all fields of nursing, their external placements should focus on obtaining a breadth of experience within a variety of health and social care settings, with a diverse range of people, across the life span.

**Placement co-ordination:** Most universities expect the employer to co-ordinate placements in your local area. Contact your NHS England learning environment lead to find out what support there is in your area via [england.primarycareschooltvw.se@nhs.net](mailto:england.primarycareschooltvw.se@nhs.net)

# Supporting a SNA in practice: protected learning time

- Protected learning time is defined as time in a health or care setting, during which students are learning and are supported to learn
- Students must be supervised during protected learning time (direct or indirect supervision, as appropriate)
- Protected learning time requires 1,150 hours in practice during which students are supported to learn
- Your university will guide you about how protected learning time can be achieved, here is an example for a full time SNA apprentice working in a GP Practice:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Work in practice – Cover clinics and shadow GPN doing dementia check	University day 7.5 hours	Work in practice – Cover clinics and complete eLearning package on health promotion	Work in practice– Cover clinics Learning outcome to learn new mental health medications	Work in practice– cover clinics and shadow health visitor for one appointment

# Supporting a SNA in Practice: Supervision, assessment & guidance



The University will teach a range of skills. They will have a plan to supervise and assess your SNA as they go through the programme to ensure their new skills and knowledge are being applied to your Practice. Talk to your learning environment lead to discuss preparation for assessment, or to discuss options if you need help.



Your SNA will have access to a regional Community of Practice for Primary Care along with qualified NAs to learn from their experience



Your SNA will have access to university support services and local knowledge libraries



[Click on this video case study](#) to hear from GPN Lead, Karen Gangadene about supporting a SNA in Practice

# Programme eligibility

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Entry requirements vary by University but in general they are:

**The individual is employed in a clinically appropriate role**

**Employed for a minimum of 30 hours per week**

**Some Universities require level 2 or 3 qualifications including the Care Certificate**

**English and maths GCSE grade 4/C or functional skills level 2. Most universities require these at entry**

**Must have the right to live and work in the UK**

**Current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Occupational Health (OH) checks and Covid Risk Assessment (record of vaccination)**

# Recruiting a new student nursing associate

Consider the steps below when recruiting a new student nursing associate



Allow plenty of time

Find out when the university will be delivering their next programme. Then allow sufficient time to recruit your SNA, induct them into your organisation and complete the university application process.



Map your JD and selection process

Make sure your job description includes the minimum criteria of the degree programme e.g. functional skills and level 3 qualifications if required. Embed some of the university interview questions into your own selection process. Use a values based recruitment approach.



Onboard as a Healthcare Assistant

Onboard your new employee as a healthcare assistant first and orient them into your Practice, before starting the foundation degree programme.



Offer plenty of information

Think about your longer term ambitions for this role - can you include any of this vision in your advert? Offer an information session or recorded video about the apprenticeship programme as part of your recruitment process.

**See the resources section for links to a sample job description and advert**

# Checklist to develop your existing employee

- Your employee works at least 30 hours a week
- Certificates are available for GCSE English and maths at grade C and above, or equivalent qualification like Functional Skills level 2\*  
Functional skills entry requirements for all apprenticeships were removed in February 2025, however for the majority of clinical apprenticeships, NMC requirements still require evidence of maths and English competency, therefore, most universities are requiring functional skills as an entry requirement.
- Some Universities require a level 3 qualification and the Care Certificate



\*For the English and maths qualifications criteria, you will need to have your certificates available. Higher level English and maths subject qualifications are acceptable, for example A Levels or a degree in English or maths. Evidence is required specifically for these subjects.

For help with functional skills and UK ENIC conversions, email:  
[england.primarycareschooltvw.se@nhs.net](mailto:england.primarycareschooltvw.se@nhs.net)

# Selecting a Training Provider - key considerations

See the resources page for questions to ask the University but below are some key points to consider:

## Quality

There are options for classroom based, self-directed and online programme delivery

The NHS Salisbury Managed Procured Services includes approved pre-selected universities

See the Resources page for contact details

## Location

Most universities deliver blended virtual and face-to-face training. Ask where and how often the face to face delivery will be and how many hours of self-directed learning is required

## Delivery

How many days a week is the academic learning, how many weeks in each placement rotation and how is protected learning to be achieved?

## Entry Criteria

What are the university's requirements for maths and English level 2?  
Are there any NVQ level 3 or equivalent qualification requirements?

# Resources

## Information about the nursing associate role

NHS [Healthcareers](#) - general information about the NA role

[Video resources about the role and training](#)

## Recruitment and selection

[Trainee nursing associate job description and advert template](#)

[Interview questions and preparation guidance for applicants](#)

## University selection

[To search for Universities approved to deliver the nursing associate click on the nursing associate \(NMC 2018\) \(level 5\) - apprenticeship training course \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

[You can also select a University using the NHS Salisbury Manager Procured Services, contact \[sft.commercial@nhs.net\]\(mailto:sft.commercial@nhs.net\)](#)

[Questions to ask a University](#)

## Funding

[Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme](#)

[How to apply for an Apprenticeship Levy Transfer - slides or watch](#)

[Set up Digital Apprenticeship Service](#)

## Nursing apprenticeships onboarding guidance

View 'Nursing Apprenticeships onboarding information pack at the Apprenticeships in Primary Care, [Working across Wessex website](#).

- Funding
- Contracting
- Placements

## Local Contacts

**Learning environment leads:**

**Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West:**

Vicky Pearson

Sarah Redhead

Abbie Canton

**Frimley ICB:**

Anya Makin-Terry

**Hampshire and Isle of Wight:**

Angie Thompsett

To express interest in nursing apprenticeships email:

[TVW Primary Care School](#)