

# Thames Valley and Wessex Primary Care School



**Nursing Apprenticeships:  
Onboarding guidance for  
General Practice employers**

# Congratulations!



Congratulations for enrolling your employee onto a nursing associate or registered nurse degree apprenticeship.

There are a number of steps involved with setting up a clinical apprenticeship for an employee. This guide has been designed to guide Practices through the next steps:

- Funding
- Contracting
- Placements



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**NHS**

**England**  
South East

# Preparing your documents

Most universities use an onboarding platform such as APTM, BUD or Onefile to collate apprenticeship documentation and issue contracts.

You and your employee will be asked to e-sign documents and upload evidence.

## Typical documentation includes:

- Employer liability insurance
- Professional indemnity insurance
- Job description for the Student Nursing Associate role
- GCSE / Functional skills level 2 English and maths certificates (dependent on your university policy)
- Company policies: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Health and Safety and Safeguarding



## Top tip

Don't confuse the learner systems with your Digital Apprenticeship Service account, known as the 'DAS'. The DAS is used to manage payments for the university training fees and not any contracting or enrolment processes.

Also note that NHSE funding is a separate process explained on page 5



## NHSE Employer support grants

- Primary care employers are entitled to NHSE training funds to support a nursing apprentice.
- **Funds are subject to change each year.** For example the funding set for financial year 2025-26 are provisional as follows:

### Nursing Associate apprenticeship

-£4,162 per year per apprentice, with a total of £8,324 over 2 years.

**Registered Nurse Degree apprenticeship – top up (RPL) programme only:** £9,027 per year of the apprenticeship programme with a total of £18,054 (subject to variation).

## Funding process

- NHSE use a student data collection tool to identify new starters via quarterly returns from the Universities. Once new learners are identified, NHSE will check that your Practice has an Education Funding Agreement in place.
- You will also be required to validate your apprentice data, when asked by NHS England.
- NHSE will contact your Practice requesting information to raise a purchase order - please look out for the email.

Payments will then be made over the duration of the programme.

When your employee starts the programme, please contact: [england.hedata.south@nhs.net](mailto:england.hedata.south@nhs.net) so that they have your direct contact details for funding purposes.

## Salary

1. The Student Nursing Associate and Nursing Associate roles are currently included in the DES ARRS contract. A Primary Care Network can claim reimbursement for their salaries plus on costs up to a maximum reimbursable amount in each year.
2. For a Nursing Associate enrolled onto the Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship 18 - 24 months Recognised Prior Learning programme can continue to claim salary costs whilst they are not working within their substantive NA role (i.e. when they are on academics and placements).

## National Insurance Contributions - under 25 exemptions

Employers may not need to pay Class 1 National Insurance contributions for an apprentice, if the apprentice:

- is under 25 years old
- is on an approved UK government apprenticeship standard
- earns less than £967 a week (£50,270 a year)

For more information visit: [Paying employer National Insurance contributions for apprentices under 25 - GOV.UK](#)

## **Which employer runs the payroll for the apprentice? Setting up your digital account correctly:**

The organisation who will pay the apprentice through their payroll will be required to set up the digital account service:

- If this is a PCN or Federation with an annual paybill of over £3million, they will normally be an apprenticeship levy payer and will need to utilise their levy funds to finance the course fees.
- If an umbrella organisation like a federation provides payroll services to several Practices or PCNs, please discuss levy provision with your HR lead as soon as possible.

## **Funding the apprenticeship training fee**

You have 2 options to pay the university training fee:

1. Enter Government co-funding where you pay 5% of the training fees. For example for the nursing associate programme fee of £15,000, you will pay £750 over the 2 years programme. (From August the employer contribution will increase to 25%)

or

2. Request full funding from a levy-paying organisation. For support with levy transfer instructions, see [“Nursing apprenticeships levy transfer and adding your apprentice to the Digital Service Account guidance”](#) available on our [apprenticeship](#) page.

# Typical expenses incurred during training

This list is not exhaustive but provides an overview of the typical expenses incurred during nursing apprenticeships:

## **Name badge and uniform:**

Most universities fund the cost of uniform either by providing it directly or refunding the employer.

## **Payment for working unsocial hours:**

During placement the NMC expectation is that a student covers the shift pattern of the ward. This could involve weekend work, shifts or the occasional night shift and this may incur overtime payments.

In the majority of cases employers have a reciprocal agreement with their learner about payments or time in lieu.



## Typical expenses incurred during training - continued.

### Travel to placements and car parking:

This should be in-line with your normal travel expenses policy for any employee on training.

### Overtime incurred from full-time placement or academic learning hours:

- Most universities will have a work-around for staff working 30 hours per week.
- Some universities operate placements on a full-time basis, with limited flexibility to extend the placement weeks.
- The key is to agree with your employee well in advance how these hours will be made up and have agreement on what can or cannot be paid.



It is best to agree expectations with your employee about if and how these hours will be paid. Your employee will be in a group with students from different health and care settings, who will have their own policies for paying overtime or covering unsociable hours.

## Contracting with the university

At enrolment stage, there will be a contract to sign between the employer and university. Contracting typically covers:

- insurances
- health and safety
- cost of re-sits
- roles and responsibilities
- funding, withdrawals and cancellations

You can contract with your university directly or for better protections you can opt to use the **NHS Salisbury Framework** to which the universities have signed up to. Currently this option is available also for primary care employers. Find out more by asking the university or contact your local training hub.

## Agreements with your apprentice

Before committing to an apprenticeship it is helpful to discuss commitments and responsibilities in detail. The **next section** covers the most commonly asked questions about agreements

## Apprenticeship agreement:

- All employers are required to complete an ESFA Apprenticeship Agreement at the start of the apprenticeship. It is used to confirm individual employment arrangements between the apprentice and the employer for funding purposes, however it is not a contract of employment.
- The 1-page agreement names the apprenticeship standard, start and end dates and off-the-job training hours.
- The university will send you this contract via their apprenticeship onboarding system, for you and your apprentice to sign.

## Terms and conditions:

- For existing staff, there should be no change to employee terms and conditions of employment, unless agreed in advanced.
- NHS Employers have produced an Apprenticeship [pay guidance and FAQs | NHS Employers for Health Trusts](#).

## ➤ Training contracts:

- As apprenticeships are funded via a Government levy, apprentices must not be asked to make any financial contribution whilst on the programme or if they leave employment:

151. The provider or the employer **must not ask** the apprentice to contribute financially to the eligible costs of training, on-programme or end-point assessment. This includes both where the individual has completed the apprenticeship successfully or has left the programme early (this includes where they have left the employer).

Taken from: [Apprenticeship funding rules](#)

## Placement Planning - Introduction

- Placements are a requirement for all nursing qualifications.
- Responsibility for planning and co-ordinating placements remains with the employer, unless otherwise informed by the university or if you have been made aware of an alternative local agreement or arrangement in place.

When planning your employee's placement needs, it is useful to consider the following:

- What skills will benefit your employee's development to compliment the skills they will need within general practice, as well as give them stretch and challenge. What would be good for their own development?
- There should be a range of placement areas to best evidence the NMC proficiencies and experiences that your employee wouldn't cover in primary care, for example - catheter care and moving and handling techniques.
- Your apprentice will need to demonstrate direct patient care skills, e.g. personal care or medication rounds within a care home setting or hospital.

# What placements do you need to plan?

## Nursing Associate apprenticeship:

- The NA programme is generic and covers the four areas of nursing: adult, child, learning disability and mental health. All areas will need to be experienced, although you may not need specific placements within each of these fields.
- At least one placement should be within an in-patient environment in order to achieve the clinical proficiencies.
- You should also consider other health and social care settings within your locality, especially those who your surgery or PCN have links to. For example:
  - Care Homes
  - Voluntary/Charity sector
  - Private hospitals or the social care independent sector

## Registered Nurse Degree apprenticeship:

- Each university will have their own pattern of placements.
- Typically there are 3 to 4 placement blocks.
- Most Practices will prefer the final placement to be home based, which must be supernumerary, however please check with the university.
- Therefore the first placements will be within a ward, outpatient or community-based setting.

## How to request a placement



Follow the university guidelines for placement requests. Line managers should make placement requests, rather than the student. Placement hosts prefer one point of contact to help them manage multiple employer enquiries and may decline requests directly made by a student.

Contact the [Thames Valley and Wessex Primary Care School](#) for guidance and support



Remember to consider how accessible a placement location will be for your employee, and factor this into your placement request.



### PLAN EARLY!

- If a learning environment quality assurance process needs to be completed, for example if the host placement is a new learning environment, this could very easily take a number of weeks or months to be arranged and completed.
- Hospital Trusts placement requests require 3 to 6 month notice.
- The earlier you plan, request and confirm placements, the simpler the process is likely to be, and a broader option of placement experiences should be available.

Placement  
Planning

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## Placement hours

- Be specific on the number of hours per week being requested and be clear on the academic days you need.
- Remember that annual leave will need to be taken outside of academic and placement blocks.



## Top tips for successfully requesting hospital and community trust placements

- **Typical placement areas** include: Sexual health / District nursing / A&E / Urgent Care settings / Medical or Surgical units / Elderly Care/ Outpatients / Paediatric Units / Hospice / Care Homes.
- **Manage expectations** - whilst you will have preferences, given the complex nature of planning student placements, it is important to be open to wider placement opportunities.
- **Cancelling a request** - Professional values should be exercised before considering cancellation of a request, especially at the last minute, or to request late changes, as there are usually wider implications.
- **Good communication** - Placement hosts should be ready to receive your employee and provide sufficient communication in advance of the placement.
- **Placement co-ordinators** - Most Trusts have a placement co-ordinator or team who have oversight of all clinical placement requests. It is important to contact this team, rather than approach multiple departments. Placement teams will have a realistic idea of placement capacity and oversight of what is already booked in, and can advise on any processes or governance (such as honorary contracts).

## Are you using a new placement host?

- If you are using an employer new to placements please contact the Thames Valley and Wessex Primary Care School
- The University will require an audit process to ensure a safe learning environment. If you are not an approved PCN Learning Environment, an educational audit will need to take place. This can take between 4 to 8 weeks.
- The new placement host **must** have completed the necessary quality assurance process, with an up-to-date educational audit in place and/or Practice Placement Agreement with the HEI.
- This process also applies to you if you are a new placement host, ready to support other learners as part of the programme reciprocation placement requests.
- Completing audit also means the placement host will be required to receive the necessary Practice Supervisor & Practice Assessor training, as per the Standards for student supervision and assessment [SSSA] (NMC 2018).
- If your PCN has completed the PCN Learning Environment assurance process, this will cover the audit requirements.

# Local Honorary Contracts / Placement Agreements and Training for External Placements

- Each hospital Trust or placement area will have their own policies in relation to placement agreements and training requirements.
- Most hospital Trusts will request an honorary contract / license to attend, completed ahead of the placement block/s. The contract must be in place well ahead of the placement commencing and can take several weeks to arrange.
- Some hospitals/organisations may request the apprentice to attend local inductions, complete learner administration e.g. car parking and ID badges, and training (such as moving and handling, eLearning and fit mask testing) – before the placement starts.
- For Manual Handling training, check with the hospital if in-person training is required.

# Occupational Health Checks

## Employee responsibility

- Occupational Health checks remain the responsibility of the employer.
- Your employee will work in a variety of other workplace settings for example inpatient, acute, surgical, community or care homes - are there any reasonable adjustments to be made?
- ? Does your employee have a health condition or disability? See the next page for more information.

## Apprentice responsibility

- It is the responsibility of the apprentice to share any pertinent reasonable adjustments and recommendations with relevant parties (employer, those planning placements, placement areas and the university) in a timely manner.
- This will enhance safety and wellbeing within the workplace and placement areas and allow suitable allocation of appropriate placement areas.



Good practice is to review your employee's occupational health check at the start of a nursing apprenticeship, to consider the varied context of potential placement settings.

This allows consideration of a wider variety of factors, such as differing shift patterns, working areas, shift lengths, working environments (such as increased length of time standing & walking) and moving and handling expectations.

# Occupational Health Checks - Employees with a health condition or disability

- If an employee has a health condition or disability that might impact their ability to undertake their role, the Occupational Health assessment can establish whether any restrictions or reasonable adjustments are recommended to protect the health and wellbeing of the employee, colleagues and patients.
- By law, under the Equality Act 2010, employers have a legal responsibility to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff.
- Reasonable adjustments are changes which an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability; this could be finding a different way to do something, providing equipment or support, making changes to the workplace or working arrangements, and could be related to physical or mental health conditions.
- Alongside this, universities offer support for learning difficulties (such as dyslexia) and mental health and wellbeing services support to promote an inclusive learning environment.
- Apprentices who suspect they have an undiagnosed learning difficulty can access screening via their university. From this, recommended reasonable adjustments can be implemented for teaching, assessments and exams.
- Those with physical or a mental health condition can also access support such as Access to Work
- Universities mental health services, which can usually be accessed via self-referral.

## Further links

[Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme](#)

[Set up Digital Apprenticeship Service](#)

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

[Instructions for accepting a levy transfer and adding your apprentice correctly](#)

[Access to Work](#) - support for employees with physical or mental health condition or disability.

## Local Contacts

### Learning environment leads:

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West:

Vicky Pearson

Sarah Redhead

Frimley ICB:

Anya Makin-Terry

Hampshire and Isle of Wight:

Angie Thompsett

Contact: [TVW Primary Care School  
england.primarycareschooltvw.se@nhs.net](mailto:TVW.Primary.Care.School@nhs.net)