

A Managers Guide to Health and Care Apprenticeships

Find out how to recruit an apprentice to your team or develop your existing staff using apprenticeship programmes.



Why employ apprentices?

Apprenticeships are a great way to upskill members of your team. They are also a great way to attract new talent and you should consider a newly recruited apprentice when recruiting for an existing or new role.

You can use apprenticeships to:

- Attract a wider pool of people from your local community
- Recruit a diverse and representative workforce
- Offer flexible training solutions.
- Provide return on investment
- Reshape your workforce and skill mix
- Develop your existing workforce
- Attract new talent

NHS Employers have created this [infographic](#) which highlights how apprentices support workforce needs in the NHS.

What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a paid job with training and is available to new or existing staff.

Apprenticeships range from level 2 qualifications, equivalent to GCSEs, to level 7 qualifications, equivalent to a master's degree. Individuals can undertake an apprenticeship at any level (this could be higher, equal, or lower to a qualification they already hold) if it allows them to acquire substantive new skills.

The minimum duration for an apprenticeship is twelve months with the apprentice spending at least six hours a week of their time on off-the-job training (for some roles such as nursing, the requirement may be more).

Contract of employment



All apprentices must have a contract of employment long enough for them to complete the apprenticeship programme and many employers ensure there is a position available at the end of the apprenticeship.

They must also have a job role (or roles) that provides them with the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve the standards required to pass their apprenticeship. Employment can be offered either on a fixed-term or permanent basis.

Find your organisations apprenticeship expert

Most NHS organisations employ an apprenticeship lead, they are your organisation's expert for apprenticeships, and they can guide you in:

- Accessing apprenticeship levy
- Selecting a training provider
- Selecting the correct apprenticeship qualification for your staff

Your apprenticeship lead will normally work in your trust's education, organisational development (OD) or Human Resources (HR) function.

Primary and social care employers may not have a dedicated apprenticeship lead; however you can still access support either through your [primary care training hub](#) or NHS England.

Training costs

The training costs of the apprenticeship are covered by the Apprenticeship Levy. The levy applies to employers in England, who have an annual pay bill above £3m. The levy is charged at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's pay bill.

Apprenticeship levy can only be used to fund eligible training costs. It cannot be used to fund salaries. [Read the apprenticeship funding rules](#) for full details of what you can and can't pay for using apprenticeship levy.



Apprentice salary



As the employer you will need to cover the costs of the apprentice's wages. Find out more about [How to Fund the Salary of Apprentices](#) here.

There may be instances in 2024/25 where some apprenticeships will attract NHSE Training grants through METIP (Multi-professional Education and Training Investment Plan). Speak to your regional NHSE teams to understand regional funding for apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship qualifications

Before recruiting an apprentice, you will need to identify a suitable apprenticeship standard and your organisation's apprenticeship lead can support you to select the correct qualification.

Apprenticeships are available in a range of subjects including, clinical apprenticeships such as nursing, advanced clinical practice, adult care worker, radiography and non-clinical apprenticeships such as senior leadership, clinical coding and facilities management.

There are over 90 Health and Care Apprenticeships to choose from, you can explore them [HERE](#).



Upskilling existing staff

An individual can undertake an apprenticeship at the same level as, or at a lower level than, a qualification they already hold, if the apprenticeship will allow the individual to acquire substantive new skills.

Off the job Training

To enable apprentices to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) needed to be competent in their job, they need time to undertake training and education, this is called “off the job training”.

Full-time apprentices should do a minimum of six hours ‘off the job’ training a week. Part-time apprentices ‘off the job’ training hours may vary but should make up at least 20% of their working hours. ‘Off the job’ training should take place during regular working hours.



Off the job training can take place in different locations, including:

- college
- university
- place of work
- training provider’s premises

Off the job training could include:

- lectures
- role playing and simulation exercises
- online learning
- practical training such as shadowing and mentoring
- time spent on writing assignments and projects

Providing learning opportunities in the workplace

The apprentice's job role must provide them with the opportunity to gain the necessary skills, knowledge and behaviours required to complete their apprenticeship successfully, you should consider the activities they undertake whilst they are in the workplace, so they have the opportunity to test out and practice their new skills.



Mentor requirements

Apprentices may need some additional support, however, if planned right from the outset, you can minimise the impact this has on team resources. It is best practice to assign apprentices with a named mentor; mentoring or supervising apprentices also provides a development opportunity for existing staff.

Selecting a training provider



An approved training provider is required to deliver the training for the apprenticeship. The role of the training provider is to work in partnership with you to develop and deliver an apprenticeship programme that meets your needs.

Your organisation's apprenticeship lead or primary care training hub can support you to select a training provider, as it is likely they will have already procured or know a good quality training provider for the programme.

Eligibility Criteria



There are some eligibility criteria that apply to all apprenticeships, for example:

- An apprentice must be aged 16 years or over.
- They must have the right to work in the UK and have been a resident in the UK for three years or more.
- Learners in the UK on a visa will need to ensure that the visa covers them for the duration of the apprenticeship.

Some apprenticeship programmes have additional entry criteria, such as the need to evidence GCSE Maths and English (or equivalent). Speak to your organisation's apprenticeship lead and your training provider about specific entry criteria.

English and Maths Functional Skills

English and Maths are a mandatory element of all apprenticeships.

- For level 2 Apprenticeships, apprentices must achieve level 1 English and maths (similar to a GCSE at grade D to G).
- For level 3 to 7 apprenticeships, apprentices must achieve level 2 English and maths (similar to a GCSE at grade A* to C).
- For those with an education, health and care plan or a legacy statement the apprenticeships English and maths minimum requirement is Entry Level 3 (below GCSE level) and British Sign Language qualification are an alternative to English qualifications for whom this is their primary language

Staff aspiring to take on future apprenticeship opportunities may worry they won't be accepted onto the course if they don't have the level of English and Maths required. They can access support either internally from your organisation's learning and development department or through [**NHSEs funded English and Maths support offer.**](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/)



Apprenticeships - employer implementation flowchart

The pathway below shows the steps to implement apprenticeships in your organisation

**Please note this is an example pathway and is provided for guidance only, these steps may occur in a different order or not be relevant to your organisation.*

Step 1

Explore the benefits of apprenticeships

Apprenticeships can help to create a sustainable career pathway within your organisation.

Find out more about Healthcare Apprenticeships [HERE](#)

Step 2

Select an education provider

Liaise with your trust's apprenticeship lead to select your training provider. Consider the course content and the release time.

NHSE have facilitated a national procurement framework in partnership with Salisbury. To find out more about contact - simon.dennis@nhs.net

Step 3

Identify and recruit learners

Advertise your apprenticeship vacancy, you could recruit from internal applicants, or you might want to consider targeting school or college leavers.

Your training provider may also jointly interview your potential apprentice to ensure they meet all the entry requirements.

Step 4

Build your business case

Apprenticeship levy will pay for the tuition costs of the apprenticeship, but you need to consider how you will fund your apprentice's salary as they train. For example, you could: Recruit to a vacancy, pay the apprentice annex 21 and utilise the remaining salary costs for backfill.

or
Develop a board business case for rolling training posts.

Step 5

Entry criteria

Potential apprentices may have to evidence Math and English at grade C/4 or above or functional skills Level 2 before they can start the apprenticeship.

There may also be additional entry criteria specific to your training, make sure you speak to them about their entry criteria.

Step 6

Access Apprenticeship Levy

[Apprenticeship Levy](#) funds the cost of the apprentice training. Speak to your organisation's apprenticeship lead who will be able to advise about apprenticeship levy.

If your organisation doesn't pay apprenticeship levy you can access either a [levy transfer](#) or a [reservation](#).

Step 7

Start!

The learner starts their apprenticeship!

Step 8

Supporting your apprentice

Provide ongoing support for the apprentice: including, helping the new apprentices to adjust to the workplace, nominating a member of the team to be the apprentice's mentor, planning workload to provide the necessary opportunities to complete practical tasks in line with training goals. Also build in time for the apprentice to receive regular assessment / workplace reviews by the training provider.