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| Developing the Physician Associate workforce: apprenticeship funding initiative 2023/24 |
| Implementation Guidance for Employers |
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# Introduction

To support meeting challenges in the Physician Associate (PA) workforce and to promote the tangible benefits apprenticeships bring to the NHS, NHS England is proposing to offer training grants in 2023/24 for employers to develop PA apprenticeships.

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 standard or framework.

Apprenticeships bring several tangible benefits to NHS and other organisations they can create skilled, motivated and qualified employees and, if used properly, can help to address skills shortages across the workforce.

PA apprentices undertake a 30-36 month education programme, working towards becoming a PA with an award of Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) or Master of Science (MSc) in Physician Associate Studies, Masters in Physician Associate Studies (MPAS) or MSc Physician Associate.

The PA apprenticeship combines work-based and academic learning between the employer and a Higher Education Institute (HEI) that is approved to deliver PA programmes and is also a Registered Apprenticeship Training Provider.

Apprentices will require access to on-the job opportunities to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to complete the requirements of their course. They will also need allocated protected ‘off-the-job' learning time (around 40-50%) to attend academic study, complete assignments and undertake internal and external placements that offer further off-the-job learning opportunities.

PA apprentices need to meet the [postgraduate degree programme entry requirements](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023.03.15-HEI-entry-criteria.pdf). They may be new graduates, or staff identified within the existing workforce or embarking on second careers.

# Funding offer

**Please note** - The below mentioned funding grants are subject to approval of NHS England budgets and the data being gathered via this survey will be used to assess the level of demand for apprenticeships that will be used to develop the PA workforce. Demand data will be collated and shared with the Regional NHS England PA workforce teams and [Talent for Care Regional Apprenticeship Relationship Managers.](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/web-resources/#resourceMeet-the-Team)

**Neither you (the employer), nor NHS England, are committing to anything at this point in time. Employers are advised to wait for confirmation from NHS England as to which training posts will be awarded funding before enrolling apprentices on programme**.

To help grow and transform the PA workforce, NHS England are offering a limited number of training support grants to employers (including NHS trusts and primary care organisations) of £10,000 per apprentice starting in 2023/24 on a Physican Associate Degree Apprenticeship (level 7) programme.

The overarching aims of the offer are to:

* Support NHS organisations (employers) to develop the PA workforce and develop the pipeline of individuals along the PA career pathway
* Support existing staff to develop by moving into a PA apprentice role
* Grow the number of PAs generally and support the integration of the PA role within primary care and mental health settings; helping to develop and sustain multidisciplinary workforce models
* Increase access to and provide new routes into the PA profession through supporting the apprenticeship pathways
* Provide resources to employers to invest in educational infrastructure to support PA apprentices which can be sustained locally for future apprentices

This proposed support, would be paid in the current financial year (2023/24) by the regional workforce team.

The grant could be used by employers (in addition to the apprenticeship levy – either directly or through a levy transfer arrangement) to support and facilitate their trainees completing a recognised apprenticeship training programme. The training grant is to support trainees commencing the programme within this current financial year and this NHS England funding must be expended in the financial year 2023/24.

Salary support for PA apprentices in primary care is available through the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS). More details on funding PA apprentices in primary care can be found here [Introducing PAs into Primary Care](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023.05.27-PA-App-Primary-Care-Infographic-FINAL.pdf) and here [PAs in primary care pathway factsheet](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023.05.17-Physician-Associates-in-Primary-Care-Pathway-FINAL.pdf).

# EOI process

Recruitment to this funding initiative will be co-ordinated by NHSE Regional PA Workforce Leads, working with Talent for Care Regional Apprenticeship Relationship Managers. The NHSE Regional PA Workforce Leads will collate expressions of interest against the available offer.

**Employers should submit their expressions of interest via this national online survey –**

[**https://healtheducationyh.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/developing-the-pa-workforce-apprenticeship-initiative-202**](https://healtheducationyh.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/developing-the-pa-workforce-apprenticeship-initiative-202)

**The expression of Interest survey will open on the 14th June 2023 and close at 6pm on 14th July 2023.**

**Please note** that neither you (the employer), nor NHS England, are committing to anything at this point in time. Employers are advised to wait for confirmation from NHS England as to which training posts will be awarded funding before enrolling candidates on programme.

**Employers will be contacted at the earliest opportunity to confirm whether your EOI will be supported and, where necessary, informed of next steps in the process.**

# Procurement

To support this project NHS England and Salisbury NHS procurement have undertaken a national procurement process to identify education providers to deliver the PA apprenticeship.

This service is managed and owned by Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust and aims to deliver a range of support for employers to increase their uptake of apprenticeships.

There is no requirement for employers to use this framework, as some employers may have already run their own procurement. This framework is designed to enable those who haven’t already procured (or who want to contract new providers) to do so with minimum effort. **If you wish to use the framework, please contact Sft.commercial@nhs.net**

# Course providers

**Please see** [**course provider list**](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/physician-associate-pa-apprenticeship-faq#programme-providers--course--contact-details) **for full details of PA apprenticeship training providers, including contact information, programme structure and recruitment/intake timelines.**

You can also contact your [Talent for Care Regional Apprenticeship Relationship Manager](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/web-resources/#resourceMeet-the-Team) for local information about PA apprenticeship providers.

The table below shows the ten providers approved to deliver the PA apprenticeship and their planned start dates. This employer grant is only applicable to those programmes commencing in 2023/24, as indicated below.

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| **Proposed****Start Date** | **Provider**  | **Delivery** *Regions given are delivery locations for physical delivery elements, not regional awards* |
| Sept 2023 | Keele University | **National**  |   **This 2023/24 employer grant can be provided for these programmes**\*Start date may be later - tbc with HEI |
| Sept 2023 | University of Greenwich | **Regional**(South East and London) |
| Jan 2024\* | University of East London | **Regional** (London) |
| Jan 2024\* | Queen Mary, University of London | **Regional** (London) |
| Jan 2024 | University of Plymouth | **National**  |
| Sept 2024 | University of Central Lancashire | **Regional**(North West) |  This grant cannot be claimed for these programmes – please await details of any available 2024/25 funding |
| Sept 2024 | University of Derby | **National**  |
| Sept 2024 | Edge Hill University | **Regional\*\*** (North West) |
| Sept 2024 | University of Worcester | **Regional** (Midlands) |
| March 2025  | Sheffield Hallam University | **Regional** (North East & YH) |

# FAQs and further information

**When do learners need to start an apprenticeship to be eligible for the grant?**

The grant is available for apprenticeship programmes that start in the financial year 2023/24 (April 2023 – March 2024).

**How does my organisation apply for the grant/s?**

The Regional PA Workforce Leads will collate expressions of interest against the available offer. Employers should submit their expressions of interest via this national online survey – [**https://healtheducationyh.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/developing-the-pa-workforce-apprenticeship-initiative-202**](https://healtheducationyh.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/developing-the-pa-workforce-apprenticeship-initiative-202)

**If I Submit an EOI will my organisation be guaranteed the funding?**

No, neither you (the employer), nor NHS England, are committing to anything at this point in time, this is an expression of interest phase. Employers are advised to wait for confirmation from NHS England as to which training posts will be awarded funding before enrolling candidates on programme on the basis of the funding.

**Will there be the opportunity to request further funded apprenticeships?**

Should there be additional funding mid-year, we will reopen the EOI again for additional requests. In addition, whilst this offer is currently for 2023/24 only, NHS England has included within the spending review bid a further bid to expand this offer through to 24/25. This is however subject to confirmation through the spending review process.

**When will I hear about the outcome of my EOI?**

Employers will be contacted at the earliest opportunity to confirm whether your EOI will be supported and, where necessary, informed of next steps in the process.

**What are the entry criteria for learners?**

See [programme entry requirements.](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023.03.15-HEI-entry-criteria.pdf) Where clarification is needed we advise that employers use the [course provider list](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/physician-associate-pa-apprenticeship-faq#programme-providers--course--contact-details) and speak to universities in detail about their individual entry criteria.

**How much are the course fees?**

Apprenticeship course fees are funded via the apprenticeship levy. The course fees payable to education providers for the PA degree apprenticeship are set nationally at a maximum of £17,000

**How do I access apprenticeship levy to pay for the course fees?**

There are three ways to access funding to pay for apprenticeship training. This funding does not cover salary costs; you will have to fund the apprentice’s salary.

Primary care employers can access the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) to support salary costs of PA apprentices. See [funding PAs in primary care overview](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/physician-associate-pa-apprenticeship-faq#primary-care-funding---employer-resources)

1. **Apprenticeship Levy** Employers with a pay bill over £3 million each year pay the apprenticeship levy. Levy-paying employers can spend their apprenticeship levy funding on apprenticeship training

2. **Reserve government co-investment** If you don’t pay the apprenticeship levy you can reserve funding, where the government pays 95% of the training costs and the employer pays the remaining 5%

3. **Levy Transfers** Levy-paying employers can transfer some of their annual levy to other employers. These transfers cover 100% of the training costs of the apprenticeship (you still need to cover salary)

**Can apprentices spend their time across several sites?**

There are many benefits to exposing apprentices to several sites and experiences, provided appropriate supervision requirements are in place. Apprentices will require time on a range of placements within different parts of the healthcare system to meet programme requirements.

It is expected that employers develop and sustain effective relationships with other organisations within their integrated care system (ICS), and possibly beyond, to effectively utilise local placement capacity. Ideally this will include reciprocal placement arrangements between organisations.

**How many hours will the apprentice work per week?**

For the 30-36 month PA apprenticeship programmes it is advised that apprentices are employed 37.5 hrs per week (of which 20% will be ‘off the job’ training to include study and tasks related to their development).

Part time staff can undertake the apprenticeship. If an apprentice works less than fulltime the apprenticeship duration will be extended accordingly. This will need to be arranged with the course provider.

**What activities is the apprentice expected to be involved in?**

Apprentices will undertake a range of activities dependent on the learning environment in which they work, their knowledge and skills, and their competence and confidence. Activities should allow them to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standard and link to the agreed learning outcomes as agreed in the learning plan.

**Can I use apprenticeship levy to pay for my apprentices’ salary?**

Apprenticeship levy, reservations and transfers do not cover salary costs your organisation will need to fund the apprentice’s salary. Primary care employers can access the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) to support salary costs of PA apprentices. See [funding PAs in primary care overview](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/physician-associate-pa-apprenticeship-faq#primary-care-funding---employer-resources)

**What does “off-the-job training” mean?**

Off-the-job training is a statutory requirement for an apprenticeship. It is training, which is received by the apprentice, during the apprentice’s normal working hours for the purpose of achieving the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the approved apprenticeship referenced in the apprenticeship agreement.

# Contact details

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| **Region** | **Regional PA Workforce team contact** | **Regional Apprenticeship Relationship Manager** |
| East of England | Mark Bullockmark.bullock@hee.nhs.uk | Oliver Inwards oliver.inwards@hee.nhs.uk |
| London | PALondon@hee.nhs.uk | Jennie Stone jennifer.stone@hee.nhs.uk |
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