

Level 7 Apprenticeship Fund

May 2026

1. Introduction

This guide sets out how the Level 7 Apprenticeship Fund will mitigate the loss of access to the Growth and Skills Levy (previously referred to as the apprenticeship levy) for five specific level 7 apprenticeships and its delivery through the NHS Education Funding Agreement.

2. Level 7 Apprenticeship Fund

Eligible employers can apply to the fund to sustain provision of the five specific health and social care apprenticeships. Funding will be capped with funding distribution taking account of workforce needs, higher education institution (HEI) capacity and 10 Year Health Plan priorities.

Eligible employers

The following employers may apply for a grant from the Level 7 Apprenticeship Fund:

- Integrated care boards
- NHS trusts
- Independent and/or charitable organisations contracted to provide NHS services or any other providers of NHS services
- Public health services including local authorities
- Primary care organisations
- Integrated health and social care organisations.

To be eligible to receive funding, these employers must also:

- have entered into a fully executed NHS Education Funding Agreement, signed by both the employer and NHS England
- confirm in writing that sufficient placement and education provider capacity exists in the system
- confirm in writing that apprenticeships complement wider plans for the local system
- not be in receipt of other funding for tuition fees in respect of the apprenticeships for which funding is being sought
- agree to share start data with NHS England in financial monitoring returns.

Applicable apprenticeships

Funding is available for apprenticeships in the following professions:

Profession	Maximum funding amount per apprentice
Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP)*	£12,000
Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN)**	£12,000
Community Specialist Practice Qualification (SPQ)***	£14,000
Clinical Associate in Psychology (CAP)	£16,000
Health and Care Intelligence Specialist (HCIS)	£17,000

*Advanced Clinical Practitioner includes small and vulnerable professions such as podiatry and orthoptics.

**Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN) includes health visiting, school nursing and occupational health nursing.

***Community Specialist Practice Qualification (SPQ) includes community children's nursing, community learning disability nursing, district nursing and SPQ general practice nursing.

Eligible individual

An eligible individual is defined as a level 7 apprentice who is:

- undertaking an apprenticeship in one of the five identified professions where the learning is being delivered by an approved HEI
- aged 22 or over but is not a care leaver under 25 years
- not in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The following individuals are not eligible because employers will be able to access apprenticeship levy in relation to their apprenticeship:

- young people aged 16 to 21, and for care leavers or those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who are under 25 at the start of their apprenticeship in England
- any apprentice who started a level 7 apprenticeship before 1 January 2026.

Advanced clinical practitioner (ACP)

In most regions, organisations should engage with their NHS England regional ACP lead to access ACP apprenticeship mitigation funding. ACP demand scoping will be conducted via their organisational ACP lead and meet all their usual eligibility criteria. This is in addition to the eligibility criteria for all apprenticeships in this programme which is outlined below.

3. Roles and responsibilities

NHS England will:


- provide relationship management, policy oversight, sharing of best practice, advice and guidance via the national apprenticeship team
- ensure regional apprenticeship leads work with regional professional leads to co-ordinate the expression of interest (EOI) process
- enable effective communications to colleagues across the system and work with stakeholders to implement, monitor and evaluate the programme
- facilitate payment through the NHS Education Funding Agreement held between NHS England and eligible employers as set out in Schedule Two (Funding) of the NHS Education Funding Guide.

Eligible employers will:

- identify potential apprentices for applicable level 7 apprenticeships programmes
- ensure identified apprentices meet the eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 2
- work with their chosen HEI(s) to ensure delivery of the apprenticeship training and ensure there is sufficient placement capacity
- provide NHS England with the information and data needed to monitor and evaluate progress against the aims of the Level 7 Apprenticeship Fund if requested (in the case of local authorities, this may be co-ordinated through the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) regional teams).
- not be in receipt of other funding for tuition fees in respect of the apprenticeships for which funding is being sought.

4. Funding availability and allocation

Funding per apprentice will be made available to successful employers via the NHS Funding Agreement between NHS England and the employer.



Funding will be available for apprentices who start courses from 1 January 2026 up to 31 March 2029. Any apprentices starting during this window will be funded for all years of their course.

To access the funding, employers must detail the number of apprentices for whom funding is requested and the expected and/or proposed start date for each apprentice.

An expression of interest process was undertaken for the funding period 1 January 2026-31 March 2027 to ensure national and regional distribution was aligned across integrated care boards and local authorities, based on the eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 2, individual employer workforce needs and HEI capacity and the extent to which the proposed allocation:

- supports the government's commitment to social mobility and ensures the NHS recruits from the communities it serves
- prioritises funding for working class, coastal and rural communities and
- prioritises funding that supports the move towards a neighbourhood health model and prevention.

The employer must identify an eligible employee to become the apprentice for Year 1 and a confirmed HEI place to access funding. Employers must submit indicative numbers for years 2 and 3 in line with process communicated. Planning for future years will follow the usual process.

5. Payment

Funding will be paid as a training grant through the NHS Education Funding Agreement held between NHS England and eligible employers as set out in Schedule Two (Funding) of the NHS Education Funding Guide.

Payments to NHS Trusts will be made by including them on the Finance and Activity Payment schedules (F & AP). Payments to other employers will be made by invoicing and the raising of purchase orders.

Employers must identify an eligible employee to become the apprentice for Year 1 and a confirmed health education provider place to access funding. Employers must submit indicative numbers for years 2 and 3 in line with the process communicated. Planning for future years will follow the usual process.


6. Use of the Level 7 Apprenticeship Fund

The Level 7 Apprenticeship Fund is ringfenced to the identified number of applicable level 7 apprenticeships set out in section 2 with some flexibility based on workforce needs and other priority occupations should they come into scope.

Typically divided by year of apprenticeship education programme, the funding can be used to support employer costs that are payable to the HEI. For example, the total training cost for one level 7 Advanced Clinical Practitioner apprentice is £4,000 a year, which is £12,000 in total when delivered over 36 months.

7. Reporting requirements

Anonymous demographic data and information is covered by a data sharing agreement between the Department for Education and DHSC. This allows NHS England to monitor activity without additional reporting requirements placed on employers.



However, employers in receipt of funding will be required to confirm that the funding has been spent on activity related to the creation of level 7 apprenticeships in the eligible professions.

Employers will be required to provide the following information in line with existing arrangements:

- the start and end dates of their apprenticeship programme and the name of the HEI involved
- confirmation that these meet the defined eligibility criteria in paragraph 2
- planned versus actual starts

8. Managing risk of fraud

Employers must:

- maintain a sound system of internal financial controls
- ensure appropriate measures are in place to mitigate against the risk of fraud
- assure themselves that they are legitimate recipients of this funding
- as far as possible, put measures in place to ensure this funding is not used to support activity that has been funded by an alternative source of public funding.

If an employer has any grounds for suspecting financial irregularity, it should notify NHS England immediately, explain what steps are being taken to investigate and keep NHS England informed about the progress of the investigation.

For the purposes of interpretation, 'financial irregularity' includes fraud or other impropriety, mismanagement, and the use of a grant for purposes other than those for which it was provided.

9. Associated documents

NHS 10 Year Health Plan, 2025. Department for Health and Social Care.
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future>)

Apprenticeship funding rules, 2025. Department for Education.
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules#to-2026-rules>)

Appendix A: Questions and answers

Purpose and scope of funding

Q1: Can the funding be used to pay for the non-apprenticeship route if available?

No. The funding is to be used to pay the education cost of the level 7 apprenticeship that would have previously been funded by the Growth and Skills Levy. NHS England wants to preserve the apprenticeship brand and quality measures.

Q2: Is funding available for any other level 7 apprenticeships (for example, Senior Leader)?

No. This funding package is only for the five agreed level 7 apprenticeship standards. This will be reviewed during the first year of funding and there may be some flexibility based on workforce needs and other priority occupations should they come into scope in future years.

Q3: How much funding is available per apprentice?

Funding is designed to replace what would have been covered by the Growth and Skills Levy. For example, a level 7 Advanced Clinical Practitioner apprenticeship typically costs £12,000 delivered over 36 months, equating to approximately £4,000 per year.

Q4: Can the funding be used for existing apprentices or only new starts?

The funding is designed for new apprenticeship starts. Existing apprenticeships will continue to be funded through the Growth and Skills Levy (where employers remain eligible to use it).

Funding period, duration and limits

Q5: Is the proposed funding for the financial year or academic year?

The funding will be aligned to the following financial years:

- April 2026-March 2027
- April 2027-March 2028
- April 2028-March 2029

Q6: Will funding be available for apprenticeships that start within the second or third year of funding but finish after March 2029?

Funding will be available for apprentices who start courses from 1 January 2026 up to 31 March 2029. Any apprentice starting during this window will be funded for the full duration of their course, even if it finishes after March 2029.

Q7: Is there a cap on the overall number of apprenticeships funded?

The funding is capped based on an aggregated figure of indicative apprenticeship starts data for the five apprenticeship standards in the 2023/24 academic year. The expression of interest (EOI) process then balanced employer demand against HEI capacity to allocate places fairly.

Employer recruitment and expressions of interest

Q8: How will the expressions of interest work for Year 2 and Year 3?

Our priority is to get the Year 1 funding mobilised, but we will confirm the processes for future years in due course.

Q9: Can employers now recruit to the numbers confirmed in their expression of interest?

Yes, we encourage all employers to work with their chosen HEI to enrol eligible apprentices for Year 1.

What the funding covers (and what it doesn't)

Q10: Does this funding include salary support?

No. This funding is to cover the education costs of the apprenticeship previously covered by the Growth and Skills Levy. Wider funding arrangements for these programmes will continue as per existing arrangements.

Where a regional funding model for any of the five apprenticeship programmes includes funding over and above tuition, NHS England will extend the regional funding offer to include the same offer for all starts in that region (up to the agreed 2023/24 intake numbers).

For regions where there is currently no additional funding offer for these programmes, the existing local arrangements will continue to apply. Further information is available on the [NHS England website](#).

Q11: Will additional funding currently available from NHS England for these roles through the Education Training and Activity Plan (ETAP) continue?

Employers should confirm with their regular NHS England contact.

Q12: There is additional funding available from NHS England for these roles via ETAP. Will this continue?

Employers should confirm with their regular NHS England contact.

Eligible apprentices and personal eligibility criteria

Q13: Are there any age restrictions for this funding?

Yes. This funding is only available for apprentices no longer eligible for levy funding. This means that the Level 7 Apprenticeship Fund will not be available for young people aged 16 to 21, and for care leavers or those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who are under 25 at the start of their apprenticeship in England.

ACPs: In most regions, organisations should engage with their NHS England regional ACP lead to access ACP apprenticeship mitigation funding. ACP demand scoping will be conducted via their organisational ACP lead and meet all their usual eligibility criteria.

Q14: Do the same apprenticeship eligibility criteria apply to those funded by this route in relation to visas?

Yes. All apprentices must have a visa valid for the duration of their apprenticeship programme as they do now. The national apprenticeship team continues to discuss this issue with the Department for Education.

Eligible apprenticeships and programmes

Q15: If the HEI delivers an accelerated programme, how does the funding work?

If the full course content is being delivered in a shortened time and not reduced due to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), then the full funding band will be paid accordingly to meet the new duration. Employers should confirm arrangements with their regular NHS England contact. Further guidance on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will be provided in due course.

Providers

Q16: Which apprenticeship providers can we use to deliver the five apprenticeships?

Any apprenticeship provider on the Salisbury Procurement Framework for the Provision of Apprenticeship Training and End Point Assessment Services. We encourage you to continue existing arrangements using this new funding mechanism. Currently only JGA Group deliver the Level 7 Health and Care Information Specialist. A full list of L7 apprenticeship providers can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/employers-find-apprenticeship-training>

Q17: What about the HEIs who have already closed their level 7 apprenticeship programmes due to the changes to Growth and Skills Levy funding and eligibility?

The funding package has been very well received nationally by HEIs, and many programmes that were at risk can enrol starts from September 2026 onwards. A full list of level 7 apprenticeship providers can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/employers-find-apprenticeship-training>.

Funding flow, payments and administration

Q18: How will the funding flow?

Employers should confirm arrangements with their regular NHS England contact. It is anticipated that NHS England will make the payment to the employer through a training grant under the NHS Education Funding Agreement. The HEI will invoice as per co-investment models with a new code 99 unfunded learner. This new code is in place on the Apprenticeship Service account for 100% funded apprenticeships.

Q.19: I am an employer without an Education Funding Agreement in place with NHS England but understand I need one to access funding. What should I do?

In the first instance, please go to the NHS England commissioning and/or professional lead in your locality.

Q20: How should the 'privately funded apprenticeship' be entered onto the Apprenticeship Service?

The apprentice should be entered as normal on the Apprenticeship Service account and ILR as per levy funded apprentices. DfE have released additional guidance here:

[Privately funded apprenticeships: rules and guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Q21: Will the funding be sent on a 1 by 1 basis as starts are confirmed?

No. Employers will be expected to identify their workforce needs for Y1, Y2 and Y3 through the EOI process. And an eligible apprentice needs to be identified before the funding is confirmed. We will then confirm the payment schedule.



Change in circumstances

Q22: If an apprentice withdraws from the programme, will the funding need to be repaid?

No. The amount already claimed would not need to be repaid. However, we will stop future payments for people who have withdrawn from the programme. We encourage employers to ensure commitment to complete the apprenticeship is obtained at enrolment and, depending on the individual circumstances, to consider whether a break in learning would be a better option. The employer can withdraw the apprentice on the ILR (Individual Learner Record) and the apprenticeship AS (Apprenticeship Service) account. Employers who have previously employed apprentices will be familiar with this process.

Advice and support

Q23: Who do we contact if we have any further questions?

Your regional NHS England Apprenticeship Lead, NHS England Professional Lead, or email: england.nhsapprenticeships@nhs.net