

Nursing Associate Apprenticeship FAQs for Trainee Nursing Associates, Employers & Educators



What is a Nursing Associate?

The Nursing Associate is a new regulated nursing role developed to support the Registered Nurse; currently the role is only in England.

The role was developed following the Shape of Caring Review (HEE, 2015) to fill an identified gap in care delivery between the graduate registered nurse and the health care support worker (HCSW/HCA). Further information can be found on the HEE and NHS Employers websites:

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/nursing-associates>

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/shape-caring-review>

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/nursing-associate>

The first Trainee Nursing Associates (TNAs) began training in January 2017.

The two-year training programme is at foundation degree level and incorporates theory for the TNAs to apply to clinical practice. The training enables TNAs to come together as a diverse group of adult learners from a variety of different health, social and voluntary care organisations including mental health, acute trusts, community settings, nursing homes, hospices and GP practices. Nursing Associates are registered and regulated by the Nursing & Midwifery Council.

The Aims of the role

The aims of the role are to support the career progression of HCSWs/HCA's and to increase the capacity and capability of the nursing workforce by ensuring that the right person with the right level of skills and education is delivering the right care to the patient.

What qualifications are needed to apply for the Nursing Associate programme?

To apply to become a Nursing Associate, the minimum entry requirements for the chosen Higher Education Institution/university (HEI) must be met, please confirm with the chosen HEI as they may differ from one organisation to another. The employer must be assured that the candidate is capable of the academic learning required and that they possess the values and behaviours to become a Nursing Associate. It is important that the candidate is sufficiently prepared and understands the requirements of the programme and is committed to complete a foundation degree alongside completing the apprenticeship. Usually an up-to-date enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Certificate is required that will be effective across all areas.

The apprenticeship minimum entry requirements are:

Level 2 functional skills in English and math or GCE/GCSE English and Math (Grade C or above) or equivalent, evidence of this must be provided. Intermediate IT skills are also required

Providing math and English requirements can be evidenced (plus any additional requirements specified by the HEI) the candidate is invited to a values-based interview which will be conducted jointly by the employer and education provider to ensure shared entry criteria are met.

What are the core requirements of the programme?

From 26th July 2019 all new programmes must be NMC approved and meet the NMC standards

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/education-standards/nursing-associates-proficiency-standards.pdf>

All trainee Nursing Associates must meet the following:

- To be in, ideally full time, employment (minimum 30 hours). Apprenticeship rules state that no element of the programme may be undertaken in the learner's own time.

- To evidence 2300 hours of learning, divided equally between theory and practice; this includes theory, clinical practice and alternative placements. Alternative placements patterns may vary and need to be confirmed with the HEI; although placements are primarily the responsibility of the employer to arrange, some HEIs/partnerships have agreed to facilitate on behalf of the employer.
- To include practice learning opportunities to a diverse range of people, across the lifespan and in a variety of settings.
- The trainee will need an NMC registered practitioner as an assessor to support them throughout the training. Registered supervisors may also be involved in supporting trainees.
- Be prepared to enter a profession that will be regulated by the NMC

The NA role is at foundation degree level and may provide an opportunity for further development including to Registered Nurse (adult, child, mental health or LD) should this be identified in the individual's personal development plan.

What are Local Nursing Associate Partnerships?

Following HEE's announcement in 2016 to pilot the nursing associate role, test site partnerships were required across Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STP) or Integrated Care Systems (ICS).

All partnerships required at least one education provider and had to identify all organisations which would be employing and/or providing placements for the Trainee Nursing Associates

The aim of the partnerships was to ensure development and delivery of high quality and innovative programmes of education and training for Trainee Nursing Associates. The partnerships should generate learning and good practice around the introduction of this new role and enable the TNAs to practice across a variety of settings.

Following NMC approval it is no longer an essential requirement to join a partnership, but this may be beneficial in providing support to overcome challenges, share good practice and work collaboratively to meet placement requirements. Employers may approach their local HEI direct for advice and guidance if this is their preference.

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a work-based learning programme combining both on-the-job training alongside academic study. The HCA/HCSW is now employed as a Trainee Nursing Associate Apprentice, a different role:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/nursingassociates>

The apprenticeship standards can be found here:

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/nursing-associate-nmc-2018/>

<https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/>

Government guidelines here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nursing-degree-apprenticeships-factsheet/nursing-degree-apprenticeship-factsheet>

Funding

Who will pay for the cost of the training (apprenticeship route)?

If the programme is delivered via an apprenticeship route, it is work based and employer led.

Larger organisations pay into a digital levy account and the programme would be funded through employers via their apprenticeship levy account.

For small and medium sized employers, that do not pay into the digital levy account, 95% of the training may be funded. The total cost of the programme is £15,000 per trainee and so small/medium employers would pay the remaining 5% (£750). This relies on the HEI having non-levy places available and being registered to accept non-levy payers. Alternatively levy transfers may be an option and would cover 100% of the fees, these would need to be arranged on an individual basis.

N.B: Some HEIs are approved by the NMC to deliver self-funded TNA programmes, these would be paid for via the student loan system. These should become more readily available as the role becomes more well-known.

Is there any funding available to support employers?

There are two funding streams with an enhanced offer to support trainees that spend at least 50% of the programme in a Learning Disabilities setting

Standard funding offer – The present funding per Trainee Nursing Associate is £8,000 in total, paid in installments over the 2 years, this is to support both the trainee e.g. travel expenses, uniforms, IT equipment and the nursing workforce development more broadly. There is an anticipation that it will help to prepare the workforce for the deployment of nursing associates.

Enhanced Learning Disabilities offer - For those trainees who can evidence that they spend 50% of their time, while on programme, in a Learning Disabilities setting the total package of funding is £7,900 per annum and can be used to support the release of staff.

Expectations from HEE – the funding supports the implementation and development of the Nursing Associate role; HEE may require interaction with TNA employers in relation to data returns and quality assurance of the programme.

Apprenticeship Levy – this should be accessed to fund course fees, where apprentice levy is not paid by the employer, and all non-levy places at the HEI have been utilised, it may be possible to arrange a levy transfer via the HEE apprenticeship team.

How are the funds paid?

Details will be given on commencement of the programme. The funding is paid in instalments on receipt of invoice directly to the employer. For employers that are not signed up to the local HEE learning and development agreement (LDA) a contract will need to be raised and signed to enable access to the funding

Is the funding dependant on a Nursing Associate role being available at the end of the apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship rules require that the qualified NA should be able to put their new skills into practice in an immediate job or future career. It is desirable and anticipated that a Nursing Associate job is available at the end of the training, but not essential, and nationally other employment opportunities should become available.

Question	Answer
Will an assessor be required in the primary workplace?	A named assessor will be needed to oversee clinical work and contribute to supervision reports. They will manage progress, as well as providing additional support if required. They may need to be involved in organisation of placements, depending on the HEI. The assessor needs to be an NMC registrant; registered supervisors may also be involved.
What is the shift pattern during training?	During the programme the TNA will be expected to work the shift pattern of the clinical area where working or on placement.
When can holidays be taken?	Holidays may be restricted during the two-year programme, this will need to be confirmed with the HEI of choice, HEIs would expect attendance at all formal teaching days.
What happens if there is a need to step off the programme?	This may be an option in exceptional circumstances but would have to be negotiated with the employer and the HEI. As this is an ongoing programme there should be the opportunity to rejoin a future cohort.
Can part time workers apply?	Due to the 2300 practice hours required, Trainee Nursing Associates need to ideally work full time (30 hours per week minimum). This will enable the programme to be completed in the 2-year timeframe. Individual HEIs need to be approached to understand whether they are taking applications from part time staff and what the minimum number of hours would be. (Please remember no element of the programme can be undertaken in the TNAs own time if it is delivered as an apprenticeship)
Is there a minimum/maximum age to apply for the programme?	There is no minimum or maximum age for study, however most employers would usually require trainees to be at least 18 years of age to support within the clinical workplace.

The applicant works in healthcare, but not in a clinical role. Can they apply?	Yes, they can apply if they have the required qualifications and the support of your organisation. However, once employed as a trainee nursing associate apprentice they must be in a clinical role. Alternatively, they can search for any Trainee Nursing Associate apprenticeship vacancies with other organisations and apply for those.
The applicant already has a degree level qualification.	This would need to be discussed on an individual basis with the HEI, although apprenticeship rules require the studying of significantly new learning having a degree does not necessarily exclude applicants
How are placements organised?	<p>This varies depending on the HEI but as the programme is delivered via an apprenticeship the organisation of the placements is primarily the responsibility of the employer unless the HEI has agreed to facilitate.</p> <p>However, the partnerships should have encouraged a local agreement of support around placement provision from the partners. It is envisaged that this provision will be reciprocal in nature, with out of hospital placements being offered to TNAs working primarily in the hospital setting and vice-versa.</p>
What qualification will I receive?	A Regulated Level 5 Foundation Degree
Is the nursing associate role regulated?	<p>Yes, the Nursing Associate role is registered and regulated by the NMC.</p> <p>Nursing Associates need to pay the annual NMC fee, work within the NMC Code of Conduct for Nurses, Midwives & Nursing Associates and undertake revalidation every 3 years, this will include demonstrating evidence of elements of practice including practice hours/CPD/reflective practice/feedback.</p> <p>https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/nmc-publications/nmc-code.pdf</p>

Is there a National Job Description for the Nursing Associate?

As for registered nurses there is no national job description, as the scope of the role will be dependent on the area of practice. There is guidance that has been developed by both the Royal College of Nursing and NHS Employers; this includes some guiding principles to help employers to develop a job description for their area of care delivery.

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/become-a-nursing-associate/job-description-guidance>

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/nursingassociates>

Can the Nursing Associate qualification be used to access pre-registration nurse training?

The Nursing Associate foundation degree may be accredited for prior learning and experience (APL/APEL) up to 50% (depending on the programme) of pre-registration nurse training programmes. There may be an opportunity to access an undergraduate pre-registration nursing programme which could result in a degree and nurse registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. This may also include nurse apprenticeship degree programmes which are now available from some HEIs.

Quotations

‘This is what I was always meant to be – I just did not know it’ (TNA)

‘Could sell it to other PMs – need to grow our own’ (Practice manager)

‘Much more aware of my own individual & accountability when delivering care’ (TNA)

‘We changed H’s uniform, name and door plate straight away to highlight her change in role’ (Mentor)

‘You can see them bursting out of the bubble they have been trapped in as a HCSW/HCA’ (University Programme Lead)

Want to know more?**Please get in touch**

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Updated by Nursing & Midwifery Workforce Team 27th May 2020, all information is correct (to the best of current knowledge) at time of updating but as the role continues to evolve please expect further changes. The document will be regularly updated, any feedback on the information gratefully received.