

Funding for Further/Higher Education Policy

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CONSULTATION AND DISTRIBUTION RECORD	
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CHANGE RECORD			
Date	Author	Change	Version No.
1.4.2023	As above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove F/HE from Learning, Education and Training Policy: Process and Procedures, Issue 6 • Rebrand as separate policy 	V1.0
10.5.23	Chrissy Rooney	Minor amendment to Para 4.2.2. to reflect SLA funding for NMAHP thorough Practice Development	V2.0

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

NHS Lanarkshire's Learning Strategy 2023-2028 and Our Health Together Strategy highlights the organisation's commitment to ensuring employees are provided with the appropriate development, knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver high quality services.

NHS Lanarkshire (NHSL) recognises the importance of having a Funding for Further/Higher (F/HE) policy that is clear, concise and free from all forms of discrimination. NHSL recognises the need to ensure access to appropriate personal development opportunities is available to support employees throughout their careers.

This is an important element of NHSL's commitment to equal opportunities and the following procedures aim to ensure fairness and equity in relation to all employee groups.

This policy is in line with the current Learning Strategy and the 'appropriately trained' element of the Staff Governance Standard. To this end NHSL is committed to providing an environment that enables personal development for all employees delivering high quality, innovative health and social care that is person-centred.

2. **AIM, PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES**

The aim of this policy is to outline the process for F/HE funding for development for NHSL employees.

The purpose of the policy is to provide a procedural framework with guidance to line managers and employees relating to the opportunities for F/HE funding for development supported by NHSL.

The policy outcome is to provide a fair and equitable process across all employee groups applying for F/HE support.

3. **SCOPE**

3.1 **Who is the Policy intended to Benefit or Affect?**

All employees employed by NHSL who apply for, or support the application for F/HE funding for development.

3.2 **Who are the Stakeholders**

All employees employed by NHSL who apply for, or support the application for F/HE funding for development and F/HE providers.

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4. PRINCIPAL CONTENT

4.1 Definitions

NHSL supports applications for F/HE funding support for all employees.

F/HE is classified as learning, education and/or training offered by an appropriate, professional provider of qualifications and/or accreditations leading to the award of a nationally recognised outcome. Such qualifications and/or accreditations will be called 'course' throughout this policy.

F/HE funding support will only be considered by the F/HE Funding Panel for learning, education and/or training courses considered as personal development.

Funding for learning previously categorised as Mandatory/Essential for Role or Desirable for the Organisation/Service is the responsibility of the employee member's department.

Funding Panel

Representation of senior management and partnership representatives who meet on an annual basis to consider F/HE applications.

Funding Support Group

Learning & Organisational Development staff who manage the F/HE process.

4.2 Pre-Application Considerations

4.2.1 Prerequisites

Any courses planned/applied for must be included in your annual Personal Development Plan (PDP).

NHSL will only support F/HE applications if:

- (a) The employee has attended a compulsory F/HE learning awareness session
- (b) The application is for personal development purposes only
- (c) The formal application process is followed

Employee's must submit their application for funding support and await the formal decision from NHSL's Funding Panel before entering into an agreement with any learning provider.

NHSL will not support retrospective applications where the formal application process has not been adhered to.

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Employee's should read the Fees and Additional Costs section below to ensure they fully understand the financial implications for themselves and their departments before submitting their application.

4.2.2 NMAHP Practice Development Centre Service Level Agreement

Nursing, Midwifery & Allied Health Professionals should consider the best route for applying for funding support. This may not be by F/HE application.

NMAHP Practice Development Centre (PDC) consider applications to support employees working in a Nursing, Midwifery or Allied Health Professional clinical role to access accredited modules/programmes through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of West of Scotland.

Application forms are available at: practice.development@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

Fully completed and authorised forms should be returned directly to PDC in line with their application period.

4.3 Application Process

All employees applying for F/HE support must discuss their personal development requirements with their line manager and record the discussion in their Personal Development Plan (PDP).

Employees must attend an F/HE compulsory awareness session to ensure they fully understand the process, their responsibilities if successful, and also NHSL's responsibilities to successful applicants.

Applications for funding support for F/HE will be considered on a year-on-year basis. A new application will be required for each year of learning.

Employees must submit a fully completed and managerially supported application form within the application period. The application period will open on 1st April and close at 5.00pm on 31st May each year. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Applications must include a statement of support from the employee member's line manager, countersigned by either their General Manager, Head of Service or Director.

Applications will only be considered for the academic year immediately following each annual application period.

Employees will be informed of the Funding Panel's decision by 30th June each year.

Applications which are not supported by management will not progress to the Funding Panel.

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4.4 Fees, Additional Costs, Additional Funding Support, Repayment Options and Exclusions

4.4.1 Fees

NHSL will support successful applications through the offer of 50% funding towards course fees only. Employees will be required to repay 50% of the total cost of the total course fees.

Applicants, therefore, require to consider their personal financial circumstances to fund their 50% commitment.

4.4.2 Additional Costs

NHSL will support funding for course fees only. This includes, for example, in-person classes and virtual learning licence fees for virtual learning programmes.

NHSL will not support funding for additional learning, examination or assessment fees that are:

- (a) Not included in the learning provider's course fees
- (b) Outwith the academic year that funding support is offered
- (c) Course, examination and/or assessment resits

Additional costs for books, materials, travel and/or accommodation incurred remain the responsibility of the employee member and/or their department. We encourage employees to discuss requirements for books with their local Knowledge Services Department and refer to the Knowledge Services Borrowing policy.

Additional costs, outwith course fees, should be discussed and agreed with line managers and if agreed, claimed through NHSL's expenses procedure and charged against your departmental budget code.

NHSL will consider, in exceptional circumstances, requests to defer a course and/or modules (see Deferrals section).

4.4.3 Additional Funding Support

Where employees are eligible for additional funding from recognised bodies such as:

- Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)
- Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Individual Learning Accounts [ILAs]
- A Professional Body [e.g., Society of Chiropractors]
- A Trade Union [e.g., Unite]
- A charity [e.g., The Society for the Study of Addiction]
- Other organisation [e.g., The Nurses Memorial to King Edward VII Fund]

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the amount of any grant or award made will be deducted from the total course fee before the 50% split is applied.

Employees will be required to declare as part of the application process, if additional funding is being sought or has been granted.

4.4.4 Important Points of Note

To ensure a fair and equitable process for all employees's, departments are not permitted to and must not fund or partially fund employees to undertake personal development courses where an application has been approved. NHSL will not facilitate or support any Directorate to fund the successful applicant's 50% commitment. Employees applying for learning provided as part of a National Initiative must follow the appropriate process as determined by the provider, e.g., National Education for Scotland (NES) and will not be eligible for additional F/HE funding from NHSL.

4.4.5 Repayment Options

To support employees, NHSL will pay 100% of course fees directly to learning providers, minus any grant or award (see Additional Funding Support section) which will normally be paid directly to the learning provider.

Employees will be offered repayment of their 50% commitment in a single payment or payment across six, 10 or 12 months, commencing October each year. Repayments will require a payroll mandate to be authorised by the employee. Repayments will commence in October each year, irrespective of when the course commences.

4.5 Failure to Attend or Complete Approved Course, Withdrawing from Approved Course after Registration and Before Completion; Leaving NHSL within Two Years Following Completion of Course

4.5.1 Failure to Attend or Complete Approved Course

If, for any reason, an employee does not attend their funded course (in-person or virtual) or does not sit any examinations and/or assessments mandatorily required to complete the course they must immediately:

- (a) Advise their line manager
- (b) Advise the learning provider and
- (c) Advise the F/HE Funding Panel (on furthered@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)

If a member has been:

- (a) Granted leave to be absent from the workplace to attend their course
- (b) Granted study leave to support a course undertaken in their own time and/or
- (c) Granted funding and/or expenses

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and fails, without reasonable cause, to attend, complete or sit any mandatory examinations or assessments, the employee may be subject to disciplinary processes.

4.5.2 Withdrawing from Approved Course after Registration and Before Completion

In line with the Overpayments/Money Owed Policy NHSL's Finance Department reserves the right to seek to recover all or part of any F/HE funding granted if the employee withdraws from an approved course, in other than exceptional circumstances (e.g., work related or personal).

The line manager, General Manager, Head of Service or Director must advise the Funding Support Group on furthered@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk immediately the above instance occurs. It is the responsibility of employee's to be aware of any potential financial impact that may result in these circumstances.

4.5.3 Leaving NHSL Within Two Years of Completion of Course

In line with the Overpayments/Money Owed Policy, NHSL's Finance Department reserves the right to seek to recover all or part of any F/HE funding granted if the employee terminates their employment with NHSL within two years of the end of the relevant academic cycle.

The line manager, General Manager, Head of Service or Director must advise the Funding Support on furthered@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk immediately they become aware that an employee has tendered their resignation.

Any additional expenses funded through departmental budgets may also be subject to recovery processes at the line manager's discretion.

It is the responsibility of employees to be aware of any potential financial impact that may result in these circumstances.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Employee Responsibilities

5.1.1. Application Forms

Employees are responsible for ensuring they are aware of the content of the F/HE Policy and attend a compulsory F/HE information session.

Employees must submit fully completed and supported application forms within the application period of 1st April to 5.00pm on 31st May each year.

Applications received after 5.00pm on 31st May will not be considered.

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Incomplete or unsupported application forms will be returned to employee's. NHSL will not accept amended application forms received after 5.00pm on 31st May each year.

The Funding Support Group will email employee's within five working days of receipt of application forms to acknowledge receipt of the application form. It is, however, the applicant's responsibility to check the Funding Support Group have received their application form if they do not receive an acknowledgement.

5.1.2 Provision of Information

Employee's are responsible for providing any additional information required by the Funding Support Group within the deadline attached to any request.

5.1.3 Fees and Other Information

Confirmation of fees and any other information required must be obtained by the employee and provided to the Funding Support Group within set deadlines. This includes but is not limited to:

- Qualification or accreditation fees
- Separate confirmation of additional learning materials, e.g. books
- Progress reports
- Payroll mandates, etc.

Employee's must liaise with their learning provider to gather information or resolve any learning provider enquiries. The Funding Support Group will liaise directly with employee's and not with learning providers.

5.1.4 Course Progress

Employee's will require to submit a completion or progress update at the end of each academic year, countersigned by their line manager.

5.1.5 Change of Circumstance

The employee must request and **receive express permission** from NHSL to change or defer their course, prior to any action being taken. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Changing learning provider, e.g., changing provider from Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) to Queen Margaret University (QMU) [irrespective of any university partnerships]
- Changing qualification or accreditation, e.g., changing an Honours Degree to a standard Degree
- Changing commencement date, e.g., changing a commencement date from October to January
- Changing how learning is provided, e.g., changing distance learning to face to face learning on campus, etc.

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Employee's must submit any change or deferral request as soon as possible by email to furthered@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk. Requests will be discussed with line managers and/or specialty expert.

5.1.6 Employee Dissatisfaction

It is the responsibility of employee's to:

- (a) Request unsupported application forms be referred the next appropriate manager for review through their local management structure
- (b) Invoke the grievance procedure within their local management structure or through partnership processes if they are dissatisfied with aspect of the F/HE process

5.1.7 Failure to Comply

Failure to adhere to these responsibilities may result in the withdrawal of the offer of funding support, irrespective of the status of application to learning providers.

5.2 Management Responsibilities

Managers must discuss personal development requests from employee's and ensure the outcome is recorded within the employee's Personal Development Plan (PDP).

Line managers must:

- Allow employee's time to attend a compulsory F/HE awareness session
- Complete a statement of support for any applications being submitted
- Ensure application completion deadlines are adhered to, in order that employee's can meet overall deadlines
- Agree any additional costs outwith course fees
- Not offer departmental funding as a 'top-up' to funding awarded by NHSL
- Advise the Funding Support Group of any change in the employee's circumstances including withdrawal from courses or termination of employment with NHSL

5.3 NHS Lanarkshire's Responsibilities

5.3.1 Adherence to Deadlines

NHSL will adhere to deadlines for communicating with employees regarding the status of their application.

NHSL will provide reasonable deadlines to employees when requesting any additional information.

5.3.2 Application Forms

NHSL will process completed F/HE application forms received before 5.00pm on 31st May each year.

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5.3.3 Fees and Other Information

NHSL will not liaise with learning providers to confirm funding status, enquiries, etc., and will only liaise with employee's.

Employee's will be offered a range of repayment options. NHSL will formalise this through payroll mandates which will be processed by Payroll Department for deductions to commence from October each year. Once processed, employee's will be responsible for liaising directly with Payroll Department for any enquiries.

5.3.4 Change of Circumstance

NHSL will respond to any employee request to change or defer learning within five working days of receipt.

If any additional information is required from employee's, NHSL will respond within five working days of receiving additional information.

5.3.5 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

In accordance with GDPRs, NHSL takes care to ensure your personal information is only accessible to authorised people. NHSL have a legal and contractual duty to keep personal information secure and confidential. In order to find out more about current data protection legislation and how we process your information, please visit the Data Protection Notice on www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk or email furthered@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk for a copy of the Data Protection Notice.

5.4 Leave Entitlement Guidance

Further and Higher Education can be delivered in a variety of formats: day release, evening classes or distance/open learning. Leave entitlement, at the manager's discretion, is as follows:

Day release:

- ' will be allowed leave during normal working hours to attend those classes and examinations that are part of the authorised course
- No additional learning leave will be given for examination or assessment preparation

All other formats:

- Employees will be granted paid leave for attendance at examinations required as part of the course
- Up to five working days per academic year **may** be granted to prepare for significant examinations or assessments

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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NHSL support investment in personal development across the organisation and as such there will be resource implications for the organisation in releasing and/or supporting employees to attend F/HE courses.

All costs outwith the actual cost of the F/HE course must be met by the Department sponsoring the individual.

7. **COMMUNICATION PLAN**

This policy will be launched using the weekly 'Staff briefing' and will be available on NHS Lanarkshire's public website

Employee's within Human Resources and Learning & Organisational Development will be briefed on the content of the policy.

Application forms and FAQs will be posted on Learning & Organisational Development's FirstPort pages.

8. **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT – Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years via the Joint Policy Forum.

9. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

This policy meets NHS Lanarkshire's EQIA (tick box)

10. **SUMMARY or FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

FAQs are attached in Appendix 1.

11. **REFERENCES**

This policy should be read in conjunction with other current supporting policies, documents and associated guidance.

NHSL's supporting documents are available on our public website at www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

- NHS Lanarkshire Learning Strategy
- NHS Lanarkshire Our Health Together Strategy
- NHS Lanarkshire Quality Strategy
- Administrative Records Policy
- Career Break
- Copyright Policy

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- Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Policy
- Information Security Policies
- Knowledge Services Borrowing Policy
- Management and Exploitation of Intellectual Property (IP) Policy
- Overpayments/Money Owed Policy
- Personal Development Planning & Review Policy
- Standards of Business Conduct Policy
- Standing Financial Instructions and Scheme of Delegation Policy
- Working Time Regulations Policy

The following supporting documents are available on FirstPort:

- Desktop Procedure for Staff (Expenses)
- F/HE Application Form
- Staff Governance Standards (redirects to NHSScotland Staff Governance Standard website)
- Travel Request Form

Once for Scotland policies are held on NHSScotland's workforce policies website at www.workforce.nhs.scot/policies

- Conduct Policy
- Grievance Policy

**Further and Higher Education (F/HE) 2023/2024
Frequently Asked Questions**

Q1.	Can I apply for F/HE funding if the course is essential to my role?
A1.	No. From 2023 F/HE funding will only be granted for personal development. Funding for learning previously categorised as mandatory/essential for the role or desirable for the organisation/service is the responsibility of the employee's department.
Q2.	Must I attend the F/HE compulsory awareness session?
A2.	Yes. We are offering a number of dates and times on MS Teams to suit employees. Your application will not progress if you have not attended an awareness session.
Q3.	Can I register for a course then apply for F/HE funding?
A3.	No. You can liaise with your preferred learning provider to obtain course information, course fees, etc. You cannot apply for formal funding from NHS Lanarkshire before your application has been considered.
Q4.	My line manager is going on leave and I might be a day late in submitting my F/HE funding application form. Is this ok?
A4.	No. The application window is open from 1 st April to 31 st May and applications out with this period will not be accepted.
Q5.	I work as an NMAHP and have identified a suitable course. Can I apply through the F/HE funding application route?
A5.	Yes, however, there may be a more appropriate route for NMAHPs through the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with local colleges/universities such as University of the West of Scotland. Please liaise with Practice Development at practice.development@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk
Q6.	Can I receive Practice Development funding and F/HE funding at the same time?

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A6.	No. If Practice Development fund an SLA course, you are not eligible to apply for F/HE funding at the same time.
Q7.	Can I receive any funding from any other source in addition to F/HE funding, including from my department?
A7.	<p>You may be eligible for part funding from Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS), Individual Training Accounts (ITA) etc., dependent upon your course of study and the criteria applied by specific funding sources.</p> <p>It is your responsibility to source such support funding. The Funding Support Group will not facilitate this for you.</p> <p>Your department is not permitted to part fund your studies as this creates inequity for other applicants and this would fall out with the commitments of the (Equality Impact Assessment) EQIA.</p>
Q8.	I plan to study for a course lasting (for example) four years. Do I require to complete a yearly application form?
A8.	Yes. Applications are approved on a yearly basis, therefore, if your course lasts (for example) four years you will require to submit an application form per year, supported by your line manager and detailing progress to date.
Q9.	Why do I require the support of both my Line Manager and General Manager/Head of Service/Director?
A9.	It is important that in completing your Personal Development Plan (PDP) you and your Line Manager agree your development needs. The application form requires to be countersigned in other than General Manager/Heads of Service/Directors are aware of study/financial commitments across their service.
Q10.	Can you confirm that funding is for course fees only? What about books, travel, overnight accommodation, etc.?
A10.	Your department is responsible for any additional costs outwith the course fees.
Q11.	What study leave am I entitled to?
A11.	<p>Paragraph 5.4 of the Funding for Further/Higher Education Policy refers.</p> <p>‘Further and Higher Education can be delivered in a variety of formats: day release, evening classes or distance/open learning. Leave entitlement, at the manager’s discretion, is as follows:</p> <p>Day release:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees will be allowed leave during normal working hours to attend those classes and examinations that are part of the authorised course No additional learning leave will be given for examination or assessment preparation <p>All other formats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees will be granted paid leave for attendance at examinations required as part of the course Up to five working days per academic year may be granted to prepare for significant examinations or assessments'
Q12.	What do I do if my course doesn't start at the beginning of the recognised academic year, e.g., September?
A12.	If successful for funding your course must begin within the academic year immediately following the annual F/HE application period.
Q13.	How do I contact the Funding Support Group for any other questions? When might I expect a response to my enquiry?
A13.	<p>There is a generic email account to which all enquiries must be directed: furthered@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk</p> <p>You will receive a response to your enquiry within five working days of its submission.</p>
Q14.	I started a course at university but my circumstances have changed and I cannot continue at the moment. Can I re-join at a later date?
A14.	<p>The employee must request and receive express permission from NHS Lanarkshire to change or defer their course, prior to any action being taken. This includes, but is not limited to:</p> <p>Employees must submit any change or deferral request as soon as possible by email to furthered@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk. Requests will be discussed with line managers and/or specialty expert.</p>
Q15.	Can I apply for F/HE funding if I am seconded into NHS Lanarkshire?
A15.	No, any funding would be the responsibility of your seconding employer.
Q16.	Can I apply for F/HE funding if I am employed on a fixed term contract in NHS Lanarkshire?
A16.	No, we are unable to support fixed term contract employees.
Q17.	Are the deductions from my salary taken from my gross or net salary?

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A17.	As F/HE funding is not classified as a benefit in kind, any deduction in relation to repayment of funding for your course will be taken after tax.
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