

# PROMOTING NHS FINANCE CAREERS

## WORK EXPERIENCE GUIDE – SCHOOL CHILDREN



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# INTRODUCTION

We want our NHS to be the employer of choice for a career in finance and what better way to showcase what a career in NHS finance can offer than offering work experience to young people in our communities.

Work experience in an NHS finance department has many benefits to young people:

**Exposure to the NHS:** Working in an NHS finance department can provide school children with exposure to the NHS and its functions. This can help to raise awareness of career options and understanding of how the NHS works and the important role it plays in society.

**Showcase a Finance Career within NHS:** Is useful in educating young people that there are career opportunities within the NHS that go beyond the clinical roles that are usually brought to mind.

**Insight into finance and accounting:** Working in an NHS finance department can provide school children with an insight into the world of finance and accounting. This can be particularly valuable for those considering a career in finance, economics or accounting.

**Development of workplace skills:** Work experience in an NHS finance department can help school children to develop a range of workplace skills such as communication, teamwork, and time management. It can play a pivotal role in preparing young individuals for their future careers by building confidence and enhancing their CVs.

**Understanding of the importance of financial management:** Working in an NHS finance department can help to emphasise the importance of financial management, both in healthcare and in society more broadly.

**Career exploration:** Work experience in an NHS finance department can provide school children with an opportunity to explore potential career paths and make informed decisions about their future education and career choices. Work experience is often the first time they get to experience the world of work so its important to make a good impression.

Not only is work experience beneficial to young people it is useful to organisations in developing staff, engaging with new ideas and establishing a pipeline for future recruits.

In this document we have outlined a guide on how to get started on your work experience offering including recruitment, onboarding, induction and suggested tasks.

# CREATING WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION

It may be that you already have requests for work experience, whether that be as part of the secondary school requirement for students to undertake a set number of weeks of work experience, or if it is students looking for work experience during the summer months to explore future career options, but it is likely that these requests come about as the individual is a family member of or knows someone that already works within the organisation.

In line with the finance EDI strategy, finance departments need to look more creatively at how they offer work experience opportunities, being proactive at attracting individuals into a career within NHS Finance. This may involve building relationships with schools within the area, promoting through local youth groups rather than relying on a word-of-mouth approach from current team members. This should help to ensure that we are approaching a diverse group, which may include individuals that otherwise would never have been aware of the opportunities for a career within NHS finance.

If as a team you have agreed that this is the approach that you would like to take, here are some pointers as to how to get started:

## 1. Plan the number and length of placements and which teams will be involved.

The first thing to remember is to be realistic. Think about how many work experience placements you can support during the year, which months would not be practical, and to make the experience meaningful, what the length of the placement would need to be. Think about which teams could be involved and the type of work experience that could be offered, which may depend upon the age and level of experience of the individual. Consider whether you could accommodate more than 1 work experience placement at a time.

## 2. Create a job description and/or day by day model programme for the different placements, which is developed by and signed up to by the teams that will be supporting the work experience placement. Appendix A outlines an example of a possible job description.

Think about the work experience and knowledge that the individuals will bring to the placement. A secondary school student with no office based experience, may have a placement that includes office type admin duties such as filing, spreadsheet updates, scanning of invoices and post sorting. Whereas an older student looking for accountancy experience may be involved in straight forward month end tasks, invoice processing, patient accounts experience.



# PROMOTING WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN YOUR AREA

Once you are clear as to the placements that you can offer, start to think about how you will promote these opportunities within your local area. Outreach to the local schools in your community. There are many ways to engage with schools to generate applications for your programme, including:

- Most organisations will have a widening engagement lead who will be able to help you with this.
- Ask colleagues if they have any connections to the local schools as a starter, but then be sure to reach out to the remaining schools within your area also.
- Look at charities that work to partner schools with organisations.
- You can also use advertising suppliers to promote your roles online i.e. [RateMyApprenticeship](#), [AllAboutSchoolLeavers](#), [Milkround](#), [TargetCareers](#).
- Attend school fairs to promote where possible.

Speak to careers support departments within secondary schools as to when their students will be looking for work experience, and see if that fits with the plans of your team, and ask them to offer the placement opportunity to their students.

Speak to the careers departments at local colleges and ask them to promote the opportunity for summer work experience to all students, with targeted messaging to those doing related studying.

Social media is always a good way of promoting to young adults. Think about the social media platforms that they are using and how you can promote by linking into the accounts of schools and colleges.



# SELECTION PROCESS

If you create enough interest that demand is greater than what you can accommodate within the team, think about how you will select from the interested students. Consider a selection process in line with usual recruitment processes for an entry level job into the finance structure, as that in itself will be great experience for the students, but also make sure that you consider:



- Is your process accessible?
- Are you breaking down barriers?
- Ensure students are able to disclose any reasonable adjustments needed in the selection process/workplace.
- Think about your selection criteria. Be flexible around educational attainment and grades. Remember why they need this opportunity, therefore is previous experience and/or IT capability as important as enthusiasm and work ethic.
- You could consider asking the young person to send in a CV before they start so you can find out more about them and help them to feel they're experiencing the real working world, but ask them to focus more on what they are looking to get from this opportunity and why they want a placement with the team.
- Think about whether you want to include an interview into the application process. Regardless of demand, you may want to do this anyway, with the purpose of meeting the student before they start and being clear as to what is expected of them and what they can expect to receive in return.

If you do choose to go down the route of a selection process, make sure that you leave the candidate with a positive experience of the process. This includes:

- Providing valuable feedback to all candidates.
- Providing resources to support candidates throughout the selection process e.g. links to resources that provide interview tips if you are going to include an interview in the selection process, CV writing tips etc.
- Offer alternative job boards/ insight experiences for unsuccessful candidates. You could also speak to other NHS organisations within the system, to see if their finance teams could accommodate a placement.

There are a number of checks that you will need to make to ensure that your organisation is accepting of work experience placements. Speak to your HR Department to make sure that you are following all the necessary checks and are compliant with any requirements from a HR point of view. This may include specific training for the staff that will be involved in the delivery of the placement, if required. It is also worth checking if any right to work checks are needed for students over 18.



# PLANNING AND COMMUNICATION BEFORE THE PLACEMENT

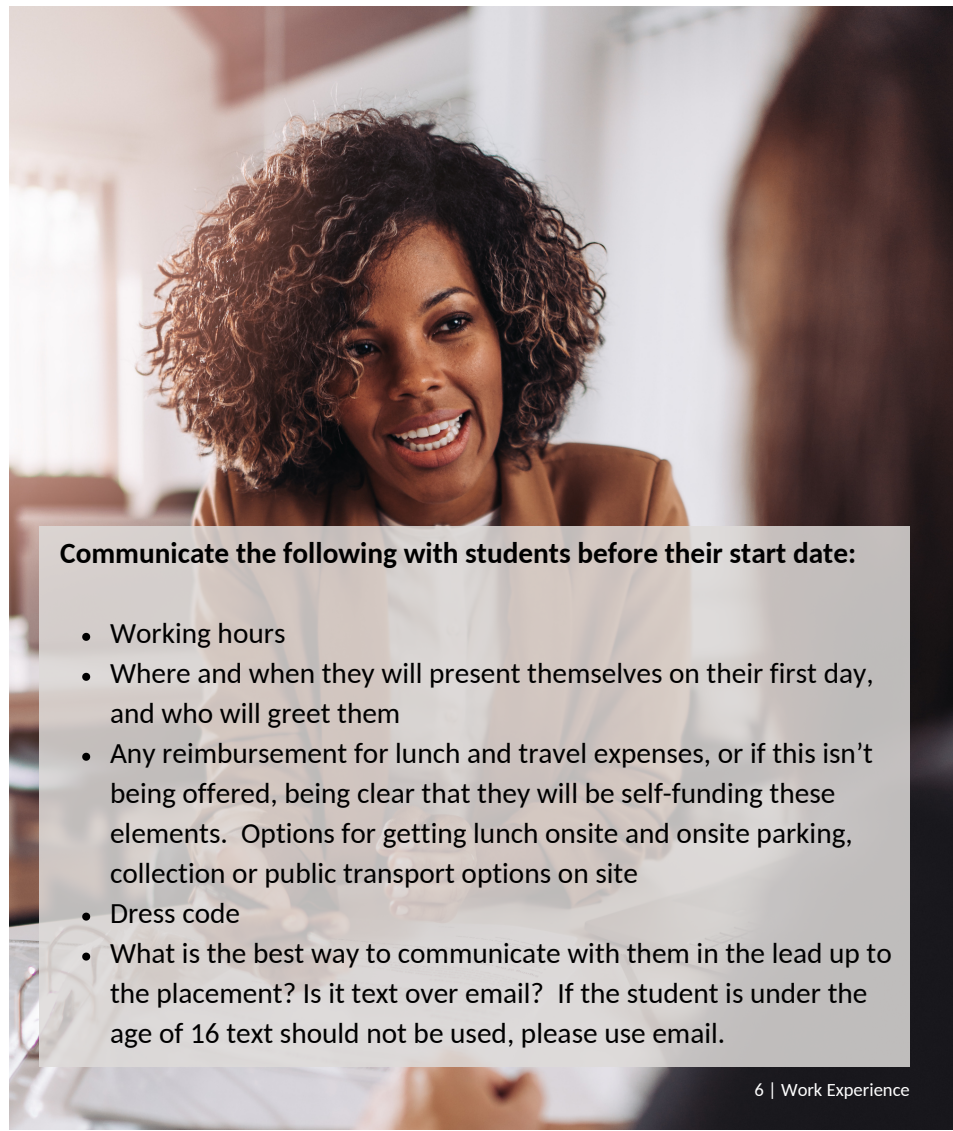
Using the model placement and the job description, carefully plan out the work experience beforehand and agree a final timetable of activities to ensure that it is both varied and challenging for students. However, please **don't**:

- Leave students alone for long periods of time, Year 10 and Year 11 students should not be left on their own in a room. If you set them a task, remember to check in.
- Expect them to have expert knowledge, this is likely their first venture into a workplace.
- Make them responsible for a piece of work. They can assist projects and work but they are not responsible for outcomes.

Think about what experience can be reasonably expected of an individual at that stage of their education. If they are currently at school, they may be computer literate, but may need support with simple excel tasks. When providing them with admin office tasks, ensure that they understand the part that this task plays in the whole process.

If they are scanning invoices, show them how the invoice comes into the system and talk them through what happens after the invoice has been scanned. Share with them a budget statement that shows the ultimate destination of that piece of information for budget managers.

Try to link tasks through from one department to another, so that they can follow an invoice, or an expenses claim through to the Finance Board report. Share with them the latest annual report and the accounts, not in detail, but so that they can see where that expenditure or income is reported every financial year. This will ensure that although they are doing general admin duties, they understand how that links to the finance specific tasks that are undertaken within the team.



## Communicate the following with students before their start date:

- Working hours
- Where and when they will present themselves on their first day, and who will greet them
- Any reimbursement for lunch and travel expenses, or if this isn't being offered, being clear that they will be self-funding these elements. Options for getting lunch onsite and onsite parking, collection or public transport options on site
- Dress code
- What is the best way to communicate with them in the lead up to the placement? Is it text over email? If the student is under the age of 16 text should not be used, please use email.

# ONBOARDING STUDENTS

When welcoming students for work experience in an NHS finance department, it's important to create a positive and supportive onboarding experience. Here are some tips to help:

- 1. Communicate clearly:** Be clear about what the placement entails and what the student can expect during their time with the finance department. Provide information about the role, tasks, and responsibilities, as well as workplace policies and procedures.
- 2. Assign a supervisor/buddy:** Assign an individual as a buddy who will be responsible for guiding the student throughout the whole period of the placement. This person should be available to answer questions, provide feedback, and offer support throughout the placement.
- 3. Provide an orientation:** Provide an orientation to the workplace and the finance department. This can include a tour of the facility, an introduction to colleagues, and an overview of the department's role and functions. Although it is unlikely that they will spend long periods with the senior management team, ensure that they are introduced to the CFO and senior team, either in passing or with a diarised formal introduction.
- 4. Explain expectations:** Be clear about expectations, including work hours, dress code, and behaviour in the workplace. Explain what is expected of the student in terms of professionalism, punctuality, and task completion.
- 5. Offer training and support:** Provide any necessary training and support to help the student succeed in their role. This can include training on specific software or systems, as well as ongoing feedback and guidance.
- 6. Foster a welcoming environment:** Create a welcoming and inclusive environment that encourages questions, feedback, and learning. Encourage colleagues to welcome the students and offer support as needed.
- 7. Check in regularly:** Check in regularly with the student to provide feedback, answer questions, and offer support. This can help to ensure a positive and productive work experience.
- 8. Laptops/Network access:** If you are going to give them a laptop for the week, or get them limited IT network access, make sure this is ready for them on their arrival or organised so that the very first task is getting IT support to access the required systems.



The NHS is a complex employer, and individuals may only be aware of the front facing organisations such as secondary care organisations, GPs, pharmacies and dentists. This is an opportunity to provide them with an insight into the NHS as a whole by sharing with them resources that explain the NHS structure, or how NHS funding flows.

1. [How the NHS is Structured](#)
2. [The Values of the NHS Constitution](#)
3. [NHS Finance Explained -The Structure of the NHS and how the Money Flows](#)
4. [What Could a Career in NHS Finance Offer You?](#)
5. <https://financecareers.nhs.uk/>

There are also many opportunities to enter the NHS finance profession.

1. [The NHS finance career map](#)
2. [The NHS finance careers brochure](#)
3. [NHS finance careers – school leaver](#)
4. [NHS finance careers – undergraduate placement/ college leaver](#)
5. [NHS finance careers – graduate or equivalent or looking for a change in career](#)



**Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS foundation Trust offers work experience through the Access Accountancy Programme, their onboarding process is as follows:**



- Email sent to relevant schools/colleges requesting expressions of interest.
- CVs received and a short statement of why the student is interested in work experience.
- Selection of candidates.
- Then: The Talent and Widening Engagement lead sends each student an application form (basic personal details) and a health questionnaire.
- Also sends a work experience agreement which covers confidentiality, dress code, behaviours expected
- Parental signatures needed for all students under 18- on all these documents.
- Students then sent IG and H&S workbooks.
- Day 1- induction (brief) with Talent and Widening Engagement Lead (before starting induction in finance).
- Meeting of buddy
- Note on safeguarding- the students are not to be left alone and our Trust staff have safeguarding as part of mandatory training.
- Travel costs and lunch costs need to be re-imbursed which are covered by the trust via volunteer lunch vouchers.
- All our work experience students also get free parking on site.

# AT THE END OF THE PLACEMENT

As the work experience programme concludes, the final day offers a valuable opportunity to conduct a debriefing session. This session allows students to reflect on their experience and share insights gained regarding a career in NHS Finance. If you are welcoming more than one student, it is a good opportunity to bring all students together as a group to collectively share their feedback and thoughts on the overall work experience.

You might want to consider asking students to feedback to some members of the finance department on what they have learnt throughout the week to assess the level of engagement. Useful feedback can also be given to the individual as to what areas they showed great promise, and the areas that they may need to focus on if they want a future career within NHS finance.



Following the placement we have a few suggestions as follows:

- Keep in touch with students/ school and make them aware of future opportunities with your organisation including further work experience.
- Ask for feedback from the careers team at the school as to what went well and what could be done differently in the future.
- Offer support to students by agreeing to act as a referee.
- If you haven't already, make sure students are aware of the NHS finance careers website ([financecareers.nhs.uk](https://financecareers.nhs.uk))

# APPENDIX A

## AN EXAMPLE WORK EXPERIENCE JOB DESCRIPTION

**Position:** Work Experience Participant

**Department:** NHS Finance

**Programme date:**

**Programme duration:**

**Deadline for application:**

**About the programme:** As a work experience participant in the NHS Finance Department, you will have the opportunity to gain insight into the world of finance and accounting within the National Health Service. This work experience will provide you with valuable exposure to various financial processes, systems, and functions, allowing you to develop essential skills and knowledge in a real-world healthcare finance setting.

**Activities:**

1. Shadowing Finance Professionals: Observe and shadow experienced finance professionals within the department to gain an understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
2. Assisting with Financial Data Entry: Provide support in data entry tasks, such as recording financial transactions, invoices, or budgetary information, under the supervision of finance team members.
3. Assisting with Financial Reporting: Assist in the preparation of financial reports, including data collection, analysis, and presentation, to gain hands-on experience in financial reporting procedures.
4. Observing Financial Systems and Processes: Gain an understanding of the financial systems, processes, and controls utilised within the NHS Finance Department through observation and interaction with finance staff.
5. Learning about Financial Management: Learn about financial management principles and practices within the healthcare sector, including cost control, financial forecasting, and resource allocation.
6. Developing Workplace Skills: Develop essential workplace skills such as communication, teamwork, time management, and attention to detail through participation in departmental tasks and projects.
7. Engaging in Professional Discussions: Participate in discussions and knowledge-sharing sessions with finance professionals to expand your understanding of finance in the healthcare context.
8. Adhering to Policies and Procedures: Follow all relevant policies, procedures, and ethical guidelines of the NHS Finance Department, maintaining confidentiality and professionalism at all times.
9. Seeking Guidance and Asking Questions: Proactively seek guidance from finance team members, supervisors, and mentors when needed, and ask questions to enhance your learning experience.

**Requirements:**

- Currently enrolled as a school or college student
- Interest in finding out more about finance, accounting, or related fields.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal abilities.
- Ability to work collaboratively in a team environment.
- Professional demeanour and willingness to learn.
- Any academic requirements your organisation may have

**About us:**

Insert a few sentences to give applicants some background information to the NHS organisation.

**How to apply:**

Let candidates know how to apply.

# APPENDIX B

## AN EXAMPLE TIMETABLE FOR STUDENTS

### DAY 1

1. Initial meet with Placement Mentor.
2. Ensure students have all that they need for the week. If the work experience is being conducted face to face, don't forget to give students a site tour and any necessary housekeeping.
3. Explain what is planned for the week ahead in terms of meetings and activities.
4. Introduce students to team.
5. Local team structure – Explain to students how the team is structured.
6. Organisation structure – Explain to students how the organisation is structured and what the organisation does.
7. Show students how the organisation links into the ICS and local Health Community.

#### Useful resources for day 1:

#### **Introduction to NHS and NHS Finance**

1. [How the NHS is Structured](#)
2. [The Values of the NHS Constitution](#)
3. Take an NHS [Careers Quiz](#)

#### **NHS Finance:**

1. [NHS Finance Explained -The Structure of the NHS and how the Money Flows](#)
2. [What Could a Career in NHS Finance Offer You?](#)
3. <https://financecareers.nhs.uk/>

### DAY 2 AND 3

#### **Different Roles Within NHS Finance**

[Finance Roles](#) introduction to the different roles in the different NHS organisations.

Dependent upon availability of contacts, you could plan in some meetings for Day 2.

#### **Calls/ Meetings with the following:**

- With the CFO
- ICB/ICS Finance – Financial Accounts, Management Accounts and Contracting
- Provider Finance – Financial Accounts, Charitable Funds (probably acute), Financial Systems, Accounts Payable and Receivable, Patient Accounts, Management Accounts, Costing, Income, Capital Accounts, Payroll
- NHSE – Financial Reporting and Regulation

Cover as many as possible within the host organisation and then use links within the ICS to cover any other areas.

#### **Reading Material:**

- [NHS Finance Careers – School Leaver](#)
- [NHS Finance Careers – Undergraduate Placement/ College Leaver](#)
- [Exploring the Role of the NHS Finance Business Partner](#)
- [Finance Career Stories](#)
- [The Role of the NHS Finance Chief Finance Officer](#)

## DAY 4

### Employability

- Provide a Job Description and Person Spec for a role in the team at the appropriate entry level (Apprentice, rotational post etc)
- Student to fill out a personal statement that they would use to apply for that post.
- Placement mentor to review and provide feedback.

### Opportunities:

- Link to [AAT](#)
- Meeting with an Apprentice in the health community
- Virtual Meeting with those currently studying AAT in the patch

### Project:

- Think about what your ideal role may be and fill in the template Job Description and Person Spec detailing the roles and responsibilities of the post, and then what you would need to apply for the post.
- Compare this with what skills and qualifications you currently have - what are the gaps?
- What can you do between now and applying for a job to fill some of those gaps?

## DAY 5

### Project

- Complete Project set on Day 4
- Present back to your Placement Mentor and include any reflections of the week with NHS Finance.

