

NHS Finance Insights Placement Scheme

Trainee Handbook



Foreword

We are delighted to welcome you to the NHS Finance Insights Placement Scheme.

This handbook is for trainees who have been accepted onto the scheme and provides overarching guidance to help you make the most of your 12-month placement. While some policies and procedures may vary between organisations, this guide outlines what you can generally expect, along with an overview of the support and resources available.

Over the 12-month placement, you will gain hands-on experience in an entry-level (Band 2) finance role. You will develop a broad range of skills, build your understanding of financial operations, and gain valuable on-the-job experience while supporting NHS services.

We encourage you to make the most out of this experience as the scheme offers new challenges, high standards, and opportunities to build professional networks to develop your skills and confidence as you step into the NHS Finance community.

We wish you the best of luck with your placement.

Example placement timeline

Please note this may not be the exact timeline for your placement but is an example of the type of experience to expect.

- Month 0–1: Onboarding, ID checks, Trust induction, mandatory training
- Month 1–3: Shadowing & introductory tasks
- Month 3–6: Rotation 1 (+ portfolio building)
- Month 6–9: Rotation 2
- Month 9–12: Final rotation, career planning, academy support, exit review
- Month 12: Portfolio completion + certificate

First week checklist example:

- Meet Placement Manager
- Understand place of work – In the office, or hybrid
- Meet Line Manager(s)
- Identify workplace buddy
- Complete Trust induction
- Complete mandatory training (H&S, fire, manual handling, information governance)
- Confirm working hours and flexi-time rules
- Understand dress code
- Set three initial goals
- Access email, systems, software, shared drives
- Understand annual leave entitlement and how to request/book leave
- Understand how to report sickness/absence



Roles and responsibilities

The section below outlines the roles of the key people involved in the scheme, and your relationship with them throughout the placement.

Placement Manager

You will be supported throughout your placement by a dedicated placement manager, who will provide guidance and help you make the most of this opportunity. We encourage you to stay in regular contact with them throughout your placement.

What you should expect from your placement manager is highlighted below:

- Induction into your organisation and team
- Set your key objectives of work
- Provide support and feedback
- Identify training and development opportunities

In addition to your placement manager, you may be managed by various line managers throughout your time on the scheme, who will provide day-to-day support and training.

Workplace buddy

A workplace buddy is a colleague who helps new employees settle in, offering guidance, support, and a friendly connection to ease your transition and integration into the team.

Please note, not all organisations will provide a buddy. However, if you would like one then you can speak with your placement manager about this.



Your role as a trainee

As a trainee, it is your role to immerse yourself in the experience to the best of your ability, make the most out of your experience and work in a professional manner. Some key things you can do to help you excel in your new role are highlighted below:

- Have a can-do attitude** - say yes to extra exposure, ask questions, turn up reliably and treat every task (even the small ones) as a chance to show you're ready for the next step.
- Rotate widely** - ask to work across different finance areas (management accounts, contracts, capital, costing) rather than settling into one task.
 - If you are not enjoying a rotation, then communicate with your placement manager and ask to try something new.
- Network** - make connections with colleagues and access the [One NHS Finance website](#) to join various networks to connect with the finance community.
- Development opportunities** – If you are looking to become qualified, use the HFMA bitesize courses so you are ready for the next steps, [HMFA membership is free for band 2-6](#). Create an account via this link to access the bitesize courses.
- Start “what’s next” conversations by month 9** – Start thinking about your next steps before the placement ends.

Other trainees

We encourage you to stay in touch and network with your fellow Insight trainees. Having a support network of others going through similar experiences can be incredibly beneficial. The regional and national induction days will be a great opportunity for everyone to meet and exchange contact details if you wish to do so.



Regional leads

The regional leads are dedicated to managing the scheme recruitment process and providing continuous support throughout the 12-month placement. They offer ongoing guidance and resources to trainees, including quarterly online check-ins. The regional contacts are:

Region	Name	Email
East of England	Jane Payling	jane.payling@eastamb.nhs.uk
London	Charlie Dolan	charlie.dolan@nhs.net
Midlands	Becky Jenvey	becky.jenvey@hfma.org.uk
North East	Laura Hartland-Adams	l.hartland-adams@nhs.net
North West	Julia Chilton	Julia.Chilton@nca.nhs.uk
South East	Chris Fleckney	chris.fleckney@nhs.net
South West	Charley Spicer	charley.spicer@hfma.org.uk
Yorkshire & Humber	Ben Underwood	ben.underwood2@nhs.net

External support

King’s Trust Mentor

[The Kings Trust](#) offer additional support for those who apply for it. Details on how to apply for this opportunity will be shared with your placement manager. ***If you have not received information regarding this by 1st August, please contact your regional lead.***

Trainees who have opted in to the King’s Trust support will receive the below benefits:

- Pre-placement and in-placement employability training
- Access to a youth worker or mentor for independent support
- Workshops on wellbeing, confidence-building and workplace readiness
- Additional pastoral support for trainees who may face challenges during the year
- Some financial support in the first month of the placement

AAT

AAT is the Association of Accounting Technicians,

which is a leading professional body providing practical accounting and bookkeeping qualifications globally.

You have access to AATs virtual work experience website, which can be accessed via the below link.

[AAT | Hub powered by Springpod](#)

Kaplan

Kaplan is a global educational services company offering test preparation, higher education, professional certifications, and training programs for individuals, universities, and businesses.

If you are unable to secure a role within your current organisation or any other NHS organisation, Kaplan have offered support through their recruitment team to help find roles external to the NHS.

Please get in touch with the [ONF central team](#) to connect you with the Kaplan team should you need this support.



Conducting your placement

Below are some top tips on what to do at each stage of your placement.

Before you start:

1.
- For you to be employed and your placement to begin there are certain checks and processes that your organisation will have to do, to complete the onboarding process. To ensure this process is completed as quickly as possible, make sure to have all your documentation ready and to share anything they ask you for as quickly as possible.

Some examples of what you may be asked to do or share:

- Complete onboarding paperwork
- Share a copy of your ID/Passport
- Share you National Insurance number
- Confidentiality agreements
- DBS checks.

2.
- When starting a new role, it is always helpful to familiarise yourself with the organisation that you are going to work at. You can do this by:
- Visiting your organisations website — read their current strategy, their latest Annual Report, and their news page.
 - Read the HFMA's Pocket Guide to NHS Finance (a few pages, free) for the finance-specific version of the same picture: hfma.org.uk/publications/introductory-guide-nhs-finance (a link to create an account was provided earlier in this document).

3.
- As this is an active learning process, it would be beneficial to your progress to set out some goals of what you would like to achieve over the course of the 12-month period.

During your placement:

1. Attend any induction sessions that are offered to you.
2. Take up any opportunities to shadow a variety of staff from different finance teams.
3. Make sure to update your placement portfolio on a weekly basis (further information on this is later in this document).
4. Have regular progress and learning conversations with your Line Manager to identify skills, areas for improvement and courses to assist with development. Be specific, examples below:
 - Rather than asking ‘do you have feedback?’ ask something specific like, ‘Have I structured this spreadsheet correctly?’
 - Ask soon after completion of the task
 - » Feedback is easiest to give when it is fresh
 - Be open to constructive criticism
 - » Listen without interrupting or defending
 - » Take notes on what has been said

At the end:

1. When the placement ends, it would be helpful for you to share your reflections so we can continue to develop the scheme.
2. It is important to leave on a positive note as the connections and networks you have built could benefit you throughout your career; make sure to thank your host team for their support.
3. When asked to, provide feedback honestly on your experience.

Work based learning

Over the course of your 12-month placement, you'll gain invaluable experience and exposure across various departments within your organisation's finance division. This rotation will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of financial operations, helping you develop a well-rounded skill set. Here are some of the key areas where you may gain experience and the types of activities you may do:

Areas of finance:

- Management Accounts
- Financial Accounts
- Costing
- Procurement
- Contracting
- Finance Systems
- Business Partnering

Types of activities you might do:

- Attend budget review meetings or month-end sessions.
- Learn about NHS financial systems (Oracle, SBS, etc.).
- Support with spreadsheet updates, reconciliations, or analysis.
- Help prepare internal communications or reports.
- Shadow staff across finance, procurement, or performance.
- Join wider NHS sessions (insight talks, networking events).

This diverse exposure will equip you with the practical knowledge, experience, and confidence to begin your finance career, laying a solid foundation for your professional development and setting you on the path to a successful career journey.

Please note that this process will vary between organisations and you can discuss your rotations with your placement manager.



Placement portfolio

Your placement portfolio is your opportunity to showcase the work you've completed during your 12-month placement. It's an interactive document where you can add text, images, documents, and examples. Completion of the portfolio is a requirement to receive your end of scheme certificate, so please ensure it is finished by the end of your placement. We recommend updating it regularly and setting aside time each week. This will not only make the process easier but also provide a valuable record of your achievements to draw on when applying for future roles and opportunities.

You will submit your completed portfolio to your placement managers 2 weeks prior to your placement ending. [Access the portfolio here.](#)

What happens at the end of the 12-month placement?

Before your placement ends, we recommend discussing potential next steps with your placement manager. It is recommended that these conversations begin at least 3-month before your placement is due to finish.

Options may include:

- Pursuing apprenticeship pathways
- Further qualifications
- Applying for entry-level finance roles.

One NHS Finance will offer support with CV and interview preparation sessions before the completion of the scheme.



How to get the most out of your placement

Be curious and ask questions

- Don't be afraid to ask "why" as well as "how."
- Observe processes, meetings, and decisions; try to understand the reasoning behind them.
- Prepare a few questions each week to discuss with your placement manager, mentor, or wider team members.

Be proactive

- Volunteer for tasks that are appropriate to your skills.
- Take initiative to shadow different team members (with permission).
- Keep a list of tasks and activities you've completed; it helps with reflection, your portfolio, and your CV.

Engage with the team

- Introduce yourself and understand people's roles.
- Attend meetings, discussions, and informal team activities if invited.
- Build your network; connections can provide insight, guidance, and future opportunities.

Make the most of rotations

- If your placement includes rotations across teams, plan ahead:
 - » Observe how each team contributes to NHS finance.
 - » Ask about differences in processes, priorities, and challenges.
- Respect peak periods (month-end/year-end) and follow your host team's guidance.

Reflect on your career goals

- Think about how what you are learning relates to potential careers in finance.
- Ask your host about career pathways, qualifications, and typical progression in NHS finance.
- Consider what skills or experiences you'd like to gain in future placements or work experience.

Hints and tips

- Reflect regularly: what surprised you, what challenged you?
- Remember: it's okay not to know everything; this is a learning experience.



Learning and development

To complement the work-based learning experience, a programme of online workshops delivered by One NHS Finance and the regions will run alongside the placement, where you will access training for different basic skills to help you throughout the placement and for your future career development, such as basic Excel skills, job application and interview techniques, etc.

Personal development

As you embark on your 12-month training programme, you will have access to a range of additional development opportunities designed to enhance your understanding of NHS finance and support your professional growth.

These opportunities include various programmes and resources offered by HFMA, One NHS Finance, and the Skills Development Network. Here's an overview of what you may have access to, dependent on what is offered in your organisation:

- [HFMA Bitesize Online Courses](#)
- [Excel Events](#)
- [Induction and Introduction to NHS Finance Events](#)
- [CPD and Technical Events.](#)
- [Webinars](#)

Trainees may be required to travel to attend regional or national events during the placement. Travel and expense arrangements vary between organisations. Before making any bookings, please discuss this with your placement manager and ensure you understand your organisation's expenses policy and approval process. Any claims for travel, accommodation or subsistence must be made in line with your host organisation's local policies and procedures.

Discuss with your placement manager about accessing the development opportunities.

Recommended resources

Here are some helpful links for you to explore:

- [NHS Finance Careers website](#): You may need to create an account to access all the resources on this site.
- [NHS Glossary of Terms: A-Z of Healthcare](#) - The NHS uses many abbreviations and jargon. While you're not expected to memorise all terms, this glossary is a valuable tool for familiarising yourself with NHS terminology.
- [One NHS Finance Website](#): Discover the different networks and programmes available to all NHS Finance staff. Once you start, you will be able to create an account and have access to all the events and training material.
- [HFMA: Healthcare Financial Management Association](#): HFMA The professional association for healthcare finance. Once you start, you will be able to create an HFMA account, granting you access to a range of resources tailored to your professional development. Access to the HFMA membership is free for band 2 – 6 NHS employees.
- [Skills Development Network](#): Sign up for the SDN website and explore a wide array of events, online learning and resources. Whether you're aiming to develop analytical skills or focus on personal development and awareness, there's something for everyone. *Please note that spaces are limited for each event, so participation cannot be guaranteed. Please note that your organisation need to be signed up to SDN for you to access, please discuss with your placement manager before accessing.*
- [One NHS Finance YouTube Videos](#): We recommend exploring the ONFs Youtube, which will give you insight into how the NHS is structured and funded as well as the career options and development opportunities available in NHS Finance. Suggested videos to start with:
 - » [NHS finance explained: How money flows in the NHS - 2023 Update](#)
 - » [What could a career in NHS Finance offer you?](#)



Employee policies & procedures - what to expect

This section is designed to act as a useful reference, providing an overview of employment policies and procedures.

Contract of employment

Your contract of employment is with your host organisation; this will vary for each Insights trainee. Please ensure that you are familiar with the individual policies and processes for your organisation.

Salary

Your salary is payable monthly in arrears through the trust payroll, by credit transfer into your nominated bank account. Your host organisation will confirm how pay slips are issued.

It is important to keep a record of your pay slips in case you need to refer to them later, they are usually issued online. The pay slip summarises your personal details. Your basic pay will be detailed along with any deductions for tax, National Insurance and pension contributions, where applicable.

Dress code and conduct

This may vary depending on your organisations approach, but aim to dress smart-casual when in the office unless told otherwise. It is recommended to check your organisations policies around dress code ahead of your first day.

Whilst in the workplace, it is good to approach the day with a positive attitude and to communicate in a professional manner. This can be done by ensuring emails are written professionally, asking for help if needed and respecting confidentiality when appropriate. It would be beneficial to try and understand the NHS values and how they apply to your placement.

Consistent lateness or poor timekeeping may lead to disciplinary action. If you are experiencing problems that may impact your ability to attend work on time, then please speak to your placement manager in the first instance for support.

Pension

For information on paying into a pension, please ask your placement manager.

Hours of work

The Working Time Regulations 1998 provide for a maximum “average” working week of 48 hours. In accordance with the contract of employment, you are required to work a 37.5 hour week (exclusive of lunch periods) spread over 5 days.

Flexible working hours apply in many organisations, although systems vary locally. You are required to adopt the arrangements operated by the organisation

to which you are working for. If your contract is for part-time hours, please speak to your placement manager to confirm your hours of work.

Annual leave

Your full year leave entitlement is 27 days annual leave, plus national and bank holidays, per annum. The annual leave year runs from 1st April to 31st March. If your contract is for part-time hours, please speak to your placement manager to confirm your pro rata annual leave entitlement.

Special leave

Special Leave, either paid or unpaid, may be available in circumstances of domestic crisis, bereavement, or family illness. Should you require special leave, you should contact your placement manager and ensure that the leave is recorded. The amount of time off and whether it is unpaid or paid will vary depending upon the circumstances.

Medical and dental appointments

Doctors, dental and optician appointments should be made outside of working hours. Where this is not possible, you should be allowed time off to attend the appointments; please arrange this through your placement manager and check your organisations HR policies.

Sickness

In the event of absence from work due to sickness, you must notify your placement manager and /or line manager on the first day of your illness and then follow your host organisation’s procedure on sick leave.

Un-notified sickness will be counted as unauthorised leave. In the event of unauthorised leave, disciplinary action as well as loss of pay may result.

Change of personal details

If any of your personal details should change (i.e. name, address, telephone number, emergency contact, marital status, etc) you should contact the Employment Services Team, or the team that is responsible for this area in your host organisation.

This will ensure that you receive information, communications, and documents correctly (i.e. payrolls, expenses and other important documents).

Health and safety

Your placement organisation has a duty to:

- Provide safe equipment for employee’s use.
- Develop safe systems to ensure that equipment used is maintained and in a safe condition.
- Develop safe systems and means for the safe use, handling and storage of substances and materials.

- Provide information, training and supervision.
- Maintain its premises in a safe condition.
- Provide welfare facilities e.g. rest rooms, WCs etc.

It is your duty to:

- Take care of personal health and safety and that of anyone else who may be affected
- Co-operate with your placement organisation so that it can fulfil its duties
- Not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health and safety
- Familiarise yourself with and comply with the local workplace regulations

An accident book should be available in every organisation. All accidents (however minor) should be reported and recorded, as this is a statutory requirement.

Support

You are encouraged to address any workplace or personal difficulties by discussing them with your placement manager and/or line manager in the first instance. Your placement manager will be able to put you in contact with the appropriate department depending on what you need, e.g. – HR, finance, wellbeing.

If you feel you can’t speak with your line manager or placement manager, contact your regional lead so this can be escalated appropriately.

Additional support and guidance are also available through the One NHS Finance central team.

Performance review

Progress will be reviewed and assessed with reference to reports on general performance in the workplace and objectives.

Please note: This section may vary depending on your organisation’s policies and procedures, so make sure to familiarise yourself with them within your first week.

