

Cost of living - guidance for supporting apprentices with travel and subsistence costs

Background

The cost of living crisis is currently being cited by employers and apprentices as a challenge across the NHS.

Further to the recent queries around travel and expenses for apprentices, this guidance note aims to provide clarity and support to employers to ensure that apprentices are supported in the current climate.

Can apprenticeship levy pay for travel and subsistence costs?

The Education and Skills Agency (ESFA) have confirmed travel and subsistence costs are not eligible costs that can be funded by apprenticeship levy. Therefore, apprenticeship levy cannot be used to fund travel and subsistence costs during an apprenticeship.

Should employers cover apprentices' costs for off the job training travel and subsistence?

The [ESFA apprenticeship funding rules](#) for employer's state that 'typical employer costs' should cover the below:

- Apprentice wages.
- Travel and subsistence costs for apprentices under any circumstances (including travel to off-the-job training)
- All accommodation costs including outward bound activities and where the apprentice is resident away from their home base

It is down to the employer to provide clarity on potential travel and subsistence costs prior to commencing the apprenticeship programme. This should be clearly stated in the tripartite agreement signed with the apprenticeship training provider.

As an employee apprentices would be eligible to claim under the standard employee expenses policy subject to existing NHS organisational policies and procedures.

Apprentices aged 18+ in London are eligible to apply for discounted TFL travel [Apprentice Oyster photocard - Transport for London \(tfl.gov.uk\)](#)

Can apprentices be asked to contribute towards travel and subsistence costs?

Yes, apprentices can be asked to contribute financially to travel and subsistence costs. However, consideration should be given to the following to ensure that the apprentice can successfully undertake and achieve the programme and are not financially disadvantaged:

- **The apprentices' wage:** some apprentices may struggle to cover substantial travel costs to and from their training provider. Employers should therefore consider how they can financially support these costs to ensure that the apprentice can continue to take part in off the job training.

- **External placement travel requirements:** some apprentices may struggle to cover the cost of travel costs whilst undertaking mandatory placements as part of their apprenticeship. Employers should therefore consider how they can financially support these costs.
- **Childcare and caring responsibly:** some apprentices may also have additional caring responsibilities. Employers should therefore consider how they can financially support these or can offer flexible working arrangements.

Can apprentices be asked to contribute to the costs of an apprenticeship?

Apprentices cannot be asked to contribute financially to the [eligible costs](#) of training, on programme or end-point assessment. This includes where the individual has completed the programme successfully or left the programme early.

Can degree apprentices claim university Student Supporting Funding?

The Student Support Fund helps students who are experiencing unexpected financial difficulty due to an unforeseen change in their circumstances. It's available to all full-time current students, UK and international, undergraduate and postgraduates – **apprentices are not eligible for student support funding.**

Can apprentices claim tax or universal credits?

Apprentices are eligible for UC, but only in particular circumstances. Apprentices can only claim UC while they are on a recognised apprenticeship, meaning they must:

- Have a named training provider
- Be working towards a recognised qualification
- Be paid at least the National Minimum Wage (NMW) for an apprentice.

To get more information on eligibility for UC, head to <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/eligibility>

Apprentice Discounts

Apprentices can also apply for a NUS Apprentice Extra Card which offers discounts at hundreds of high street retailers and online brands [NUS Apprentice extra](#)