

**Employer Guide**

# Recognising Talent for Care: Pathways for Progression

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## Recognising the value of the Senior Healthcare Support Worker Apprenticeship

The Senior Healthcare Support Worker (SHCSW) apprenticeship standard has been recently revised to be delivered over 24 months (rather than 18 months) and includes a new mandatory level 3 Diploma in Healthcare Support qualification. It is designed to prepare apprentices for progression into registered health practitioner or health professional occupations, including nursing and midwifery. The SHCSW apprenticeship is an excellent preparation for higher education (HE) healthcare programmes and a key means to promote the career progression of your staff.

Having that initial hands-on experience is vital in healthcare, learning to be more than just the health professional but how to care. I see so many times students pass through our doors that strive to be a nurse but without the hands-on caring side of the profession.

With the Apprenticeship you are working from the ground up, starting as a Healthcare Support Worker, gaining skills, knowledge and most important experience. You are learning how to give quality care, how to talk to people, how to work as part of a team structure, with a notion of what caring actually means, but also developing an awareness of what it means to work in the Health Sector along with gaining the interpersonal aspect required of the job.



**Vanessa Billson**

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## Introduction

This guide is an introduction to the work commissioned by Health Education England (HEE) that builds on the [Talent for Care national strategic framework](#) (HEE, 2014), with its focus on widening access and participation, diversifying the workforce supply and supporting individuals to develop in their long-term career.

**The work benefits healthcare employers because:**



The focus is on maximising the potential of the [Level 3 Senior Healthcare Support Worker \(SHCSW\) apprenticeship](#) to meet your needs. The progression of SHCSW apprentices to HE health professional programmes has a key role in developing an [Integrated Care Strategy](#); fulfilling [People Plan priorities](#), by helping to recruit staff into hard to fill vacancies; helping improve retention of staff by creating clear career progression routes; and offering routes to healthcare professions to staff who did not have the opportunity through school education, due to social and economic exclusion or disadvantage.

Promoting the progression of SHCSW apprentices to professional healthcare HE programmes can make a significant contribution to social mobility by improving the career prospects for disadvantaged entrants. We are asking you to liaise directly with your higher education provider (HEP) partners to ask if they have signed up to the **National Progression Agreement** to help promote the consistency of recognition of the SHCSW apprenticeship that is needed.

# The Senior Healthcare Support Worker Apprenticeship

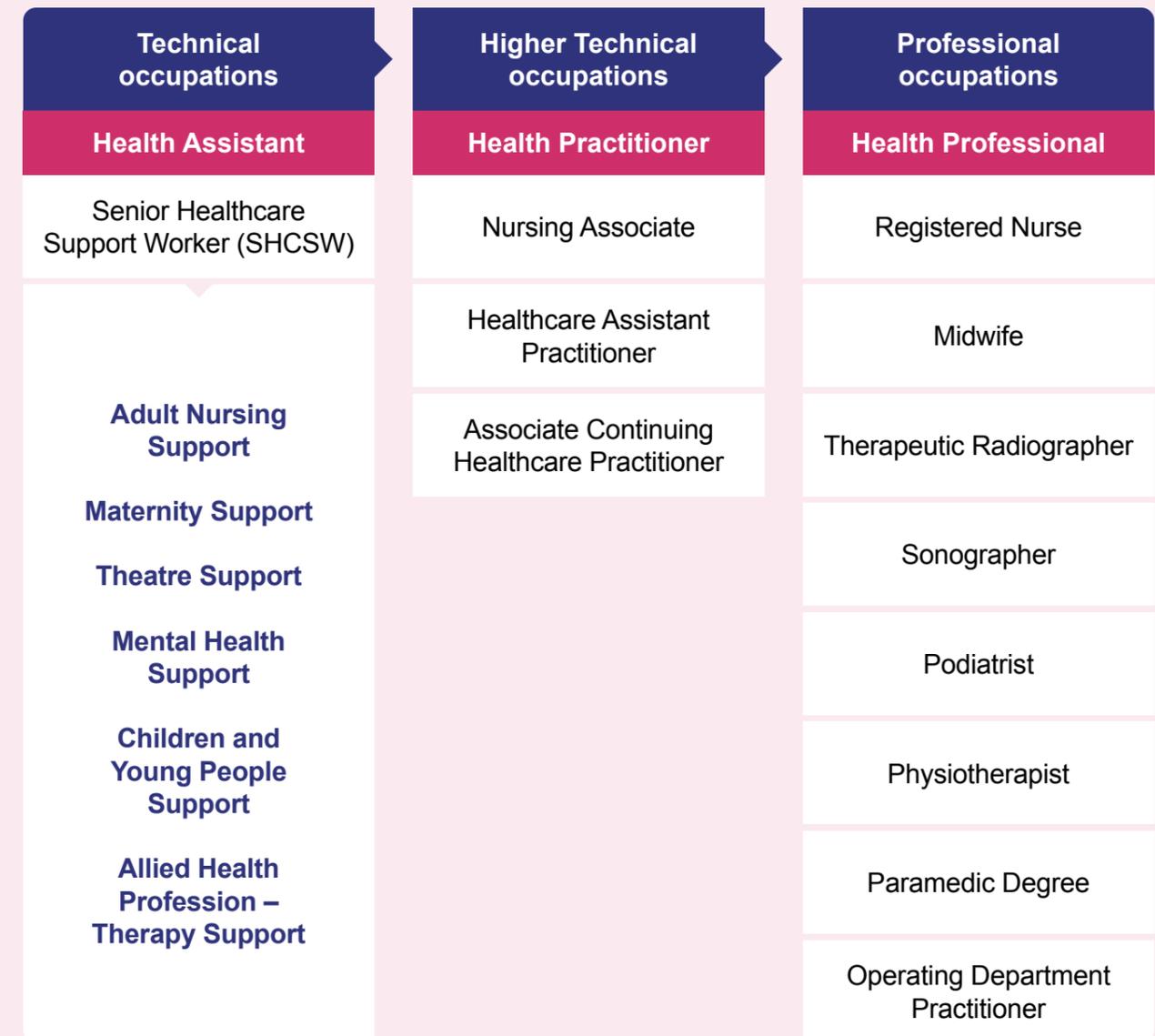
This is a very important apprenticeship for the sector because it helps meet your workforce challenges. It has multiple pathways and covers different occupations and healthcare settings – from hospitals, community teams, day-case units, birthing centres, individuals' homes, nursing or care homes, hospices, mental health support, children and young people support, therapeutic settings and general practice. It is significant in providing a range of exciting progression and widening access opportunities for multiple job roles and professions.

The broad purpose of the SHCSW is to support registered healthcare professionals in the delivery of 'high quality and compassionate specialist health and social care for a range of people' (IfATE, 2022). The SHCSW apprenticeship standard is designed to prepare apprentices for progression into health practitioner and registered health professional occupations, including nursing and midwifery.

The occupational maps presented by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) show how progression from the SHCSW apprenticeship is mapped to higher technical occupations and registered professional roles in the health sector.



## Progression pathways



Learn more



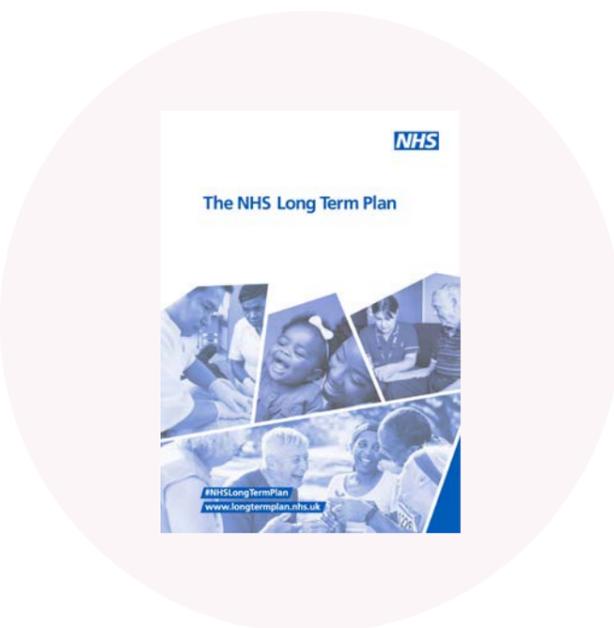
[www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/occupational-maps/](http://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/occupational-maps/)  
[haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/pathways/](http://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/pathways/)

## Barriers to Career Progression

HEP admissions tutors want to be assured that the SHCSW apprenticeship is an adequate preparation for HE level learning on healthcare apprenticeships/programmes. However, the awareness of the value of the SHCSW apprenticeship as an entry route to HE is at best variable and this is perpetuating persistent inequalities. Part of the problem is that apprenticeships are not allocated UCAS tariff points and HEP **recognition of the SHCSW apprenticeship is inconsistent**. These barriers to SHCSW apprentice progression impact on your strategic workforce ambitions.

### Turning away motivated and qualified staff

As an employer you will know and understand the crisis in recruitment to key roles in health and adult social care. **The NHS (2019) reports that 14,000 applicants to nursing fail to get accepted onto courses.** At a time of staff shortage across the NHS alongside high rates of vacancies and staff turnover in healthcare and adult social care, it is unacceptable that many thousands of highly motivated and well-qualified applicants with appropriate work-based experience and workplace practice who wish to make a career or progress to more professional roles in the health service and in adult social care are being denied entry.<sup>1</sup>

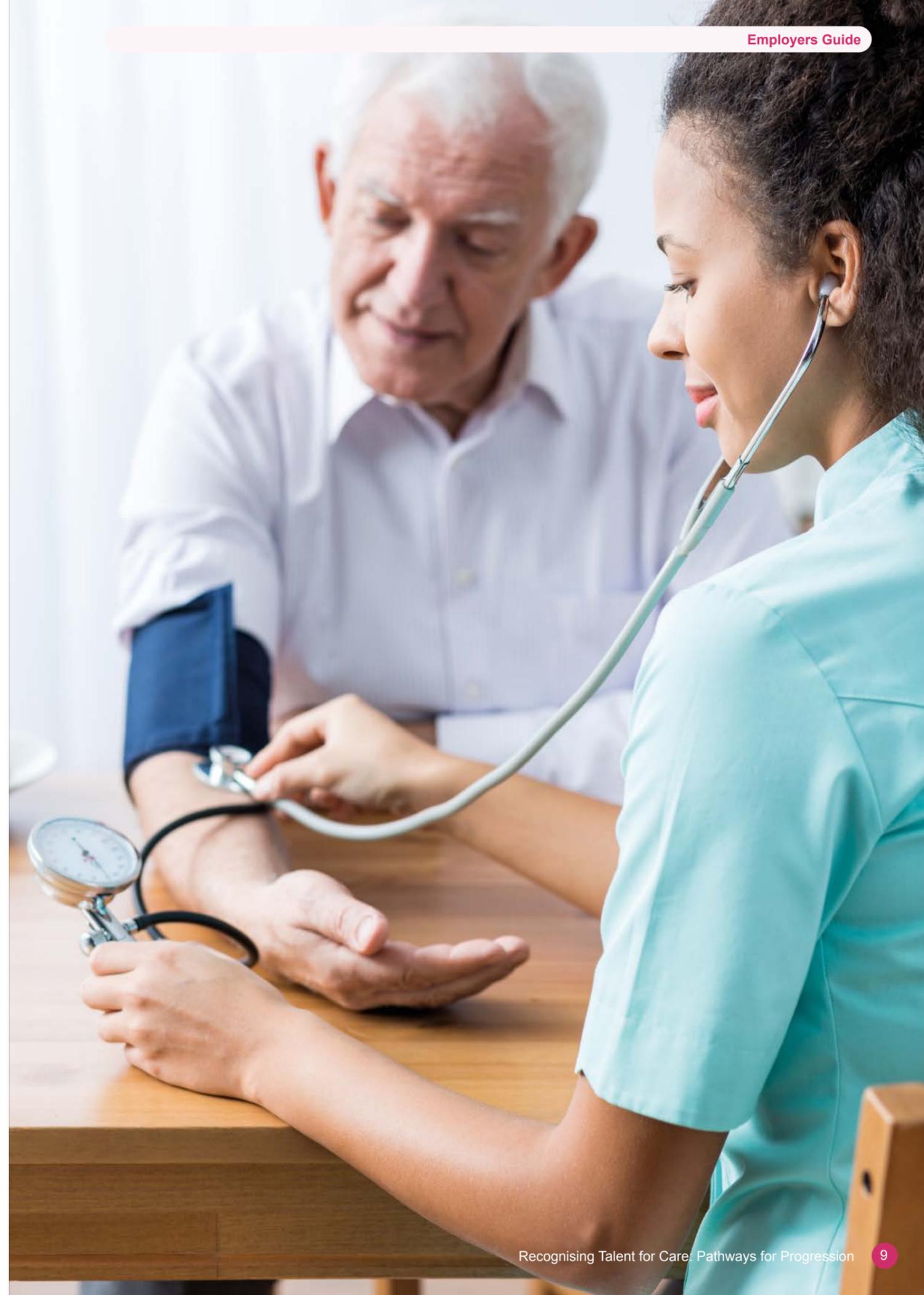


# 14,000

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### Tackling the barriers

The healthcare sector can tackle these barriers by **setting clear expectations with HEP partners regarding the value and recognition of the SHCSW apprenticeship** as a key progression route to support workforce development. The challenge for you as an employer is how to support and challenge HEPs to meet government requirements, while allowing you to maximise your apprenticeship levy, and at the same time, facilitate SHCSW access and entry to HE healthcare professional programmes



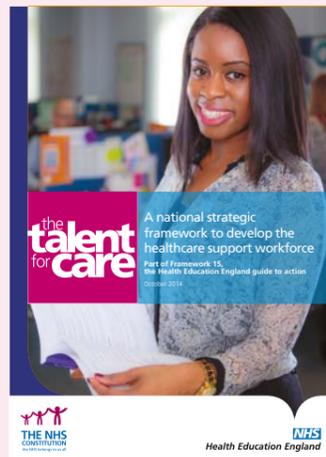
1. NHS (2019) The NHS Long Term Plan, NHS

## Meeting needs

There is no greater need than for your healthcare workers to have visible progression pathways into nursing and allied health professional roles. The 'win' for you as an employer is your existing workforce, can gain access to higher level professional roles as a result of more consistent recognition of their learning on and off-the-job.

Apprenticeships are intended to provide essential career ladders for staff both for new entrants and early/mid careerists. However, we recognise that a **main reason for people leaving your sector is that they do not realise their career progression aspirations.**

This work contributes to delivering on social mobility and 'levelling-up' by enabling a wider range of people to access professional careers in the healthcare sector. It is a means to contribute to the delivery of HEE **Talent for Care** strategy.



**Talent for Care is about:**

### Valuing support staff

...valuing support staff and getting formal recognition through nationally consistent standards that staff could carry with them from job to job.

### Simplifying career progression

...simplifying potential progression routes for support staff, especially for those who want to get into training for registered professions (HEE, 2014)

## Supporting career progression

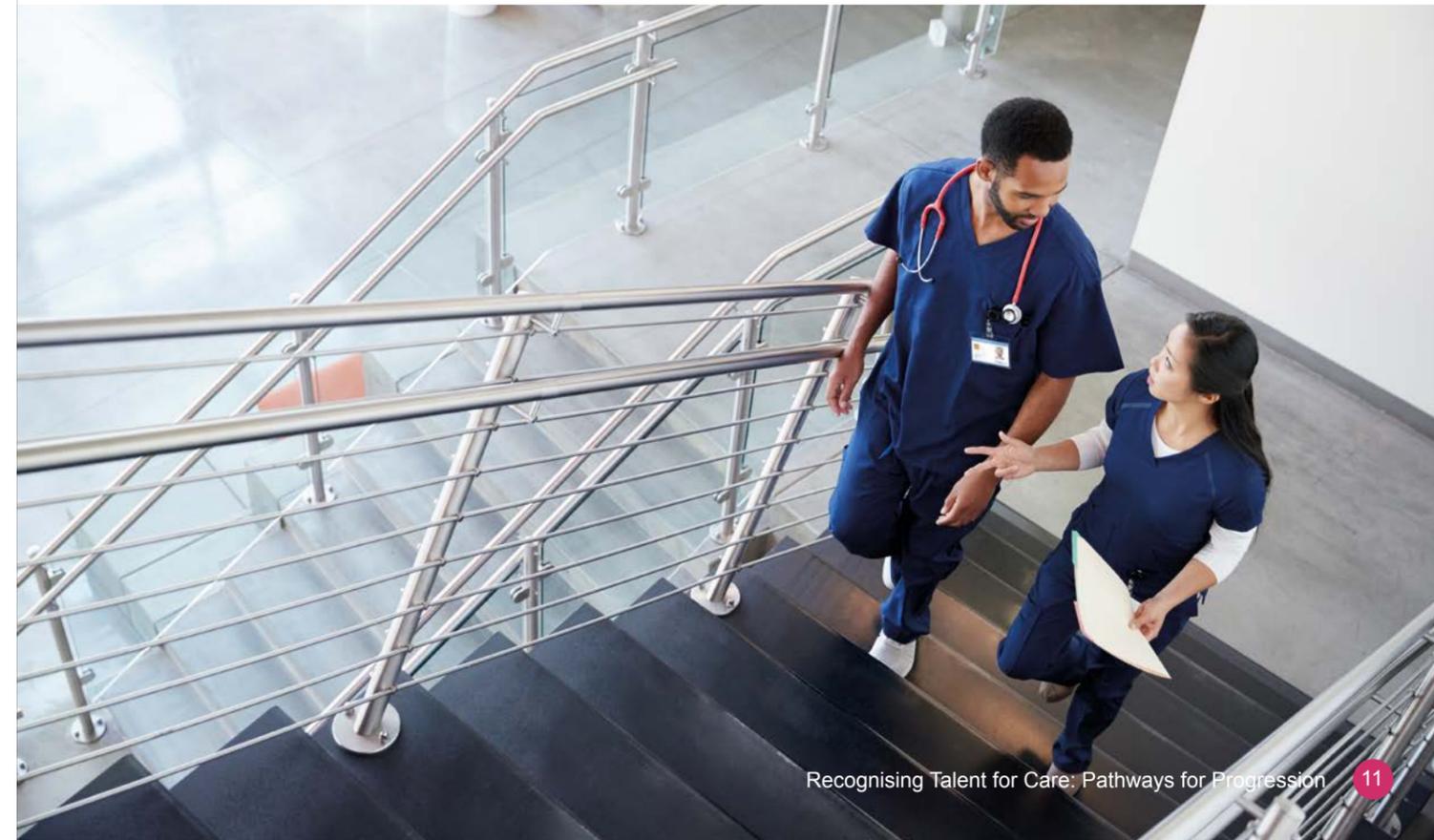
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The work of supporting progression in and through work and in creating routes into healthcare professions aligns with these national initiatives to maximise its social mobility, widening participation, diversity and inclusion impact. The impetus provided by the challenging policy landscape highlights the urgent need to establish the value of this apprenticeship to promote consistency of recognition by HE of the SHCSW apprenticeship.

### The SHCSW Apprenticeship as a way to meet your higher level skills needs

We know that this apprenticeship offers fantastic preparation for career progression in healthcare which in turn meets employers' workforce development needs.

We also know completion of this standard provides an excellent stepping-in point to higher technical and professional registered occupations. By learning both on-and off-the-job, completion of the apprenticeship programme gives apprentices the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to undertake higher level learning.



## Recognising the value of on and off-the-job learning

The SHCSW apprenticeship is not just about the mandatory qualification. An apprenticeship must include both on-the-job and off-the-job learning to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to be fully occupationally competent. In addition to off-the-job training, apprentices must have ‘the opportunity to apply these new skills in a real work environment (in a productive job role) through on-the-job training’<sup>2</sup> (ESFA, 2022, p. 7). This means that to establish the total amount of learning undertaken, both on and off-the-job learning hours need to be considered.

Working with an expert panel of healthcare sector trailblazer employers, we know that SHCSW apprentices will be expected to complete on and off-the-job learning, including the level 3 mandatory qualification, that amounts to over 1,200 learning hours during the two years of training. This is estimated to equate to a credit value of 120 credits<sup>3</sup>. This is important as it will make it easier for apprentices to meet HE entry requirements.



# 1,200

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2. DfE (2022) Apprenticeship funding rules for main providers, August 2022 to July 2023: Version 1, London: ESFA

3. The number of credits is based on the estimated learning hours (where one credit typically represents 10 notional hours of learning). (QAA, 2021)

## Call to action

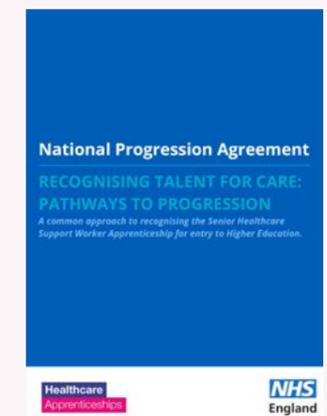
To establish clear progression routes to HE, in partnership with employers, and to assist with ‘opening doors’ to the professions in the healthcare sector, we wish to formalise HEP recognition of the SHCSW apprenticeship standard for entry to HE level healthcare apprenticeships/programmes.

We would like you to be part of a national challenge to inconsistency which has led to your staff – even with good access to skills training and education – being blocked from progressing because they may find their qualifications or past experience are not recognised and valued to enable progression to HE level professions.

By championing the consistency of recognition for the SHCSW apprenticeship standard across the healthcare sector and through your relationships with HE, we can address the barriers and start to maximise the potential for your staff to progress their careers.

We are asking you to liaise directly with your HEP partners to ask if they have signed up to the SHCSW National Progression Agreement to help promote the consistency of recognition that is needed. We would also recommend that you consider whether a HEP has signed up to the agreement whilst selecting a provider and include it in the procurement criteria.

**Contact us [HERE](#) to find out if your HEP partners have signed up.**



## Contact

To find out more, please visit our website:  
[haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk](https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk) or email us at  
[nhsapprenticeships@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:nhsapprenticeships@hee.nhs.uk)