



How do we
make finance
careers
accessible to
everyone?

Socio-Economic Background & Workforce Opportunity

East of England – Year 13 leavers (approximate scale)

- Estimated regional Year 13 cohort: ~25,000 students
- Around 25% nationally are from lower-income backgrounds (FSM eligible)
- That equates to roughly **6,000+ disadvantaged students leaving Year 13 annually**
- **This is a workforce pipeline question — not just a social mobility question.**

Group	Estimated in Cohort	Progress to HE	Approx Count
FSM-eligible	~6,400	28.9%	~1,850
Non-FSM	~18,600	49.0%	~9,100

Those from less advantaged backgrounds are under-represented relative to cohort share — showing a clear equity gap.



What This Means for Pathways

- **What happens to the rest of the cohort?**
 - **HE progression:** ~45–50% overall (estimated)
 - **Employment / Apprenticeship / Training:** ~40–45%
 - **NEET / Unknown:** ~5–10% - (up to 1,860 school leavers go into unemployment)
- **By background**
- FSM/Disadvantaged young people are generally **more represented in the Employed/Training and NEET groups than in HE** compared with peers.
-
- **Key equity issues**
- Pupils from low-income backgrounds are:
 - ~20 percentage points less likely to go into HE than their better-off peers.
 - More likely to experience barriers to progression including:
 - financial constraints
 - lack of careers guidance networks
 - fewer role models in professional careers



Why NHS Finance Should Act



NHS finance pathways targeted at disadvantaged Year 13 leavers

- ✓ Provide a structured, paid
- ✓ Offer **training + qualification routes (AAT/ACCA)**
- ✓ Bypass some barriers to HE (e.g., cost + immediate labour market access)
- ✓ Create social capital and career exposure where it's often missing

Equity rationale

- Aligns with general widening participation goals
- Helps make NHS finance workforce more representative
- Leverages the NHS as a major anchor employer

Barriers for disadvantaged young people

- Lower access to informal careers information
- Fewer family networks in professional jobs
- Higher financial pressure to enter work early
- Lower confidence due to messaging and expectations

What we are doing about it in the NHS

Access accounting – At school



Insights – Leaving school



Apprenticeships – follow on education – offering brighter futures with career progression – open to all.

Access Accountancy – Lorriane Bromley-Martin

What is Access Accountancy?



[Home](#) | [Access Accountancy](#)



5-day in person finance work experience for eligible lower socio-economic students studying in the East of England region



Working with sixth form schools and colleges to offer genuine insight into NHS finance careers, routes into the NHS, study support offers and benefits



Co-ordinated week with time at NHSE, Addenbrookes and Royal Papworth gives a rounded view of opportunities, Trust experience and exposure to executives



Introducing the NHS and specifically NHS Finance as a career



Engage with schools and colleges to introduce the NHS and NHS Finance as a potential career

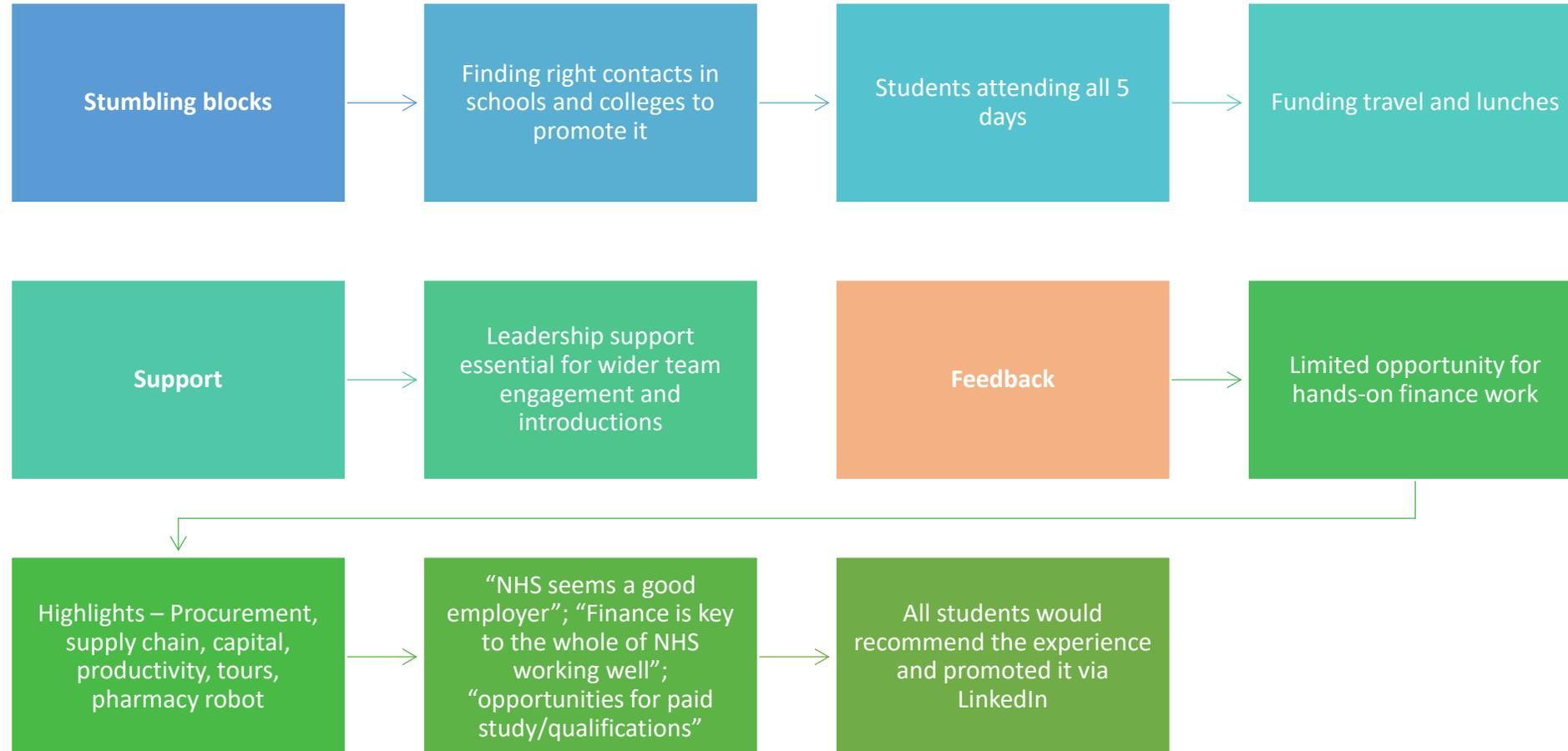


Exposure to various departments and Trusts highlighting how finance runs through all areas of the NHS – capital, procurement, workforce etc.

Barriers, costs and feedback



[Home](#) | [Access Accountancy](#)



Insights – Megan Mulhall



What is the Insights Programme?

Creating opportunities	Establish an entry route into NHS Finance for young people (18+)
Addressing income and ethnicity	Research shows a higher representation of Black (25%) and Asian (22%) individuals in households with persistent low income compared to the 13% average.
Targeting schools / colleges	Collaborate with schools / colleges having a significant number of disadvantaged students Promote the NHS and NHS finance careers
NHS Finance 'Insights' placements	5 placements in the London pilot in 2023 Opened to all regions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 38 placements in 2024• 23 placements in 2025

Some context...

Our NHS finance senior leadership workforce is not reflective of our wider teams and population

- *23% of finance teams in the NHS are from a BAME background, but represent only 8% of our Directors*

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds do not do as well as their counterparts

- *Only 25% of young people eligible for school meals go to university, compared to 45% of their better-off peers*

The NHS has a national graduate scheme to attract future leaders who have a degree

- *With no equivalent programme for people from different backgrounds, are we surprised our senior workforce lacks diversity?*

Why does this matter?

- *Diverse leadership teams and organisations perform better (McKinsey)*
- *Everyone in our workplace should feel like they belong*



Who are we looking for?

For candidates to qualify for the scheme they must meet the below criteria:

- Aged 18+ and attended/attending state school or college, minimum Grade C / 4 in GCSE Maths is desirable but not essential, and
- Have not and do not intend on attending university, and
- The occupation of your main household earner is categorised as a lower socio-economic background, or
- Have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the previous six years
- Have the right to work within the UK

Other than the above, a desire to work in NHS finance and learn new skills are the only other criteria. No previous work experience necessary!

A new generation of senior leaders in the NHS who are able to complement the existing talent to create a more inclusive place to work for our staff, and an outstanding health system for our population.



Timeline

September 2025	Engagement begins – internal and external
September	Engagement begins – internal and external
September onwards	School and college visits take place
October	Applications open – 1 st Oct
End October	Expression of interest closes and organisations are sent MOU to complete by end of November
January	Central team check in with current applicants if still interested
March	National Webinar & Placement Manager training
April	Central team check in with current applicants if still interested
May	Applications close (8 th May), organisations must pull out before applications close if they do not want to be involved anymore (1 st May).
Mid – May	National team initial shortlist
End May / early June	Regional Shortlisting of applications and checking shortlisted candidates against scheme criteria.
Mid - June	Notify shortlisted candidates
End of June / early July	Interviews to take place
Mid July	Confirm success candidates and match with host
Mid July – August	Hosting organisations complete HR enrolment processes
September	Placement begins
September	National induction 1
September	National induction 2
End September / October	Regional inductions day (Region’s decision)
February	National development day 1 – Online
June	National development day 2 – Online
July / August	Central team to circulate feedback to Students and managers
September	Placement ends – circulate certificate Regional send-off (Region’s decision)

2024 Cohort and next steps

37 students completed the 12-month placement

- 15 have secured roles within the NHS
- 1 in a private hospital
- 6 are furthering their education in accountancy
- 2 are staying in the public sector
- 13 students are unsure of next steps or have not let us know yet.

2025 & 2026 Cohorts

2025

- 23 students have been successfully accepted on to the programme and have begun or will begin their placements this month.

2026

- Applications opened on the 1st October
- 81 eligible applications
- 144 enquiries but were not eligible



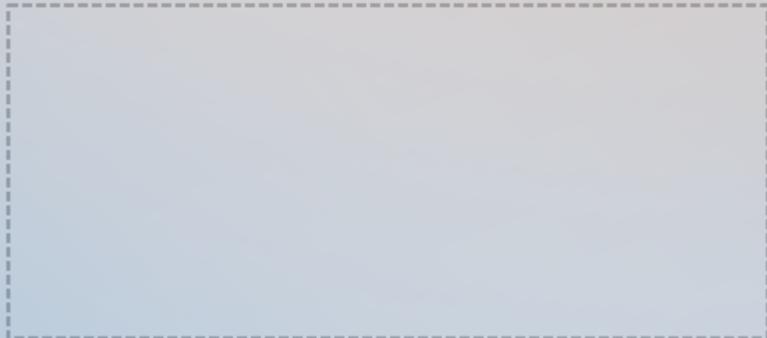
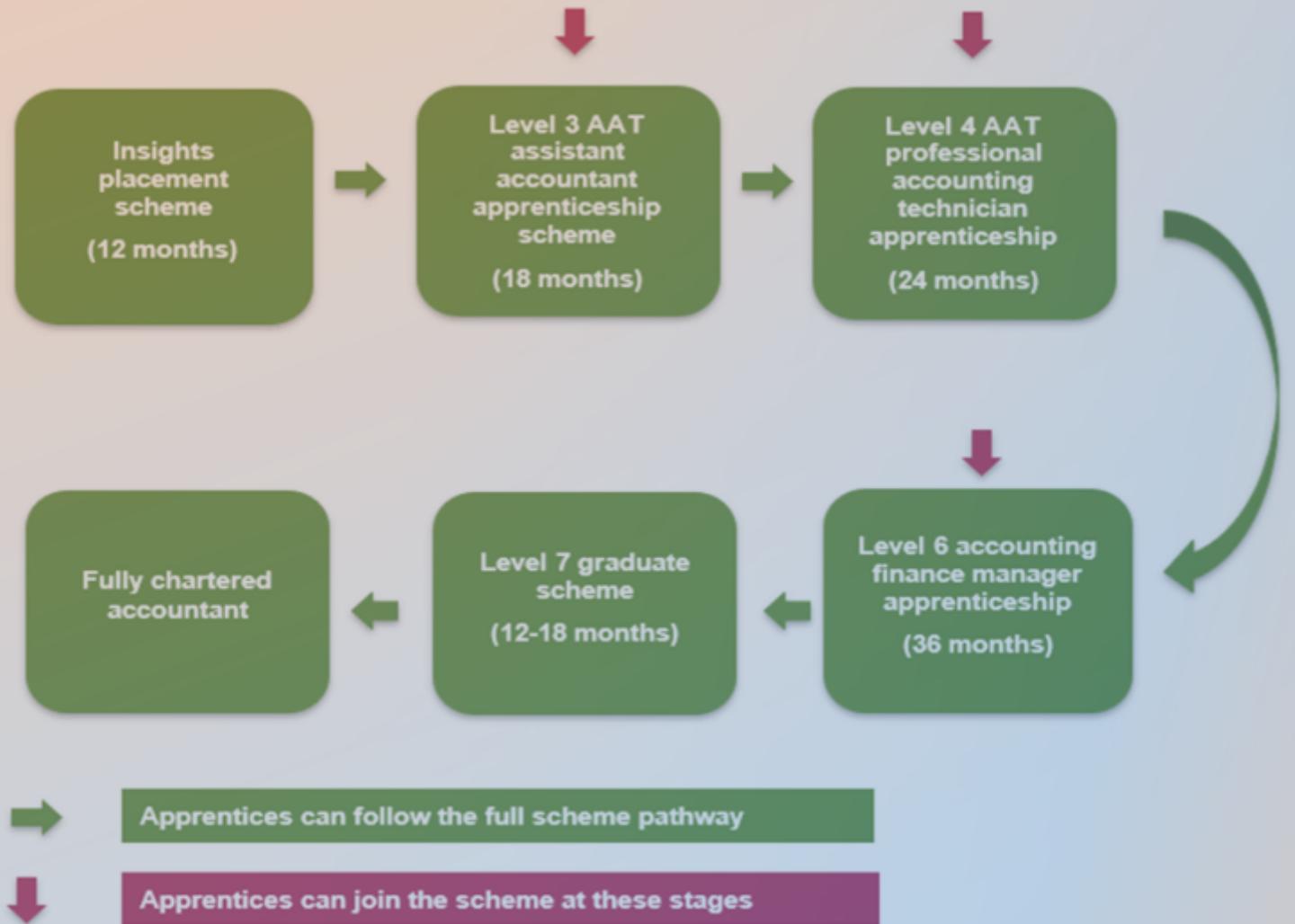
Acknowledgments



- The scheme was a finalist in the UK social mobility awards 2024.
- The scheme won the HSJ Workforce Initiative of the Year award 2025.
- For the 2024 & 2025 Scheme, we worked in partnership with the King's Trust, who were able to provide the students with mentors, wellbeing and financial support.
- CIPFA will provide students with free access to their Careers Hub and access to a Diploma in Finance Skills for Public Sector Manager.

Apprenticeships and
other support – Frances
Khatcherian

Pathway from Insights to professional qualifications (via apprenticeship route)





Overview of Finance Apprenticeships

Work-based learning, recognized qualifications

Structured pathways combine real finance work with study, building skills and credentials.

Popularity and impact

20% of all apprenticeships are in business and finance, underscoring strong demand.

Roles and NHS alignment

From finance assistants to management accountants; NHS tracks support budgeting, reporting, procurement.

Importance for NHS Workforce Development



Retention

Apprenticeships have led to improved retention rates among NHS finance staff, reducing turnover and stabilizing teams.



Skills Alignment

Practical skills development through apprenticeships ensures finance staff capabilities match sector needs and service delivery requirements.



Career Flexibility

Apprenticeships promote flexible career pathways, supporting adaptability and progression within NHS finance functions.

+40%

Higher-role progression for NHS staff from lower-income backgrounds after apprenticeships

Progression Through Finance Qualifications



AAT (Operational Level)

Entry-level qualification focused on foundational finance skills. Suitable for support roles and early-career NHS finance staff.



CIMA (Management Accounting)

Emphasizes management accounting and business strategy. Ideal for NHS roles in planning, analysis, and decision support.



ACCA (Financial Accounting)

Comprehensive coverage of financial accounting, audit, and tax. Prepares for a wide range of NHS finance positions, including senior roles.



ICAEW (Chartered Accountant)

Highest-level qualification with rigorous standards. Best suited for NHS finance leadership and strategic roles.

Apprenticeship Levels & Career Outcomes



Intermediate (Level 2/3)

Entry-level roles such as Finance Assistant. Pathway to further study and skill development. Supports foundational diversity in NHS finance teams.



Advanced (Level 4/5)

Progression to Assistant Finance Manager within 3 years. Increased salary and job stability. Bridges gap to specialist and managerial positions.



Degree (Level 6+)

Achieves chartered status and leadership roles. Highest salary potential and long-term career fulfillment. Drives diversity in senior NHS finance positions.



Career Impact

Faster progression to managerial roles, increased pay and stability, and improved vacancy fulfillment and diversity across NHS finance.

How the Apprenticeship Levy Works for NHS Organisations

Mechanism, funding use, and NHS-specific implications

Overview of the levy

Introduced in 2017, employers with payrolls over £3m– including NHS trusts–pay 0.5% of their pay bill into a digital fund dedicated to apprenticeship training.

Using funds in NHS finance

Levy funds can be used directly to cover approved training costs for finance apprentices, supporting entry-level pathways and progression across finance roles.

Utilisation and challenges

Most trusts fully utilise funds, though some face 24-month fund expiry and administrative complexity, risking unspent balances returning to the Treasury.

Strategic impact

The levy incentivises NHS employers to invest in apprenticeships, aligning workforce development with service needs and strengthening long-term capability.

£4K-
£15K+

Typical NHS apprenticeship cost per participant by level

Funded via levy or 5% co-investment; added support for eligible 16-18s and under-25s with disabilities

NHS Talent Pipeline and Social Mobility



Talent Pipeline Sustainability

Finance apprenticeships ensure a steady flow of qualified candidates for advanced NHS roles, reducing external recruitment and supporting workforce planning.



Salary & Job Satisfaction

Apprentices earn 10-20% more and report higher job satisfaction than peers without apprenticeships, according to longitudinal studies.



Social Mobility

Widening access through apprenticeships offers career opportunities regardless of socioeconomic background, advancing NHS equity and inclusion goals.



Community Wellbeing

Improved career prospects and inclusion contribute to broader community health and socioeconomic outcomes over time.



Eastern NHS Finance

Student Network

Supporting NHS finance staff on their study journey

**free, online
support for
everyone studying
CCAB or AAT**

The study support network is a safe space for students from across the region to connect on their study journey

What is the network all about?

- To provide every student and organisation in the region access to a study support network covering all the main accounting bodies and professional qualifications (AAT, ACCA, CIMA, CIPFA, ICAEW, etc...)
- To support colleagues on their study journey and draw on the experience of others
- To ease the pressures of study by having open discussions and ultimately help people stay on track and get qualified

How it works

- Monthly study group meetings
- Dedicated MS Teams channel for Q&A, notices, advice, suggestions
- Mix of informal sessions and more formal sessions with guest speakers such as First Intuition (training provider)
- Study buddy scheme to link people in line with the different accounting bodies and stages of study

Benefits

- Networking opportunities – a chance to link with colleagues at different organisations across the region
- Sharing experiences
- Celebrating successes and supporting through the challenges
- Building relationships with external parties (First Intuition, ICAEW, etc...)
- Learning about different study options and routes through study.
- Everyone has a voice - meetings are tailored to the needs of the group

How to join

Just get in touch via e-mail or MS Teams and we'll add you to the group and invite you to the meetings!

- Sam King, Cambridge University Hospitals – Samuel.king5@nhs.net
- Martha Biza, Royal Papworth Hospital – Martha.biza1@nhs.net

East of England One-Stop Shop



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Access our regional programme of events via the Skills Development Network (SDN).

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

HFMA EASTERN BRANCH

See the programme of events coming up in our region.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Leadership Academy

EAST OF ENGLAND NHS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Access leadership resources and events from the East of England

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



ONE NHS FINANCE EVENTS

See all the upcoming events from One NHS Finance.

[VIEW EVENTS](#)