

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for employers applying via a partnership

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1. General

What is the Workforce Development Fund?

The Workforce Development Fund (WDF) is a funding opportunity for adult social care employers in England.

It's a finite pot of money which allows you to reclaim some of the costs incurred developing your paid workforce.

WDF is supported by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) who enable the funding to be disbursed to adult social care employers by Skills for Care and our partners across England.

What will WDF fund?

The WDF will fund a range of qualifications, learning programmes and digital modules that:

- Skills for Care endorsed, promotes and in many cases has been involved in developing.
- Are named on this [list](#)
- have been certificated between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.

Please check the list prior to commissioning any learning you intend to claim funding for.

It is important to note that all of the courses in the WDF list of qualifications and learning will be funded during the 2023-24 financial year. The government is also due to launch a new fund for training and professional development to support members of the adult social care workforce to develop in their roles and progress in their careers, as outlined in the ['Next Steps to put People at the Heart of Care'](#) published in April. Some courses may be removed from the WDF when this new fund launches as new learners will have the opportunity to claim for training costs through the new fund. Please note, any learners enrolled in eligible learning prior to the new fund being launched will remain eligible for and receive support through the WDF.

Who can claim WDF?

All organisations that provide an adult social care service and directly employ paid care staff in England can claim the fund. This includes:

- hospices whose adult social care workers are not NHS funded;
- workers recruited from overseas
- the fund cannot be used to develop volunteers.

How do I claim WDF?

There are three routes to claim WDF:

1. Through a WDF Partnership – area or national
2. Directly through Skills for Care as there isn't a local WDF partnership
3. Directly through Skills for Care as a large national organisation if you made a successful application to us.

It is essential you join a WDF partnership to enable you to make a claim unless there isn't a partnership operating in your area, in which case you can make a direct claim. See our website for a full list of local authority areas in which you can claim directly.

Large organisations operating in multiple parts of England can join a national partnership to claim funding.

What is a WDF partnership?

The majority of WDF partnerships are led by local organisations with strong connections to adult social care employers in an area. Often the WDF partnerships offer wider social care related services that can add additional benefits to those who join them. All partnerships are open to new members. WDF partnerships help to distribute the WDF.

Is this funding guaranteed?

No, as the funding is finite. As the funding year progresses, there is a chance the money will run out. There are simple ways to give your organisation the best opportunity to benefit from the funding that is available:

- join a WDF partnership at the earliest opportunity
- keep in regular contact your partnership during the year (April to March)
- check whether your partnership has limits on the amount of funding you can claim (to maximise the number of employers who benefit from the fund)
- update your Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) account(s) in line with the advertised requirements early in the funding year
- submit claims on receipt of the learner's certificate
- set aside some administration time to process claims.

What is the maximum funding that can be claimed for each learner in 2023-24?

A maximum of £2,000 can be claimed per learner per funding year. It is possible to claim funding to support more than one qualification or learning programme/module per learner up to the limit of £2,000.

Why has WDF been limited to claiming a maximum of £2,000 per learner per financial year?

Skills for Care wants to expand the reach of WDF to ensure that as many employers

as possible within the adult social care sector have the opportunity to benefit from the fund.

Will the WDF fund the Care Certificate, Food Hygiene, First Aid, Moving and Assisting and other induction and refresher courses?

No. The fund is to support the continuing professional development of staff and will not fund induction or mandatory training. There is currently funding available to support new recruits into the sector and for some essential refresher training for existing staff for a limited time. For more information click [here](#).

What do I do if I have issues with learning providers?

Learning providers are chosen by employers at your own discretion.

If you're unhappy with a learning provider, you should consider alternative providers. Any issues between employers and learning providers should be resolved directly between the parties involved.

You can use Skills for Care's [endorsed provider directory](#) to search for high quality learning providers

Our learning provider has gone into administration. We had already paid the learning provider, and our staff are part-way through their qualifications. What do we do in this situation?

If it isn't possible for you to reclaim your money from the learning provider, then the best solution is to ensure your learners have possession of their learner portfolios (theirs by legal right), and look to negotiate a deal with a new provider to deliver the remainder of the qualifications from the learners' part way point, rather than starting the qualifications again from the beginning.

A learning provider has offered to deliver qualifications to my staff and has assured me that these qualifications are fully funded through the WDF. OR, when looking for a learning provider, their website states that the qualifications they deliver are fully funded through the WDF. Is this correct?

In most cases, no. This is because:

- the DHSC provides a finite amount of money and each partnership receives a limited amount of funding
- as the funding year progresses, there is a chance the money will run out
- employers need to pay the learning provider for the learning that is being commissioned and then reclaim a funding contribution through their WDF partnership on completion
- there is a funding cap of £2,000 per learner
- some partnerships may cap organisations' claims

- we advise that you seek clarification from any learning providers making such promises as they cannot provide this guarantee.

Please note: The WDF should not be confused with other Government funding initiatives, such as the Education and Skills Funding Agency who commission learning providers directly. Some employers choose a combination of Education and Skills Funding Agency and WDF funding to help develop their workforce.

For the most comprehensive information about WDF please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/wdfpartnership or contact your WDF partnership. Our [Guide to developing your staff](#) provides guidance on how you can develop your workforce.

Can funds be allocated per unit?

No. Funding is claimed on the completion and certification of a full qualification, learning programme or digital module. This should be considered in terms of the length of time the organisation will need to wait before funding can be claimed.

Why is it only possible to claim funding for learning programmes delivered by Skills for Care's endorsed providers?

Skills for Care is confident that the content of these programmes meets employer need. Our endorsed providers have completed a quality assurance process with us to demonstrate that they deliver high quality learning and in applying for a licence to deliver the funded learning programmes have demonstrated that they have the capability to deliver the learning outcomes specified.

Why can I only claim funding for RQF diplomas that have been approved by Skills for Care?

Skills for Care has developed qualification specifications in conjunction with sector representatives to outline the mandatory content of these qualifications and will approve qualifications developed to these specifications. Any approved qualifications will show the qualification approved by Skills for Care logo. We will maintain a list of approved qualifications on [our website](#) as they become available. Funding is assigned to these qualifications because we are confident that they meet sector need.

What should I do if I have an issue with my WDF partnership in relation to accessing the funding?

Discuss the issue with your WDF partnership to try to reach a satisfactory outcome.

If you are not satisfied with the partnership's response: Contact the partnership in writing, clearly setting out what the issue is along with any supporting evidence and request a written response.

If you are not satisfied with the partnership's written response: Discuss the issue with your Skills for Care Locality Manager (details can be found [here](#)) and share the written correspondence by email, i.e. what you sent to the partnership and the response received.

The Locality Manager will review and may contact the partnership for further information before emailing a response to you.

If you are still not satisfied following the response from your Locality Manager you can make a formal complaint to Skills for Care in writing, by following our [feedback policy](#).

You will be expected to provide copies of all written correspondence relating to the issue between you and the partnership and between you and your locality manager.

A final written response will be made by Skills for Care.

Before making a complaint, you should consider the following points:

- the WDF is limited and is a resource to the sector
- funding is not guaranteed
- partnerships are expected to ensure that as many employers as possible can benefit from the funding and you may not receive funding for all qualifications and learning that you submit
- partnerships may operate an allocation or capping system for managing their funding allocation and Skills for Care sees this as reasonable and fair
- partnerships are expected to increase their membership each funding year to maximise the number of employers who benefit from the funding. This means more employers will be accessing the same amount of funding so the amount received by any employer may decrease year on year
- Skills for Care recommends that you update your Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) account(s) and start to submit claims to your partnership as early in the funding year as possible to maximise their chance of successfully claiming some funding
- leaving submission of a claim until very close to the end of the funding year means that the partnership may have run out of funding and your claim may not be paid
- if you have already received a substantial amount of funding, or you have left it until close to the end of the financial year to update your ASC-WDS or to submit any claim, your WDF partnership may not be able to pay your claim. In this situation, making a formal complaint to Skills for Care will not change the position and you should not expect to receive funding
- where a partnership has not acted in accordance with our contractual requirements or has not effectively supported you, we will consider the evidence presented to us and will also consult the partnership in reaching a conclusion.

You can access the requirements that Skills for Care expects partnerships to exercise when disbursing WDF [here](#).

2. Eligibility criteria

What do I need to do in order to be eligible to claim WDF?

To claim through a WDF partnership:

- Join a WDF partnership by completing a members' declaration form and submitting it to the partnership in good time. Partnerships must submit this to Skills for Care by 29 February 2024 please allow for sufficient time for them to meet this deadline;
- Contact and liaise with your WDF partnership directly – learning providers cannot do this on your behalf;
- Meet the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS), requirements for WDF as set out below;
- Submit valid evidence to the partnership to claim funding;
- Keep the partnership lead updated as to what you hope to claim for during the funding year.

To claim directly through Skills for Care:

- Ensure there is no partnership operating in your area;
- Complete and submit a direct access declaration form by 29 February 2024;
- Sign and return a grant letter;
- Submit funding claims and evidence directly to Skills for Care. Third parties such as learning providers cannot do this on your behalf.

To claim as a large employer who has a grant agreement with Skills for Care:

- Complete your organisation declaration form if you have not held a grant in the previous funding year or if you wish to add services to your grant;
- Sign and return your grant letter;
- Meet the ASC-WDS requirements;
- Submit funding claims directly to Skills for Care. Third parties such as learning providers cannot do this on your behalf.

What is the ASC-WDS?

The ASC-WDS is a national database of information about social care organisations and replaced the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC). It can be used to help employers benchmark how they compare with other care organisations and crucially provides information to Government about the changing needs of the adult social care sector, informing policy and practice. Usage of the ASC-WDS system as advertised is a requirement for employers wishing to access WDF.

For more information about how to use the ASC-WDS and to learn more about the benefits of this resource please visit our [website](#). To login or register for an account please visit <https://asc-wds.skillsforcare.org.uk>

What are the ASC-WDS requirements in relation to accessing WDF?

Recipients of the fund are required to ensure and confirm that the required fields within ASC-WDS are accurate and up-to-date in line with the eligibility criteria:

1. You must fully complete and update an ASC-WDS workplace record on or after 1 April 2023.
2. You must fully complete individual worker records for all staff with a minimum of 90% of the data completed. These must be fully updated on or after 1 April 2023.
3. Individual records for workers completed before 1 April 2023 which are included in the 90% calculation must be both fully completed and updated.

A workplace's ASC-WDS account is expected to be an accurate reflection of its service and workforce. If your service or workforce changes significantly during the year it is expected that your ASC-WDS will be updated. Failure to do so may affect your ability to claim funding.

How can I tell if I have met the ASC-WDS requirements and how will eligibility be monitored?

You must ensure that your data is up to date.

Single workplaces: When logged in as a single workplace, check eligibility by going to 'Check your WDF data'

- This in-browser function will show you whether you have met eligibility at workplace level and staff record level and will highlight areas where more data is required.
- Meeting requirements - The overview page will tell you if you have met the requirements for this financial year and the date you met eligibility.
- Not Meeting requirements – The overview page will tell you if you have not yet met requirements – Click 'View your WDF data' to see which areas need to be addressed.
- If, after meeting eligibility, you make changes to your workplace or staff records do not worry – click 'Keep your WDF data up to date' to see what needs addressing for next financial year. You will still meet the criteria up to 31 March.
- **Parent/subsidiary accounts:** You have the same functionality as single workplaces, but for all your workplaces.

Click 'Check your WDF data' – your overview page will say meeting criteria once all your workplaces have met the requirements. To check each workplace individually click 'View your workplaces'.

If you have met eligibility in previous years, you will need to confirm the answers are still correct after 1 April.

NHS Digital expects a return from Local Authorities on the ASC-WDS. Does this also meet the criteria for claiming WDF?

The local authority workforce return for NHS Digital is a different set of ASC-WDS requirements than the WDF so you won't automatically be able to claim funding. To view the full ASC-WDS requirements for the WDF please [click here](#).

Can the Workforce Development Fund be accessed for shared lives carers?

Yes, as long as the claiming organisation has incurred the learning and development costs for the shared lives carer and meets the eligibility criteria for the fund.

How should shared lives carer information be recorded in ASC-WDS?

- all shared lived schemes have the option to include shared lives carer worker information in their ASC-WDS account(s) **in addition** to that of their **directly** employed workers (e.g. co-ordinators)
- local authorities should include the scheme as part of their annual return and have the option to provide the shared lives carer information
- recording shared lives carer information: if you decide to include shared lives carers then they should be recorded on your workplace record in your total staff figure and a staff record should be completed for each carer with 'Other' selected for their Contract type
- all other information should be completed in accordance with the staff record requirements.

Can one of my workplaces access WDF through multiple partnerships/grants?

No, a workplace can only claim WDF through one partnership/grant at any one time. If for any reason during the funding year an establishment wishes to access WDF via a different partnership they will need to:

- complete a new member's declaration form so that Skills for Care knows which partnership they want to join
- notify the current partnership that they wish to leave.

Large national organisations will need to:

- inform the contracts unit if a subsidiary needs to be removed from your grant.

Subsidiaries of large national organisations who have a direct grant agreement with Skills for Care cannot join WDF partnerships to access further funds.

A workplace can only claim funding via one WDF grant. Does this mean that as an employer I have to claim all WDF via one grant?

No. Every workplace has a unique ASC-WDS ID. In this context, a workplace is an individual care service or location for which an employer has an ASC-WDS ID. An employer may have multiple workplaces.

Each workplace, identified by its ASC-WDS ID, can only be linked to one WDF partnership/grant. Employers will need to link each workplace to their local WDF partnership (if not part of a national partnership or accessing a large employer grant agreement).

For large national organisations that have a WDF grant agreement with Skills for Care, their workplaces are not able to join a WDF partnership and all funds must be claimed via their national agreement.

How do I transfer from one WDF partnership to another?

To join another partnership:

- you will need to complete a member's declaration form and submit this to the new partnership
- the new partnership will then submit the member's declaration form to Skills for Care who will approve or decline the request
- if accepted by Skills for Care, any previous partnership agreement that was in place will be immediately terminated.

I am claiming money for learning and development from another public funding source, can I make a claim under the WDF? or, my staff are accessing qualifications which are being funded through another source of public funding, can I make a claim under the WDF?

Employers should review the points below and then decide whether to make a claim for WDF.

1. The WDF is a contribution to the cost of paid employees undertaking vocational qualifications and other learning from our list of funded qualifications and learning. This funding allows you to claim from more than one source.
2. Each funding source will have its own rules/requirements and it is the responsibility of the recipient of the funding to make sure that they understand and adhere to the rules of the funding they are accessing.
3. WDF is a retrospective funding stream. The employer must have already incurred all costs prior to claiming a contribution towards these costs from WDF. The overarching principle of the WDF is that employers cannot make a profit from their employees undertaking training. You cannot claim for costs that you have not directly incurred.
4. Where employers are claiming from more than one source of public funding they must ensure that they do not claim the same cost from more than one

source as this would constitute double funding and is not allowed. If your staff are completing qualifications which have been funded through another source of public funding, you cannot include any costs such as registration, training delivery and certification when calculating your training costs which have been covered by other funding.

5. It is an employers' responsibility to ensure that they do not claim more funding than the cost to them of employees undertaking training. Direct costs such as course fees, employees' salaries and backfill if required (i.e. wage replacement costs) can be included for this fund. For each qualification or learning programme/module the employer cannot claim back more than the advertised WDF contribution, even if the costs incurred exceed this.
6. Employers must ensure that they have records in place to evidence the costs of any funding claims they make.
7. The evidence requirement for claiming WDF for qualifications, learning programmes and modules is a copy of the learner's certificate which includes the advertised criteria, set out in section 3 of this document and has a date of issue between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.

I am accessing 'free' training through a learning provider - am I able to make a claim under the WDF?

Learning which is advertised as 'free' is sometimes available from learning providers where they are receiving funding from another body to cover the cost of delivery, such as the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Where this is the case, claims can still be made under WDF for associated costs, such as employees' salaries while they are undertaking training, coaching and mentoring costs, external venue costs for the training, cost of expert witness testimony and if required backfill (wage replacement costs).

This is a retrospective funding stream and all costs must have been incurred prior to claiming a contribution towards these costs from WDF. See question above 'I am claiming money for learning and development from another public funding source, can I make a claim under the WDF?'

The evidence requirement for claiming for associated costs of qualifications, learning programmes and digital learning modules is a copy of the learner's certificate which includes the advertised criteria and has a date of issue between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.

Employers must ensure that they have records in place to evidence the costs of any funding claims they make and provide these when requested by the partnership, Skills for Care, the DHSC or an authorised representative acting on their behalf. Where associated costs are being claimed these records may contain staff salary information, timesheets, invoices for external venue costs etc. as appropriate. You

cannot claim for costs that you have not directly incurred or that have been covered by alternative funding.

My organisation pays the apprenticeship levy, can I make a claim under the WDF? (The response below is also relevant to organisations who receive transferred levy funds.)

The apprenticeship levy can only be used to pay training delivery and end-point assessment costs. The levy is a tax being applied by Government so it would not be appropriate to allow public money to offset it.

You can claim WDF alongside the apprenticeship levy but it will not be possible to use the WDF towards training delivery and end-point assessment costs. However, the WDF can be used towards the associated costs of training so for levy paying employers this is what the fund would be claimed towards.

Employers should review the points below and then decide whether to make a claim for WDF.

1. The WDF is a contribution to the cost of employees undertaking vocational qualifications and other learning from our list of funded qualifications and learning. This funding allows you to claim from more than one source.
2. Each funding source will have its own rules/requirements and it is the responsibility of the recipient of the funding to make sure that they understand and adhere to the rules of the funding they are accessing.
3. WDF is a retrospective funding stream. The employer must have already incurred all costs prior to claiming a contribution towards these costs from WDF. The overarching principle of the WDF is that employers cannot make a profit from their employees undertaking training. You cannot claim for costs that you have not directly incurred.
4. Where employers are claiming from more than one source of public funding they must ensure that they do not claim the same cost from more than one source as this would constitute double funding and is not allowed. If your staff are completing qualifications which have been funded through another source of public funding, you cannot include any costs such as registration, training delivery, end point assessment and certification when calculating your training costs which have been covered by other funding.
5. It is an employers' responsibility to ensure that they do not claim more funding than the cost to them of employees undertaking training. Direct costs such as course fees, employees' salaries and backfill if required (i.e. wage replacement costs) can be included for this fund. For each qualification or learning programme/module the employer cannot claim back more than the advertised WDF contribution, even if the costs incurred exceed this.
6. Employers must ensure that they have records in place to evidence the costs of any funding claims they make.

7. The evidence requirement for claiming WDF for qualifications, learning programmes and modules is a copy of the learner's certificate which includes the advertised criteria, set out in section 3 of this document and has a date of issue between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.

When working out the total cost of learning and end-point assessment, levy paying employers need to exclude the cost of training delivery and end-point assessment which is covered by the levy and calculate based on the remaining costs such as the 20% off the job learning time or wage replacement if they have to bring in cover while the apprentice is undertaking training/off the job learning. The evidence of costs should be retained on file by the employer and they will use the diploma and final standard certificates as set out above to evidence their claims.

My organisation does not pay the apprenticeship levy, but we do employ apprentices and access funding towards this. Can we still claim the WDF?

Non-levy paying employers pay 5% of the training delivery costs and the Government pays the remaining 95%. This is separate to the WDF. When calculating the total cost of learning to determine whether the WDF can be claimed, the funds that you have directly paid towards training delivery (which would be a maximum of £150 on an apprenticeship standard capped at £3,000¹) can be factored into your total cost of learning. The 95% from the government (£2,850 in this example) cannot because that would constitute double funding and that is not allowed.

The information set out in points 1 to 7 under the question above 'My organisation pays the apprenticeship levy, can I make a claim under the WDF?' should be used to answer this question.

I am a levy paying employer and have used all my apprenticeship levy. I am therefore accessing funding for apprenticeships from an alternative source of public funding. Can I still access the WDF?

Please see the above question, 'My organisation does not pay the apprenticeship levy, but we do employ apprentices and access funding towards this. Can we still claim the WDF?' You should apply the answer to this question when deciding whether to access the WDF for those learners who are not being funded through the levy.

My organisation works with young people transitioning into adults' services. Are we eligible to claim WDF?

We recognise this is a grey area as transition doesn't fit neatly into either children's or adult workforces. For the purpose of the WDF, if the staff are working primarily with people aged 18 years and over, your organisation will be eligible to claim. If they

¹ Example based on funding band for the Adult Care Worker and Lead Adult Care Worker standards with a start date before 26 June 2023

are working primarily with people aged under 18 then we will be unable to accept a claim. It's your judgment call, as you will know the make-up of your client group.

3. Evidence requirements

What is the evidence to claim a qualification?

The evidence to claim a qualification is a copy of the learner's certificate from the awarding organisation which must contain the following information:

- candidate name
- candidate registration number
- unique learner number
- name of qualification
- qualification code as per the list of funded qualifications and learning
- the date of issue of the certificate must be between 1 January 2023 - 31 March 2024
- name of the awarding organisation
- name of the learning provider or centre number.

What is the evidence to claim an apprenticeship standard?

The evidence to claim an apprenticeship standard is a copy of the learner's diploma certificate to claim the diploma within the apprenticeship standard (full detail as set out in the above question, what is the evidence to claim a qualification) and a copy of the final apprenticeship standard certificate. The final apprenticeship standard certificate must contain the following information:

- candidate name
- unique learner number
- name of the apprenticeship standard
- apprenticeship standard code as per the list of funded qualifications and learning (this can be written on)
- the date of award must be between 1 January 2023 - 31 March 2024
- the certificate must be issued by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE).

What is the evidence to claim a learning programme?

The evidence to claim for a learning programme is a copy of the learner's completion certificate from the learning provider which must contain the following information:

- candidate name
- candidate date of birth (this can be written on)
- name of learning programme completed

- our code for the learning programme completed as per the list of funded qualifications and learning (this can be written on, e.g. LTS for Lead to Succeed.)
- the date of issue of the certificate/completion of the course must be between 1 January 2023 - 31 March 2024
- name of endorsed learning provider (must be a Skills for Care endorsed provider who is licenced to deliver the learning programme).

What is the evidence to claim a digital learning module?

The evidence to claim for a digital learning module is a copy of the learner's completion certificate which is available on completion of the digital module and must contain the following information:

- candidate name
- candidate date of birth (this can be written on)
- name of digital module completed
- our code for the digital module completed as per the list of funded qualifications and learning (this can be written on, e.g. IMLM for the leading and managing in adult social care module)
- the date of issue of the certificate/completion of the module must be between 1 January 2023 – 31 March 2024
- Skills for Care logo.

What is a Unique Learner Number* (ULN)?

A unique learner number is a 10 digit number which is allocated to a learner and will be theirs for life. This links to the personal learning record which is a lifelong, verified record of a learner's qualification achievements. Learning providers will be able to obtain a ULN for any learner who does not have one.

How do I claim for candidates if their name has changed due to marriage/divorce etc.?

Submit the claim as normal but include a brief letter to advise which candidate has had the name change providing the existing and the new details. We can then update our records and any further claims will not require the same letter.

Where can I find guidance/information on the taxation aspect of the payments?

Skills for Care does not provide any specific guidance for the taxable treatment of WDF grants to recipients. The HMRC web site (www.hmrc.gov.uk) advises, 'Financial assistance in the form of grants is subject to the normal taxation rules' therefore we would advise you to seek guidance from your dedicated professional advisors as to the tax treatment for your case.