

# T Levels in health and care

April 2025

# About us

NHS Employers is the employers' organisation for the NHS in England. We support workforce leaders and represent employers to develop a sustainable workforce and be the best employers they can be. We also manage the relationships with NHS trade unions on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

# Introduction

This guide offers comprehensive support for employers and educators, including practical insights, real-world examples and implementation strategies to help embed T Levels effectively within health and care settings.

To explore our full range of case studies, articles and resources, [visit our T Level hub](#).

# What are T Levels

T Levels are delivered by many schools and colleges. They are taught full time and include an industry placement, with up to two employers (or three if part of an employer network), for a minimum of 315 hours (approximately 45 days). This can include up to 35 hours of work taster activities, delivered in an employment setting. T Levels are not currently available for adult learners.

Although students will complete their industry placement in an employment setting, they will not be an employee and are not required to be paid, though some employers choose to pay their students and/or offer them a supplementary bank role for paid employment.

There is a full range of T Level courses available which will support the NHS including: health, science, business services, childcare, digital, facilities management and HR. View the [full list of T Levels](#) and the occupations they can lead to on completion.



T Level programmes provide students with broad knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary for employment in an occupation or industry related to their field of study. In the second year students will study an occupational specialism, a deep-dive into one area of their chosen T Level, beyond the

core competencies they have developed. For example in health, this could be supporting the adult nursing team, dental nursing, supporting the therapy teams, amongst others. Students will also have the chance to further develop relevant maths, English and digital skills.

T Levels will provide a progression pathway to skilled employment, higher or degree-level apprenticeships and higher education. For

those students who wish to go onto higher education UCAS points are awarded, with T Levels being accepted by many universities.

## UCAS Points

On completion of a T Level course, UCAS points will be awarded. The table below shows the points and grade equivalents.

UCAS Tariff Points	T Level grade	A Level equivalent grade
168	Distinction* (A* on the core and distinction in the occupational specialism)	3 A*s at A Level
144	Distinction	3 As at A Level
120	Merit	3 Bs at A Level
96	Pass	3 Cs at A Level
72	Pass	3 Ds or Es at A Level

## BTEC defunding

The Department for Education (DfE) has published the outcomes of the recent Review of Qualifications Reform, centred around proposed defunding of BTECs and additional Level 3 qualifications.

The original proposal to defund was made based on the need for simplification of the Level 3 offer, and the significant overlap with T Levels. A change in government saw the proposal paused.

DfE have concluded that several Level 3 qualifications on the health and science route will be permitted to continue to be taught until July 2026, at which point the outcome of a longer-term review will be determined.

A full list of those extended or defunded can be [found here](#). The following qualifications, most relevant to health and care employers, have had funding extended to 2026:

- NCFE CACHE Technical Level 3 Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care
- NCFE CACHE Level 3 Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care
- NCFE CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care
- OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Extended Diploma in Health
- OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Diploma in Health and Social Care

- Pearson BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care
- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Diploma in Health and Social Care
- iCQ Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care
- TQUK Level 3 Certificate in Understanding Mental Health (RQF)

Providers can appeal defunded qualifications until the 24th of January 2025.

The DfE believes that by 2026 a combination of A Levels, T Levels and new qualifications that are developed from the above will be suitable for the range of learners studying health and care qualifications.

Further information of the outcomes of the 2024 Review of Qualifications Reform is available on the [Gov.Uk website](#).

For those not ready to go directly onto a level three T Level qualification, a one-year T Level foundation programme is available for those students who have finished their GCSEs. Find out more about the [foundation programme](#).

## T Level industry placements at Frimley Health

This case study, following the journey of Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust from pilot stage to a developed T Level offering a few years later, looks at the considerations that need to be made when developing industry placements in organisations. It focuses on learning from the pilot to full rollout, how to embed a pastoral support offer for students and the longer-term benefits to the organisation.



# Career pathways

Skills England has developed a number of occupational maps for T Level programmes which show the skills, behaviours and core competencies required for industry roles. However, T Level students do not achieve full occupational competency through their industry placement in the same way that they would if they completed an apprenticeship. The industry placement is designed to provide a taster of the variety of roles available within a subject area.

# T Level industry placements explored

Industry placements are intended to provide a practical insight into a learner's chosen sector and should offer the young person a chance to embed their knowledge and skills learned in the education setting. For you as an employer, industry placements provide the opportunity to engage with a new talent pipeline and showcase the variety of roles available in health and social care.

A T Level industry placement can be formed in a variety of different ways. It can:

- be a continuous block of working days or a number of days each week, or a combination of both models.
- be distributed across the first and/or second years of the T Level course
- include work taster activities of up to 35 hours
- be hosted by a maximum of two employers, unless part of an employer network, for further understanding of the industry. For example, some providers may wish for students to spend some time in their first year in a social care setting, moving to a hospital setting in the second year
- be hosted by three employers who are part of a network, such as an integrated care system, with one employer acting as the lead employer
- employers can choose to interview the students who are coming onto placement, or ask the provider to select suitable students

- be gained by paid, part time employment aligned to their chosen T Level subject.
- 20 percent of the industry placement can be offered virtually, increasing to 50 percent for the Digital T Level. This should be in a suitable setting, unlikely to be the student's home
- a third of placement hours can be spent either on a small team project or in a skills hub or training centre.

Further information on industry placement flexibilities can be found in the Department for Education's [T Level industry placements delivery guidance](#), last updated in January 2025.

The Department for Education have developed a video exploring the recent changes to T Level industry placement delivery.

A work taster activity is an opportunity for a student to gain an understanding of the working environment prior to starting their placement.

This could involve a site visit, a chance to meet employees sharing information on their roles, completion of mandatory training or the opportunity to share expectations. Employers should reflect on how this time can be used effectively, for example bringing the entire cohort of students together for the training or integrating some elements of the taster activities with other staff groups, for example healthcare support worker inductions. This may also be used as an opportunity to explore some of the roles available in healthcare, potentially shaping later parts of the student's placement.

## Exploring the small team project

The small team project offers flexibility in industry placements, allowing students to spend up to a third of their placement hours working with peers on a specific project under employer supervision. For health and care students, this may be an opportunity to introduce them to other careers in health and care with the opportunity to spend one-on-one time with a member of staff and experience an environment outside that of their other placements.

Kirsti Shaw, Senior Development Nurse at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Health and Care Academy piloted a small team project to offer interested students some insight into the work of a mental health, learning disability and neurodevelopmental trust. This project, focused on the interaction between physical health and mental health, was chosen to encourage students to think

about the relationship between a patient's physical and mental health, developing their research skills, presentation skills and communication skills by discussing their work with Kirsti.

The project ran for fifty-four hours, with the students spending one day a week in a facilitated session with some additional independent learning. This independent study was an opportunity to use the hybrid working model, a recently added flexibility to industry placements, where students can work independently in locations like their college IT suite. The project concluded with students presenting their research to peers, tutors and a representative from the integrated care board. The trust is now exploring how this small team project could be developed to support more students.

## Benefits to offering T Level industry placements

- provide an opportunity to tap into new talent pipelines and showcase the NHS as a great place to work
- allow you to showcase the breadth and depth of roles available in the NHS, including shortage occupations and hard to fill roles
- provide a new supply route into a variety of professions using T Level pathways
- offers opportunities for existing staff to mentor and supervise T Level students aiding staff development and retention
- encouraging young people with skills and new ideas into the health service

- build relationships with further education and other providers in your local area.

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"T Levels have benefited us immensely! They have helped strengthen our relationships with local FE providers, offered invaluable experience to students and provided us with a local talent pipeline." - County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

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The below video explores industry placements in the NHS:

Your organisation may wish to ask the student to sign an honorary contract prior to starting a placement, depending on local policies. This can be a good way of emulating some of the elements present when they join the workforce, including a contract with expectations and terms of employment.

NHS Employers have created an [honorary contract template](#) that can be used.

## Example placement structures

At University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay, placements are organised into three blocks of three weeks over the two-year qualification period. During the first two blocks, students rotate through different areas, such as urgent treatment centres, pharmacy and the frailty ward, allowing them to integrate into the team over three weeks. For the third block students have the option to choose a new area or return to one of their previous placements. This model is developed in collaboration with other employers, which allows students to spend one of these blocks in social care, for example.

The NHS Sussex Integrated Care System have a model agreed with employers across the system that works as a hybrid model where students spend three days a week on industry placement for blocks of three to five weeks. These placement blocks avoid academic breaks and times of high demand, such as the resident doctor changeover. Their system wide placement model ensures consistency across organisations, providing clarity to both employers and providers and reducing administrative pressure.

To find out more about different placements structures the NHS Employers [Top tips from T Level Employer of the Year finalists](#) document and [T Level industry placements at a system level: reflections from industry placement coordinators publication](#) explore this in more detail.

We would recommend that employers speak to other employers offering T Level industry placement in their area, as this could be an opportunity to align placement structures or learn from other employers' challenges and successes.



# Getting started with industry placements

A key organisation which is assisting with industry placements is the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). They are responsible for providing advice on T Level industry placements to employers. They can also provide a matching service which employers can use to find local education providers who are offering T Level programmes.

Alternatively, employers can use the [Gov.Uk website](https://www.gov.uk) to search for providers offering relevant T Levels in their area. You can search by town and postcode, and filter by T Level subject.

## Where can students go on placement

During their industry placement, T Level students should be offered the opportunity to experience some of the many career opportunities in the health and care sector, whilst ensuring they have time to embed fully into a team, learning valuable team working, communication and clinical skills.

Recent updates to industry placement delivery guidance now allow placements to be undertaken at pathway or route level, rather than occupational specialism level. This allows students to experience a broader range of content. While this provides more variety in placement settings, employers should be mindful of the student's intended career pathway. For example, a student who is confident that they want to pursue nursing could spend more of their industry placement in a nursing environment. Whereas, others who are not sure of the area in which they want to work

could expand their understanding of the breadth of careers by rotating through a number of different areas.

The list below highlights just a few potential options to consider. Whilst not all aspects of these areas will be suitable for students, most contain elements that are appropriate for industry placements:

- Frailty wards
- Outpatient services
- Elderly care wards
- Theatres
- Physiotherapy
- Radiography
- Speech and language therapy
- Midwifery
- Community nursing teams
- Audiology
- Pharmacy

# Working with providers

An integral part to organising T Level industry placements is working with further education providers to implement placements and ensure the students are supported throughout. This may be the first time that employers are engaging with further education, or it may be that your organisation has worked with schools and colleges in other areas and for other qualifications. Below are some recommendations for considerations prior to starting to offer industry placements which can prevent challenges at a later date.

## Making those first steps

### **Documentation and planning**

- What support can providers offer.
- What documentation have they already developed to support T Level industry placements.
- Can they put you in contact with other organisations who are further along their industry placement journey.

### **Pre-placement preparation**

- Are providers aware of your talent pipelines and workforce needs.
- It is important to share what opportunities exist for students after placement at this point, and in which areas of the workforce there are gaps.
- This is also an opportunity to discuss the providers' growth plans and mapping of future demand to understand how industry placements may develop.

## **Pastoral support**

- How will the providers be ensuring they are supporting students pastorally during their placements.
- This is particularly important during block placements as students will spend limited time in the education setting.

## **Concerns and feedback**

- Discuss with providers how best to escalate issues and how they will be seeking and sharing feedback from the students.
- It may be best to address concerns immediately on an ad hoc basis and then have the opportunity at a later date to reflect on resolution.

## **Student recruitment**

- Share with providers how you might like to choose which students go on placement.
- Some employers want to be involved in an interview process; others are happy to let providers decide which students are more suited.

## **Destination data**

- We recommend setting the expectation with providers from the beginning that they will provide destination data after each cohort as this can be crucial for workforce planning and understanding the organisational impact of hosting T Level industry students.

The above suggestions are not exhaustive but should provide a basis for having effective conversations when starting to work with new providers. You may wish to speak to colleagues working across the system to understand how they've approached the

relationship with providers which in some cases could be the same.

You can learn from peers who are actively engaged in this field by joining the Gatsby Foundation and Department for Education ICS Industry Placement Network.

"Working collaboratively through our community of practice with NHS Trusts, Social Care organisations and local colleges we have been able to provide over 120 T Level students placements in a range of specialities within our organisations. T Levels have enabled us to strengthen our recruitment pipeline and provide opportunities to young people from a wide range of backgrounds from our local community." - Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care System

# Funding T Level placements

The DfE have announced that an employer support fund will be available for employers hosting Health T Level students and SMEs providing placements for all T Levels. This will support placements starting between 23rd of April 2025 and 31st March 2026. More details of the support fund, including how to claim, will be released in due course.

Further details on how funding works for the T Level qualification can be found in the [T Level funding guide 2025 to 2026](#).

The below video showcases a student on an adult nursing industry placement in the NHS:

# Placements for students under 18

There is a myth that students on industry placement who are under the age of 18 are unable to work in clinical settings. This is incorrect, and we have created a page to provide [guidance on good employment practice](#) when employing people under the age of 18. This page includes links to case studies with Yeovil District Hospital NHS Trust and University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust. We have also spoken to [Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust](#) on how they have effectively supported students under 18.

## Working across the system

We have [developed a resource](#), drawing on the knowledge and expertise of the seven Department for Education funded industry placement coordinators, exploring how systems can support the implementation and upscale of T Level industry placements. This resource contains practical advice and strategic guidance with links to further information, which will also be useful for those working at an organisational level.

# Safeguarding students

T Level learners may be under 18. Under 18s can work in clinical and non-clinical settings, however employers must provide a safe working environment with safe working hours. Most placements will take place during regular daytime working hours, but in some placements, this may involve working outside normal working hours and should be evaluated to determine the necessity of working outside of these hours. Working patterns should be agreed with the training provider as part of the work plan discussion. Read more on the legal requirements as an employer on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Students must have the correct safeguarding in place to protect themselves and patients while on placement. Training providers hold overall responsibility for safeguarding and the welfare of the student on an industry placement. The training providers will check policies and procedures to make sure the workplace is a safe environment for the student, they may carry out a site visit before the placement starts.

Where necessary, the student must be provided with the relevant equipment to fulfil their duties, the cost of this can be claimed through the education provider.

A DBS check is very likely to be required for students on a T Level industry placement in the health and care sector. Some providers may require students to do a DBS check as part of entry onto the T Level course, whilst others may organise this at point of industry placement.

Line managers and supervisors will not generally require a DBS check, however some providers might ask that this be done for when they are hosting industry placement students. For more information, view the [NHS Employers DBS check eligibility tool](#) and the [GOV.UK T Levels web section](#).



### **T Level student working hours**

In line with government guidance on working hours the following should be considered:

- Students cannot work more than eight hours a day, up to a maximum of 40 hours per week which includes two days of rest.
- They cannot work between 10pm and 6am, which can be changed to 11pm and 7am with provider and student agreement.
- There must be a 12-hour rest period between each working day.
- Students should be given a 30-minute break after working for more than four and a half hours.

# Supporting young offenders and SEND students

T Levels and industry placements are available to young offenders and students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). These learners may receive additional adjustments to their course, including a maximum of 105 hours of the industry placement being delivered in the education setting, before completing the remainder of the industry placement in an industry setting. This is to help young offenders and SEND students prepare for a real-life work environment.

## Further information

NHS Employers have [created a comprehensive T Levels FAQ](#) answering your questions on T Levels.

For more information, including guidance, tools and resources visit [employer industry placements](#).

The government website also has [a resource library with useful information and materials](#) to help employer engagement with T Levels, including campaign guidelines and an employer toolkit.

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