

Employer – FAQs

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 is a finite pot of money which allows you to reclaim some of the costs incurred through the achievement of qualification units by your workforce. The fund supports the on-going professional development of staff across the adult social care sector. WDF is supported by the Department of Health 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 units from the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) only. These are vocational qualifications that are widely recognised and valued by adult social care employers.

The qualification units on the acceptable units list relate to adult social care qualifications in England that Skills for Care endorse, promote and, in many cases, have been involved in developing. The funding can only be used for qualification units that are on the list.

Claims can be made for qualification units that have been completed (signed off by an internal verifier) between 1 January 2015 and 31 March 2016. Where the units have been signed off outside of this timeframe, the funding cannot be used. A full list of acceptable units is available on our website.

For care organisations, the WDF cannot be used to fund short courses, refresher training and induction if not delivered as part of a formal QCF qualification from the approved list.

Who can claim WDF?

All organisations that directly employ adult social care staff in England are able to claim the fund. The following are also eligible to claim WDF as long as they are not NHS funded: hospices, agencies employing social care bank staff, and individual employers. Adult social care employers can claim WDF for volunteers and workers recruited from overseas.

Is this funding guaranteed?



No, but there are simple ways to give your organisation the best opportunity to benefit from the funding that is available.

Each year, the Department of Health provide a finite amount of money to support the WDF. Whilst the WDF enables thousands of care organisations to benefit from the funding, as the funding year progresses there is a chance that the money will run out.

To ensure that you have the best chance of accessing this funding, it is important that you join a WDF partnership and keep in regular contact with them during the course of the year (the WDF funding year is April to March). You should also update your National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC) account(s) in line with the advertised requirements early in the funding year.

Skills for Care recommends that you do not wait until the full qualification has been achieved before you start reclaiming funding. We advise you to submit claims on a regular basis – many organisations submit monthly claims. Setting aside some administration time each month to process claims can often help employers to be reimbursed for costs that far outweigh the time needed to process this.

What is the maximum funding that can be claimed for each learner in 2015/16?

A maximum of 60 credits (£900) can be claimed per learner per financial year (April to March).

How do I claim for qualifications that are larger than 60 credits?

WDF funds learning at unit level. You can therefore claim funding as learners progress through qualifications and claim for units as they are completed. Where a qualification is larger than 60 credits you will need to claim the WDF contribution over more than one financial year. This is conditional on the WDF being renewed again by the Department of Health in future years. Your evidence will need to meet the date criteria set out in section 3 of this document for the units being claimed in 2015/16.

Why has WDF been limited to claiming a maximum of 60 credits per learner per financial year?

Skills for Care wants to expand the reach of WDF to ensure that as many employers and their employees as possible within the adult social care sector have the opportunity to benefit from the fund. The maximum 60 credit cap has been set at a level which supports recommended timescales for qualification completion.

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

No, not unless some of this training is delivered as part of an accredited qualification.

The fund is to support the on-going professional development of staff using qualifications and will not fund mandatory training.

Employers have a responsibility to budget for their induction training and this is not covered by WDF. However, the Care Certificate has been mapped to qualification units and many of these can be funded through WDF. If your induction programme has been mapped to these qualification units, your staff have been registered with an awarding organisation and the qualification units have been signed off by an internal verifier recognised by the awarding organisation then WDF can be claimed.

The learning hours, depth of knowledge and workplace assessment needed to complete a qualification unit may exceed what would usually be delivered in a short induction course. Employers will need to decide if they wish to deliver inductions as part of a formal qualification or as standalone training.

. Any units being delivered as part of the Care Certificate would be completed within the first 12 weeks of the worker's employment. The new recruits must formally complete these qualification units as detailed and cannot simply complete an induction course covering similar learning.

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

Learning providers are chosen by employers at your own discretion.

Many learning providers provide an excellent service and will be happy to meet your needs, including the provision of evidence to enable you to claim WDF. Skills for Care recommends that employers have a written agreement with their learning provider to ensure that they can provide what is required. This should include supplying fully completed unit summary sheets on a regular basis to enable WDF to be claimed.

Learning providers are often helpful in promoting WDF to care organisations, enabling you to benefit from the funding that is available. However, Skills for Care recommends that you comprehensively read the information on our website about the WDF and contact your WDF partner directly for the most current information.

We are aware that some learning providers over promise or mislead employers as to what is available from WDF. Likewise, the majority of learning providers do not



charge for “administration” of producing the unit summary evidence needed to claim WDF and so you may choose not to use those that do.

If you are 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.

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

No. Each year the Department of Health provides a finite amount of money to support the WDF. Each WDF partnership receives a finite amount of funding. As the funding year progresses there is a chance that the money will run out.

Learning providers cannot access the fund either directly or on an employer’s behalf, so they have no way of making any guarantees as to what will be funded by WDF.

The Workforce Development Fund is an employer funding stream which is disbursed by Skills for Care through a series of employer led partnerships. As an employer you need to pay the learning provider for any qualifications or qualification units that are delivered and then seek to reclaim a funding contribution through your WDF partnership.

To support partnerships to disburse the funding to an increasing number of organisations there is a cap against the amount you can claim for any one employee. Some partnerships may also cap the amount of funding that any one organisation may claim. It is therefore not possible for a learning provider to guarantee that WDF will cover the cost of any qualification or qualification unit.

Any learning provider who promises ‘free’ training as the learning is funded by the WDF is providing employers with incorrect advice as to how this funding works. We would recommend that you seek clarification from organisations if they make such promises as they cannot provide this guarantee.

For the most comprehensive information about WDF please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/accessingWDF or contact your WDF partnership. Our guidance to support choosing workforce learning can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Please note that the WDF should not be confused with other Government funding initiatives. One of the best known is provided by The Skills Funding agency who commission directly with learning providers to offer funding towards qualifications.



Whilst this funding can often be very beneficial to employers, there are limitations around what level of qualification can be funded and restrictions on eligibility. Some employers choose a combination of Skills Funding Agency and WDF to help develop their workforce.

Will funds still be allocated per unit?

Funding is calculated on the credit size of the qualification units. The focus and learning required to achieve some qualification units is far more comprehensive and time-consuming to achieve than others, therefore units are weighted differently.

In 2015-2016 we will fund a credit at £15. The qualification units on the acceptable units list vary in size between 1 and 20 credits so the amount of funding that can be claimed ranges from £15 to £300 per unit.

Do we claim WDF directly from Skills for Care?

Most organisations do not claim the funding directly from Skills for Care. Each year we work with WDF partnerships to help distribute the funding across England. In 2015-16 some employers will be able to access WDF directly from Skills for Care where there isn't a WDF partnership operating in their locality. These localities are clearly advertised on our website.

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

For larger care organisations operating in multiple parts of England, there are also national partners to choose from who can help you to claim funding for your various different sites across the country.

In order to access WDF, it is essential that you join a WDF partnership to enable you to make a claim.

Skills for Care does have direct grant agreements with some large national organisations who applied for funds directly. These organisations claim funds directly from Skills for Care as set out in their grant award letter.

2. Eligibility criteria

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

Adult social care employers can join a WDF partnership by completing a members' declaration form and need to meet the NMDS-SC requirements for WDF as set out

below. Employers must contact and liaise with partnerships directly. Learning providers cannot do this on your behalf. Employers are responsible for submitting the evidence to the partnership to claim funding and for keeping the partnership lead updated as to what you hope to claim for during the funding year.

For employers who are claiming funding directly through Skills for Care because there isn't a WDF partnership operating in their locality they must complete and submit a direct access declaration form, sign and return a grant letter, then submit their funding claims and evidence directly to Skills for Care. Third parties such as learning providers cannot do this on your behalf.

For large employers who have a grant agreement with Skills for Care to access the fund directly an organisation declaration form needs to be completed and the NMDS-SC requirements for funding must be met.

What are the NMDS-SC requirements in relation to accessing WDF?

The National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC) is national database of information about social care organisations. 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 NMDS-SC system as advertised is a requirement for employers wishing to access WDF.

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

1. An establishment must fully complete and update an NMDS-SC organisational record on or after 1 April 2015.
2. The establishment must fully complete individual worker records for a minimum of 90% of its total workforce (this includes any staff who are not care-providing). These must be fully updated on or after 1 April 2015.

For more information about how to use the NMDS-SC and to learn more about the benefits of this resource please visit www.nmds-sc-online.org.uk

How can a member/subsidiary tell if they have met the NMDS-SC requirements and how will NMDS-SC eligibility be monitored?

It is important for employers who want to claim WDF to keep the information on the NMDS-SC database up to date.

A report called 'My WDF NMDS-SC requirements report' or 'Parent WDF NMDS-SC requirements report' has been developed to allow employers to check whether they are meeting the NMDS-SC requirements for the WDF. All you need to do is log into your NMDS-SC account and run the appropriate report from the reports section. The report will state whether the establishment is eligible or not eligible. Where an establishment is not eligible it will be clear from this report whether this is due to the establishment data, worker data or both and will contain links to the 'My establishment report' and 'My worker list' for further information. For support in using this report please contact the NMDS-SC Support Service on 0845 8730129.

The NHS Information Centre expects a partial NMDS-SC return from Local Authorities. Does this also meet the criteria for claiming WDF?

The local authority return to the Information Centre needs fewer data fields to be completed than the NMDS-SC requirements for the Workforce Development Fund so you will not automatically be able to claim funding. To view the full NMDS-SC requirements for Workforce Development Fund please see the NMDS-SC requirements for WDF on the accessing WDF page of the Skills for Care website.

Can one my of my establishments/subsidiaries also access funding via another WDF grant/partnership?

No, an establishment can only claim WDF through one partnership/large national organisation 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. The establishment will need to 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. Skills for Care will authorise or decline any requests by establishments to access funding via an alternative partnership and our decision will be final.

An establishment 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 establishment has a unique NMDS-SC id. An employer may have multiple establishments. In this context you should view the term establishment as referring to an individual care service or location for which an employer has an NMDS-SC id. Each establishment, which will be identified by its NMDS-SC id, can only be linked to

a single WDF partnership/grant. Many employers have establishments in different areas within England and will therefore want establishments to join local partnerships to access WDF. Employers are able to do this. What is not allowed is for an individual establishment to join multiple partnerships to access funds. For large national organisations that have a WDF grant agreement with Skills for Care, their establishments 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?

Employers must inform their existing partnership that they will no longer be accessing WDF funds through them. You have to notify your existing partnership directly. This information cannot be conveyed through a third party such as your learning provider.

The old partnership then informs the Skills for Care contracts unit that the named employer is to be removed from the partnership. Once this process is complete the employer can join another partnership. To join another partnership the employer would need to complete a member's declaration form and submit this to the new partnership. The new partnership would then submit the member's declaration form to Skills for Care who will approve or decline the request.

I am claiming money for learning and development from another public funding source, can I make a claim under the Workforce Development Fund?

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

1. The workforce development fund is a contribution to the cost of employees undertaking vocational qualifications from our list of acceptable units and 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 Workforce Development Fund 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 this is not allowed.
5. It is an employers' responsibility to ensure that they do not claim more funding than the cost to them of employees undertaking training but 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 unit, the employer cannot claim back more than the advertised WDF contribution, even if the costs incurred exceeded 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 the Workforce Development Fund is a completed unit summary sheet that has been signed off by the internal verifier between 1 January 2015 and 31 March 2016 for every unit claimed.

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

Learning which is advertised as 'free' training is sometimes available from learning providers where they are receiving funding from another body to cover the cost of training delivery, such as the 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. The overarching principle is that an employer is not making a profit from their employees undertaking training - see question above 'I am claiming money for learning and development from another public funding source, can I make a claim under the Workforce Development Fund?'

The evidence requirement for claiming for associated costs from the WDF is a completed unit summary sheet signed off by an internal verifier between 1 January 2015 and 31 March 2016 for every unit claimed. Learning providers should be releasing signed off unit summary sheets to employers. Where this is not the case please advise Skills for Care of the details of the learning provider by emailing wdf@skillsforcare.org.uk so that we can take this up on your behalf. Skills for Care recommends that employers make a written agreement with learning providers at the

outset which details that evidence of unit sign off will be provided on a regular basis to enable WDF to be claimed.

Employers must ensure that they have records in place to evidence the costs of any funding claims they make. 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.

3. Evidence requirements

What must I submit as acceptable evidence for all units claimed?

We can only accept units that are included on the list of acceptable units. You need to submit a completed unit summary sheet or learning provider equivalent for each unit claimed. These need to include:

Unit code and title being claimed for (as advertised on our acceptable units list)

Candidate name

Candidate registration number

Unique learner number

Name of Awarding Organisation

Name of Learning Provider or Centre Number

Internal Verifier signature and date (the unit should be internally verified between 01/01/2015 - 31/03/16)

If a unit has not been internally verified due to the sampling policy we are still able to fund the unit. A copy of the sampling policy will need to be supplied by the learning provider to support these units.

In lieu of a unit summary sheet or learning provider equivalent, we will accept a copy of the learner's certificate, with a summary of units completed.

Copies of certificates being used as evidence must contain the following information:

- Candidate name
- Candidate registration number
- Unique learner number*
- Our unit code as per the acceptable units list (our unit codes will need to be written on, if the awarding organisation uses different codes)

- Name of units completed
- The date of the certificate must fall within our advertised dates for the funding year, so 1st January 2015 – 31st March 2016 for 15/16.
- Name of Awarding Organisation
- Name of Learning Provider or centre number

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.

I want to claim WDF for Functional Skills but am unable to obtain a unit summary sheet. Can I use a copy of the candidate's certificate for Functional Skills to evidence this claim?

Functional Skills are part of the Health and Social Care Intermediate and Advanced Apprenticeship Frameworks and these can be claimed via WDF. Where unit summary sheets are not provided for functional skills you can provide a copy of the candidate's certificate from the awarding organisation demonstrating the completion of each of these skills for which a claim is being made to evidence the claim. This is because each skill is certificated on completion. The certificate must be dated between 1 January 2015 and 31 March 2016 and must be for the full functional skill not an individual aspect of it.

Does all evidence have to be sampled?

When the evidence is not sampled the internal verifier should state "not sampled". A copy of the sampling policy from the learning provider needs to be provided. A copy of the relevant policy will need to be submitted with each batch containing units that have been sampled.

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.

Why is it that some Sector Skills Council unit numbers for QCF units do not match the unit numbers on awarding organisation documents but the unit title is the same?

There have been some concerns relating to some Sector Skills Council unit numbers on the QCF units that do not match the unit numbers on Awarding Organisations documents. The units will have the same title but the unique unit number will relate to a specific Awarding Organisation's systems. Unfortunately changing to just one code is not possible as Awarding Organisations internal systems require a unique code that they generate. The acceptable units list now contains the RITS number and links to the learning outcomes on the OFQUAL register so this information can be used to cross-reference units. The Skills for Care and Development unit identifier will remain the same throughout regardless of the Awarding Organisation. Awarding Organisations have agreed that any such queries should be directed to them.

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.