

How we find a placement that's right for you

We are funded by the Department of Health and Social Care to recruit and train 160 social workers, and then place those trainees with partners across England. While we wish we could work everywhere, we can only partner with a limited number of NHS trusts and local authorities each year, and those partnerships are based on whether the partner is suitable to host our trainees.

Where you get placed is where you will live and work for the two years of the programme, and where we hope you will build your career from. It is important we get it right. We usually begin to match applicants to placements from January onwards.

What we consider when trying to find you a placement:

From our experience running the programme, we know that your commuting distance and support networks are both really important for your wellbeing. The programme is demanding and we need to ensure you have that support in place.

To be able to match you to a placement we need to be confident of your academic eligibility and you will need to hold a valid UK driving licence and have access to a car (where relevant). After we match you to a placement you will then also need to complete other suitability checks, an enhanced DBS check and an occupational health assessment.

1. Your location and commuting distance

The first step is to talk to you about where you are currently based and establish whether you are within commutable distance to one of our placements.

This means you must be within a one hour (London) or 45-minute commute (everywhere else). If you are within this time (at rush hour), we will then establish if the location is expected to be oversubscribed.

If the location is commutable, and not oversubscribed, you will be offered a placement. Where there is no placement within the commuting range, we will give you information on your options, which may include:

- Booking in a follow up call where we will discuss other suitable locations.
- Deferring your placement to the following year.
- Withdrawing your offer.

2. Your support network and links to the area

We aim to find you a place in a location where you have a support network. Our experience shows us that your support system within the area (particularly access to friends and family), and knowing the area well are important.

3. If you deferred from last year

If your place was deferred last year, we will prioritise placing you if you are currently based within a commuting distance from a placement. If you are not within this distance, we will talk to you about other locations that you may be interested in, where you do have a support network.

Timelines

We aim to offer location placements to our first group of offerees by the start of February. This would be the case if you are able to meet the criteria straightaway and there is availability in your preferred location.

If we can't match you to a placement straightaway

If your location is oversubscribed, or you are outside commuting distance, it can take until the end of May to find a placement for you. In cases where we are not able to match you to a partner (and you have not already been deferred once) we will defer your offer to the following year.

If your location is oversubscribed

Many of our locations are oversubscribed and we don't work in all areas of the country. When this is the case, we use a number of criteria to match placements, examined on a case-by-case basis, which include:

- Being a deferral.
- Being sponsored by a partner organisation
- Having a disability or other health requirements which may limit your ability to be placed in alternate locations.
- Belonging to an underrepresented group.
- Distance from the location.
- Ability to drive or access a car (where relevant).

If your location is oversubscribed, we will discuss the below options with you.

Placing you on our reserve list

If your location is oversubscribed and we are unable to match you in our first rounds of allocation in February, but you would still like to be considered for this year, we will discuss placing you on our reserve list for a location. This means you would be kept in our pool of candidates if a space were to come available. The reserve list is not created on a first-come, first-serve basis, but on whether you meet the placement and eligibility criteria set out above.

Relocating if you are outside commuting distance

If you feel that there may be a location suitable for you that would require you to relocate, we will ask you to complete a short form and book a call to discuss this in more detail.

Your case will be discussed at a panel involving the recruitment team, practice specialist team and in some cases the partner to discuss your support network and other important factors about supporting you to relocate. This process can be lengthy, and we aim to keep you updated every three weeks, however you may not get a decision on whether we are able to match you to a placement until May 1.

All these factors are unique to each person and placement, so timelines for decisions vary because of this.

Relocation criteria

We work across the country with different NHS trusts and local authorities who are looking for trainees who want to make an impact in their communities and stay long term. From our eight years' experience running the programme, we know that relocating can put both emotional and financial pressures on our trainees and this can lead to them not being able to complete the programme.

We use the factors below to decide on whether we are able to match a placement with an offeree who will be relocating. Please note these are not in an order of priority:

- Any disabilities or other health requirements which may limit your ability to be placed in alternate locations.
- Any caring responsibilities, either children or others for whom you are the primary carer.
- Other existing commitments which may limit your ability to move.
- Ability to drive or access a car (where relevant).
- Your support structure within the local area, particularly access to friends and family, and existing familiarity with the area.
- Your commute time once relocated, which should generally be no more than 45 minutes, (one hour London) at rush hour. Although previous experience of longer commutes will be considered.
- Belonging to an underrepresented group.
- Ongoing commitment to the profession and programme, as measured by timely responses to communications and efforts to complete suitability checks such as the occupational health assessment and enhanced DBS check.

Deferring to the following year

If we can't find a place for you that meets the criteria explained above, we'll offer you the option to defer and do our best to try to find you a place in the following year's intake. If this happens, we'll start discussing possible locations with you as soon as we have a clear indication of the partners we'll be working with – usually around January of that year.

If we do have a place that's suitable for you next year, you'll be given priority over new applicants, providing you are within the commuting distance from one of our placement locations. You'll still need to meet the other usual criteria for starting the programme. This process leads to us successfully offering places to several deferred applicants each year.

Withdrawing your application

If we still can't find you a place after you've been deferred once, we would usually withdraw your application. You are of course always welcome to re-apply for future cohorts. You are also able to withdraw yourself if you change your mind about the programme or if you don't want to be deferred.

Matching you to a placement does not guarantee entry to programme

To start the programme, you must also complete an occupational health assessment, have an enhanced DBS check, two references, meet the eligibility criteria and attend specific sessions and meetings to help prepare for placement. So, matching you to a placement does not guarantee entry to programme.