



EPSRC Northern Health Futures Hub

northfutures.org

Round 1 Training Funding Call Guidance Document

NorthHFutures Training and Skills

Open 3 March - 14 April, 2025



Engineering and
Physical Sciences
Research Council

NorthHFutures Training and Skills: Round 1 Training Funding Call

Summary

NorthHFutures Digital Health Hub, funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) is launching this Round 1 Training Funding Call, to commission the development and delivery of training in digital health and care skills across the North East and North Cumbria. Both Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and non-HEIs are welcome to apply. We are specifically interested in receiving applications from providers whose training is designed for one, both, or a subset of our two key audiences – the health and social care workforces, and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups in the health and care technology sector. Applicants must present a well-evidenced *need* for training in their proposed topic and for their proposed audience, as well as a detailed and robust method for tracking and reporting on the impact of the training they deliver.

Two contract values are available through this funding call:

- Smaller funding pots – up to £15,000, inclusive of VAT (100% FEC)
- Larger funding pots - £15,000 to £40,000, inclusive of VAT (100% FEC)

Deadline for submission of applications: 14th April 2025.

Context

Digital health is a broad name for technology and solutions that can improve our health and wellbeing. This might be apps on your smartphone that help to track fitness, monitor sleep, or manage your medication. It could also refer to smartwatches that measure your heart rate and activity levels. Health-tech aims to make healthcare faster, more effective, and more personalised to you – this could include digitising patient records for easier access by healthcare providers, or using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to transform diagnostics and treat diseases. Digital Health and health-tech is a fast moving and exciting area of work that can make a real difference to how we live and age well.

There are reported skills and training deficits in the digital health and care sector. Amongst the Health and Social Care workforces, there are skills and knowledge gaps around digital literacy, and the understanding and uses of advanced digital and data-driven technologies. The digital transformation of the NHS is vital for the long-term sustainability of health and social care services across the whole of the UK (Health and Social Care Committee, 2023), and integral to achieving the Government's 'Three Strategic Shifts' -

hospital to community, analogue to digital and sickness to prevention. Equally, amongst industry (in particular, SMEs and start-ups), there are often reported skills challenges related to the design, development and regulation of new health and social care technologies.

There are many instances of the North East and North Cumbria standing as a progressive example of achieving digitally-enabled health and care. Sunderland and South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust was the first hospital in the UK to fulfil the NHS's Global Digital Exemplar Programme, and the successful launch of the Great North Care Record, a pan-regional electronic patient record system, are just two examples. However, digital skills and knowledge gaps restrict further health and social care innovation in our region. Some gaps, such as digital literacy, are more prominent in the North East and North Cumbria compared to other regions of the UK. Disparity also exists between the digital maturity of the respective workforces within health and social care. For example, both the skill level and provision of training is more comprehensive within the health sector, compared to within the care sector.

This Call is designed to develop training opportunities to address some of these skills shortages and gaps. The aim is to help foster an innovation ecosystem for the North East and North Cumbria (NENC) region that supports the development and use of advanced digital technologies in health and social care. By upskilling our local workforce, we wish to push our region to the forefront of innovation in the digital health and care sector.

About NorthHFutures Digital Health Hub

NorthHFutures Digital Health Hub (NorthHFutures) is a three-year programme funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). The Hub addresses healthcare needs and health inequalities in NENC, by facilitating responsible research and innovation in healthcare technologies (health-tech), supported by inclusive digital skills sharing, training, and making connections – to promote the design of useable and useful technologies for all. NorthHFutures, led by Newcastle University, brings together a rich cross-sectoral network of regional universities, the NENC Integrated Care Board, NHS Foundation Trusts, Local Authorities, industry partners from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, and public partners.

NorthHFutures is comprised of 4 Work Packages, spanning community infrastructure, translational research, networking for innovation and entrepreneurship, and training and skills. Hub activities mobilise around the following themes, grounded in evidenced health and social care needs and opportunities for innovation:

- Promoting health and nutrition for children and young people
- Developing digital surgical pathways
- Supporting mental health and wellbeing
- Living and ageing well with multiple long-term conditions.

The programme entered its second year of implementation in November 2024. To find out more, please visit our website [here](#).

About our Training and Skills work

The Training and Skills component of NorthHFutures is focused on reducing the digital skills gap in the regional health and social care workforces and health tech industry, to enable digital and innovation upskilling, so that key stakeholders across NENC can engage fully in a growing digital health and care technology innovation ecosystem. Two key objectives have been designed to enable us to achieve this aim:

- Identify the digital health skills gap in the health and social care (HSC) workforce in NENC (including VCSE sector), SMEs and start-ups within industry.
- Facilitate the delivery of digital health and innovation training and upskilling for the health and social care workforce (including VCSE partners), SMEs and industry start-ups, responding to identified and articulated needs.

The Training and Skills component of NorthHFutures is led by [Professor David Kirk](#) at Newcastle University, [Dr Alan Platt](#) at Northumbria University and [Dr Antonia Dingle](#) at Health Data Research UK (a core consortium partner of the programme).

Our Requirements

This is the first of two rounds of training funding calls to be launched by NorthHFutures. We are seeking to commission the development, delivery and/or rollout of training in digital skills and innovation within the health and care sector, specifically for two key audiences in the NENC region:

- The health and social care workforce – including doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, dentists, all allied health professionals, social carers and social workers.
- SMEs and start-ups working in health and social care technology.

Training providers can apply for funding to develop and deliver entirely new training content, as well as to deliver and roll out pre-existing training offers. A key requirement is that applicants provide evidence for the digital health and care training needs or gaps in the region that their training addresses.

Funding Call Objectives

- Commission training in health and social care digital skills and innovation that meets specific, evidenced needs amongst (either, both, or a subset of) the two target audiences within the region.

- Commissioned training is delivered at an appropriate scale, with good geographic reach across the NENC region.
- Commissioned training is delivered free at the point of access for learners.
- Commissioned training providers evidence the impact of their training through reporting on audience engagement, training quality and overall impact on the training participant, in terms of their knowledge, skills and practice.

Scope of Training

The two key audiences identified as the focus for receiving training – health and social care workforces, and SMEs and start-ups in health and care technology – have been selected because they represent two ends of the spectrum of digital health and care innovation – those producing technological innovation, and those eventually using and implementing the innovations in their practice, with patients and clients. For this process to effectively support and contribute to the digital transformation of both health and social care, a multitude of training needs must be addressed within each audience. A key objective of NorthHFutures' work on Training and Skills is to contribute to addressing these varied needs.

Both audiences comprise many sub-populations of different professionals and roles, with differing levels of competency in relation to digital health, digital care, and innovation. A one-size fits all approach to training and up-skilling is not sufficient or appropriate, rather training must be tailored for individual audiences. We require multiple well-researched and well-designed initiatives to meet the multiplicity of needs that exist.

The training content that is eligible for funding through this Call includes:

- Digital literacy and capabilities for working digitally in a given profession, including for upskilling of teaching staff on health and care education programmes.
- Health and care data – its production, management, and use.
- Health informatics, data analysis.
- Ethics, privacy, safety, data and information governance.
- Use of new digital technologies and tools, including AI, in a health and care setting.
- Regulation and procurement of digital technologies in health and social care settings.
- Change management for digital health and care – methods, processes, frameworks, case studies, best practice.
- Digital innovation and transformation practices in health, social care and social work.

The above list of training topics is not exhaustive – other topics can also be proposed. The key requirement from applicants is that sufficient evidence is presented of the *need* for training in the proposed topic for either of the two key audiences, or a specific sub-population within these. Evidence of need should comprise either primary data collection

amongst the target audience or sub-population, or detailed analysis of secondary data that is specific to the region.

There is much flexibility in the method of delivery of the proposed training. The major requirement is that it is in a format / location (e.g. online, self-paced, or in-person) and timescale that suits the needs of the intended audience, with evidence provided of how applicants have explored this. We anticipate most applications will comprise short-course training content and styles, with a time commitment of several hours to several weeks or maybe months, rather than anything more formal or long-term.

Any type of education or training provider is eligible to apply to this Funding Call, including higher education institutions, further education institutions, publicly funded training organisations or private businesses which offer training.

This Call will fund training that is provided for free at the point of access for learners. As such, the costs of developing and delivering the training should be included in the budget submitted. It will not be possible for training providers to recover costs or generate revenue by charging fees to learners or their employers to access training (through this funded programme). This should be accounted for in budgets submitted. Costs of training development and delivery may be one-time, fixed costs if the training is delivered asynchronously online and there are unlimited numbers of learners that can access it, or applicants may cost a fixed number of places on their training course to be funded through this Call.

Measuring Training Impact

NorthHFutures is funded by the EPSRC, and we must report on the impact that the training facilitated by the programme has had on the delivery of the program. Therefore, we require applicants to provide details of how they will measure the impact of their proposed training. Examples of the impact indicators successful applicants will need to report are listed below. Please include in your application how you will gather data to report on scale, reach, quality and impact of your training course.

Scale and reach:

- Number of people who have completed training.
- Geographic spread of training, by sub-regions within NENC where trainees are based, such as the North East Combined Authority area, Tees Valley Combined Authority area, and North Cumbria local authorities areas.

Quality:

- Validated measures of training quality – reporting against an established framework, e.g. UK Quality Code for Higher Education, or Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation.
- Trainees' self-reported perceptions of course quality.

Impact:

- Technical domain or capability theme that the training content falls within – from the NHS AI and Healthcare Technology Competency Framework (2023), the Digital Skills Framework for Social Care, or the Digital Capabilities for Social Workers framework, whichever is most relevant for your training offer and intended audience.
- Persona or level that the training is designed for – from the NHS AI and Healthcare Technology Competency Framework (2023), the Digital Skills Framework for Social Care, or the Digital Capabilities for Social Workers framework, whichever is most relevant for your training offer and intended audience.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - demographic and professional data from trainees e.g. gender, ethnicity, role, seniority level, highest level of education.
- Change in knowledge, skills and practice immediately after completing training.
- Change in knowledge, skills and practice several months after completing training – capturing impact on professional practice.

Where training involves some element of live delivery, either remote or in-person, training delivery must be completed by May 2026. For projects where costs are to be used for development of online learning resources, training videos etc., these will be licensed (open access) in perpetuity for (non-exclusive) NorthHFutures use.

Selection criteria

Selection Criteria	Weighting
1. Compliance check	Pass/Rejected
2.1 The applicant's evidence of need for training for a specific audience.	20%
2.2 The applicant's detailed training content and design, and how well this responds to the identified need.	20%
2.3 Proposed scale and reach of training delivery, and approach to measuring quality and impact of training delivery.	10%
2.4 Perceived risks, challenges and mitigation strategies, and a conflict-of-interest statement.	5%
2.5 The applicant's proposed delivery timeline of key milestones, aligned with risk mitigation strategies.	5%
2.6 Total cost and value for money.	20%
2.7 The suitability of the proposed team to develop and/or deliver the training, as outlined in professional biographies of each individual.	20%
	100%

Application format

Please submit your application and relevant Costing Template by 5.00pm on Monday 14th April 2025 by email to Emma.Letham@newcastle.ac.uk. If you have any questions regarding the application in advance of your submission, please email them to this address.

Applications to be a maximum of 8 pages (minimum font size 11).

Applicants should complete the application form (see separate document) responding to the following questions:

1.	Detail the training or skills need that your training offer directly responds to, including detail of the methodology used to gather data and identify the needs or gap.
2.	Describe the proposed training, detailing the training content, the intended audience, the implementation design and how the training meets the specific needs evidenced in Section 1.
3.	Detail the proposed scale and reach of your training offer in terms of size and geographic location of learners. Describe how you will measure the quality and impact of your training.
4.	Explain any perceived risks and challenges that may arise from delivering your proposed training and how you plan to identify and mitigate against these. Please include a risk assessment and a conflict-of-interest statement, notifying us of any potential identified conflicts, as part of your response to this question.
5.	Provide a proposed timeline of activities. Set out key milestones, aligned with your mitigation approaches from section 4.
6.	Provide a detailed outline of your requested budget and justification of costs, using one of the two costing templates provided.
7.	Provide professional biographies of each of the training team members, detailing their relevant experience and expertise. Full CVs can be included as an appendix to the application.

Contracting

Funding awards will be made via a subcontract, prepared by Newcastle University.

Budget

Two contract values are available through this funding call:

- Smaller funding pots – up to £15,000, inclusive of VAT

- Larger funding pots - £15,000 to £40,000, inclusive of VAT

Please state in your application which size funding pot you are applying for. Please note – applications will be assessed on demonstrated value for money.

The NorthHFutures Hub is funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which reimburses the Hub for 80% of its full economic costs (FEC). All costs must be inclusive of VAT.

When applying for the Training Funding Call, applicants will fall into one of two categories:

- Applicants eligible for UKRI funding**, including higher education providers, research institutes, independent and public sector research establishments, NHS bodies, and Catapult centres. Applicants in this group are required to submit their costings using Costing Template A. Funding will be awarded at 80% FEC, as is the UKRI standard. The remaining 20% will be funded by the lead applicant.
- All other UK lead applicants**, i.e. applicants not eligible for UKRI funding including VCSE's, local councils, SMEs and start-ups. Applicants in this group are required to submit their costings using Costing Template B. Funding will be awarded to them at 100% of the requested costs. Please note: For the purposes of this call, SMEs are defined as companies with less than 250 employees and either a turnover under £41m, or a balance sheet total lower than £35m. Larger commercial organisations will be awarded 80% of the total cost of their proposal.

The updated list of organisations eligible for UKRI funding is [available here](#). Please consult the list to see if your organisation is eligible.

If you have questions about the categorisation of your organisation or the costing process, please get in touch with Emma Letham at the address above.

Timing

Stage of process	Date
Funding Call opens	03/03/2025
Deadline for clarification questions	31/03/2025 17:00 GMT/UTC/BST
Deadline for submission of applications	14/04/2025 17:00 GMT/UTC/BST
Notification of intent to award	16/05/2025
Contract start date	26/5/2025
Last possible contract end date	29/05/2026

APPENDIX

Compliance Criteria

1.0 Compliance Checking		
1.1	Application received on time?	Yes / No
1.2	Application complete and in the requested format?	Yes / No
1.3	Newcastle University Standard terms and conditions for the supply of services shared and understood to be basis of any contract without caveat?	Yes / No
1.4	Financial strength assessed and risk acceptable?	Yes / No
1.5	Compliance with the Newcastle University Supplier Code of Conduct?	Yes / No
1.6	Confirmation of up to date safe-guarding training (submitted in response to Q4 of application)	Yes / No
<p>Scoring Criteria:</p> <p>PASS – Application is compliant, or Applicant has corrected any obvious error in their Application after clarification.</p> <p>REJECTED – Application is not compliant, including any clarification measures.</p>		

If the Application is compliant, it will be scored as follows.

Scoring Criteria

1.	The applicants' explanation of the training or skills need that the training offer directly responds to, including detail of the methodology used to gather data and identify the needs or gap.
	<p>Scoring Criteria:</p> <p>1 - Response is absent, does not meet the criteria in any aspect, or has significant major shortcomings and clear deficiencies, which on balance outweigh positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>2 - Response has multiple shortcomings and/or deficiencies, which are balanced with the positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>3 - Response has minor shortcomings and/or deficiencies, but on balance these are outweighed by the positive aspects that meet the majority of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>4 - The response meets most aspects of the criterion with only very minor shortcomings or deficiencies.</p> <p>5 - The response meets all criteria or exceeds expectations.</p>
2.	The applicant's proposed training content and design, and how well this responds to the identified need.
	<p>Scoring Criteria:</p> <p>1 - Response is absent, does not meet the criteria in any aspect, or has significant major shortcomings and clear deficiencies, which on balance outweigh positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>2 - Response has multiple shortcomings and/or deficiencies, which are balanced with the positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>3 - Response has minor shortcomings and/or deficiencies, but on balance these are outweighed by the positive aspects that meet the majority of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>4 - The response meets most aspects of the criterion with only very minor shortcomings or deficiencies.</p> <p>5 - The response meets all criteria or exceeds expectations.</p>
3.	The proposed scale and reach of the training offer (size and geographic location of learners), and the methodology presented for measuring the quality and impact of the training.
	<p>Scoring Criteria:</p>

	<p>1 - Response is absent, does not meet the criteria in any aspect, or has significant major shortcomings and clear deficiencies, which on balance outweigh positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>2 - Response has multiple shortcomings and/or deficiencies, which are balanced with the positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>3 - Response has minor shortcomings and/or deficiencies, but on balance these are outweighed by the positive aspects that meet the majority of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>4 - The response meets most aspects of the criterion with only very minor shortcomings or deficiencies.</p> <p>5 - The response meets all criteria or exceeds expectations.</p>
4.	<p>Presentation of perceived risks and challenges that may arise from delivering the proposed training and how these will be mitigated. Risk assessment and conflict of interest statement to be included in application.</p>
	<p>Scoring Criteria:</p> <p>1 - Response is absent, does not meet the criteria in any aspect, or has significant major shortcomings and clear deficiencies, which on balance outweigh positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>2 - Response has multiple shortcomings and/or deficiencies, which are balanced with the positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>3 - Response has minor shortcomings and/or deficiencies, but on balance these are outweighed by the positive aspects that meet the majority of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>4 - The response meets most aspects of the criterion with only very minor shortcomings or deficiencies.</p> <p>5 - The response meets all criteria or exceeds expectations.</p>
5.	<p>Proposed timeline of activities, including key milestones, aligned with mitigation strategies from section 4.</p>
	<p>Scoring Criteria:</p> <p>1 - Response is absent, does not meet the criteria in any aspect, or has significant major shortcomings and clear deficiencies, which on balance outweigh positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>2 - Response has multiple shortcomings and/or deficiencies, which are balanced with the positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>3 - Response has minor shortcomings and/or deficiencies, but on balance these are outweighed by the positive aspects that meet the majority of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>4 - The response meets most aspects of the criterion with only very minor shortcomings or deficiencies.</p>

	5 - The response meets all criteria or exceeds expectations.
6.	Detailed presentation of proposed budget, justification of costs and discussion of value for money.
	<p>Scoring Criteria:</p> <p>1 - Response is absent, does not meet the criteria in any aspect, or has significant major shortcomings and clear deficiencies, which on balance outweigh positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>2 - Response has multiple shortcomings and/or deficiencies, which are balanced with the positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>3 - Response has minor shortcomings and/or deficiencies, but on balance these are outweighed by the positive aspects that meet the majority of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>4 - The response meets most aspects of the criterion with only very minor shortcomings or deficiencies.</p> <p>5 - The response meets all criteria or exceeds expectations.</p>
7.	Relevant experience and expertise of training team members proposed.
	<p>Scoring Criteria:</p> <p>1 - Response is absent, does not meet the criteria in any aspect, or has significant major shortcomings and clear deficiencies, which on balance outweigh positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>2 - Response has multiple shortcomings and/or deficiencies, which are balanced with the positive aspects that meet some of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>3 - Response has minor shortcomings and/or deficiencies, but on balance these are outweighed by the positive aspects that meet the majority of the criterion requirements.</p> <p>4 - The response meets most aspects of the criterion with only very minor shortcomings or deficiencies.</p> <p>5 - The response meets all criteria or exceeds expectations.</p>