Trust policy on sponsorship/secondment opportunities for health care assistants and maternity care assistants to pre-registration nursing and midwifery training.
Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to make explicit the Trust’s procedure on the secondment/sponsorship of HCAs/MCAs to pre-registration nursing and midwifery education in higher educational institutions (HEIs) - Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) is our local education provider.

The policy will enhance the following:

- Accessibility of information about secondment to ward/unit managers and in particular to HCAs/MCAs who have the desire to advance their career in nursing and midwifery.
- Provide direction to ward/unit managers when considering options of career development for HCAs/MCAs during the yearly appraisal and formulation of personal development plans (PDP).
- Awareness of the role of the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) in the administration of education commission funds and workforce development.

Background:

There have been a number of changes in recent years that have had a direct impact on the role of the nurse and the ability of nurses to meet the nursing care needs of the local population. Today, the roles of health care assistants (HCAs) and midwifery care assistants (MCAs) have been hugely transformed cutting across the traditional boundaries of the registered nurses and midwives roles. The effect of changes in the demographics - ageing population with chronic health problems and the impact on the NHS budget; medical and technological advances and innovation in treatments; higher patient expectation; care in the community strategy and European work time directives have implications on the education and training of nurses and midwives. In addition, the Workforce Review Team (WRT) has predicted shrinkage in the nursing workforce by about 15% of the current workforce by 2020 (WRT, 2008), hence the adoption of measures to increase capacity and capability of the nursing workforce. The widening participation agenda makes it possible for HCAs/MCAs to undertake pre-registration training with opportunities to acquire the required qualification having access to Life Long Learning.

Other policy drivers influencing staff development in particular the education and training of HCAs/MCAs include the development of career framework for the NHS in 2004; the introduction of the competency framework in 2004; Changing Workforce programme (Modernising Agency) in 2004; HR in the NHS (2002); Modernising nursing careers (2008) and Lord Darzi’s Next stage review – High quality for all (DH, June 2008).

The education and training fund to support training and continuing professional development (CPD) needs of NHS staff followed the implementation of ‘The NHS Plan’ and two years later ‘Delivering the NHS plan’ (2002). This training fund is available to
support all grades of NHS staff and is administered by the Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs).

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, as with other NHS organisations apply for funds every year to support staff education and training. Enthusiastic and motivated HCAs/ MCAs have the opportunity to apply to the Trust for secondment to support them through their three year pre-registration education. The SHA within the Eastern and Coastal PCT collates and approves the education commissions submitted by all the Trust's within Kent every year. As the number of education commissions is limited, secondments are offered on merit to selected HCAs/MCAs following a formal application and interview process.

**Criteria for secondment:** Only candidates who fulfil the following academic criteria and trust criteria are considered for secondment. By 2012, nursing will become degree only profession and in preparation for this EKHUFT has from September 2007 given preference to applicants who opt to undertake the nursing degree pathway.

1. **Academic criteria**

   **Entry qualification by HEIs (determined by UCAS): Degree programme**
   - 5 GCSEs grades A – C (one in English and one in Maths or Science) AND 2 A’ level passes grade C or above
   - A-Level (obtained up to and including 2001): including two passes at grade CC in GCE A-Level and a minimum of three GCSE/O-level passes at grade C or above.
   - AGNVQ: An overall merit in an Advanced General National Vocational Qualification or NVQ level three and a pass in Use of English or English Language at GCSE/O-Level grade C or above.
   - BTEC: (obtained in 2003 or before). Students should achieve merits in all second year units of their BTEC National Diploma, (ND) and a pass in Use of English or English Language at GCSE/O-Level grade C or above.
   - New BTEC Qualifications: Applicants with a 12 unit BTEC National Certificate should achieve an MM grade. Those taking the 18 unit National Diploma should achieve an MPP grade.
   - Scottish Highers: 200 UCAS points.
   - Irish Highers: Five Irish Highers at honours (C or above) and two subjects at ordinary grade in one sitting;

Although candidates can be seconded to both diploma and degree programmes, the Trust will give preference to candidates with two A Levels who secure a place on the degree pathway. As secondment to diploma programme can not be guaranteed, applicants are advised to enrol for additional courses especially in English and Mathematics in local colleges in order to meet the required academic qualification set by the Trust. The Trust’s Life Long Learning Adviser can be contacted for advice on registration for courses in local colleges in order to gain the required qualification. University application should be completed online via UCAS (University clearance application system) website in March and October of each year for September and April intakes. It is important that admission is secured by candidates first before attending secondment interview within the Trust as secondment cannot be offered unless admission has been secured.

It is essential that the correct UCAS code is selected for either the diploma or the degree pathway. 200 UCAS points is required for entry to the degree programme at university.
2. Trust criteria:
   - Duration of contracted employment with the Trust and number of hours worked: To be eligible for secondment staff must work at least 15 hours/week and in substantive post. NHS Professional staff are not eligible for secondment.
   - Evidence of recent study skills which is essential to ensure successful completion of written assignments.
   - Line manager’s reference to support application for secondment and candidate’s capability of coping with the challenges of the academic aspect of the programme.
   - Good attendance record over the last 12 months.

Application process:
Secondment application form can be requested in writing from the Practice Development Nurse (PDN), KCH. Evidence of meeting the above criteria and evidence of academic qualifications is required.

Interview Process:
Applicants will be short-listed depending on the number of secondment commissions per cohort. Interviews will be held twice a year, May and December for the September and April Cohorts respectively in accordance with the University calendar.

Information on Secondment:
Two copies of information on secondment will be sent to applicants, conveying the offer of secondment. Applicants need to read and understand the content of this letter before making a decision on whether or not to accept the offer of secondment. If applicants wish to accept the offer, they should return a signed copy of the letter to the Practice Development Nurse, KCH. The second copy is kept by the applicant who is required to accept or decline the offer of secondment within two to three weeks of the offer, so that the position could be offered to another candidate, if declined.

Secondment/sponsorship could only be offered subject to the confirmation of a place on the pre-registration programme.

Successful candidates will be required to sign an ‘Amendment to Contract’ that is, an amendment to the initial contract as HCA/MCA with the Trust. The ‘Amendment to Contract’ clearly stipulates the conditions attached to secondment/sponsorship by the Trust during the duration of the programme and more importantly the consequences of non-compliance (withdrawal of secondment).

Pre-registration training is a full time course (37.5 hours/week) and seconded students wishing to undertake NHSP shifts to supplement income are only allowed an additional 7.5 hours shift a week without contravening the European working directive. Disciplinary action would be taken where violation against this regulation has been established; however, students may choose to work during the university holidays. Students are not entitled to additional holidays outside the university break. Holidays should not be booked outside university holidays.

Sickness absence Reporting
Seconded students must ensure that sickness absence is reported to the Practice Development Nurse, KCH in accordance with EKHUFT sickness absence policy. They must also inform CCCU and wards or unit managers during clinical placement. Failure to comply with the Trust’s sickness absence policy may lead to disciplinary action. Sickness absence reporting form must be completed by seconded students during
placement during each episode of sickness and managers should complete Part 2 - return to work interview of the sickness absence reporting form on returning from sickness (whenever possible). Completed forms should be sent to PDN, KCH for monitoring purposes. The cooperation of ward/unit managers is essential in ensuring compliance with this policy.

**Line Management:**
Line management is provided by the Practice Development Nurse, KCH to all seconded Nursing and Midwifery students during the three years of pre-registration education. Seconded students have an obligation to comply with the Trust policies and protocols and inform the PDN of any issue that could impact on their academic progress. Failure to comply with Trust policies including sickness absence could lead to disciplinary action. Tripartite meetings are held twice a year with seconded students, their Pathway Directors and the Practice Development Nurse to discuss areas of concerns and offer personal and academic support. Poor academic performance may lead to interruption on the programme, in which case the affected student will be required to work on the ward as a health care or midwifery care assistant. The cooperation of directorate matrons and ward managers is crucial to facilitate this process.

**Change Form:**
Ward/Unit managers should complete staff transfer/change form at least two weeks before the commencement of programme and secondment. **Termination form** should **not** be completed as HCAs/MCAs seconded to pre-registration education remain employees of the Trust throughout the three years of studying and retain employment rights for the duration of their programme of study.

**At the end of Programme:**
On completing the programme, seconded students like other students nurses will be required to go through the Trust recruitment process for a band 5 post. A recruitment study day will be arranged by the Trust to prepare them beforehand.

Candidates are seconded by the Trust **and not** by their prospective wards or departments, therefore managers should not expect seconded students to return to their previous wards after qualification unless in an exceptional circumstance.

**REFERENCES**
5. Competency framework (2004);