



GP Assistants

Spread and Adoption across the South West

What is it?

The GP Assistant (GPA) is a new and emerging role created to relieve some of the pressure on GPs. Former RCGP Chair Dr Maureen Baker said GPAs would be 'a cross between a healthcare assistant and a doctor's Personal Assistant' combining administrative skills and clinical skills for a versatile, interesting role.

Health Education England is supporting the spread and adoption of this new role and Devon Training Hub are co-ordinating the rollout of Phase 2 of this project on behalf of the South West Region. This project will see 40 candidates from across General Practice in the South West trained into the GPA role and have the opportunity to achieve the GP Assistant Certificate. This is the second wave of the programme, with more than 40 GPAs already trained across the South West. The first cohort have been enthusiastic about the opportunity to directly help patients, support their teams in new ways, and the chance to gain a qualification whilst not having to stop working.

What can they do?

GPAs are trained to undertake routine administration and basic clinical duties, which may include:

- Sorting and prioritising clinical post
- Dealing with routine clinical post directly e.g. DNA letters, 2WW etc.
- Extracting information from clinical letters that requires coding.
- Completing basic (non-opinion) forms for the GP to approve and sign such as insurance forms, mortgage forms e.g. ESA113 etc.
- Preparing patients prior to going in to see the GP, e.g. taking a brief history and observations in readiness for the appointment.
- Arranging appointments, referrals and follow up appointments of patients
- Clinical observations, urinalysis, ECGs & phlebotomy.
- Explaining treatment procedures to patients including arranging follow up.
- Helping the GP liaise with outside agencies, e.g. contacting an on-call doctor by phone to ask advice or arrange admission while the GP can continue with their consultation(s).



The first cohort of GPAs in the South West were able to cover parts of other team member's roles, including keeping routine administration flowing when a practice manager was off sick and preventing phlebotomy clinics being cancelled for staff absence.

What is the GP Assistant Certificate?

Trainees will need to dedicate one full day a week to the course, which can be achieved flexibly whilst remaining in their place of work. Half a day will be spent working on an online portal to provide evidence of their learning, and half a day gaining hands-on experience with a GP mentor or appropriate member of the workforce.

Trainees will need to be supported by a named GP who will act as mentor and assessor. Trainees may spend time with others, such as practice nurses to gain experience in clinical duties such as blood pressure measurement, but the GP mentor will ultimately be responsible for signing-off the GPA as competent.

The level 4 certificate has been accredited by University of Chester. The workbook and syllabus has been created by Sysco Training working, with GPs, Practice Nurses and Practice Managers.

How long will it take?

The course takes 6-9 months to complete and we are aiming to commence in May / June 2021 – we are working to confirm dates and this will be governed by the level of interest in the programme.

What are the entry criteria?

There are no formal qualification requirements. Candidates should be considered competent from their experience as practice administrators or healthcare assistants and possess a current Enhanced DBS disclosure.

Each candidate must have a named GP mentor who will be responsible for supporting them through their competencies.

An Online Launch Event will be held for all successful applicants and all GPAs, GP Mentors and Practice Managers are encouraged to attend.

We have 40 places across the South West Region. Places will be allocated to ensure a fair spread across the region. An application form should be completed and submitted to andy.smallshaw@nhs.net. **The deadline for applications is now 16th June 2021.** Please note that submission of an application form does not guarantee a place on the programme – we will confirm that allocation of places once the closing date has passed.



What is the cost?

There is no charge for participating in this programme. On completion of the GPA Certificate, the practice will be eligible for a **£1,700 training grant** (per candidate) in recognition of the time given to support learners in achieving their competencies. As an additional resource it is useful for you to watch how one GP practice in the North West has developed a new GPA role, transforming the way they work and practice.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-GVx4dcRPw&feature=youtu.be>

How to apply?

Please complete the application form sent with this email to andy.smallshaw@nhs.net.

If you need further information about the course, please contact Andy Smallshaw at Devon Training Hub on the email address above.