**General Practice Assistant (GPA**

**Accredited Education Route**

**- Specification**

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## Introduction

Health Education England (HEE) is responsible for providing education, training, and personal development to every member of Health & Social Care - without a knowledgeable, skilled, and confident workforce there would be no Health & Social Care.   In addition, HEE is responsible for the leadership of all healthcare education and training for those employed by the NHS and for those seeking NHS employment. HEE also has statutory obligations for the quality of the services which it funds and for the safety and protection of learners and patients.

This tendering process relates to the provision of an accredited programme and support for trainee General Practice Assistants (GPAs) and their associated mentors. GPAs work within a General Practice or across a Primary Care Network (PCN), supporting health professionals in their day-to-day management of patients, helping to make best use of consultations. GPAs can carry out a range of tasks that contribute to the care of patients, including routine patient-related administrative tasks, and basic clinical duties.

## Background

In 2016, The General Practice Forward View set out a vision to reduce workload, optimise the existing workforce and expand the future, wider workforce. It highlighted the pressures facing GP practices across the country including the rise in patient expectation, increased GP workload, recruitment issues and poor staff morale.

In response to these challenges, HEE implemented plans in 2018 to introduce the General Practice Assistant (GPA) role to safely deliver a combination of routine administrative tasks with some basic clinical duties in the general practice setting.  The focus was to support General Practitioners and nurses in their day-to-day management of patients. The role was specifically aimed at reducing GP and nurse administrative burden, making best use of consultations, and supporting those particularly vulnerable to isolation, who were regular attenders at the practice.

The aim was also to provide a consistent approach to developing the role, underpinned by a defined job description, competency framework, on the job training and associated accreditation. The resulting agreed model was adopted and spread across England, led by dedicated Primary Care Training Hubs within each of the seven HEE regions.  To date, a third and final wave of learners are due to complete in 2023.

In October 2022, the GPA role was included in the NHSE Additional Roles Reimbursement scheme which will allow PCNs to employ a GPA and claim reimbursement for salary and some on costs. It is anticipated that the inclusion of this role in the ARRS funding scheme will increase demand for the GPA role and consequently associated learning provision.

The objectives of this tendering process will be: to create availability of more GPAs in general practice/primary care networks; to ensure a programme is offered, which will be recognised nationwide; to produce skilled GPAs who are confident and competent in their role; are confident to contribute to service improvements and optimise outcomes for patients in primary care; and have increased job satisfaction and higher retention.

This tendering process will therefore not only provide a standardised, consistent approach for GPAs wishing to gain accreditation but will also contribute to the Long-Term Plan ambition to support the acceleration of new roles within primary care through quality education, training, and support.

This specification provides you with the necessary information regarding the requirement and provides the vehicle within which your tender will be submitted. Prospective suppliers are advised to read this invitation to tender carefully to ensure they are familiar with the nature and extent of the obligations to be accepted by them if their tender is successful.

## The GPA Programme

HEE’s [GPA Competency Framework](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Comp-framework-branded.pdf) sets out the standards required for GPAs working in practice or across Primary Care Networks (PCN’s). The core competencies cover clinical and non-clinical elements spanning across 5 domains: Care, Clinical, Managing Health Records, Communication and Admin.

The Framework provides an opportunity for GPAs working in GP practices or across PCN’s, to develop and evidence the competencies applicable to their role, i.e. the knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to the GP practice or PCN. Whilst completing the GPA programme GPAs are supported with on-the-job training led by a GP mentor alongside senior healthcare clinicians and practice management, as appropriate.

Whilst accreditation is not a mandatory requirement to practice as a GPA, it can help to increase the individual’s confidence, will support future progression, validate their learning, and demonstrate their commitment to achieving optimal standards of practice and improving patient outcomes.

GPAs wishing to receive accreditation must develop a comprehensive, evidence-based portfolio supported by research, practical application, and reflection. Upon successful completion and verification, the GPA will be awarded with a ‘GPA Skills Certificate’ equating to 10 credits at Level 4.

Dependent on local need, there may be learners who undertake only the three non-clinical elements only. This would still require completion of an evidence-based portfolio. Upon completion and verification, GPAs would be awarded with a ‘Certificate of Attendance’ or similar, with an option to complete the clinical domains within two years.

At present, due to the recent introduction of GPAs as part of the ARRS scheme, some GPAs have started to collate evidence against the competency framework. It is therefore anticipated that this commission, once agreed, will not only support GPAs who are new to the role but also those who want to retrospectively create an evidence portfolio for accreditation.

In summary the programme must be aligned to the GPA competency framework and job description covering clinical and non-clinical skills requirements. This will provide a standardised, consistent approach for General Practices and PCN’s employing trainee GPAs and also support the growth and future portability of the role across the country.

**Appendix 1** provides an overview of the anticipated accredited route stages, illustrating the support offer required from the suppliers. This covers the requirements for individuals who wish to start the programme at the beginning of their employment as well as those who are already in post and requiring retrospective accreditation.

## Scope of Contract

HEE seeks to commission bids to deliver an accredited GPA programme, which will include support for GPAs and their mentors (see the Detailed Requirements section). Successful bidders will be expected to demonstrate suitable collaborative working arrangements are in place in order to achieve successful delivery, these could include, but are not limited to education provider(s) and primary care training hub(s).

The individuals seeking accreditation will be GPAs recruited into post and currently working within a GP Practice or across a PCN. It will not include individuals working in GP practices or PCNs who are undertaking other roles and wish to pursue a career as a GPA.

Successful bidders will offer cohorts of GPAs the opportunity to achieve recognition and accreditation aligned to the GPA role, [GPA Job Description](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/GPA-Job-description.pdf) and the [GPA Competency Framework](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Comp-framework-branded.pdf).

Successful bidders will be expected to offer the following support and provision to GPAs who will undertake either of the following routes:

**Accredited route – Start of employment:**

This refers to GPAs newly recruited into a trainee role, who are receiving on-the-job training and development led by a GP mentor in line with the role and competency framework. From the start of employment, the GPA will join the accredited programme and receive support and guidance from the supplier to create an evidence portfolio over a 6–9-month period. This will be aligned to the competency framework, resulting in verification and accreditation undertaken by the education provider.

**Accredited route – Retrospective:**

This refers to GPAs who have already been recruited into the trainee role from October 2022 and have registered their interest in the accredited programme. They will already be receiving on-the-job training and development led by a GP mentor in line with the role and competency framework. These GPAs may have begun collating evidence, therefore, support and guidance from the suppliers will be required retrospectively.

The tender is organised into regional lots which are outlined in **Figure 1** below, and bidders will be expected to:

* Identify the lots against which they are making submissions.
* Specify their delivery capacity against total numbers in each lot within their submission, including breakdown by cohorts/intake points during the contract.
* Ensure good coverage across their chosen region(s) which will enable GPAs from both urban and rural localities to access the accredited programme. Please note prospective suppliers may wish to bid for more than one lot outside of their region. Priority shall be subject to the outcome of the evaluation for each [region](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about/how-we-work/your-area)
* Liaise with relevant stakeholders to facilitate this offer and identify cohorts of suitable individuals.
* Evidence relationships/collaborative working with relevant partners.
* Demonstrate that all parties have the capacity to work on this project and deliver within the timeframe.
* Create and deliver a quality, standardised and accredited learning programme for GPAs.

Contracts will be awarded in June/July 2023 and there is an expectation that project implementation should start straight away. Multiple intake points may be required, and learners enrolled onto the accredited programme throughout the year to the end of contract.

**Figure 1: Regional lots available and total allocated funding**

The following table shows the expected places delivered per [region](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about/how-we-work/your-area). Preference will be given to suppliers who can deliver across a whole region(s).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **LOTS** | **REGION** | **PLACES** | **TOTAL ALLOCATED FUNDING** |
| Lot 1 | London | 80 places | £277,040 |
| Lot 2 | South West | 50 places | £173,150 |
| Lot 3 | South East | 75 places | £259,725 |
| Lot 4 | Midlands | 94 places | £325,522 |
| Lot 5 | East of England | 55 places | £190,465 |
| Lot 6 | North West | 68 places | £235,484 |
| Lot 7 | North East and Yorkshire | 78 places | £270,114 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **500** | **£1,731,500** |

Please note this contract is for 500 learners with a possibility to extend to 1000 based on PCN demand and subject to funding.

**Figure 2: Funding breakdown per learner place**

The following table is the expected funding distribution for each learner place, including support for mentors. HEE reserves the right to reject bids in excess of £3,463 per learner.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Funding offer** | **Indicative Cost per learner** |
| Accredited programme (education)   * Learner verification and accreditation * Provide access for learners, mentors and verifiers to an e-portfolio platform aligned to the GPA competency framework * Academic and technical support and guidance | £675 |
| Regional Project Management/Support   * Leading, co-ordinating and integrating the project across chosen [NHS region(s)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about/how-we-work/your-area) e.g via Training Hubs * Including GPA project management, administration, support, and guidance | £380 |
| Mentoring and support for learner in practice (to PCN or GP practice)   * For time taken to support learner (1/2 day per week over six-nine months). | £2,408 |
| **Total** | **£3,463 per learner** |

## Detailed Requirements

Suppliers are required to demonstrate they can fulfil the following criteria to ensure that the services delivered are fit for purpose for HEE’s organisational needs. Suppliers should demonstrate:

* A proven track record and positive feedback in delivering and supporting accredited, high-quality education in healthcare
* Strong educational governance and leadership through demonstrating accountability for the continuous improvement of quality outcomes.
* Experience in or understanding of the General Practice Assistant programme.
* Provide access for learners, mentors and verifiers to a high quality, proven e-portfolio platform which will be aligned to the GPA competency framework.
* Ability and experience in delivering update seminars, webinars and other supported learning such as action learning sets and peer to peer support.
* Ability to evaluate and provide feedback on content both for HEE and evidence of engagement with learners, mentors and verifiers.
* Availability to support learners over the full 12 months of each year, including holiday/out of term time periods.
* **Table 1** sets out functional Requirements.

**Table 1 -** The following table sets out the functional requirements relating to each supplier.

**Table

Description automatically generated**

**Mandatory requirements** are as follows and must be adhered to by successful suppliers:

* The Supplier agrees to operate under the terms of the Standard NHS Terms and Conditions.
* The Supplier shall be responsible for the delivery of all the Services required under this contract, which may include sub-contracts where required and with the approval of HEE.
* The Supplier shall ensure that all work is conducted using the expertise of its members, employees, stakeholders and sub-contractors who should all have experience working in environments related to education and training in the NHS.
* Identifying programmes of work and associated plans to achieve the required outputs and outcomes.
* The Supplier shall ensure that lessons learned, and continuous improvement takes place in line with HEE’s requirements.
* The Supplier shall ensure that knowledge acquired during and related to the contract is transferred to HEE.
* The Supplier shall adopt and where necessary demonstrate a process to ensure data security (ISO 27001 or equivalent) and confidentiality of such information in compliance with GDPR (Data Protection Act 2018).
* The Supplier shall have processes and systems in place for ensuring costs and pricing are managed appropriately to achieve value for money, in line with the principles of best value tendering. This might include, for example, ensuring the grade mix of an assigned team and flexibility to provide an appropriate balance in terms of quality, cost effectiveness and efficiency.
* The Supplier shall work collaboratively with HEE to achieve and deliver best value and identify and act on, opportunities for increased spend under management throughout the life of the contract.

## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and deliverables

To ensure the maintenance of quality and delivery of this specification, the below KPIs and deliverables will be measured for the duration of the contract and will be collected and reviewed on a quarterly basis:

**Deliverable 1: Project and implementation plan** Successful suppliers will be expected to revise their submitted project and implementation plan within the first month of the contract start date. The plan should detail how the accredited programme will be developed and initiated across the awarded region(s), confirming deliverable dates and milestones.

**Deliverable 2: Development of the GPA accredited routes** including support, guidance, e-portfolio and online delivery to be offered should be in place by three months after award.  Successful suppliers will be expected to illustrate how they have provided a mixture of resources, online and/or face to face learning and support, to ensure all learning needs are met.

**Deliverable 3: Targeted marketing** to General Practices and PCN’s where GPAs are employed in post should be evidenced.

* Successful suppliers will be expected to work alongside relevant partners and stakeholders e.g., Training Hubs, employers and PCNs, to hold a minimum of 3 launch events, which can be virtual but should be system based to ensure coverage and representation across all ICS regions. These events should ensure that the GPAs and mentors are well informed of the requirements for each route and the support package.

**Deliverable 4: Pre and post evaluations** Successful suppliers will be required to undertake pre and post evaluations with employers (GP practices and/or PCNs) to illustrate for the Annual evaluation report the impact/outcomes of the GPA role. HEE will choose to use this information as part of an independent evaluation if required.

**Deliverable 5: Annual evaluation report** to be produced to outline progress against KPI plus impact on patient experience, staff experience and cost efficiency.  This will also include case studies to reflect GPA, GP practice and PCN experiences

**KPI 1: Number of starters on programme** against agreed figure (see Figure 1). Successful suppliers will be requested to report against the number and percentage of starters on the module at the planned intake points for all routes:

* Accredited route -start of employment:
  + Starters undertaking the full programme covering 5 domains (GPA Skills Certificate)
  + Starters undertaking 3 non-clinical domains only (Certificate of attendance)
* Accredited route retrospective:
  + Starters undertaking the full programme covering 5 domains (GPA Skills Certificate)
  + Starters undertaking 3 non-clinical domains only (Certificate of attendance)

This includes reporting on the number of applicants, total offers made, and justification for unsuccessful and incomplete offers (i.e.: rejections and leavers).

The metrics reported by successful suppliers are graded in three RAG criteria:

* + Green: recruitment figures of 80% or above
  + Amber: recruitment figures ranging from 60-80%
  + Red: recruitment figures which fall below 60%

**KPI 2: Number of completers on programme** based on agreed figure (Figure 1). Successful suppliers will be required to report against the number and percentage of completers aligned to the planned intake points, for the accredited and accredited retrospective routes. This should also detail those completing the five domains equating to full accreditation (GPA Skills Certificate) and those completing the three domains equating to Certificate of attendance.

**KPI 3: Attrition** measured through Contract Review Meetings and end of year reports, to include:

* + Number of learners who leave/withdraw from the programme for each route as set out in KP1.
  + Evidence of notification to HEE of learners who leave the programme.
  + Evidence of actions taken to minimise attrition
  + Trends and themes identification report
  + Attrition report, demonstrating date notified, action taken, outcome

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**KPI 4: Learner satisfaction outcomes** Successful suppliers will be expected to deliver a comprehensive learner and mentor satisfaction review at key points during the contract to include a minimum 50% response from learners and mentors. Monitoring and reviewing can be done using a range of approaches, including learner feedback, surveys, focus groups.

**KPI 5: Progress reporting** Successful suppliers will be required to produce evaluation at key points throughout the year including, but not limited to the following:

* + Accredited and retrospective route – development and delivery
  + Identified risks and issues
  + Key deliverables and milestones reached
  + Financial spend
  + Numbers of starters and completers
  + Attrition rates and management
  + Learner and mentor satisfaction outcomes

## Contract Management and Review

This contract will be managed directly by HEE as part of their standard governance. This will then be reported through the national primary care delivery and assurance board.

There will be a minimum of two face to face/virtual Contract Review meetings each year unless otherwise required by the Authority. These will be led by the Authority with appropriate representation from the Supplier. The purpose of contract review meetings shall include, but is not limited to:

* Identify problems encountered with delivery and actions taken and/or planned.
* Report the effectiveness of any previous changes to curriculum or delivery.
* Report on current recruitment, delivery, teaching and assessment of courses being delivered.
* Identify significant changes to resource and the impact of this on the programme.
* Review performance information including recruitment, programme attrition and completion rates.
* Review delivery of actions agreed as part of annual report.

## Sustainability

Suppliers are asked to consider the sustainability of their submission, hence opportunities to provide a variety of learning methods/learning/support are considered critical to this work to ensure direct benefits to learners (including equality of access), benefits to employers (reduced travel and subsistence), as well as wider positive environmental impacts associated with less travel.

Sustainability in the project management of this commission will be considered through virtual project management meetings wherever possible.

## General data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Privacy Impact Assessments (PIA)

The successful supplier(s) will be required to complete all necessary Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) documentation including a Third-Party Assurance Form to ensure adherence with GDPR and HEE policies, in respect of data processing and security.

The Supplier will be considered as the data manager for learner and supplier information. The Supplier will abide by public sector requirements for data security and management and will abide by GDPR regulations. Data will be required, anonymized for use by the commissioner. Data in respect of individuals may be required by the commissioner, or its agents, in order to prevent, investigate, or prosecute fraud or other illegal activities.

## Contract Period

The initial contract period shall commence on date of contract award and end on 31st March 2024, with the option to extend for up to a further two years, subject to funding.

## Funding

The total contracted numbers are 500 with a possibility to extend to 1000 based on PCN demand and subject to funding.

Contract funding has been secured for the first year.

There is no guarantee to value, and the numbers provided within this document and any further in support of this process are anticipated. These values will be subject to annual review of need and available budget.

## Freedom of Information

Submissions will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA). All information submitted will be treated as ‘commercial in confidence’ during the tendering process. Successful suppliers should be aware of HEE’s obligations and responsibilities under the FoIA to disclose on request recorded information held by HEE provided by potential suppliers in connection with this tendering process, or with any contract that may be awarded as a result of this exercise, unless it considers one of the statutory exemptions under FoIA.

## Appendix 1 – Accredited Route Stages

This diagram below provides an overview of the anticipated accredited route stages, illustrating the support offer required from the suppliers. This covers the requirements for individuals who wish to start the programme at the beginning of their employment as well as those who are already in post and requiring retrospective accreditation.

