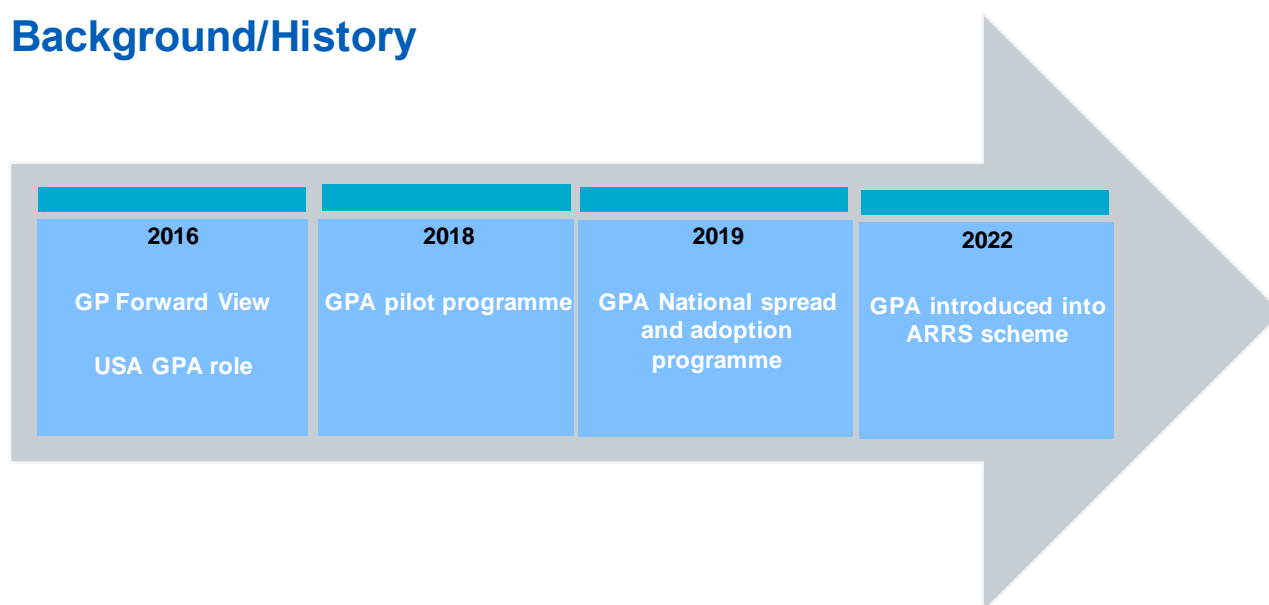


# General Practice Assistant: Overview

## Background/History



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 addition, GP practices at a local level also identified **lengthy waiting times, high staff turnover and increased reliance on locums**, all of which impacted on patient care.

In response to these challenges, **HEE introduced the General Practice Assistant (GPA)** role as a regional pilot in 2018. The role was developed to safely deliver a combination of routine administrative tasks and 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, specifically aimed at reducing their administrative burden, making best use of consultations, and supporting those particularly vulnerable to isolation who were regular attenders at the practice.

The aim was to provide a consistent approach to developing the role, underpinned by a defined job description, competency framework and associated accreditation, resulting in an agreed model which was adopted and spread across England. By 2022, over 400 GPAs had undertaken the GPA programme.

Furthermore, the success of the programme led to the inclusion within the **Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme** (ARRS) in October 2022. The ARRS scheme was introduced in England in 2019 as a key part of the government's manifesto commitment to improve access to general practice and support the recruitment of 26,000 additional staff into practice. ARRS funding allows PCNs to employ a GPA and claim reimbursement for the salary and some on costs.

## The General Practice Assistant (GPA) Role

General Practice Assistants (GPAs) play an important role in Primary Care, helping to ensure patient health and care is timely, efficient, and patient-centred. It focusses on supporting General Practitioners and the wider team in their day-to-day management of patients, specifically aimed at reducing the administrative burden, making best use of consultations and supporting those particularly vulnerable to isolation who are regular attenders at the practice.

The General Practice Assistant role (GPA) is an enhanced administrative role, with some basic, clinical elements and can be flexed to suit general practice requirements. However, any clinical duties undertaken must be **covered by the practice governance and associated liability insurance/arrangements**.

The full job description can be found on [General Practice Assistant - elearning for healthcare \(e-lfh.org.uk\)](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk) and includes the following tasks:

- Sorting all clinical post and prioritising for the GP in terms of actions. Signposting some post to others such as clinical pharmacist etc.
- Extracting all information from clinical letters that needs coding and adding to notes.
- Arranging appointments, referrals, tests and follow up appointments of patients.
- Supporting GP with basic observations as required e.g., dipping urine, taking blood pressure, ECGs & phlebotomy.

- Completing basic (non-opinion) forms and core elements of some forms for the GP to approve and sign such as insurance forms, mortgage, benefits agency forms etc.
- Explaining treatment procedures to patients as requested by the GP.
- Helping the GP liaise with outside agencies e.g., getting an on-call doctor on the phone to ask advice or arrange admission while the GP can continue with their consultation(s).

Historically, **most GPAs have been recruited in house** which has supported retention and offered career progression opportunities for existing staff. They have predominantly come from reception, administration or healthcare assistant roles.

## General Practice Assistant Competency Framework

It is expected that all GPAs are trained in practice, with on-the-job training and development led by GP mentors, in line with the role outline and national competency framework.

The GPA Competency Framework 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 by a GP mentor and other healthcare professionals.

Whilst accreditation is not a mandatory requirement to practice as a GPA (see next section), 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.

## Training and Development Routes

### Non-accredited route

GPA undertakes activities and tasks aligned to the job description and competency framework.

Does not need to produce evidence portfolio but must be

### Accredited route\*

GPA undertakes activities and tasks aligned to the job description and competency framework.

Produces an evidence portfolio with support and guidance

Underpinned by **on-the-job training** and development led by GP mentor plus other healthcare professionals, where appropriate

The GPA programme offers 2 routes as follows:

- **Non accredited route (in house competency development):** GPAs will undertake activities aligned to job description and competency framework, under the guidance and supervision of a GP, as with other ARRS roles. The GP practice/PCN must then deem them competent. GPAs will operate under the contract, guidance and supervision of GPs, as with other ARRS roles. GPs hold responsibility for services delivered under their contract.

However, to encourage best practice GPs/PCNs may request that GPAs create evidence aligned to the competency framework for them to sign off as competent in practice. If so, there are documents and resources to support them on [General Practice Assistant - elearning for healthcare \(e-lfh.org.uk\)](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk) including 'how to build evidence' and 'supporting resources' plus the GPA learner and mentor guides. They may also wish to use the competency framework as a spreadsheet to upload and record their information.

- **Accredited route – start of employment:** Upon recruitment into the trainee role, the GPA is supported with on-job training in practice led by a GP mentor. From the start of employment, the GPA will join the accredited programme and receive support and guidance to create an evidence portfolio at is assessed locally and verified by an

education provider. Upon successful completion/verification, the GPA will be awarded with a certificate and accreditation (e.g. 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.

- **Accredited route - retrospective:** This refers to GPAs who were recruited into the trainee role between Winter 2022 – Autumn 2023 only, registered their interest in the accredited programme but awaited further confirmation about their local education provider. They will already be undertaking on-job training and development led by GP mentor, in line with the role and competency framework and started to collate evidence aligned to the competency framework for potential retrospective accreditation.

To help frame their evidence, there are documents and resources to support them on [General Practice Assistant - elearning for healthcare \(e-lfh.org.uk\)](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk) including 'how to build evidence' and 'supporting resources' plus the GPA learner and mentor guides. They may also wish to use the competency framework as a spreadsheet to upload and record their information.

## Accredited programme providers

Accredited programme providers have now been approved and a list of providers can be found on the following page.

GPA's wishing to undertake the accredited route should **only contact the education provider covering the specific region where they are currently working**. For example, if you live in Essex, please contact East of England provider.

Region you work in	Education provider name	Contact details to express interest
London	SEL Workforce Development Hub (London Training Hubs Together), hosted by Bromley Education and Training for Health CIC	<a href="mailto:gpa@seltraininghub.co.uk">gpa@seltraininghub.co.uk</a>
Midlands	Lincolnshire Training Hub Ltd.	<a href="mailto:licb.lthmidlandsgpa@nhs.net">licb.lthmidlandsgpa@nhs.net</a>
North West	Sysco Business Skills Academy Ltd	<a href="mailto:gpatraining@sysco.uk.com">gpatraining@sysco.uk.com</a>
North East and Yorkshire	Sysco Business Skills Academy Ltd	<a href="mailto:gpatraining@sysco.uk.com">gpatraining@sysco.uk.com</a>
South West	Sysco Business Skills Academy Ltd	<a href="mailto:gpatraining@sysco.uk.com">gpatraining@sysco.uk.com</a>
South East	Buckinghamshire New University	<a href="mailto:GeneralPracticeAssistant@bucks.ac.uk">GeneralPracticeAssistant@bucks.ac.uk</a>
East of England	ARU Writtle	<a href="mailto:gpassistant@writtle.com">gpassistant@writtle.com</a>

## General Practice Assistant Accredited programme



The accredited GPA programme is based on a framework that **covers 5 domains** (2 clinical and 3 non-clinical):

- Care (clinical)
- Clinical (clinical)
- Communications (non-clinical)
- Administration (non-clinical)
- Managing health records (non-clinical)

The learner will work through each domain on an on-line learning portal which is then signed off by their GP mentor and verified by their regional education provider.

**Aim:** To provide a standardised, consistent approach for those undertaking GPA role.

**Benefits:** Helps to increase individual's confidence, supports future progression and validates learning.

**Requirements:** GPAs will be expected to:

- Complete the programme within a 9-month timeframe
- Evidence the knowledge, skills and behaviours aligned to the competency framework and role outline
- Secure a dedicated GP mentor and secondary mentor for support and portfolio sign off, as directed by the regional education provider
- Confirm 1 day a week protected for on the job training/supervision and study time
- Be comfortable with experiential and self-directed learning
- Be I.T. proficient
- Be DBS enhanced level checked
- Engage with and update the regional education provider, as required.

**Education Providers:** Accredited programmes within each region have a specific education provider. For any further information, please contact the provider **within your region only.**

## Further information

For more detailed information, please review the documents on this e-learning for health page, including the frequently asked questions or alternatively contact the accredited provider within your region (page 6).