

POLICY DOCUMENT

# Allocation of Placements Policy – General Practice Specialty Training

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## **Policy Review Schedule**

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**Policy Owner:** Director of General Practice Postgraduate Education

### Amendment Overview

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2015 – 2.0	February 2015		Document revised cf. Accreditation of Transferrable Competency Framework (ATCF).  Document available for 2015 GP Recruitment round	
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# **Role of the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training**

## **Agency**

The Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA) is an Arm's Length Body sponsored by the Department of Health (DoH) to train postgraduate medical and dental professionals for Northern Ireland. NIMDTA seeks to serve the government, public and patients of Northern Ireland by providing specialist advice, listening to local needs and having the agility to respond to regional requirements.

NIMDTA commissions, promotes and oversees postgraduate medical and dental education and training throughout Northern Ireland. Its role is to attract and appoint individuals of the highest calibre to recognised training posts and programmes to ensure the provision of a highly competent medical and dental workforce with the essential skills to meet the changing needs of the population and health and social care in Northern Ireland.

NIMDTA organises and delivers the recruitment, selection and allocation of doctors and dentists to foundation, core and specialty training programmes and rigorously assesses their performance through annual review and appraisal. NIMDTA manages the quality of postgraduate medical and dental education in HSC Trusts and in general medical and dental practices through learning and development agreements, the receipt of reports, regular meetings, trainee surveys and inspection visits. It works in close partnership with local education providers to ensure that the training and supervision of trainees support the delivery of high quality safe patient care.

NIMDTA recognises and trains clinical and educational supervisors and selects, appoints, trains and develops educational leaders for foundation, core and specialty medical and dental training programmes throughout NI.

NIMDTA is accountable to the General Medical Council (GMC) for ensuring that the standards set by the GMC for medical training, educational structures and processes are achieved. The Postgraduate Medical Dean, as the 'Responsible Officer' for doctors in

training, has a statutory role in making recommendations to the GMC to support the revalidation of trainees. Revalidation is the process by which the GMC confirms that doctors are up to date and fit to practice. NIMDTA also works to the standards in the COPDEND framework for the quality development of postgraduate Dental training in the UK.

NIMDTA enhances the standard and safety of patient care through the organisation and delivery of relevant and valued career development for general medical and dental practitioners and dental care professionals. It also supports the career development of general medical practitioners and the requirements for revalidation through the management and delivery of GP appraisal.

NIMDTA aims to use the resources provided to it efficiently, effectively and innovatively. NIMDTA's approach to training is that trainees, trainers and educators should put patients first, should strive for excellence and should be strongly supported in their roles.

# 1. Introduction to the Process

The GP Director in conjunction with the Associate Directors for GP Specialty Training will confirm 3 year GP Specialty Training programmes on an annual basis. The content of the training programmes takes account of the RCGP and GMC requirements for award of a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) in General Practice.

From August 2018 there are 111 available programmes to applicants for GP training in Northern Ireland.

The GP Specialty Training Programme normally consists of 18 months in General Practice and 18 months in hospital based placements. GP trainees must complete a minimum of three of a number of hospital specialties relevant to General Practice; Emergency Medicine, General Medicine, Paediatrics, O&G, and Psychiatry for example.

Due to the high demand for extensions to time in the GP Specialty Training Programme, usually due to maternity and/ or sick leave, and requests for Less Than Full Time training opportunities there is a significant proportion of trainees who take longer than 3 years to acquire a CCT. For the purposes of this document these trainees are referred to as 'out of sync'.

Trainees who are out of sync within the programme may complete slightly more than the usual 18 months in hospital or general practice training. The Deanery will ensure that the composition of any GP training programme will meet the requirements for the award of a CCT.

Specialty experience gained prior to commencing the GP Specialty Training Programme does **not** usually contribute towards General Practice training, **except** where a trainee has indicated early in the recruitment process that they wish to be considered under the Accreditation of Transferable Competencies Framework (ATCF), or the CCT (CP) and

CEGPR (CP) routes. Further information about this can be found on the NRO website <https://gprecruitment.hee.nhs.uk/>

Any other prior experience such as Foundation placements and other Specialty placements not included in the categories above cannot be used to off-set time in GP training. The basis for this principle is that whilst the same training posts may be utilised by GP trainees and Specialty trainees, once on the GP training programme the GP curriculum is applied with a specific emphasis on the ethos of a General Practice approach. A trainee can endeavour to expand their experience when selecting and ranking training programmes.

The ATCF route enables competencies gained in another Specialty Training Programme other than General Practice to be accredited and to off-set time in the GP Training Programme for a CCT.

The ATCF, which was introduced for new applicants beginning on or after August 2015, will permit six months of previous approved training experience in a **relevant** specialty to be counted towards a UK GP programme. This will result in a shortened programme for this cohort of GP trainees.

Details of the ATCF route can be found at:

<http://www.cogped.org.uk/pages/trainee-information.html>

The CP route to CCT and CEGPR also shorten the time spent in GP training. The intention to pursue these routes in training has to be made early in the application process.

Details of these can be found at: <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/training-exams/becoming-a-gp/entry-to-gp-the-register.aspx>

There are 5 Trust areas in Northern Ireland; Western, Southern, Northern, South Eastern and Belfast. GP Specialty Training programmes are based in a Trust Area Group. All GP Specialty Training is completed within this Trust Area Group including 'out of hours' training. Should a post within a programme be no longer suitable for GP Specialty Training the GP

Director will endeavour to find a suitable alternative post within the same Trust Area Group. The primary responsibility of the Deanery is to ensure a trainee has access to a high quality training programme for General Practice.

On appointment trainees will be provided with a list of GP Specialty Training programmes within the Trust area accepted by the trainee. The programmes will usually consist of three 6 month rotations in Trust hospital posts and 2 rotations in GP practices, one of 6 months and another of 12 months. There is a small number of 4 month Trust rotations.

## **2. Special Circumstances**

On some occasions trainees may have special circumstances which may need to be taken into consideration on allocation of their post. Such circumstances may arise prior to entry to the programme or during the programme.

On entry to the programme a trainee can indicate if there are any special circumstances which apply to them. Such circumstances will need to comply with the Deanery's special circumstances policy.

Details of the Special Circumstances policy is available at the link below:  
<http://www.nimdtg.gov.uk/trainee-policies-and-guidance/>

Special circumstances should be clearly evidenced in line with the above policy. In order to ensure fair and transparent consideration of all trainees' needs such circumstances will be carefully reviewed. Acceptance of a statement of special circumstances has the potential to impact on the availability of training posts to other trainees due to a fixed number of training posts in the programme.

Should a trainee wish their circumstances to be considered whilst they are on the programme the submission of a special circumstances application should be made as early



as possible, for example prior to a return to work, to ensure there is adequate time to review the application and make any necessary amendments to a programme.

If special circumstances are upheld then trainees will normally be offered the most suitable post available at that time to enable them to progress towards a CCT in General Practice.

When there is capacity available in the NI GP training programme, NIMDTA may accept trainees through the Inter Deanery Transfer, (IDT), system. This is a national process. The IDT process is in place to re-locate trainees whose circumstances change after recruitment to a Specialty. Trainees in the IDT process will only be accepted by the incoming Deanery where there is capacity in the programme and will be required to accept currently vacant programmes. Dean to Dean transfers fall outside the IDT process and trainees in this category will be placed individually as they will require specific educational and training support which was the basis for their inclusion in the Dean to Dean process for transfer.

### **3. Allocations Panel**

The GP Director will convene an allocations panel. The purpose of the panel is to allocate GP Specialty Trainees to GP Specialty Training programmes. This panel will normally consist of the following members:

- Lay representative
- GP Trainer
- GP Director/Deputy Director
- Associate Directors for GP Specialty Training
- HR qualified representative

Trainees on appointment will be provided with clear written instructions as to how to complete the ranking process.

## **4. Allocations Panel to three year programmes on entry to the GP Specialty Training Programme**

Newly appointed trainees are provided with a list of available 3 year programmes within the Trust area that they have accepted, usually in April, after being appointed to the Northern Ireland Deanery. Each Trust provides the Deanery with specific programmes each year. There are a similar number of programmes in each Trust area across the province.

Each programme is within a Trust Area Group and once recruited into that area it is likely that a trainee will remain in that area for the completion of their entire GP training programme unless special circumstances are established. Specific GP practices are not listed at this stage of the process. These will be available prior to taking up a General Practice placement within that Trust Area Group in St2 and St3 depending on availability.

Trainees will be allocated to a programme based on:

- Special circumstances
- Rank from recruitment (out of the total number of trainees)
- Ranked preferences (out of the total number of training programmes)

If special circumstances have been submitted by any trainees the panel will review these to determine if they meet the essential criteria and take this into consideration when allocating a programme to that trainee. The panel usually endeavours to give such a trainee a suitable post whilst limiting the impact on other trainees.

The panel will also review and consider those applicants which have successfully applied under the ATCF and suitable adjustment will be made to their programme where possible.

From August 2016 a straight pathway into General Practice has been developed. This means that a trainee who achieves a nationally agreed threshold score in Stage 2 machine

marked test will not be invited to Stage 3 but will proceed straight into GP training. They will be subject to the same document checks as those who have to participate in Stage 3.

The trainee with the highest score from the recruitment process will be allocated their first choice of programme. The straight pathway cohort therefore will be offered the available programmes in the first instance.

Selected programmes are then removed from the allocations process, as only one person can be allocated to each programme.

The next highest scoring trainee will be given their favoured choice of programme if it is still available. If not, their next favoured and so on until a programme is allocated to that trainee. This process is applied to all trainees until all programmes are filled.

At the end of this process all trainees recruited into the programme will be offered a Trust based training programme with their hospital posts identified and 2 training placements in General Practice in that Trust area. It is not possible to specifically identify GP training practices by name at this stage (refer to point 6).

The Deanery will endeavour to inform trainees of their placement as soon as possible. Where possible 8 weeks notice will be given regarding a placement, however this timeline may be affected by the availability of suitable posts.

## **5. Allocation Panel for St2 & St3 General Practice placements**

The purpose of the Panel is to allocate trainees to General Practice placements within their Trust Area Group. This panel considers those trainees who are in-sync with the programme and require a General Practice placement during their next training year.

St1 & St2 trainees will be provided with a list of available general practice placements within their Trust Area Group at the appropriate point in their training. This enables trainees to indicate their preference for a particular practice for their St2 and St3 General Practice training posts.

Trainees, (in sync only), will be allocated to a programme based on:

- Special circumstances
- Rank from recruitment
- Ranked preferences

The Deanery will endeavour to inform trainees of their general practice placement as soon as possible. Where possible 8 weeks notice will be given regarding a placement, however this timeline may be affected by the availability of suitable posts.

## **6. General Practice Placements**

GP training practices are selected for training each year. Firstly, each training practice within the Trust Area Group provides information relating to their practice and capacity to accommodate trainees. Subsequently the training history of the practice and other issues identified in the Trainer Ranking Policy are reviewed by the Deanery and a decision made as to what trainees that practice can accommodate at that time.

Practices are identified based on the number of trainees in programmes within that area group. Practices are also selected to accommodate specific training needs for individual trainees as required throughout the academic year, for example trainees who have been absent from training for a period of time.

The capacity of Practices to accommodate trainees may change each year. This may be due to particular circumstances in the practice e.g. retirement of a GP trainer, maternity leave etc.

Practices are allocated different levels of trainees each year to ensure that each training practice receives a proportion of trainees on a rotational basis and to ensure Educational Supervisor skills of GP Trainers are maintained.

Most practices are working to full capacity accommodating GP Specialty trainees and/or FY2 trainees. Capacity in practices is somewhat more restricted than in the hospital environment since a consulting room needs to be available to a trainee. Regrettably it therefore follows that it is generally not feasible to hold a post vacant for a period during which a trainee may be absent.

## **7. Out of Sync GP Specialty Trainee Post Allocations**

Any absence from the training programme due to ill health or maternity leave should be reported immediately to the GP Specialty Training Department (by emailing [gpspecialtytraining@nimdta.gov.uk](mailto:gpspecialtytraining@nimdta.gov.uk)) so that the existing training plan can be reviewed to ensure that it is suitable for CCT.

GP Specialty trainees are provided with a three year programme of training on appointment. Trainees who take time out of the training programme will be out of sync within the training programme and whilst every effort will be made to accommodate the trainee within their original placement, this may not be possible due to the limited capacity within the GP Specialty Training Programme in Northern Ireland. This includes those who go 'out of programme' under OOPE(experience), OOPR(research) and OOPT(training) arrangements.

It also includes Inter-deanery and Dean to Dean transfers as these trainees often need bespoke training depending on their previous training experience, and those who join the programme in February in Round Two recruitment as these trainees do not have a recruitment score commensurate with the others in their cohort group.

Out of sync trainees will be allocated to their placements through consideration of:

- Special circumstances
- Individual training requirements (e.g. a trainee who must complete additional time in a specific post)
- Originally allocated programme
- A placement in the same Trust Area Group
- Completion of hospital based training before commencing a General Practice placement where possible
- Availability of a suitable training placement

The Deanery will endeavour to inform out of sync trainees of their placement as soon as possible. Where possible 8 weeks notice will be given regarding a placement, however this timeline may be affected by the availability of suitable posts.

## **8. Less Than Full Time Training Allocations Panel**

Trainees who wish to train on a less-than-full-time basis in GP should apply to the GP Director for Less Than Full Time Training (LTFT) using the document and process outlined at the following link: <http://www.nimmdta.gov.uk/trainee-policies-and-guidance/>

All applications are considered as set out in the LTFT policy. In exceptional circumstances, usually on Occupational Health recommendation, LTFT posts may be considered outside this window. Currently LTFT posts are agreed for a specific period from the date of commencement of the post. The location of the LTFT post is also only guaranteed for the same period.

## **9. Capacity and limitations**

It may be necessary to change a programme or post due to altered training capacity, service reconfiguration, or a trainee becoming out of sync on the programme. The Deanery will endeavour to limit alterations to an agreed training programme with the overriding stipulation that the programme must meet the requirements for CCT.

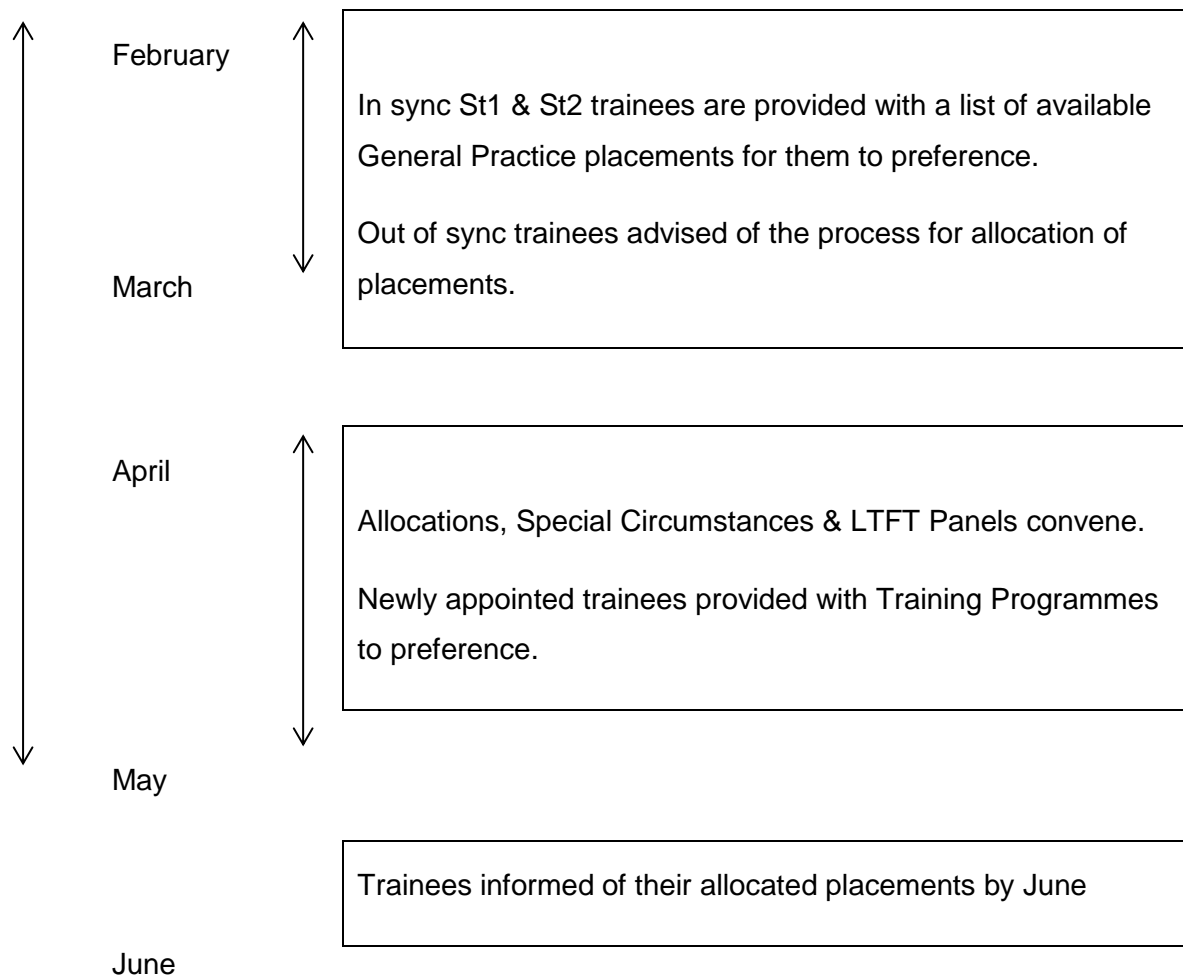
## **10. Relocating during the training programme**

Consideration may be given to requests from a trainee who is relocating their primary residence during the training programme. Should the relocation be on a permanent basis then a request could be made to move their training placements from one area group to another. These requests will be considered by the GP Allocations Panel which meets twice yearly in April and December. Requests should;

- provide at least three months' notice of the requested move
- be supported by evidence of the relocation – such as proof of new home ownership

The Allocations Panel will review the request, along with the availability of suitable training placements within the preferred area group. Consideration must also be given to the recruitment rates in each area group at St1 along with the number of out-of-sync trainees remaining in the programme at each level and the training group size. Preference will be given to requests into areas of under-recruitment.

## 11. Allocations timeline



\*Occasionally out of sync trainees may be advised of placements throughout the year. Where possible 8 weeks notice will be given regarding a placement, however this timeline may be effected by the availability of suitable posts.