

# PUBLIC PRACTICE



Associate Programme Applicant Pack

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# The Associate Programme

# Why should I apply to be an Associate?

The Associate Programme is designed for built environment professionals looking to use their skills for the public good. In a world facing climate change, economic instability, and social injustice, the need for people to use their skills towards shaping better places is stronger than ever.

We run a job placement programme for mid-career level placemaking professionals (Associates), we get to know our candidates and understand and propose jobs in the public sector organisations (Authorities) that are most suitable.

Alongside the job placement, Associates take part in an Associate Course to support their transition into the public sector and join a Cohort and wider officer community network.



# How does the programme work?

## You get a Job Placement

- Salary: between £30,000 - £55,000
- Employer: One of our Public Practice Authority Partners
- Location: roles across England
- Hours: a full-time, with some part-time (0.8FTE) roles, some flexibility available
- Term of contract: minimum of a 12-month contract starting once a match has been made

## And join the Associate Programme

- L&D Course: supports transition to the public sector, you will join the next available 6 month course
- Community: Join a community of like-minded professionals and access to mentoring and Community Field Trips
- Advocacy and Events: opportunities to share your work and experience through various speaking engagements, events, articles, and media.



# What type of experience do I need to have?

We accept applications from candidates from eight key built environment disciplines. Click on links below to find out what public sector roles might be suitable for each discipline:

- [Architecture](#)
- [Ecology & Environmental Science](#)
- [Engineering](#)
- [Landscape Architecture](#)
- [Surveying](#)
- [Town & City Planning](#)
- [Transport Planning](#)
- [Urban Design](#)

Although you must have a minimum of three years experience in at least one of these discipline, we have no fixed requirements regarding your qualifications or age but you must come with some professional experience in one of these disciplines.



# What do we mean by placemaking?

We use certain terminology across our programme, here is some guidance for the key terms:

- **Placemaking**: Is a holistic and collaborative approach to shaping places. It takes into consideration social, environmental and economic factors to improve the quality of places and the quality of life for people.
- **Public sector**: The public sector refers to those organisations and institutions that are owned, funded, and operated by the government. It includes various government bodies at the national, regional, and local levels, as well as government-owned enterprises.
- **Mid-career**: Mid-career professionals usually have around three to seven years of work experience in their respective fields.

To read more, visit our full [glossary](#) on the website



# Who can apply?

To be eligible for the programme, you must:

- Have the right to work in the UK
- Be able to commit to an employment contract for a minimum of 12 months
- Be willing to accept a salary of £30,000 – £55,000 per annum
- Have at least three years of built environment experience in one of our eight listed disciplines





# Placement Examples

# Creating Strategy & Guidance for Cultural Co-Location

You could do this role if you have a background in one of the following:

Urban Design

Architecture

In Spring 2023, one of our Associates joined the Place and Design team at Thurrock Council as a Principal Design Officer to develop the emerging Design Code. The Place & Design team sits within Strategic Services and parallel to the Local Plan team.

Their varied role involved assessing the design quality of built schemes in a borough-wide Design Audit; exploring how to code for the design process, and producing guidance about opportunities for cultural placemaking in Thurrock.

In the last year, they have been part of the team working on a project that builds on Creative Estuary's Cultural Planning Toolkit. This work looks at cultural placemaking opportunities for Thurrock. It highlights key processes and tools that the Council can use to ensure that space for culture is protected and encouraged by development. It also includes specific guidance about how the public realm, and mixed-use schemes can be designed to create spaces of encounter, to enrich the cultural life of the borough.



Cultural Co-Location – Strategy & Guidance cover image. Sourced from Thurrock Council.

# Co-ordinating the update of a Framework Plan

You could do this role if you have a background in one of the following:

Landscape Architecture

Architecture

In Spring 2023, a new Public Practice Associate joined Dacorum Borough Council as the council's Lead in the Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) team. HGC is a development programme to deliver existing town transformation and new residential development, with 11,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs coming forward over the next 25 years on the land to the north and east of Hemel Hempstead, founded in a strong Spatial Vision.

Their role involves leading the delivery of the update of the Framework Plan, coordinating Local Plan Regulation 18 representations review and supporting the drafting of Regulation 19 relevant policies, and leading the delivery of the HGC Strategic Design Code. The update of the Framework Plan is a key activity in the overall HGC programme, where this holistic plan is to guide the future development and infrastructure needs to year 2050.

# Writing a Design Supplementary Planning Document for St Helens Borough Council

You could do this role if you have a background in one of the following:

Urban Design

Architecture

In Autumn 2022, St Helens Borough Council hired a new Urban Design Officer through Public Practice. The council had just adopted a new Local Plan, and they were pushing the projects coming forward to be aspirational yet accessible, with a focus on providing a mix of housing, including affordable options, to uplift the wider area. This effort is crucial in some of the most deprived areas of the country. St. Helens faces challenges with viability due to lower property values.

The Associate's role has been pivotal in finding solutions that balance good design with viability, and they will be embedding this confidence and authority on design matters in the team as they lead the updating of the Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), set for formal adoption in April, which focuses on raising standards of housing design.



St Helens town by Fiona Finchett

# Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. A retrofit project and strategy

You could do this role if you have a background in one of the following:

Mechanical Engineering

In Autumn 2022, we placed an Associate with a Mechanical Engineering background into a Housing Energy and Sustainability Manager role at the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Their responsibilities included building the capacity of our Housing Asset Management team to deliver housing retrofit projects and to integrate sustainability into their capital programmes. This work included procuring consultants and contractors for large-scale retrofit and heat network upgrade projects and developing a decarbonisation and retrofit strategy for social housing.

Whilst at the council, they have been part of the team that successfully secured funding to retrofit 665 social homes across the Borough, prioritising homes based on energy efficiency, fuel poverty, and instances of dampness and mould, as well as geographically selecting estates with higher proportions of eligible properties. The project is now underway, with resident focus groups being set up and retrofit surveys being undertaken.



Tom Smith Heat Pump

# Delivering the transformation of Heywood Civic Centre into a multi-use culture hub

You could do this role if you have a background in one of the following:

Urban Design

Architecture

One of our Associates joined Rochdale Council to assist with the delivery of the Heywood Masterplan. Working alongside colleagues, their role has involved taking the transformation of a much loved but deteriorating 1960's Civic Centre from feasibility stages into construction and turning this into a multi-use community cultural hub.

As Project Manager, this has involved managing the project brief, scope, budget, procurement and programme in line with funding agreements, along with thorough engagement with stakeholders within the Council, partnered charities - who are the building leaseholders, and local community and arts groups. The proposed works include internal refurbishment and reconfiguration, along with a new 160 sqm extension at the front of the existing building that will include a new cafe bar and accessible facilities. The improvements will create an inclusive, flexible and accessible community space for all ages and backgrounds to engage at different times of the day, more frequently.



Illustration by K2 architects

# Application Process

# The Application Process

The application process has been specially designed to help us understand and assess your individual strengths using innovative and inclusive recruitment methods. It is a competitive and thorough process and getting into the candidate matching pool takes 2 months from when our applications close.

## Step 1: Online Application

Fill in the online application form including eligibility questions (CV and right to work), work sample and three long-answer questions. Your CV is checked separately and will not be seen by assessors, all applications will be scored anonymously.

## Step 2: Online Assessments

If your application is successful, you will be invited to attend online Assessments. You will be asked to prepare some additional material for this second stage.

## Step 3: Candidate Pool

If you are successful at the online Assessments, you will be invited to join the candidate pool, where you will be considered for any suitable role that is submitted from then on.

## Step 4: Job Matching

Once in the candidate pool we will consider you for job matches based on your skills and preferences, and the Authority's requirements. If you are proposed a job placement you will be asked to submit a statement of interest for the role.

## Step 5: Interview with Authority

When you and your Authority accept the proposed match, you will be invited to an interview where you will have the opportunity to ask more questions about the role directly to the people you will be working with.

## Step 6: Agree your contract and become an Associate

Once you have agreed your employment contract with your Authority, you will start your new career in the public sector as soon as possible and join the next Associate Cohort.



# Key Dates for Winter 24/25 Assessments

Key Dates	Stage
26 November 2024	Applications open
6 January 2025	Applications close
17 January	Shortlisted candidates informed via email
23 or 24 January	Online Assessment - Group Exercise (60 mins)
29, 30 or 31st Jan or 3 or 4th Feb	Online Assessment - Interview and Presentation (30 Mins)
10 February	Shortlisted candidates invited to join the Candidate Pool
From February onwards	Job matches may be proposed, interviews with Authorities conducted and successful candidates sign contracts and begin in role and become an Associate.

# Accessibility Adjustments

Adjustments are available throughout our recruitment process to ensure that all applicants have access and can participate. Please email [info@publicpractice.org.uk](mailto:info@publicpractice.org.uk) or call 020 3740 1233 to discuss any adjustments you require.

## **Online Applications**

In order to apply to our programme, you will need access to an internet-connected device and copies of your CV, work samples and right to work documents such as a passport scan to upload. The application will ask for information about yourself and long-answer questions (100-250 words each). If you need to submit in an alternative format please email or call us.

## **Online Assessments**

The second stage includes two online events where you will take part in three different activities. To take part, you will need internet-connected device with a camera and microphone, and the ability to charge your device. We ask you to confirm any adjustment requests ahead of the day.

## **Matching and Authority Interviews (online or in-person)**

During the matching stage you will need to submit a statement of interest in a short timeframe (24 hours) so you will need access to an internet-connected device. If your interview is online, you will need access to an internet-connected device with a camera and microphone. If in-person, you will need to travel to the office of the Authority.

# What our Alum Say



“I never thought I’d be in a position where the news headlines might impact on my next day of work, and where my day-to-day work might actually impact on those stories in the news.

Being part of Public Practice has not only put my skills to better use, it has made me feel like a better citizen.”

Tilly Ford  
London Borough of Enfield  
Public Practice Associate, Spring 2020



“I wouldn’t have applied for a public sector job without Public Practice.

They make local government jobs accessible and the learning and development programme they provide alongside the placements looks excellent and is something I’ve never seen before.”

Abigail Patel  
Lake District National Park Authority  
Public Practice Associate, Autumn 2022



# Alum Career Stories

Click on the links below to watch our Alum career stories

- [Mark Stancombe, an Urban Designer](#)
- [Abigail Patel, a Strategy Planner](#)
- [Ted Maxwell, a Senior Regeneration Manager](#)
- [Louisa Facchino-Stack, a Principle Urban Designer Project Officer](#)
- [Wen Quek, a Senior Regeneration Manager](#)
- [Ibrahim Buhari, a Senior Urban Design Officer](#)
- [Dan Daley, a Senior Project Officer](#)
- [Matt Brown, a Housing Project Manager](#)

# About Public Practice

We build the skills local authorities need,  
to shape the places we deserve.





# Our Vision & Values

We believe in the power of equipping local government with quality, diverse in-house design, engagement, sustainability, data, planning and commercial skills. We value:

**Equality** because everyone should have an equal opportunity and the freedom to make the most of their needs, ambitions and talents.

**Diversity** because different lived-experiences bring diversity of thought and are critical to solving societal inequality.

**Inclusion** because everyone should have the ability to access experiences, knowledge and opportunities fairly.

**Excellence** because it is important to aim to do the best we can do, in whatever we do.

**Entrepreneurship** because there are always new ideas and solutions to existing problems, and new problems to solve.

**Pragmatism** because by being realistic and practical you get things done in practice and that doesn't dampen ambition.

**Openness** because being transparent about what, how and why we do what we do enables trust.

**Trust** because human relationships are important and by sharing power and supporting each other we make the best decisions.

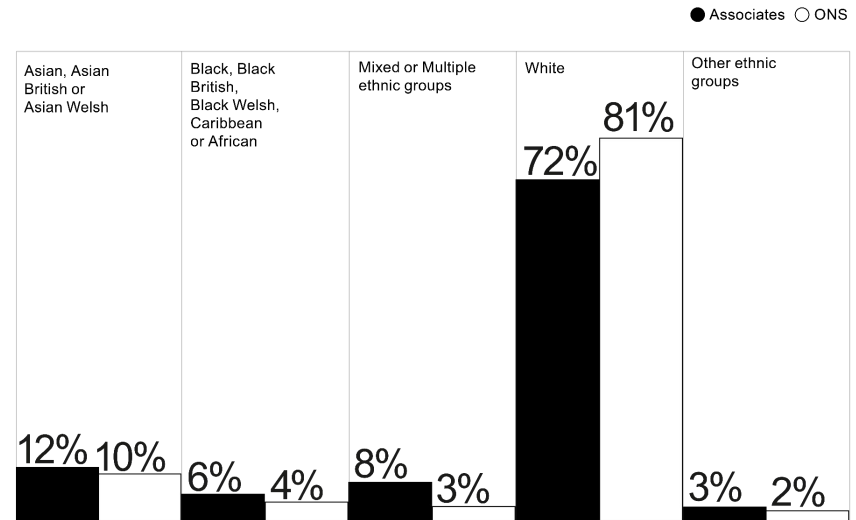
**Respect** because no one person knows best or can make change in a complex system as an individual.

# Our approach to Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Public Practice is working to establish a model for best practice for equality, diversity and inclusion on our programme. Using a data-led approach, we are comparing our data to regional populations to measure representation among Associates.

We made a commitment to track and report the diversity data of our Associates who take part in our job placement programme. We publish our latest data on the ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity of our Associates annually.

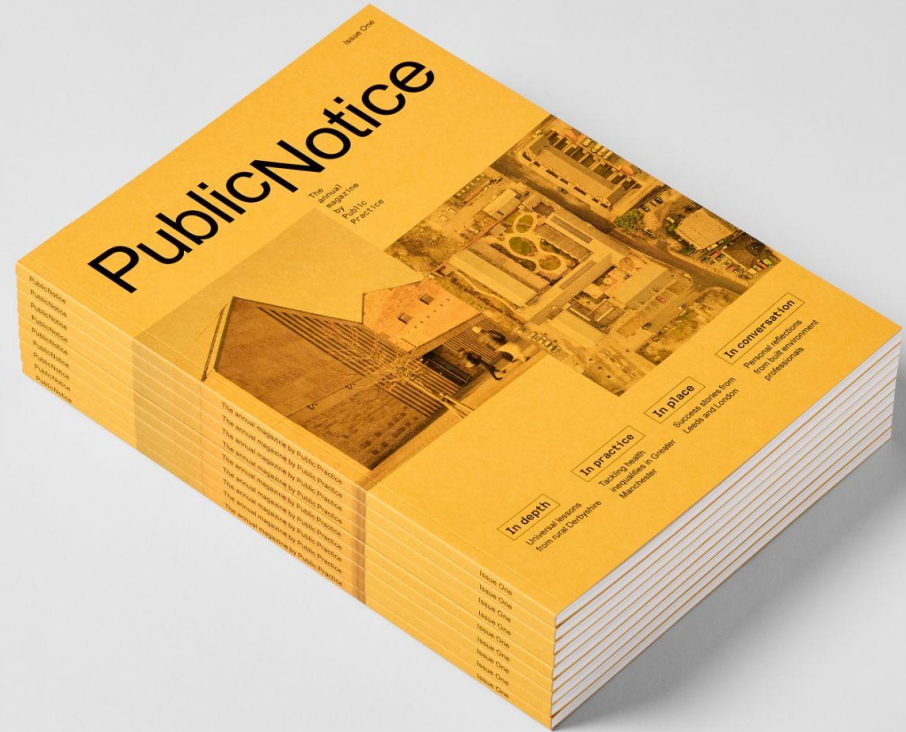
You can see the [latest diversity data](#) on our website.



# Stay in touch

You can stay in touch with us in a variety of ways:

- Visit the [Associate Programme](#) page on our website for resources and guidance.
- [Sign up to our newsletter](#) for the latest news and updates.
- Order our magazine, [Public Notice](#), to read inspiring stories from “public placemakers” across England.
- You may also be interested to hear about senior-level roles we’re advertising via our [Jobs Board](#).



# Our Funders

## Grant Providers



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government



Homes  
England

## Partners



## Supporters

**MAYOR OF LONDON**



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