



# PUBLIC PRACTICE

## Applicant Brochure

Associate Programme

Public Practice is a not-for-profit bringing built environment skills into local authorities to build the public sector's capacity to improve the quality, equality and sustainability of places.



Why become an Associate?

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.

Our flagship initiative, the Associate programme, can offer you an opportunity to **make a real difference** by working in the public sector. It is designed to grow your skills, expand your network and help you **gain valuable experience** to support your next career steps.

With 96% of the Spring 2024 Associates saying their work impacted the **quality, equality and sustainability** of everyday places, we invite you to **join the movement** to build better places, serve your community and support public good.

# 96%

---

“Our Associate has brought enthusiasm, fresh eyes, constructive challenge and skills we don’t have within the team. In his short time so far with the authority they have achieved a huge amount and made a real difference to the lives of our residents” .

Petra Marshall, Line manager, LB Lewisham

We believe in **working within the system** to influence the decisions that impact places and people most.

This is why we work in partnership with local authorities to grow the **capacity, skills and diversity** of public sector placemaking teams.

By improving delivery, **we can improve places**. Creating a better built environment for everyone, with **high quality, equitable and sustainable spaces**.

# The programme can offer you



“Joining the Associate Programme was the best decision professional I’ve ever made...”

Andrej Mecava, Spring 2022 Associate

Are you looking to have **more impact** in your work?

Whether you’re searching for your next role, exploring how to apply your skills in a new way, or planning a long-term *career shift* to the public sector, the Associate Programme can help you confidently take this next step.

Who's it for?





PUBLIC  
PRACTICE

INTRODUCTIONS

- in 2.5 mins:
- Who are you?
  - What is your placement?
  - Why have you joined Public Practice?

“I studied architecture  
as a way to have an  
impact.  
I wanted to work doing  
something valuable –  
so I applied  
to Public Practice”.

Beth Stevens, Autumn 2022 Associate

The Associate Programme is for **built environment professionals** looking for a career shift to **have more impact** in their work.

We accept applications to the Candidate Pool from **eight key disciplines**.

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.

# Built Environment Disciplines

Architecture

Ecology &  
Environmental  
Science

Engineering

Landscape  
Architecture

Surveying

Town & City  
Planning

Transport  
Planning

Urban Design

# Types of Roles

We recruit for a broad variety of placemaking roles, including:

- Urban Design & Masterplanning: Influencing the quality of design and sustainability for places.
- Housing & Capital Delivery: Working on development capacity appraisals or delivering housing in partnership with the private sector.
- Town & City Planning: Balancing competing demands for land and ensuring that new places work for different needs and deliver economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Landscape & Ecology: Strategically influencing landscape design quality at various scales.

To learn more from our Alums, read the Career Stories and Case Studies on our website.



# What are the requirements?

Ideal applicants have strong civic responsibility, adapt well to change, and thrive in collaborative environments. They are ready to navigate the unique challenges of public service.

To be eligible to become an Associate, you must have the right to work in the UK (and have a minimum of 18 months' right to work from March 2026) and be able to work and commute to locations within England and/or Wales (we will only consider for roles in locations you have selected).

Take the [Eligibility Quiz](#) to understand the other requirements and see if the programme is right for you.



What is the programme?



# The Programme

The Associate Programme is our key service, it's a leading **local authority job placement scheme**.

We place mid-career level built environment professionals into **key placemaking roles in forward-thinking local authorities**. The Programme has three parts, a job placement, a career development course and a cohort.









# What's included?

1

A **public sector role**  
matched to your  
experience and skills

2

A **tailored  
development course**  
to support your shift  
into public service

3

A **cohort of peers** to  
grow with, connect with  
and learn alongside

# A job placement

- Applicants looking for our support to make a *career shift* will apply to **join our candidate pool** and be considered for suitable roles we receive from local authorities.
- We use our expertise to **find you a role** that will meet your attributes and skills, while encouraging you to learn about public sector planning and local government.
- Every job is a **minimum 12-month contract**, with a minimum of a four day week (0.8 FTE).
- Associates are based in roles in **England or Wales**, which pay between **£30,000 - 55,000 per annum**.



# Support to transition

- We understand joining the public sector for the first time can be a unique challenge. Through our **bespoke Associate Course**, we will provide you with career development and **unique on-the-job learning** in a supportive environment to help you transition.
- This **6-month development** provides structured learning days and accompanies your time on the Associate Programme. Depending when you start your 12-month placement, you will join the next Course intake in either April or October.
- This is your chance to build your **placemaking leadership skills** and **form valuable connections**, setting you up for continued impact and career progression.
- The Course is **fully funded by your Authority employer**, and participation is integrated within your role.

# A community of peers

Feedback from previous Associates tells us that one of the most valuable parts of the Associate Programme was the opportunity to build a network of peers, all facing similar challenges in their new roles.

As an Associate, you'll join **a cohort of like-minded professionals** navigating a similar career transition into public service.



“Having community of practice was really vital to have good perspective.”

Bethania Soriano, Spring 2021 Associate

You will have the opportunity to **participate in other community activities** such as joining our peer-to-peer mentoring programme or attending Field Trips to other local authorities across England and Wales.

As you reach the end of our programme you will also have opportunities to **share your work** and experience through various speaking engagements, events, articles, and media.

# What happens afterwards?

We work hard to ensure our Associates' experience of public sector work is positive and fulfilling.

With **74% staying in the public sector two years after completing the programme**, we help you find not just a job but a meaningful career pathway.

After your 12-month placement, you can discuss your next steps directly with your Authority employer.

# 74%

---



“We’ve had some very talented individuals come through the scheme, all of which were retained past the 12 month placement”.

David Syme, Head of Strategic Planning, Lewisham Council (Line Manager)



# The Recruitment Process



# How does it work?

- Our recruitment process has been specially designed to help us understand and **assess your individual strengths** using innovative and inclusive recruitment methods.
- Applicants apply to **join our candidate pool** and be considered for suitable roles we receive from local authorities. If you pass our assessment process, we will enter you into the candidate pool.
- Job roles arise **throughout the year** and if a suitable role becomes available, you will be invited to interview with a local authority.
- If successful you will receive a **minimum 12-month** job contract directly from a public sector organisation in England or Wales and become an “Associate”.
- You’ll then be enrolled onto the next **Associate Course**, starting in either April or October.

# Overview

## ● Stage 1: Join the Candidate Pool

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

You remain in the Candidate Pool until matched to a role

## ● Stage 2: Be matched to a role

### 1. 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.

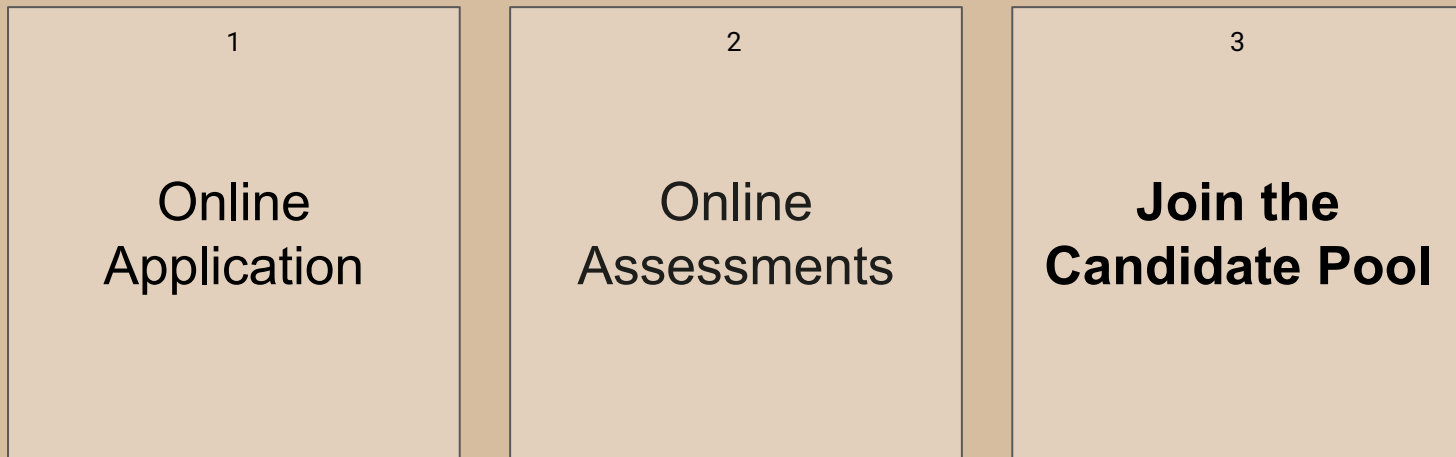
### 2. Interview with Authority

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.

### 3. 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.

# Stage One: Join the pool



# Submitting your online application

To apply, you'll need to complete an online application, which we recommend submitting at least a few days before the deadline.

You can always return and update your responses. Preparing your application may take between an hour to a couple of hours depending on how readily you can access and provide the application materials.

You will need to create an account on our application site and prepare and submit the following information:

- CV
- Work sample
- Right to work
- Personal information
- Your answers to three questions (min 100 words, max 250 words)

# Online Assessments

Successful candidates will be informed via email and invited to join the online assessment day. We expect the online assessments and preparation time to **take around 3-4 hours** of your time.

The online assessments include a **60-minute group exercise** followed by a 30-minute interview and presentation.

Shortlisted candidates will then be invited to join our candidate pool.



“My experience in the private sector may not have opened a door for me in the public sector without Public Practice”.

Mark Stancombe, Autumn 2022 Associate

How does the **Candidate Pool** work?

If you're looking for Public Practice's support with making an exciting career shift and you're ready to tiptoe into the public sector, then begin by applying to our Candidate Pool.

Joining our Candidate Pool is **the first step** towards a new role in the public sector; however, it is important to know that this does not guarantee a placement.

We will review the candidate pool every two years, and if you are still in the pool we will contact you regularly to discuss your career ambitions.

# Stage Two: Be matched to a role

1

Job Matching

2

Final interview  
with Authority

3

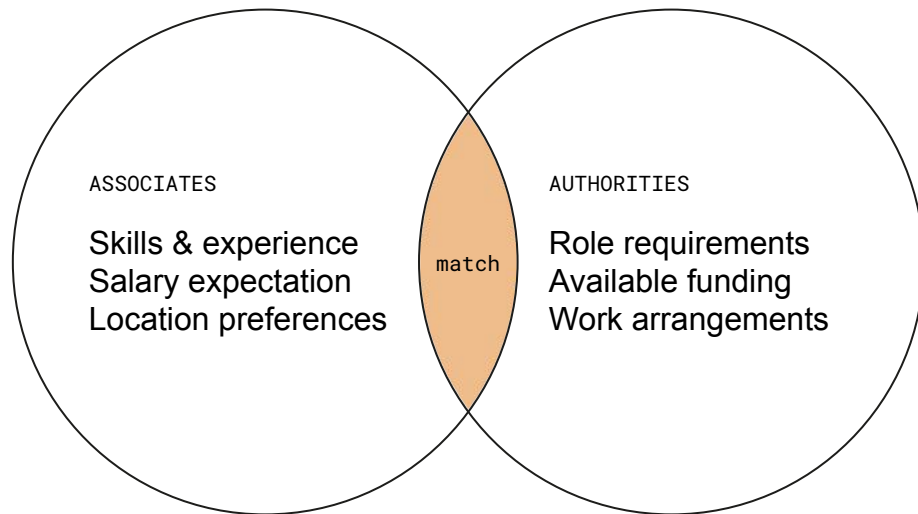
**Become an  
Associate**

# Matching & interview

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, and you accept, you will be asked to submit a statement of interest for the role. The Authority will then review your statement.

If 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.







# 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.

You will also join the next Associate Course, starting in either April or October depending on when you begin in your role.

And finally, you will be invited to join our community platform and begin making **valuable connections across your new network.**

# Upcoming Key Dates

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 18 November 2025        | Applications open   |
| 5 January 2026          | Application window closes                                     |
| 15 January              | Select candidates invited to book onto the online assessments |
| 19 - 22 January         | Online Assessment - Group Exercises                           |
| 26 January - 3 February | Online Assessment - Interview and Presentation                |
| By 13 February          | Select Candidate invited to join our Candidate Pool           |

Interested in applying?

# What to do next

Take the  
Eligibility Quiz

Attend an online  
event

Read the FAQs

Read about  
previous  
Associates

Apply

# Accessibility & Inclusion

We are committed to having accessible recruitment processes and adjustments are available throughout to ensure that all applicants have access and can participate.

- Online Application: 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. The application will ask for information about yourself and long-answer questions. 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. We ask you to confirm any adjustment requests ahead of the day.

Please email [info@publicpractice.org.uk](mailto:info@publicpractice.org.uk) or call 020 3740 1233 to discuss any adjustments you require.

# AI usage

- We recognise that many applicants use AI tools, such as ChatGPT or AI-based writing assistants, to help prepare for recruitment and online assessments.
- We support thoughtful use of these technologies to help you practise, reflect on your experience, and clarify your thinking.
- However, our assessment process is designed to identify candidates who can bring personal authenticity, real-world insight, and relevant professional experience.
- We recommend that you use your own words and voice, as responses that appear generic or formulaic may not score as highly.
- For more information and guidance, [read our FAQs](#)

# Our Funders

## Grant Providers



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government



Homes  
England

## Partners



**L&Q**



## Supporters

**MAYOR OF LONDON**



**RTPI**  
Royal Town Planning Institute

# Contact Us

[info@publicpractice.org.uk](mailto:info@publicpractice.org.uk)

+44 (0)20 3858 7447

Better Space,  
127 Farringdon Rd,  
London, EC1R 3DA

[Website](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Vimeo](#)



PUBLIC  
PRACTICE