PUBLIC
PRACTICE

Applicant Brochure 26/27

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

1

Employment

2

Community

3

Training

“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
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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 **twelve key disciplines**.

You must have a minimum of three years’ experience in at least one of these disciplines. We have no fixed requirements regarding your qualifications or age, and you do not need previous public sector experience to apply.

Built Environment Disciplines

Architecture & urban design	Ecology	Engineering	Heritage and conservation
Infrastructure	Landscape architecture	Planning	Property development
Regeneration & economic development	Sustainability	Surveying	Transport

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, with a **minimum of 18 months' right to work from April 2027**. You must also be able to work and commute to locations within England and/or Wales. We will only consider you for roles in locations you have selected.

Take the Eligibility Quiz to check whether you meet the programme requirements before starting your application.

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 support to make a career shift can apply to join **our Candidate Pool** and be considered for suitable roles we receive from local authorities.
- We use our expertise to consider you for roles that match your attributes, skills and preferences, while supporting your transition into public sector placemaking 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 **£30K–55K 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, you will be invited to join 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. From there, you can be considered for suitable roles submitted by Authorities.

If you join the Candidate Pool, you can be considered for suitable roles as they are submitted by Authorities.

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, preferences and the Authority's requirements. If you are proposed for a 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

1

Online Application

2

Online Assessments

3

Join the Candidate Pool

Submitting your online application

Applications are now open and close at 10am on Monday 16 November, 2026. 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

Shortlisted candidates will be informed by email and invited to attend online assessments. 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 to make a career shift into the public sector, begin by applying to our Candidate Pool.

Joining our Candidate Pool is **the first step** towards being considered for a new role in the public sector. However, joining the pool 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

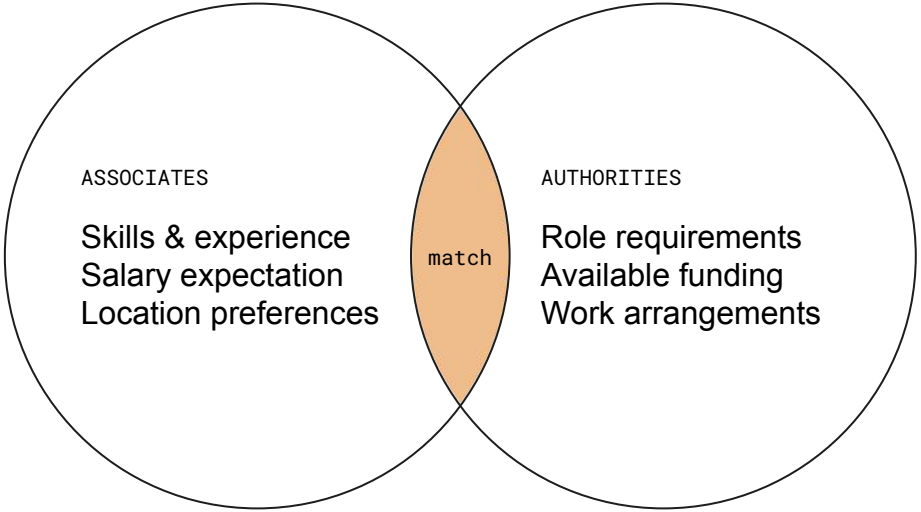
Become an Associate

Matching & interview

Once in the Candidate Pool, **we will consider you for job matches** based on your skills, preferences and the Authority's requirements.

If you are proposed for a job placement, and you choose to accept the proposed match, 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

12 October	Applications open
16 November, 10 am GMT	Application window closes
26 November	Select candidates invited to book onto the online assessments
8 or 10 December	Online assessments: group exercises
14 - 16 December	Online assessments: interview and presentation
By 21 December	Selected candidates invited to join the Candidate Pool

Interested in applying?

What to do next

Applications are now open and close at 10am on Monday, 16 November.

No public sector experience is needed to apply.

Take the **Eligibility Quiz**

Start your application

FAQs

About **previous Associates**

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 sample and right-to-work documents, such as a passport scan or share code. 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 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

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