
Supporting Mentors Scheme Guidance for 2021/22

Making primary care a great place to work

This guidance is for Integrated Care Systems and Primary Care Networks, practices, Federations and other local partners to further develop their Supporting Mentors Scheme

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Please note: Changes to the previous version of this document are highlighted in yellow.

Programme summary



What is the scheme?

- The Supporting Mentors Scheme is a commitment made in the [‘Update to the GP Contract Agreement 2020/21 - 2023/24’](#)
- It is a scheme supported by national funding, delivered by ICSs, aimed at supporting GPs through creating an opportunity to develop mentoring skills, and to work in a different way
- The overarching aim is to retain experienced GPs working in primary care through creating this portfolio working opportunity, while supporting less experienced GPs through high quality mentoring
- The scheme should be delivered to link directly to the General Practice Fellowship programme, with mentors providing mentorship to fellows participating in the programme
- **In 2021/22, systems may consider deploying their additional mentoring capacity to other GP cohorts if the need of all their GP fellows have been met**

Who is it for?

- The scheme supports GPs who currently deliver - or agree to deliver - a minimum of three clinical sessions (4 hours 10 minutes each) per week, and are looking to conduct an additional weekly session of mentoring
- GPs who have experience in leadership roles, medical education, or are currently a GP partner are particularly encouraged to participate
- GPs who want to give back but are not looking to retire yet

How is it delivered?

- **ICSs should now have a scheme running across their footprint**

- The delivery of the scheme involves the onboarding and training of mentor GPs, connecting them to mentees, and reimbursing mentors for their mentorship sessions

What do participants receive?

Participants are able to access two aspects of this scheme, **and must undertake both of these to be eligible:**

- a) mentorship training which results in an industry recognised qualification
- b) a financial payment of £289 (‘mentoring supplement’) for the weekly session utilised for delivery of mentorship activities **as well as up to four sessions for attending mentorship training**

How do GPs join the scheme?

- The onboarding process is led locally by the respective ICS. It is expected interested GPs will complete an application template and provide supplementary evidence, such as a statement outlining their motivation for becoming mentors. An example application form can be found on FutureNHS

Funding

- **Initial quarterly allocation will be made to ICSs on a fair shares basis**
- ICSs will need to engage with their respective NHS England and NHS Improvement regional colleagues **to agree future quarterly allocations to reflect actual and planned spend and delivery**

Going forward

- The scheme is expected to run for two to three years, and is subject to ongoing consideration and review

Introduction



This updated guidance is for the Supporting Mentors Scheme, which is a national initiative first launched in August 2020 so systems can support their more experienced GPs to mentor newly-qualified GPs. The document outlines the updated ask of ICSs in their delivery of the initiative, along with details of the resources available to support delivery in 2021/22.

Delivery of this scheme enables systems and their PCNs to provide experienced GPs with a portfolio working opportunity and associated training. In turn, this enables these GP mentors to connect with newly-qualified doctors to embed into the local general practice environment and become an integral part of the local primary care team.

By supporting experienced GPs through engaging them into this scheme, systems and practices are able to access a cohort of locally based and highly experienced doctors to support their own more junior doctors. In joining the scheme, GP mentors can use and share their experience to support GPs who are joining the workforce and beginning their career in general practice. Systems should continue to use this initiative to deliver the 'GP Mentorship' aspect of the General Practice Fellowship Framework, which states fellows should expect to receive one hour of mentorship every four weeks; as well as to provide additional mentorship opportunities, where capacity allows.

A diverse range of Mentor GPs supported through this scheme will benefit from funded training, leading to a recognised mentoring qualification, which will equip them with the necessary skills to mentor and 'give back' to their GP colleagues. Supplementary to the funded training, GP mentors will be entitled to financial reimbursement of £289 per session for the mentoring activity they conduct each week, as well as up to four sessions for attending their mentoring training. Accessing funding is dependent on GPs participating in both elements of the scheme, meaning there must be a local plan in place for the mentor to connect with mentees and deliver mentorship once they have undertaken the initial training.

This scheme is available to all GPs working in general practice who currently work at least three clinical sessions per week, are looking to undertake one additional session for such mentorship, and have the necessary skills, motivation and experience to be effective mentors. This is therefore a great opportunity for GPs seeking a partial step down before retirement.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have established the national principles for the scheme via this guidance, and local areas should utilise this initiative to build on current local good practice that may already be in play. Nationally, it is hoped this initiative will build on the mentor cohort trained last year, supporting a total of 600 GP mentors in 2021/22, which in turn could provide mentoring to thousands of newly-qualified GPs and other GPs.

Subject to year on year financial planning outcomes, systems should expect to have access to a budget for delivery of this scheme next year and beyond. The scheme will be under ongoing review and so your suggestions and experiences of it are welcomed.

Scheme delivery

This scheme comprises four main aspects of delivery for ICSs to take forward, which are summarised in the table below. Further detail on each of these can be found in the subsequent slides. In some systems, delivery will make sense at the place rather than the system level.

Aspect of the scheme	Summary
1 GP mentor recruitment	Systems will need to identify and onboard local GPs to their scheme. Systems are encouraged to provide local clinical leadership to promote the scheme to experienced GPs in their area to drive implementation
2 Training of GP mentors	Systems should procure the delivery of training to ensure GP mentors have the necessary skills and tools to mentor and support other GPs
3 Connecting to GP mentees	Local leads should develop a process by which GP mentors are connected with GP mentees, in particular those on the Fellowship scheme
4 Reimbursement	Each GP mentor engaged through this scheme should be reimbursed one session each week to provide time to conduct mentoring as well as up to four sessions for attending training

We expect most systems to have a scheme in place already. For systems who are still considering the design and delivery of the local scheme, they should:

- Align this initiative with delivery of the General Practice Fellowships scheme, in order to utilise these mentors to deliver an aspect of the Fellowship Framework
- Implement a process to monitor and evaluate the local scheme in an ongoing way, both in terms of numbers of GPs supported on the scheme, number of GPs trained, number of mentor-mentee matches, as well as understanding GPs' experiences of the scheme. Systems will be asked to share information against these metrics with NHS England and NHS Improvement

1 GP mentor recruitment

ICs are responsible for having a local scheme in place. Systems and/or constituent places should work together with local partners in promoting the scheme to experienced GPs in their area, driving uptake.

Systems need to implement and oversee a local application process to onboard GPs interested in joining the scheme as mentors. They will need to ensure GPs applying to the scheme meet all the eligibility criteria outlined in this guidance and that these GPs are of good character and have the potential to be effective mentors. Nationally there is a limit to the number of GPs each system can support, in accordance with their population size and allocated budget.

Where an ICS cannot support an application, they should provide feedback to the individual GP outlining the decision with information on how to reapply, where appropriate.

Systems should consider accepting GP mentors with a mix of specialist focus areas e.g. leadership, career progression, career planning, which they should use to form a register of mentor profiles. Consideration should also be paid to diversity, seeking a good mix across all of the associated characteristics.

Systems may build on a local mentor scheme that is already ongoing in their respective areas, considering how this programme can support broader recruitment and retention initiatives. This means where good practice activity is already in place which supports delivery of this programme it should continue. Your local training hub is a good point of contact and support in delivering any of your local GP workforce schemes.

An example application form for GPs looking to become mentors via this scheme can be found on [FutureNHS](#), and can be adapted for your local scheme.

2 Training of GP mentors

Systems should ensure that all GP mentors participating in the scheme have mentorship training funded through this initiative. **In order to qualify for the training there should be a clear plan in place for how and when the individual will deliver mentorship sessions.** Training should be accredited where possible, and it is recommend this is ILM5 in Coaching and Mentoring, or similar. With the agreement of the respective NHS England and NHS Improvement regional colleague, systems may consider utilising another equivalent qualification that meets the objectives outlined in the box below, in addition to the training offering good value for money. Through investing in upskilling experienced GPs to become mentors, we build mentoring capability to support resilience and strengthen the GP workforce and help doctors, especially those entering primary care, feel more supported and less isolated.

GPs undertaking mentorship training in 2021/22 will be eligible for reimbursement of up to £1,156 (four mentoring sessions) for time attending their training.

Where a GP already holds a mentorship qualification there is no need for them to undertake any additional training in order they can deliver mentorship sessions through this scheme.

Systems may elect to administer the training function themselves in-house, or perhaps invite a local partner to coordinate on their behalf such as the training hub, flexible pool or a federation.

In consideration of value for money, systems should seek to ensure that mentor GPs are able to remain on the scheme for a minimum period of one year, except for in unexpected circumstances, for example absence or retirement due to ill health. Systems may consider recovering the cost of any training GP mentors have undertaken if they do not remain on the scheme for the minimum period and an exemption is not granted. **Systems should also ensure that the supply of mentors is aligned with the demand for mentoring so that all trained GP mentors are able to contribute positively after undertaking their training.**

Mentor training should be recognised by a professional body and equip mentors to:

- Assess their own skills, knowledge and behaviours as a mentor
- Plan, deliver and review their mentoring
- Understand how to manage the mentoring process within an organisational context
- Deepen their understanding of how the organisational context can affect mentoring
- Plan, deliver and review their mentoring, for example through utilising the 'GROW model' or similar to help shape objectives of the person they are mentoring
- Plan their future development in mentoring

3 Connecting with GP mentees



Systems should establish a mechanism to connect GP mentors on this scheme with newly qualified-GPs who are participating in the GP Fellowship programme. There are a number of methodologies which could be used to activate this, including organising 'speed meeting' events to introduce GPs and support them in establishing mentorship relationships. Alternatively, systems may elect to deliver this aspect through taking advantage of technology such as an online platform to support the matching process. An additional benefit of this is such systems can also aid mentors and mentees with the administration needs of their mentorship relationship.

While mentoring capacity should be prioritised for GP fellows, systems may consider deploying their additional mentoring capacity to the following GP cohorts:

- Helping mid-career GPs make career choices including deciding to take on a partnership role
- Support to New GP partners, including those on the New to Partnership Payment Scheme
- GPs on the National GP Retention Scheme who are transitioning to a regular GP role outside of the scheme
- Supporting locums into salaried roles
- Supporting GPs thinking of returning to the profession

Systems may consider using the Flexible Pool as a way of connecting mentors to the final two GP cohorts listed above.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are interested in hearing about what works well in making such vital and lasting connections. You are encouraged to share your thinking and suggestions with other local leaders implementing these schemes, as well as NHS England and NHS Improvement in order to help us unlock this learning. Sharing can be done through FutureNHS (details on final page) in order a wider range of standard approaches can be defined and made more easily achievable. Your good practice is hugely valuable to others.

4 Reimbursement



ICCs should utilise the CCG payment function in order to reimburse GP mentors directly on a monthly basis for their sessions undertaken through this scheme. GP mentors participating in this scheme are entitled to receive **one session every week to the value of £289 in order to undertake mentoring activities.**

In exchange, mentors will be expected to support between **four to eight** mentees and provide direction and an objective view on how their mentee/GP fellow can develop and progress in their clinical environment. The mentee to mentor ratio may be increased while maintain the quality of the mentoring relationships, especially if mentoring sessions are conducted virtually and no travel time is therefore required.

Mentors should agree with the local mentorship scheme how they will use the time available to them, and if they are able to carry out mentoring in less than the time allocated, should identify other suitable GP retention activities to participate in.

- The reimbursement will cover time mentors spend on meeting preparation and follow up administration, travel time to any face to face mentorship sessions, and the mentoring session itself
- GP mentors will not be entitled to any other reimbursement outside of this including expenses, such as the cost of travelling
- The £289 GP mentors receive is inclusive of any on-cost including employer contributions

All GPs engaged with the scheme should:

- Hold full registration and a licence to practise with the General Medical Council (GMC)
- Meet the requirements for remaining on the NHS England GP Performers List and report to NHS England any concerns that might affect their status on the National Medical Performers List
- Not be subject to interim suspension under section 41A of the Medical Act 1983
- Currently be working at least three clinical sessions per week and intending to conduct one additional session of mentoring per week

The scheme should particularly welcome applications from GPs from a wide range of diverse backgrounds, and who have experience in leadership roles, medical education, or are currently a GP partner.

Experienced GPs who are considering retirement may wish to use their experience to mentor new entrants to the profession, perhaps utilising this as a 'step-down' opportunity

Indemnity cover for mentoring activities

- NHS England expects GP mentors participating in the Supporting Mentors Scheme are 'relevant persons' for the purposes of the NHS Litigation Authority Liability for Third Parties Scheme (LTPS) and as such are expected to be covered by this scheme in terms of liability for their actions while acting in the role of mentor
- GP mentors who are licensed medical practitioners should note that this cover does not extend to representing them in the case of a challenge to their licence or registration
- GP mentors may therefore want to speak with their medical defence organisation and consider whether they also need to maintain appropriate professional insurance for protection of their medical licence/cover for legal fees

Funding for 2021/22



The [Primary Care Transformation funding letter](#) confirms £8.1m is available nationally for the scheme in 2021/22. ICSs will receive an initial fair shares allocation upfront during Q1, which will be adjusted in later quarterly allocations to reflect actual and planned spend and delivery. Accessing funding is dependent on GPs participating in both elements of the scheme. Funding for training should not be released until there are clear arrangements in place for a mentoring arrangement which follows.

Scheme covers two aspects of delivery, and both must be activated in order to access this:

1. Procurement of mentor training plus networking and CPD of mentor GPs. Funding to train an agreed number of GPs with a recognised mentorship qualification. Nationally, we have calculated the 'unit cost'/per head for mentorship training and ongoing peer networking and CPD activities to be £2,500 per GP mentor per year. To ensure value for money, systems are encouraged to explore expanding existing training opportunities that are hosted by local authorities and/or local NHS Leadership Academies.

2. Quarterly reimbursement of the mentoring supplement. The ICS should pay the qualifying GP mentors their £289 per session of mentoring on a monthly basis.

Activity	Who pays
ICS securing mentor training	The ICS will receive an initial fair shares allocation upfront during Q1 2021. To inform subsequent allocations, the ICS should work with their regional NHSEI team to agree an implementation plan outlining projected spend and the number of GP mentors they intend to recruit over 2021/22
Salary to GP mentors for clinical sessions undertaken while engaged through the scheme	The individual employing practice
Reimbursing GP mentors for their mentoring session	The ICS delivering the scheme pays the GP through a lead CCG
Delivery of peer networking and CPD activities	The ICS electing to deliver this aspect through another provider – such as training hub or LMC - should build the cost into their delivery plans agreed with their NHSEI regional team

Programme evaluation



NHS England and NHS Improvement will require management information on all primary care workforce schemes in order to understand impact and return on investment, and to inform the ongoing review of the support offer to the workforce.

ICSs and their delivery partners should continue to report their quantitative data primarily via the Primary Care Monitoring Survey and financial ledger.

Primary Care Monitoring Survey

- How many GPs that have been trained as mentors as part of the Supporting Mentors Scheme?
- How many mentor/mentee matches have taken place (where a formal first introductory meeting has taken place and they have been 'registered' locally as a pair)?
- What is the average number (mean) of clinical sessions delivered in addition to mentorship session?

Financial ledger (monthly)

- In-year spend to date
- Profiled spend to end of year

Future evaluation

- Participants' scheme experience

Where to go for support



GP WORKFORCE SCHEME **DELIVERY HUB**



This [website](#) offers further delivery resources for ICSs, including workforce modelling tools and retention guidance and support. There is also a community of others leading this programme locally, so you can use the forum to ask questions and learn from other areas.

If you haven't used it before you will need to set up a username and password which should only take a few minutes.

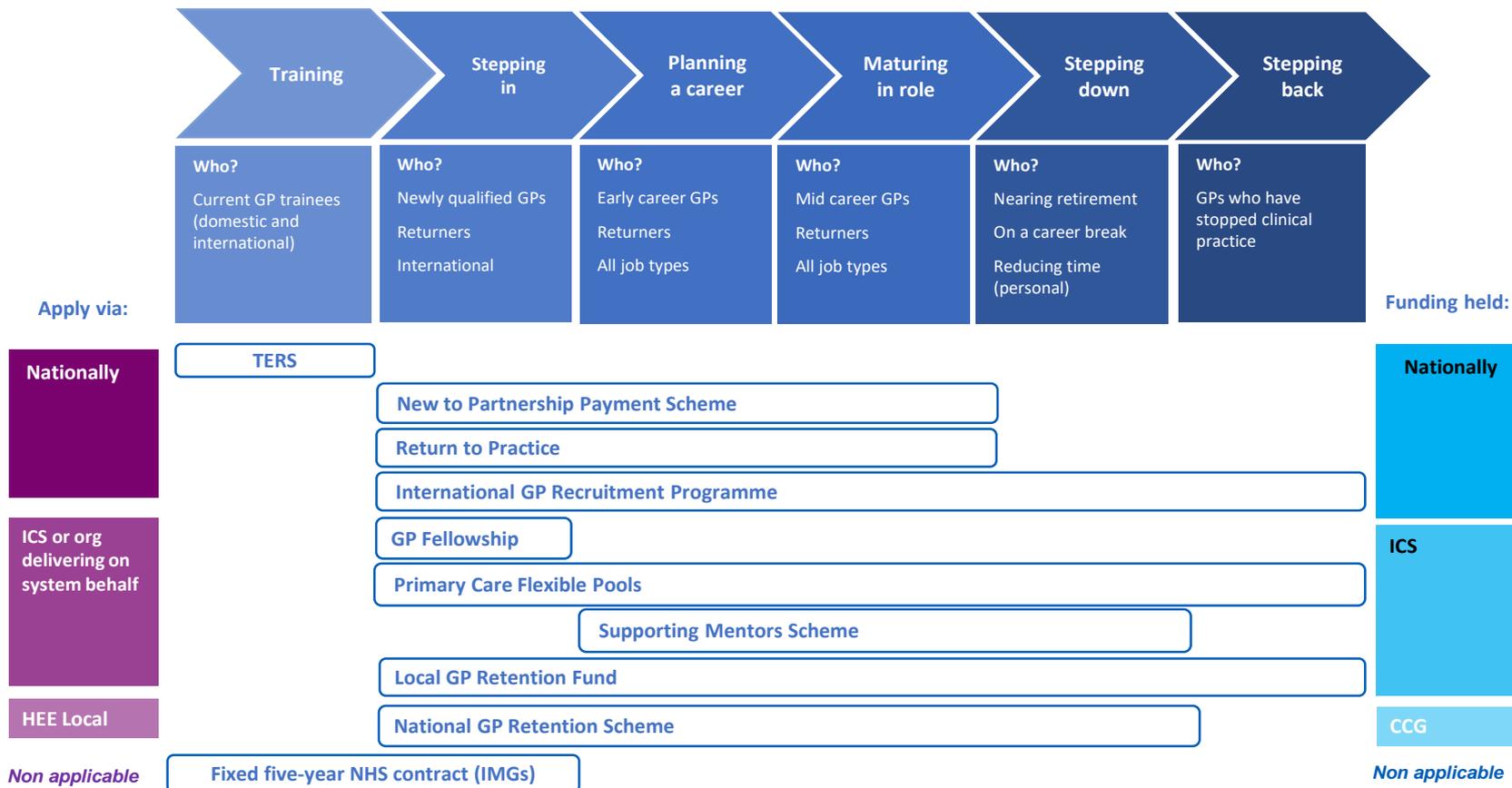
The GP Career Support Hub helping GPs on their career journey



This new GP Career Support Hub is a one stop shop space online dedicated to providing GPs with information and signposting about a wide range of support available to help them to realise a rewarding and fulfilling career. Please encourage your GPs to access the information hosted here <https://future.nhs.uk/GPCS>

National NHSEI GP Workforce Policy Team: The team who developed this guidance can be contacted at england.primarycareworkforce@nhs.net

Annex: NHSEI Interlocking GP recruitment and retention initiatives



An enhanced package of support for **GP recruitment and retention** was [announced](#) in February 2020. As an interlocking package, the schemes aim to provide GPs with targeted support at different points of their career pathway – recognising the complex factors influencing current loss from the workforce.

These schemes add to the existing support offer for colleagues in primary care - including support for health and wellbeing. Find out more at our [online GP Career Support Hub](#)