

# Recruiting a GP partner

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As more and more GPs opt for salaried or locum work, recruiting a new partner is becoming increasingly difficult. However, there are a number of steps you can take to help source and employ a keen, motivated and dedicated GP partner to optimise your workforce.

The decision to recruit a new partner will have been made in conjunction with your GP partners, and likely because:

- An existing partner has retired, resigned or died
  - The practice list has expanded, increasing the workload
  - A salaried colleague wishes to progress into the role of partner
  - There is a need for your practice to develop a new speciality area
  - The practice is relying more heavily on locum GPs
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## The role

The role of a GP partner is complex and continuously evolving, one that requires a highly motivated and dedicated clinician who is passionate about combining their clinical duties with the challenges of leading, managing and running a business.

It's important that you decide as a partnership what you want from an incoming partner. Each practice's requirements will be different. As a practice, ask yourselves the following questions:

- What do I want from a new partner?
- What can they offer above and beyond a salaried GP?
- What partnership skills can they bring to the practice?
- Do they have a specialist interest that will help practice income?
- How will they help my practice develop and flourish in these testing times?

There are some essential core skills and personality traits a GP partner should have, including:

- Empathy and sensitivity
- The ability to work as a key part of a team
- Organisational skills
- The ability to recognise their own limitations
- A professional, approachable manner

- Recognition of continuity of care as a core aspect of general practice
- Resilience and flexibility, with the ability to adapt to change
- The ability to prioritise effectively
- The ability to receive and provide constructive feedback
- The ability to set appropriate boundaries
- The ability to say no appropriately
- Strong team management skills
- The ability to pre-empt situations and plan ahead
- An awareness of 'unknown unknowns'
- The capacity to maintain a healthy work-life balance
- The ability to cope with high-pressured situations
- The ability to recognise stress and ask for help
- Financial awareness of non-clinical situations that can affect the running of the business
- Positive recognition of the politics involved in general practice

More specific skills will be determined by what your practice wants to add to or replace in its existing skillset. This could include a host of things, such as teaching medical students, GP training, minor surgery, family planning, a special interest (such as diabetes or dermatology), or any other interests that may generate income for the practice, and for which the partner can lead that QOF area.

It might be that you are looking for a partner with formal leadership or management skills to help restructure your team.

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## Hours of work

The total number of sessions required from a new GP partner will depend on a number of factors, such as:

- How many sessions the existing/former GP partner was undertaking
- How much your list size has expanded to allow you to accommodate a partner

A full-time GP post is considered to be nine sessions of four hours and 10 minutes. A full-time equivalent GP is expected to have around 1,700 patients on their practice list.

It is likely that each practice will have a partnership agreement stipulating a minimum number of sessions that is required of a partner. So, a good first step is to review your partnership contract to make sure you're familiar with these requirements and to update them if needed.

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## Recruiting a GP partner

Recruiting GP partners can be done in a number of ways.

### *Recruiting from within*

If you are a trainer, you may be aware of GP trainees at your practice who have expressed an interest in a partnership role and are keen to explore this further. You may have had a previous GP trainee who you feel may be suited to the role.

There might be existing salaried GPs at the practice who are keen to progress into a partnership. This can be advantageous, as you will likely have had the opportunity to work alongside them for months or years and observed skills that would be extremely valuable for your partnership.

### ***Recruiting from outside the practice***

You can advertise for a new GP partner through mainstream GP magazines and websites, including Pulse. This will ensure the job is seen not only in the main magazines and associated websites, but also promoted through social media such as Twitter and on the respective companies' websites.

There will likely be a cost attached to these advertisements.

You could also advertise the post through your local GP recruitment school or local RCGP faculty, targeting those in the first five years of qualification. Your local medical committee (LMC) may be able to advertise your post, too.

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## **International GPs**

The NHS is running an international recruitment scheme. See [here](#) for more details.

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## **Devising a shortlist of candidates**

If you are advertising your vacancy outside of the practice, drawing up a shortlist of suitable candidates from the applications you receive is the first step.

Important things to note in the CV will include:

- How much general practice experience the candidate has had, and in what capacity
- Experience of QOF and leading a QOF area
- Speciality areas; for example, joint injections, coil-fitting
- Whether the candidate has held previous leadership or management roles
- Evidence of a dedicated, motivated, hardworking, enthusiastic and dynamic clinician
- Any experience of teaching and/or training
- Evidence of extracurricular activities and, thus, a good work-life balance

The candidate may want to visit the practice before applying for the job. This could be a good opportunity to meet informally, without the pressure of an interview situation.

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## **Post-shortlisting and interview**

The next steps are likely to involve an interview. You will need to decide who sits on the panel. This may include all the partners, or the most senior partner, practice manager and another member of the administration team or nursing staff. Each practice will have different views on how best to do this.

You could ask each candidate to put together a short presentation for your panel. This is often a good way for potential employees to tell you more about themselves and what they can bring to the partnership.

If you are planning to conduct a formal interview, the questions you'd ask the interviewee will differ slightly from those you'd ask a salaried GP applicant, focusing more on management responsibility, leadership skills, changing systems, pathways and the ability to manage non-clinical risk.

A good way to explore the suitability of a candidate is to combine a traditional interview approach with an interviewee presentation.

Whichever approach you take, it should be structured and consistent for each candidate. Make sure all are graded or scored using the same criteria throughout the process. During the process, you will be able to clarify any questions you may have from candidates' CVs, and get an idea of the type of person they are and how they are likely to integrate into your practice.

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## Financial implications of employing a GP partner

There will often be a number of things to consider from a financial perspective. For example:

- Will the existing partner need to be bought out?
- Will the incoming partner need to 'buy-in'? If so, will it be via a loan or are they self-funding?
- Will the new partner take a full profit share from commencing the post?
- As a practice, do you own the building? If so, what implications will this have for the new partner?
- Is there an opportunity to be a junior partner or associate partner and therefore limit the financial implications?
- How will taking on a new partner impact the remaining partners financially?

Some of these decisions will involve the input of an accountant and the practice solicitor.

Specific funding may not be available for recruiting a partner, but it may be worth asking your LMC or CCG if any incentives are on offer to aid recruitment.

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## Main points

- Spend time honing your requirements.
- Bear in mind, a GP partner will need to have a broader skillset than a salaried GP.
- Casting your net wide in terms of advertising your post could encourage more applicants.
- Discuss the financial implications with partners, accountants and solicitors.

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Guide URL:

<http://preview.pulse-intelligence.co.uk/staffing/a-basic-guide-to-recruiting-a-gp-partner/>

