

Applicant Guidance: **Pre-application**

UKPHR Specialist Registration by Portfolio Assessment

June 2026 v1

This document will be updated periodically, so please check the UKPHR website to ensure you are using the current version.

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Please read this section before you go any further!

1. Purpose of this guidance

This guide explains what you need to do before submitting a **pre-application for Specialist Registration by Portfolio Assessment (SRbPA)**. It tells you who can apply, what evidence you need, and how to check whether you are ready to apply.

Please read this guide carefully before you start. You should also read the related [Portfolio guidance and the Know How and Show How competencies](#) before you begin. These documents work together and will help you understand what is expected at each stage.

The pre-application stage checks whether you are working at the right level for specialist registration. In practice, **this means showing that your experience is equivalent to that of a newly qualified public health consultant in the UK**. If your pre-application is approved, you will then have 18 months to prepare and submit your full portfolio.

You should **only submit a pre-application when you are portfolio ready**. This means you can already show evidence across the full range of competencies, or you have only small gaps left and a clear plan to address them. If you apply too early, your pre-application may be declined or if it is approved, the 18-month period allowed for completing your full portfolio may not be enough.

Portfolio development typically takes between 2-4 years on average, depending on factors such as the evidence you already have available and the time you can allocate - this will vary depending on job roles and personal circumstances. It is important to be aware of this timeframe, as it is often easy to underestimate the level of work involved. Not allowing yourself sufficient time can lead to unnecessary pressure and stress.

Before you apply, make sure you can provide all the required documents, including your application form, CV, job description, organisational chart, appraisal, 360 feedback, personal development plan, reference, qualifications, and completed matrix. Incomplete applications will not be processed.

This process is detailed, and it can take time to prepare well. We want applicants to succeed, but the best applications are those that are complete, carefully considered, and clearly mapped to the required competencies. If you are unsure whether you are ready, use this guide to check your evidence before you submit.

Support for those interested in registering via this route

There is a network open to all those interested in registering via this route, called Public Health Specialist Portfolio Network. If you would like further information on this, you can find further information on the ADPH website here: [Public Health Specialist Portfolio Network | ADPH](#)

2. About the SRbPA route and pre-applications

Specialist registration with UK Public Health Register (UKPHR), General Medical Council (GMC) or General Dental Council (GDC) is an essential requirement for Consultant or Director of Public Health roles.

The UKPHR SRbPA registration process is a **retrospective** route to Specialist registration that requires an individual to demonstrate that they meet a set of competencies that aligns with the Faculty of Public Health (FPH) 2022 Public Health Specialty Training Curriculum.

This route enables those who have not completed the Public Health Specialty Training Programme to demonstrate that **their knowledge and experience are equivalent to those of a newly qualified Consultant in Public Health.**

The pre-application process reflects the learning outcomes of the [Public Health Specialty Training Curriculum \(2022\)](#) and is considered to be equivalent with the Portfolio Pathway route for public health doctors overseen by the General Medical Council.

The SRbPA route has two stages:

- a. The **pre-application process** assesses whether the applicant is working at the right level (i.e. a new consultant) and will be able to provide evidence across the full range of competencies upon submission of their full portfolio.
- b. **Full portfolio** submission is only made if a pre-application is approved and UKPHR is satisfied that the applicant is working at the right level as in paragraph 2 above.

Before you start your pre-application, it is essential that you read this document and all of the following guidance documents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the scope of this process:

- UKPHR Show How competencies and guidance
- UKPHR Know How competencies and guidance
- UKPHR Portfolio application guidance
- Current FAQs

To help you discuss the process with your employer and gain the support you need, we have put together an [employer FAQ document](#) and you may wish to share this with those you work with.

We also recommend that you listen to the podcasts our Moderators have recorded. These are available on our [website](#) and our YouTube page: <https://tinyurl.com/yxdw6yzd> - this includes podcasts about the pre-application process, the portfolio and the reference.

3. Eligibility

Before you apply, check that you meet the eligibility requirements and can show **evidence of working at the level of a newly qualified public health consultant.**

You should be able to demonstrate **all** the following (more details on each of the below points can be found later in this guidance):

- You currently work, or have previously worked, in a senior public health role.
- You use advanced public health skills at senior level to improve population health in complex and changing settings.
- You consistently demonstrate sound judgment in using a range of advanced public health expertise and skills, and this must be mapped to the required competencies.
- You can show practice that is consistent with Good Public Health Practice.
- You can demonstrate competence across the breadth of public health practice at the level of a newly qualified consultant.
- You hold a relevant postgraduate qualification* at Level 7¹ or above, or equivalent (level 11 and above in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)².
- You have been part of a formal CPD programme for at least one year - this must include reflection.
- You have recent appraisal documentation, a current personal development plan, and 360-degree feedback.
- You have experience of strategic leadership and collaborative working for health.
- You believe you can complete and submit a full portfolio within 18 months of approval.

* Your **postgraduate qualification** may be in “any subject relevant to public health” because of the breadth of disciplines that contribute to public health practice. The purpose of this requirement is to establish that knowledge has been acquired at the appropriate level through formal study you have undertaken after a first degree - this may be a Postgraduate Diploma, Master’s Degree or PhD. If there are questions as to whether the qualification’s title or subject matter is relevant, this will be determined by the assessors. UKPHR cannot comment on the relevancy of a postgraduate qualification prior to the assessment process.

We strongly recommend that you ask someone who has been through a UKPHR portfolio registration process to read your application form, matrix and other supporting documents before submission and ask them for honest feedback on your drafts.

A public health doctor who has previously applied to the General Medical Council for a Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration/Portfolio Pathway and has been refused may apply to UKPHR under the SRbPA route, after 18 months from the unsuccessful GMC notification.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>

² <https://scqf.org.uk/interactive-framework/>

Applicants who have been part of the Faculty of Public Health formal public health training programme but not completed for whatever reason, may apply and use evidence acquired during that training if it demonstrates competency at the appropriate level.

4. What is in a pre-application?

When you apply, you need to send a complete set of documents, clearly named, and submitted in the format requested.

Here is an overview of what you need to provide (further detail on each element is provided later in this guidance):

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- Payment of your pre-application fee.
- A completed application form and signed declaration.
- Your current job description
- An organisational chart
- A current CV.
- Your most recent annual appraisal
- Your current personal development plan
- A 360-degree feedback report
- Evidence that you have been part of a formal CPD scheme for at least one year.
- A matrix showing how your evidence maps to the Know How and Show How competencies, including any gaps and how you plan to address them.
- A reference using UKPHR's reference template.
- Copies of your qualifications and any other relevant documents (such as professional body memberships, exam certificates, or name change documentation) *
- A copy of your identification*.

*Your referee must confirm within their reference that they have seen the original documents for your ID and certificates and that the copies you have provided are true and accurate copies of those originals. Your referee provider does not need to individually sign each item.

You should not use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to write any part of your application, including forms and portfolio narratives. If AI has been used to deliver public health activity, you should cite and appropriately acknowledge use of AI, including why you used it, what you learned from this experience and any advantages and disadvantages you have found when using AI. Presenting work created by AI without suitable acknowledgement is considered plagiarism. AI tools to check spelling and grammar are acceptable.

If you are planning to take any courses or training to demonstrate that you meet specific competencies, please review the course content carefully to ensure it aligns with the competencies. UKPHR does not accredit or endorse any courses for this purpose, but some institutions may map their courses to the competencies.

Please do not embed documents inside other files, and do not convert the matrix, reference, or application form to PDF unless the guidance specifically allows it. Submit the documents electronically by email and make sure file names are short and clear, as they can cause files to become corrupted or not be saved on UKPHR systems if they are too long.

- ✓ A simple way to think about it is: **if it helps assessors check your eligibility, level of practice, or readiness for portfolio submission, it probably needs to be included.**

Once received, the UKPHR office will check for completeness, and then your pre-application will be processed for assessment. An incomplete pre-application that does not meet all the requirements will not be processed.

5. What you need to send

Your pre-application form (downloadable from UKPHR website)

Please complete the [pre-application form](#) in full, with your most up to date information.

When describing your experience, clearly articulate your own role and responsibilities. Avoid focusing solely on the organisation or project; assessors need to understand what you personally did and how your contribution demonstrates the required competencies.

For each example, explain your specific role and link your work to the breadth of public health knowledge and the show how competencies. This experience may have been developed over time, across multiple roles and settings, including health services, local government, academia, the voluntary sector, and the independent sector.

Your current job description

This helps assessor understand what level you are working at.

An organisational chart

Showing your role in the structure of your organisation and who you report to.

An up-to-date CV

This needs to cover the last 10 years and should include dates of employment, details of your posts and CPD activity.

Your most recent annual appraisal, completed within the last year. This can be a work-based or professional appraisal.

Your current personal development plan (PDP)

This must be current and signed off within the last year and expected at the required level of practice. Your PDP should include elements required for specialist Public Health registration and include plans to show how any identified competency gaps will be addressed. Management PDPs alone are normally insufficient.

CPD

Your CPD should show evidence of your learning. To demonstrate that you have appropriate CPD, you must show that you have been **actively participating in formal CPD activities for at least one year prior to submitting your pre-application**. Your CPD must include an element of reflection. The Faculty of Public Health runs a CPD scheme for members, but also lists other schemes accepted by the Faculty. These are included here: [Exemption from CPD - Faculty of Public Health \(fph.org.uk\)](https://fph.org.uk). All UKPHR registrants are required to engage in CPD in line with the Faculty of Public Health's CPD policy.

Your reference, on the UKPHR reference template (downloadable from UKPHR website)

Your reference should give assessors confidence that you are working at the level of a newly qualified public health consultant and are ready to progress to full portfolio submission.

You and your referee can listen to the podcast our Moderators have made about this here: <https://youtu.be/7qal3lgGkQE>

Your referee should:

- Be a senior public health professional who is registered with UKPHR, GMC, GDC, or an equivalent international register.
- Ideally be your line manager, most recent appraiser, or someone who has a direct reporting relationship with you.
- Have worked closely with you for at least one year.
- Be able to comment on your work directly and in detail.
- Be familiar with the SRbPA competencies and the expectations of the role.
- Be able to confirm any support you will receive while preparing your portfolio, such as mentoring or study leave

Your reference should confirm that you:

- Work at the level expected of a newly qualified public health consultant.
- Can demonstrate competence across the full breadth of public health practice.
- Maintain and develop your knowledge and skills through formal CPD.
- Use advanced public health skills at senior level in complex settings.
- Show sound judgment in applying your expertise across the required competencies.
- Have support from senior colleagues to continue to full portfolio submission within 18 months.

Your referee should also confirm that you have taken active steps to maintain and develop your skills over the past 5 years. This may mean that you must ask more than one referee to support your experience across the breadth of competencies. It is very useful to get references from any placements you have made e.g. Health intelligence or Health protection.

Make sure you and your referee have both read the employer FAQs and the guidance, before the reference is completed. This helps avoid missing information and makes the reference more useful to assessors.

Referees must base their views on **direct observation of your work for at least one year within the past three years**. If no referee can provide a full year's reference, submit an additional reference to cover the shortfall. All referees must meet UKPHR's specified criteria.

If you are self-employed, you may need more than one referee to cover the full range of your experience. The referee should also confirm that you have taken active steps to maintain and develop your skills over the past 5 years.

Your referee should not be someone with whom you have a close personal relationship with, such as family and friends.

If a referee is unable to sign off a reference if they believe there is a professional or fitness to practice reason why you cannot be registered, then they must contact UKPHR as soon as possible. Further information can be found in UKPHR's Fitness to Practice guidance for employers: <https://ukphr.org/ukphr-policies-and-procedures/>

Your 360-degree feedback report

This must include your reflection on the report and should have been completed within the last 3 years and should reflect the required level of practice. An appropriate 360 tool must be used (e.g., one of, or similar to, the tools approved by UKPHR for use in connection with revalidation):

<https://ukphr.org/registration/revalidation/>. This report should be cited in your Personal Development Plan (PDP) / appraisal documents.

It's recommended that your 360-feedback report is undertaken as close to your pre-application submission date as possible.

Assessors will determine whether the 360-degree feedback tool is appropriate. It must be relevant e.g., one of, or similar to, the tools approved by UKPHR for revalidation. See view the list of approved tools under "important documents": <https://ukphr.org/registration/revalidation/>. UKPHR cannot comment on the relevancy of a 360-feedback tool prior to the assessment process.

Your pre-application matrix (template is downloadable from UKPHR website)

Your matrix sets out how your evidence matches the required competencies. It helps assessors see whether you are ready to apply and whether you have any gaps left to fill.

If you have any gaps, identify them early and explain how you plan to address them. You should only apply when those gaps are minimal and it is realistic to fulfil them within the 18-month portfolio window.

Before completing your matrix, **read both Know How and Show How competency documents carefully** and review your evidence thoroughly.

For each competency, you should:

- Identify the most relevant piece of evidence.
- State clearly whether it relates to Know How or Show How.
- Include the title of the course, piece of work, or learning activity.
- Add the date it was completed.
- Explain any gaps you still have and how you plan to address them.

- Show that your planned actions are realistic within the 18-month portfolio window.

For Know How competencies, include the course module or learning title that meets the competency, along with the date completed. For any gaps, add the planned learning and when you expect to complete it.

For Show How competencies, list the specific piece of work that demonstrates the competency and the date it was done. You do not need to write a full summary of the work at this stage, but you do need to make it clear why you are using it. If you have a gap, add the work you plan to use and the planned completion date.

Try not to repeat the same piece of evidence across multiple competencies unless it is genuinely the best fit. Keep the focus on the most relevant evidence for each competency.

- ✓ A useful rule is: **the matrix should show assessors that you understand the competencies, know where your evidence sits, and have a realistic plan for any remaining gaps.**

Using the DFPH exam to cover Know How competencies

If you plan to meet the Know How competencies by passing the Faculty of Public Health Diplomate Examination (DFPH), we recommend taking the exam before you submit your pre-application. You only have 18 months from pre-application approval to submit your portfolio, and passing the exam on the first attempt cannot be guaranteed.

If you pass the Diplomate Examination 5 to 10 years before submitting your portfolio, you do not need to provide evidence for most Know How competencies. However, you will still need to show current knowledge for the competencies that include the word “current” (KH6.f, KH6.h, KH7.c, KH7.e, KH7.f).

Where the DFPH exam is used as evidence for competencies, you must have passed all elements of the exam. A partial pass will not be accepted as evidence for any competency.

Please make sure you provide evidence that you have taken and passed the Diplomate Examination by including your results letter from the Faculty of Public Health. This should also be confirmed by your referee on the reference form.

Certified copies of documents, including ID.

A certified copy of your ID is required, and this should be confirmed by your referee on the reference form. We accept passports and government-issued ID.

Any copies of certificates or other documents must be certified by your referee on the UKPHR reference form. This includes copies of your qualifications and any other relevant documents, such as professional body memberships, exam passes, or name change documents.

Pre-application fee

Each pre-application incurs an assessment fee. You can find out the pre-application assessment fee on our website here: <https://ukphr.org/fees-and-charges/> . Payment can be made via the following methods:

BACS:	Bank: CAF Bank Account name: Public Health Register Sort code 40-52-40 Account number 00036414
PayPal:	Using the account register@ukphr.org

6. Hints and tips

Here are some frequent reasons why applications are not successful:

- There are gaps in knowledge/experience and assessors are not reassured that the applicant has acknowledged and identified ways of addressing these, particularly within the PDP. This may demonstrate a lack of planning or lack of awareness that they have a competency gap. The main gaps to date have been in health protection and health intelligence.
- The applicant is not engaged in an appropriate CPD scheme for a year prior to preapplication, or they have not demonstrated that they are focusing their CPD on the public health competencies relevant for specialist practice.
- The applicant is an expert in one field of public health, but there is a lack of assurance that they will be able to demonstrate the full breadth of the competencies. For example, experience solely in health protection or public health commissioning.
- Pre-application is not completed with sufficient detail, and assessors cannot reach a judgement.
- There is no evidence of clear public health experience.
- It may be helpful to ask a mentor or peer to review your application and supporting documents before you submit them for assessment.

Some applicants have told us that becoming an assessor for a local UKPHR Practitioner Registration scheme has helped them understand how portfolios are approached by assessors. You can find out more about this [here](#).

7. What happens after you submit your pre-application?

UKPHR office staff will check we've received everything required along with payment. Any missing elements must be received before we can process your application further.

Once we have confirmed we have received your full pre-application, we'll let you know and will contact our team of volunteer assessors.

We aim to assign your pre-application for assessment as soon as possible. When we confirm receipt of your pre-application, we will confirm the timescales.

We will let you know when your pre-application has been assigned for assessment, along with the expected turnaround times.

Your pre-application will be assigned to two assessors. Each assessor completes an individual assessment and then they agree a joint recommendation.

Assessors are all senior public health professionals who volunteer their time to us.

To help ensure fairness and avoid any potential bias in the assessment process, assessor names will not be shared with applicants at the point when applications are allocated. Assessor names will only be shared with applicants once the assessment is complete and preparation is underway for feedback.

Your assessors will aim to return their joint assessment to UKPHR within 6 weeks, but this could take longer. UKPHR will update you if the timescale is extended.

When we receive your assessment back from your assessors, we'll email to let you know which Registration Panel and subsequent RAC this will be presented/ratified at.

The assessor's joint assessment and recommendation is discussed at UKPHR's monthly Registration Panel (RP), and their decision is ratified by UKPHR's Registration Approvals Committee (RAC).

We aim to notify you of your outcome within 1 week of the Registration Approvals Committee. If you would like us to delay sharing the outcome by a short period of time, for example- for personal reasons, please contact us to discuss this.

Please note that the decision of the Registration Panel is final.

From submission to outcome, expect at least 4-5 months, but remember - this could be longer.

If assessors need more information, they may pause the process to request it. This extends the timeline until you respond.

Assessment outcomes

Your application will have one of two outcomes:

- Approved: You have 18 months from the acceptance letter to submit your full portfolio.
- Not approved: You receive a letter with reasons and an offer for a Teams feedback meeting with your assessors (you must book this within 30 days). You are encouraged to invite a colleague if possible and prepare questions ahead of your meeting. Then you can use the feedback from this meeting to address gaps before reapplying.

You can reapply up to three times. A pre-application fee is required for each new pre-application.

After three failures, you must wait two years before starting again. Previous applications are not shared with new assessors to keep reviews unbiased.

If assessors disagree, or if there are other issues with your application, the Panel may request moderation by a UKPHR Moderator, which adds time.

Delays to submitting your portfolio

If you have been approved to submit a portfolio and you take [parental leave](#) or have [extenuating circumstances](#) which means your assigned portfolio deadline is not feasible, you can apply to seek an extension from UKPHR's Registrar. Please do this at the earliest opportunity.

Annex 1 – updates to this document

Changes made April 2026

- Included guidance around use of AI (page 5).
- UKPHR do not accredit or endorse courses for completion of SRbPA competencies (page 5).

Changes made June 2026:

- Included information on what a referee should do if they are completing a reference and are aware of FtP/disciplinary issues (page 8).
- Slight formatting updates made.