



Royal College
of Physicians

RCP chief registrars

To develop chief registrars with the skills to
lead and transform healthcare of the future
Guidance for recruiting organisations



“ The RCP Chief Registrar Programme has given me the opportunity to lead and be involved with several wide-ranging projects at my trust.”

Victoria Knott, chief registrar 2022/23

RCP Chief Registrar Programme

Mission: To continually improve the standard of patient care by providing high-quality, and innovation-driven leadership development for trainee doctors who are committed to quality improvement.

Chief registrars are outstanding, motivated individuals recruited to provide a vital bridge between senior clinical leaders, managers and the wider trainee workforce.

With a remit that includes service improvement, education and training, engagement and morale, and workforce and sustainability, chief registrars have protected time to address pressing local challenges within their organisation. As senior trainees, they are ideally placed to identify issues on the 'shop floor' and engage junior doctors and clinical teams in improvement.

Chief registrars are supported to develop their skills and confidence in leadership, management and quality improvement (QI) through the RCP's comprehensive 10-month leadership development programme.

Key criteria for recruitment

- > Open to all RCP and all college and faculty specialties
- > Locally employed doctors in training must be minimum ST4 level or equivalent
- > Posts must be for a minimum of 12 months
- > Chief registrars in training must have 40–50% of their time protected for chief registrar activities
- > The role may be carried out in programme or out of programme (training or experience).



'I have been confidently able to build on my management and leadership skills by being a part of this programme. I have learnt about my own strengths and weaknesses with the help of the mentoring sessions, which have helped me maximise my productivity and success on all projects.'

Roopa Chopra, chief registrar 2022/23

RCP development programme

The RCP's comprehensive development programme provides chief registrars with knowledge and skills in leadership, management and QI, while their local leadership role enables them to put this learning into practice. As a result of the development programme, chief registrars will:

- > gain aptitude and confidence as senior leaders
- > achieve a deeper understanding of their own and others' styles
- > have the technical knowledge and skills to lead continuous QI.

The RCP development programme consists of five 2-day modules delivered between September 2024 and June 2025.

Each module consists of interactive learning and group discussion, with the opportunity to receive peer support and guidance during action learning sets.

Alongside the development programme, chief registrars are encouraged to present their work locally, regionally and nationally, get involved in RCP work, and take advantage of networking and showcase opportunities at the RCP and with our partners.

Additional events and opportunities are organised as part of the RCP chief registrar alumni network, which represents a strong and inspiring community of engaged and motivated clinical leaders.

The fee for each place on the RCP Chief Registrar Programme 2024/25 is £4,219 (VAT exempt)

Local impact

RCP chief registrars have a crucial role in leading local improvement. The projects they undertake vary widely due to a large degree of autonomy and flexibility in how the role is shaped and focused locally. Strong themes that have emerged include:

- > improving the experience of patients, families and carers
- > developing and evaluating new services and improving patient safety
- > implementing more efficient systems and processes
- > improving junior doctor engagement and morale
- > providing better education and training opportunities
- > improving recruitment and retention of trainees
- > mobilising and supporting other trainees to engage in QI
- > creating better working relationships and smoother interfaces
- > supporting organisation-wide strategic projects.

For more information about projects and outcomes:

- > Independent evaluation from the University of Birmingham is available at <https://www.rcp.ac.uk/projects/outputs/independent-evaluation-chief-registrar-scheme>
- > Previous chief registrar yearbooks are available at <https://www.rcp.ac.uk/projects/outputs/rcp-chief-registrar-alumni>



'The role allowed me to systematically think, plan and discuss possible actions with other team members and understand the crucial work done by various teams to successfully run the service.'

Michael El Boghdady, chief registrar 2022/23

In some cases, projects have led to significant cost savings for the organisation. A few examples include:

- > a weekend discharge project saving an estimated £175,000
- > a waste reduction project looking at reducing usage of high-cost / low clinical value test, expected to save approximately £200,000 per year
- > a new ambulatory service that saved over 150 bed days with extrapolated savings of £37,500 per year, with no extra cost to the trust.

There is also evidence of:

- > increased morale, better rota planning and reduced junior doctor sick leave, leading to reduced locum expenditure
- > redesigned pathways, leading to reductions in unnecessary or duplicated tests and patient waiting times
- > improved education and training opportunities, leading to greater satisfaction with training, improved trainee retention and improved patient safety.

Chief registrars have an impact far beyond the personal benefits experienced by the individual. Investing in chief registrars demonstrates a tangible commitment to valuing, supporting and motivating junior doctors, with all the benefits the role brings for the wider trainee workforce.

What makes the role successful?

Autonomy

Chief registrars have control over the projects they undertake and are able to tailor the role to focus on the most important issues affecting their organisations. They are able to develop and implement new ideas, bring learning and initiatives from previous role and seek out good practice from the chief registrar network.

Protected time

Protected time (40–50%) ensures that chief registrars have the time and opportunity to get involved in complex improvement projects, making the most of their valuable insight and experience. Their remaining time is spent in clinical practice, ensuring that chief registrars are embedded in local clinical teams, and able to put their learning into practice in on-the-ground improvement.

Local mentorship

Recruiting organisations are expected to nominate a senior clinical leader (ideally the medical director or nominated deputy) to provide local mentorship for the chief registrar. The mentor must be someone with the influence and seniority to enable sufficient access to resources and senior management but also able to devote time to the chief registrar and their development. A mentor role profile will be provided for the organisation's mentor.

Flexibility

Chief registrars have flexibility in how to organise their clinical and chief registrar commitments in order to develop a working arrangement that suits them and their organisation.

Collaboration

Chief registrars don't achieve their goals singlehandedly; their great strength is their ability to work across teams and traditional boundaries, engage with senior leadership and management, and mobilise the wider junior doctor workforce. Each chief registrar works on multiple projects, so the ability to collaborate is essential.

Senior executive support

Demonstrable and visible senior support enables chief registrars to 'own' the role and use their platform to open up two-way communication between senior leadership and management teams and the wider trainee workforce.



'The modules provide a vast knowledge related to quality improvement, leadership and management. During the RCP training days I had the chance to meet other chief registrars from other trusts, which helped with networking and exchange of ideas about my projects.'

Hebatullah Elmedany, chief registrar 2022/23

Costs and funding arrangements

RCP chief registrars are recruited and employed locally by NHS organisations, and enrolled on the RCP development programme.

NHS organisations must therefore be committed to funding the cost of the post; arrangements will differ depending on whether the role is undertaken in programme or as out-of-programme training (OOPT) or experience (OOPE). Ideally, the appropriate training status should be negotiated locally by the recruiting organisation, trainee and training programme director.

If the post is undertaken in programme:

The usual funding arrangements for the trainee's salary will apply. Backfill may also be required and should be funded by the recruiting NHS organisation.

If the post is undertaken out of programme:

The recruiting organisation will be required to commit to funding the full salary for the duration of the post.

Cost of RCP development programme

The RCP Chief Registrar Programme costs £4,219 (VAT exempt) per chief registrar and should be funded by the recruiting organisation as an integral requirement of the chief registrar role.

Summary of costs for recruiting organisations

In programme

- > Part-funding of salary
- > Any backfill required
- > RCP development programme
- > All travel and accommodation expenses related to the development programmes

Out of programme (OOPT or OOPE)

- > Full funding of salary for duration of post
- > RCP development programme
- > All travel and accommodation expenses related to development programme



'The training has been particularly useful in helping me identify my strengths and weaknesses, to explain why I work the way I do and to consider how I could do things differently. The programme allows such a concentrated exposure to practical experience in improvement and leadership.'

Robin Kearney, chief registrar
2022/23

Guidance on training status

The chief registrar must be based at a site approved by the General Medical Council (GMC) for training in the candidate's speciality.

Chief registrars should be ST4 or equivalent.

The chief registrar post is for locally employed doctors and may be undertaken as an in-programme or out-of-programme opportunity dependent upon local workforce requirements and individual training needs.

In programme: As the chief registrar role fulfils a number of curriculum requirements, trainees may wish to remain in programme. Requests must be agreed prospectively with the formal approval of the training programme director (TPD). 40–50% of the trainee's time must be protected for chief registrar activities. Trainees should continue to satisfy the requirements for the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP).

Out of programme: Requests for out-of-programme chief registrar posts must be agreed prospectively with the formal approval of the postgraduate dean. For candidates seeking OOPT, approval from the relevant specialist advisory committee will be required prior to commencing the role.

To download supporting documents for recruitment, including a sample job description, person specification, job advert and business case, visit www.rcp.ac.uk/projects/chief-registrar-scheme.

To register interest in RCP chief registrar recruitment and find out more, please email chiefregistrar@rcp.ac.uk.

Recruitment process and timeline

The recruitment and appointment of RCP chief registrars is led locally by the recruiting organisation. Before recruitment begins, expressions of interest in chief registrar recruitment must be notified to the RCP, in order to reserve a provisional place on the development programme.

Recruiting organisations should then confirm that funding has been approved and that recruitment is going ahead.

Recruitment timeline 2024

Expressions of interest open	January 2024
Complete form and send to chiefregistrar@rcp.ac.uk	Jan – March 2024
Receive confirmation from RCP that a place is reserved for your organisation	Jan – March 2024
Proceed with recruitment	Jan – May 2024
Update RCP on current recruitment status	April 2024
Notify RCP of chief registrar appointed	June 2024

Frequently asked questions

Is the programme open to all specialties?

Yes, senior trainees from any specialty can be recruited as an RCP chief registrar. The RCP Chief Registrar Programme is not currently open to GP trainees due to the shorter training time.

Who pays for the RCP development programme?

Places on the RCP development programme are funded by recruiting organisations, demonstrating commitment to the development and support of the appointed chief registrar.

How many chief registrars can we recruit?

The number of chief registrars required is determined by the recruiting organisation, based on local needs and funding availability. While the RCP does not limit number of posts, recruiting organisations should be aware that one of the benefits of the role is its clear visibility as a 'bridge' to senior clinical leaders and managers. Consideration should therefore be given to potential dilution of the impact of the role when deciding on the number to recruit. The chief registrar role should have an organisation-wide remit; if too many are recruited, the scope of each chief registrar's role may be unduly restricted.

How much does recruiting a chief registrar cost in total?

The cost will vary per recruiting organisation depending on whether the role is done in programme or out of programme, whether any backfill is required, the training grade of the candidate and the potential cost of travel and any accommodation expenses. The cost of the place on the RCP development programme should also be included in business cases. For this reason it is not possible to provide a 'typical' cost. For more information on funding arrangements please see page 5.

How long should the chief registrar post last?

RCP chief registrars should be recruited for a minimum 12-month period. Longer tenures may be appropriate if the organisation has not had a chief registrar before (to account for the longer time required for induction) or if the organisational environment is particularly challenging. Chief registrar contracts may be extended towards the end of the post if desired by the recruiting organisation and trainee, subject to approval by relevant parties.

What is the minimum training grade and why is it set at that level?

The minimum training grade for chief registrars is ST4 or equivalent. This is to ensure that appointed chief registrars have the necessary seniority and influence to lead challenging projects and deliver outcomes.

Do chief registrars need to be in training?

No, the 2024–25 Chief Registrar Programme is open to trainees ST4+ or equivalent, including those who do not hold a national training number.

Frequently asked questions (continued)

Who decides whether the chief registrar role is undertaken in or out of programme?

The decision to do the role in or out of programme is usually made by the recruiting organisation in discussion with the appointed trainee and TPD. It may be the case that the recruiting organisation decides in advance that an in- or out-of-programme post is necessary – in this instance, the post should be advertised as such. Ideally options should remain flexible in order to maximise the pool of potential applicants.

What will be the impact on the trainee's certificate of completion of training (CCT)?

The trainee's CCT date may or may not be extended as a result of undertaking the chief registrar role. This decision is made at the discretion of the relevant specialist advisory committee (SAC), depending on individual preferences and training needs. The RCP's guidance is that contribution of the chief registrar role towards achievement of generic competencies should be acknowledged, and decisions regarding CCT extension should be made on a case-by-case basis.

Can I recruit chief registrars from outside my organisation?

Yes, chief registrars can be recruited externally. Recruitment processes in all cases should be open and competitive. The organisation that a chief registrar applies to must be approved by the GMC for training in the applicant's specialty. Permission must be sought from the TPD in advance of an application.

How are trainees' out-of-hours commitments affected?

Out-of-hours commitments will be affected by whether the role is set up as in programme or out of programme. Trainees completing the chief registrar role in programme should expect on-call commitments to remain the same. For trainees completing the chief registrar role out of programme, on-call commitments should be decided locally.

Can the chief registrar role be done less than full time?

Yes, the chief registrar role can be done less than full time. The 40–50% protected time commitment should be maintained, but the role can be structured flexibly to suit local needs and preferences of individual trainees.

Are we guaranteed to be accepted to have a chief registrar enrolled on the RCP Chief Registrar Programme 2024–25?

Places are limited and expressions of interest will be on a first come, first served basis. Once you have sent back your completed expressions of interest form, you will then receive confirmation from the RCP that we are happy for you to proceed with recruitment to your chief registrar post as this means we will be holding an indicative place for your organisation. We will be unable to accept expressions of interest once we have reached the number of places available; if this is the case we will notify you that your organisation is on the waiting list and you will hear back from us if a space becomes available.

“ The RCP Chief Registrar Programme has been highly rewarding and helped me In building my confidence and skills in senior leadership roles. It has also provided me with the tools required to design and implement QI projects. Reflecting on my experiences this year there is no doubt I have achieved my goal.’

Syeda Nafisa, chief registrar 2022/23

Check out our website for stories from past RCP chief registrars
www.rcp.ac.uk/projects/chief-registrar-programme

Email: chiefregistrar@rcp.ac.uk



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