IFS UK Programme Assistant (PA) Placement Policy

Overview

The IFS UK Programme Assistant (PA) Placement Policy supports the delivery of high-quality Internal Family Systems (IFS) Level 1 and Level 2 training programmes and aims to create the best possible learning experience for everyone involved.

Further information about the Programme Assistant role and the application process can be found at:

https://internalfamilysystemstraining.co.uk/training/programme-assistants/

Our training aims to enable participants to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to practise the Internal Family Systems (IFS) model safely, ethically, and effectively in their professional work and within the wider community.

Programme Assistants play a vital role in supporting participants and trainers and in creating a positive learning environment. We are committed to building Programme Assistant teams that reflect our values of inclusion, diversity, collaboration, and mutual respect.

When making placements, we consider the specific needs of each training programme, the support required for IFS Institute leadership programmes, and opportunities for learning, development, and meaningful contribution. Our goal is to create teams where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and supported to thrive.

While the typical ratio is one Programme Assistant for every three participants, placements are made with the overall needs of each training programme in mind. We aim to make the placement process as fair, transparent, and consistent as possible, recognising that each training programme, participant, and Programme Assistant brings unique strengths, experiences, and perspectives.

The Programme Assistant role is a voluntary position. A daily stipend, the amount of which is published annually, is provided to help defray expenses incurred (rather than as professional income) while carrying out the role.

Programme Assistant Placement Process

Each year, IFS UK publishes its annual training schedule in July. Shortly afterwards, applications are invited from both experienced and prospective new Programme Assistants.

As part of our commitment to creating inclusive learning environments, if we identify that people from particular marginalised or underrepresented communities are not well represented within our Programme Assistant community, we may invite applications from those communities before the main application process opens. Where appropriate, placements may be made at this stage to help support representation across the year's training programmes.

Once applications have closed, IFS UK collates all applications and shares them with the trainers for each scheduled training programme. IFS UK and the trainer(s) then work together to identify the most appropriate Programme Assistant team for each training.

Placement decisions are made by considering the needs of the training programme as a whole rather than any single factor. In making these decisions, IFS UK and the trainer(s) may consider:

- the needs of the specific training programme
- creating balanced teams with an appropriate mix of experience
- diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and lived experience
- cultural representation
- existing dual relationships and potential conflicts of interest
- opportunities for both new and returning Programme Assistants to contribute and develop
- the professional experience and readiness of applicants

The following published criteria help applicants understand the experience and attributes that are valued and may also inform placement decisions:

- applicants who use the IFS model regularly in their professional practice
- applicants who receive regular supervision for their work using the IFS model
- applicants who are qualified therapists, counsellors, psychotherapists, or other professionals whose work aligns with the requirements of the training
- applicants who completed IFS Level 1 training at least one year previously
- applicants from marginalised or underrepresented communities
- applicants living in the UK or Ireland, or in countries where IFS training is developing

Following the placement process, IFS UK invites the selected Programme Assistants to join their allocated training programme.

Where a Programme Assistant applies for a single training programme during the year, IFS UK will make every reasonable effort to accommodate that preference. However, placements cannot be guaranteed.

At present, IFS UK is unable to provide individual notification or feedback to applicants whose applications are unsuccessful. Applicants are welcome to contact IFS UK if they would like to better understand the placement process or discuss future applications.

Commitment to the Training Programme

Programme Assistants are expected to commit to attending the entire training programme in order to provide participants with a consistent, safe, and supportive learning experience.

If, after accepting a placement, a Programme Assistant is no longer able to attend the entire training programme, they should inform IFS UK as soon as possible. Where possible, IFS UK will seek to offer an alternative training programme that they can attend in full.

New Programme Assistants

IFS UK aims, wherever practicable, to include around four new Programme Assistants on each Level 1 training programme. This helps develop and sustain a diverse, skilled, and experienced Programme Assistant community while providing opportunities for new Programme Assistants to learn and grow in the role.

To ensure new Programme Assistants are appropriately prepared and well supported, prospective new Programme Assistants will:

- attend an online orientation meeting with IFS UK
- provide a reference from a professional colleague

This process helps us assess suitability for the role, introduce applicants to the expectations of being a Programme Assistant, and ensure they receive the support they need to succeed.

Last-Minute Placements

Occasionally, changes in circumstances mean that additional Programme Assistants need to be recruited shortly before a training programme begins.

In these situations, IFS UK will seek to maintain appropriate Programme Assistant-to-participant ratios while continuing to reflect our values of inclusion, diversity, collaboration, and mutual respect. Although time constraints may mean the usual placement process cannot always be followed in full, placement decisions will continue to be guided by the principles set out in this policy and the needs of the training programme.

Where appropriate, Programme Assistants who are only able to attend part of a training programme may be considered.

To fill last-minute vacancies, IFS UK may:

- revisit applications previously received for that training programme
- invite Programme Assistants with whom IFS UK or the training leadership team have previously worked and whose experience is well suited to the needs of the training programme
- advertise the opportunity through the IFS UK Programme Assistant WhatsApp community

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Changes to Placements

Once Programme Assistant placements have been confirmed, changes will only normally be made where there is a clear operational need, such as illness, withdrawal, trainer request, or to meet the needs of the training programme.

IFS UK will work collaboratively with the relevant trainers and Programme Assistants to manage any changes as fairly and transparently as possible. While individual preferences will be considered wherever practicable, the needs of the training programme and the participant learning experience will remain the primary consideration.

Questions and Feedback About Placements

We recognise that there are often more applications than Programme Assistant placements available, and that not every applicant can be offered a place on every training programme.

Placement decisions are made collaboratively by IFS UK and the training team, taking into account the overall needs of each training programme, the learning experience of participants, and the principles outlined in this policy. No single criterion guarantees a placement.

Applicants who have questions about the placement process or would like feedback are welcome to contact IFS UK. While individual placement decisions are not subject to a

formal appeals process, we value constructive feedback and are committed to reviewing our processes regularly to ensure they remain fair, transparent, inclusive, and aligned with the values of IFS UK.

Programme Assistant Learning and Development

Prior to each Level 1 training programme, the Assistant Trainer or Lead Programme Assistant will facilitate an orientation workshop to clarify roles and responsibilities and begin creating a safe and supportive learning environment in which Programme Assistants can connect, learn, and contribute confidently.

Each new Programme Assistant will be paired with a more experienced Programme Assistant who will act as a buddy throughout the training, providing guidance, answering questions, and offering support.

All Programme Assistants have access to the Programme Assistant Orientation Workshop and Programme Assistant training days provided by the IFS Institute.

Following each training programme, Programme Assistants receive anonymised participant feedback together with a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) letter confirming their role and the number of volunteer hours completed. This may be used as evidence towards IFS certification and recertification requirements.

Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically by IFS UK to ensure it remains fair, effective, inclusive, transparent, and aligned with organisational values and the evolving needs of our training programmes.

IFS UK

July 2026