

Applying for the Paediatric Neurology National Grid

Trainees wanting to pursue a career in Paediatric Neurology are strongly advised to train through the Paediatric Neurology National Grid. Training 'outside' the grid is possible but will not lead to an entry on the GMC subspecialty register.

Appointment to the National grid is by competitive application. The interviews are held once a year (currently in the late autumn/early winter at the RCPCH in London) prior to starting grid training the following September. The interviews are arranged by the RCPCH and are advertised in the medical press.

The grid training scheme in paediatric neurology is a 3 and ½ year programme, which may include attachments in neurodisability and adult neurology in order to achieve the relevant competencies. The level 3 paediatric neurology syllabus is published on the RCPCH [website](#) and is supplemented by a CSAC/BPNA paediatric neurology training [guide](#). Most trainees apply for the grid at ST4/5 level with a view to entering the grid scheme at ST6 the following year. It is possible to have neurology training prior to grid entry approved and enter at a later stage in training, but candidates must be able to demonstrate that pre-grid training has been equivalent and formal CSAC approval is required.

The grid application process is competitive and thus applicants need to demonstrate their interest and aptitude in the speciality. It is possible to collate this evidence throughout training:-

Medical Students - ST2: Get experience and exposure to paediatric neurology, through acute, general and community paediatric training where many children will have neurological disorders.

ST3 - Meet up with your deanery lead in paediatric neurology and plan how you will get some key exposure on your CV prior to application. For example, attend a clinic, do an audit, or write up an interesting case.

ST4 - Get a paediatric neurologist (approachable via the deanery lead) to have a good look through your training so far and check that you have something to cover all the key fields within the application/interview for the grid. Eg audit, clinical activity, teaching, research (despite rumours, a Nobel Prize is not neededbut a poster or something like an interesting case submitted to the BPNA annual meeting is enormously useful). The deadline for applications is normally early September, and bearing in mind that paediatric neurologists normally spend part of the summer away on leave it's good to have it finalised by early June.

ST5 - Interviews are held in London, normally in November, and are in conjunction with our valued colleagues within the neurodisability field. They normally constitute a five minute presentation and a 25 minute interactive interview. The interview panel will be encouraging and fair to all applicants, but nevertheless, some extremely strong applicants achieve a much lower score at interview than expected, so practice makes perfect. As a minimum, contact somebody who's

gone through the process successfully and get some practice interviews (more than one if you do poorly on the first attempt) via your local deanery leads.

The number of available grid posts varies from year to year, depending on the number of existing neurology trainees and the capacity of training centres to offer new posts. Grid applicants are shortlisted by members of the CSAC according to predetermined criteria. Successful candidates will be put forward for interview. The number selected will depend on the number of available posts.

The application form is generic for all subspecialties but successful candidates will have been able to demonstrate their clinical and research experience in paediatric neurosciences through various activities and achievements, such as :-

- Intercalated BSc degrees.
- Higher scientific and medical degrees (MScs, MDs & PhDs).
- Evidence of involvement in relevant audits (particularly evidence of planning of audits, major involvement in undertaking audits, presentation of findings at local, national and international meetings, evidence of implementation of audit findings etc.).
- Research, eg: Poster on an interesting case, submitted to international meeting such as the BPNA annual conference.
- Publications in peer reviewed journals.
- Presentations at regional, national and international meetings.
- Evidence of having acquired relevant clinical skills e.g. junior posts / exposure to neurology.
- Education / Teaching - attended appropriate courses etc.
- Evidence of having had experience in management. This can range from organising rotas to holding office at regional, national or even international level.

You will also be asked to provide a statement to support your application. 'Extra' points are available so think as carefully about this part of the application as well

If you are called to interview you will be asked to give a short presentation, The title of the presentation will be given to you on the day and you will have 30 mins to prepare without any access to the internet. This is a way of assessing your presentation skills and ability to structure an answer, so it would be a good idea to practice this technique in advance. Remember the success of any presentation depends on you engaging with the audience. It should never be just about demonstrating knowledge. You should be trying to demonstrate your intellect, personality, enthusiasm, organisational skills, ability to think on your feet, etc., You may be asked questions on your presentation.

You will then be asked the same 'stem questions. Supplementary questions may be asked according to the replies given. You should have the opportunity to demonstrate your training and experience to date, your understanding of research and recent advances in practice, your team working and multidisciplinary skills as well as your leadership and teaching skills. You may also be given a clinical scenario to discuss.

Before the interview you should think carefully how might structure your responses to questions relating to these and similar topics. Successful candidates

are usually those who demonstrate an appropriate knowledge base which they can apply in different situations. It is more important to be succinct, organised and interesting, than to be able to reel off a long lists of facts.

The interview committee will be scoring the candidates and at the end scores will be added up and candidates ranked. The committee will consider if any candidate(s) has failed to demonstrate that they are suitable to train in Paediatric Neurology. The committee are blinded to the candidates preferred choice of deanery.

A separate committee at the college then considers the ranked candidate list of those considered suitable to train in the sub-speciality and matches this to the preferences previously expressed by the candidates at the time of applying to the National Grid. The top ranked candidate is likely to be offered a training post at their preferred centre, whilst lower ranked candidates may need to accept posts at training centres they have ranked quite low. It is important to note that if you indicated that you would only accept a post at training centres A, B or C but following the interview higher ranked candidates were offered and accepted posts at these centres, you cannot then ask to be allocated to another centre if lower ranked candidates had indicated their willingness to accept posts at these centres and had taken up such offers- thus you should try to keep your options as open as possible.

There will be applicants in some years, who are considered suitable for Grid training, but who fail to obtain a training slot. Depending on their CCT they may be able to apply the following year. All candidates are able to request feedback on their formal application and interview performance.

For those wishing to pursue an academic training route a number of options are available. Detailed advice on these can be obtained on the websites of the RCPCH (www.rcpch.ac.uk) and the National Institute for Health Research (www.nihrtcc.nhs.uk).

As for all trainees, it is essential that you plan your application to the National Grid at the correct time. Do ask your local Paediatric Neurologists for advice. If you are not working a neuroscience centres, ask you head of school or TPD for the name of the neurology training lead in your area. You are also welcome to contact the BPNA national training advisor or another member of the CSAC committee if you have further queries.

Good Luck!

A Parker, NTA 2016, updated by A-M Childs, NTA 2018