

Wessex School of Anaesthesia Less Than Full Time (LTFT) Rostering Guidance July 2024

This summary has been written in light of increasing numbers of LTFT anaesthetists at all stages of training across Wessex following the removal of categories for LTFT applications; and also in response to some queries regarding working patterns and the potential implications on those who are full-time, to help provide clarity. It brings together all the latest published guidance relating to LTFT rostering in Wessex School of Anaesthesia.

The Deanery supports the provision of flexible training to suit the work/ life balance of individuals and in support of the NHS long term workforce plan. As less than full-time training increases in popularity, Trusts have to balance this with the needs of others and the obligation to our patients and services throughout the week. **Early communication and as much mutual flexibility as possible are key to finding the best solutions for all.**

A work schedule for doctors in training in Anaesthetics and Intensive Care Medicine will include duties throughout the 24 hour day and the seven day week, including work on statutory and public holidays. The Gold Guide and BMA/NHSE Good Rostering Guide state that those in LTFT training should expect to contribute to this in a pro-rata arrangement.

A change was made in the Terms and Conditions of Service for NHS doctors and dentists in training in 2019, which stated “unless agreed, no shift should be rostered on a non-working day in a fixed working pattern”. When this was highlighted in 2021, the Head of School issued guidance to College Tutors. It was pointed out that this did not apply to Category 3 applicants for LTFT training (as there was no obligation for fixed working patterns). Category 3 was essentially a pilot programme before LTFT applications opened to all doctors in training for any well-founded individual reason.

The BMA guide prior to this stated that ideally a run of night shifts should not include more than one that starts or finishes on a non-working day in a fixed working pattern. The RCoA TPD guide elaborates – with regard to allocation of weekday night shifts - that consideration needs to be given to both potential difficulties of finishing nights on a non-working day, but also rostering nights in a pattern that is fair to the department and other colleagues. A specific fixed working pattern without any compromise or flexibility may therefore not be possible for a Trust to agree or implement.

With the removal of categories, College Tutors and departments may not be aware of specific reasons for LTFT training. The NHSE Terms and Conditions of Service state that “on request, all reasonable attempts should be made to facilitate set working day patterns...provided service needs can be met”. The Gold Guide states that a balance needs to be maintained between the LTFT training arrangements, the educational needs of both full-time and LTFT trainees, and the needs of the service. NHSE guidance of flexible working recommends that the needs of the individual must be balanced with three key organisational factors: patient/service user and staff experience, service delivery and the work-life balance of colleagues.

If an Anaesthetist-in-training requests a fixed working pattern, then the reasons should be discussed with the College Tutor / Department, along with options regarding out-of-hours shifts, in order for the best solution to be found. If there are health reasons for LTFT training, then factoring Occupational Health recommendations into the design of the rota would be a priority. College Tutors should discuss any impact on service and specific educational needs and what alternative options are possible. The Terms and Conditions note that a doctor is expected to engage constructively with the employer in the design of services and of safe

working patterns to support service delivery; and to make all reasonable efforts to achieve agreed training and service delivery objectives.

NHSE has published guidance encouraging contact prior to rotation to new Trusts, acknowledging the potential need for variation to arrangements with regard to working days to suit a new Trust. Wessex Deanery LTFT guidance states that if or when a trainee rotates, the training and educational opportunities may occur on different days and the trainee must make personal arrangements to access training. This might include making new childcare arrangements. Every effort should be made by both employers and trainee to consider and make alterations to work patterns in line with current guidance; Code of Practice is a minimum of 12 weeks' notice of programme/ rotational information; 8 weeks for a generic rota/ work schedule; 6 weeks for individualised rotas. NHSE Wessex policy for LTFT applications/ adjustment to LTFT status (% or return to FT) normally requires a 16 week notice period prior to a rotation change or prior to each six month block within a twelve month rotation. If there has been variation from the Code of Practice for notice periods of a rotation/ rota information to a trainee, it would be more impractical to expect changes from anaesthetists' current working arrangements, especially where there are caring responsibilities.

The TPD guide confirms that there is no absolute requirement for departments to give set days off. The guidance specifically says that any shift finishing after midnight on Friday is a weekend shift and should be worked pro rata. Regarding Friday working/ choosing Fridays as a fixed day off, there are some examples of compromises that might be considered if this is difficult for a Trust, for example working a long day or evening on a Friday when it is part of a weekend worked.

It is hoped the above information is useful for all Anaesthetists and their Departments when agreeing working patterns and rotas.

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References

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- NHSE. NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (June 2023)
- NHS Employers. Terms and Conditions of Service for NHS Doctors and Dentists in training (England) 2016 v11 (Feb 2023)
- NHS Health Education England Wessex Process for Managing Less than Fulltime Medical Training (2009, last updated Feb 2023)
- COPMeD, Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans UK. The Gold Guide 9th Edition: A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Foundation and Specialty Training in the UK (Aug 2022)
- NHSE. Flexible working: Raising standards for the NHS (Jan 2022 v1)
- Association of Anaesthetists/ RCoA. Less Than Full-Time Training in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine: An A-Z guide (July 2021)
- BMA NHS Employers Good Rostering Guide (May 2018)
- NHS Employers / BMA / NHSE. Code of Practice: Provision of Information for Postgraduate Medical Training (Oct 2017)