

Flexible working: promises for the new workforce or challenges for the existing one?

Guhavarma (Guhan) Viswesvaraiah
Associate Dean, NHSE Wessex and Southeast
Wessex Medical Educators Forum
Tuesday 3rd February 2026

Postgraduate Medical Training Review

- Phase 1 report ‘diagnostic’ published October 2025

“Recommendation 3: Training should become more flexible”

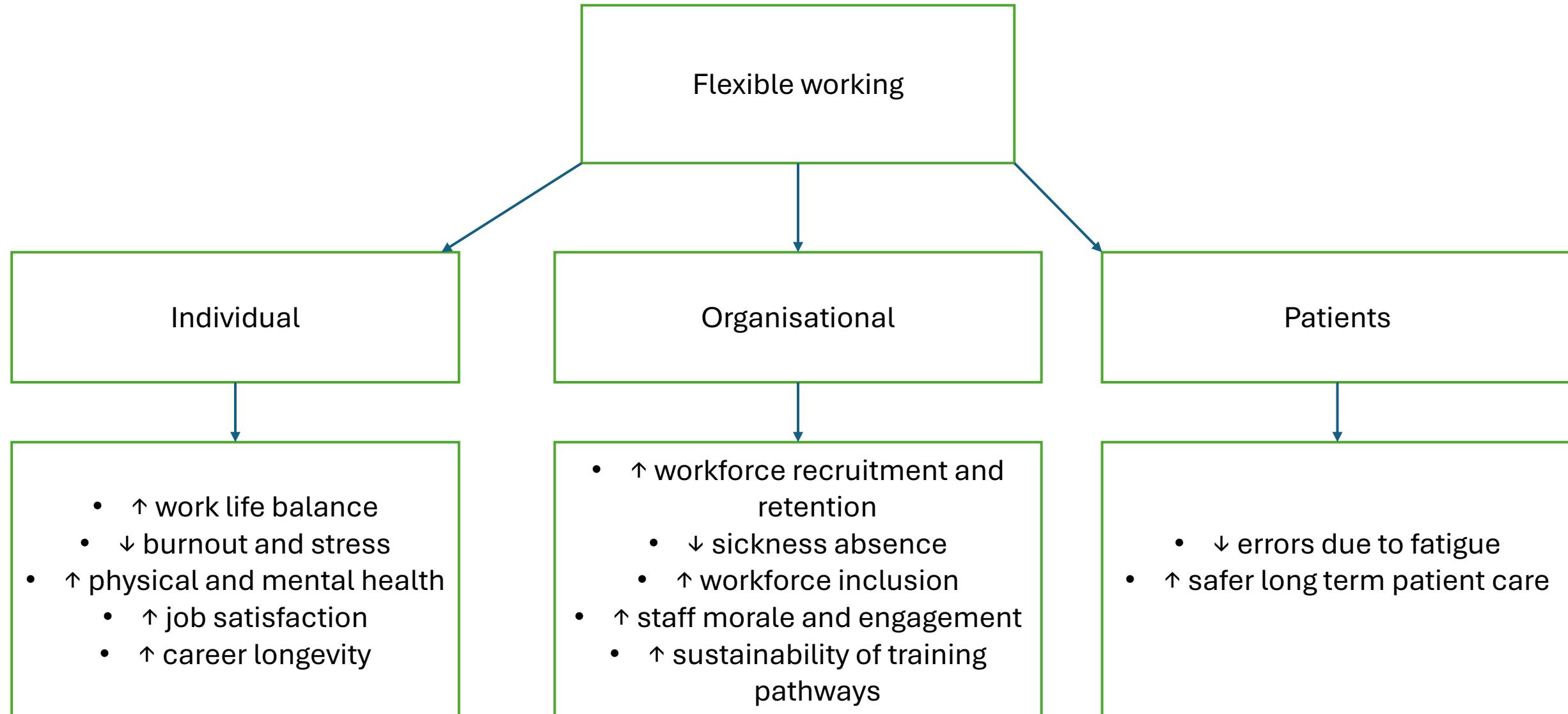
Flexible working: Options

- **LTFT**
- **OOP**
- **Flexible portfolio training**
- Others:
 - Annualised hours
 - Fixed or flexible rota patterns
 - Job sharing
 - Self or preferential rostering

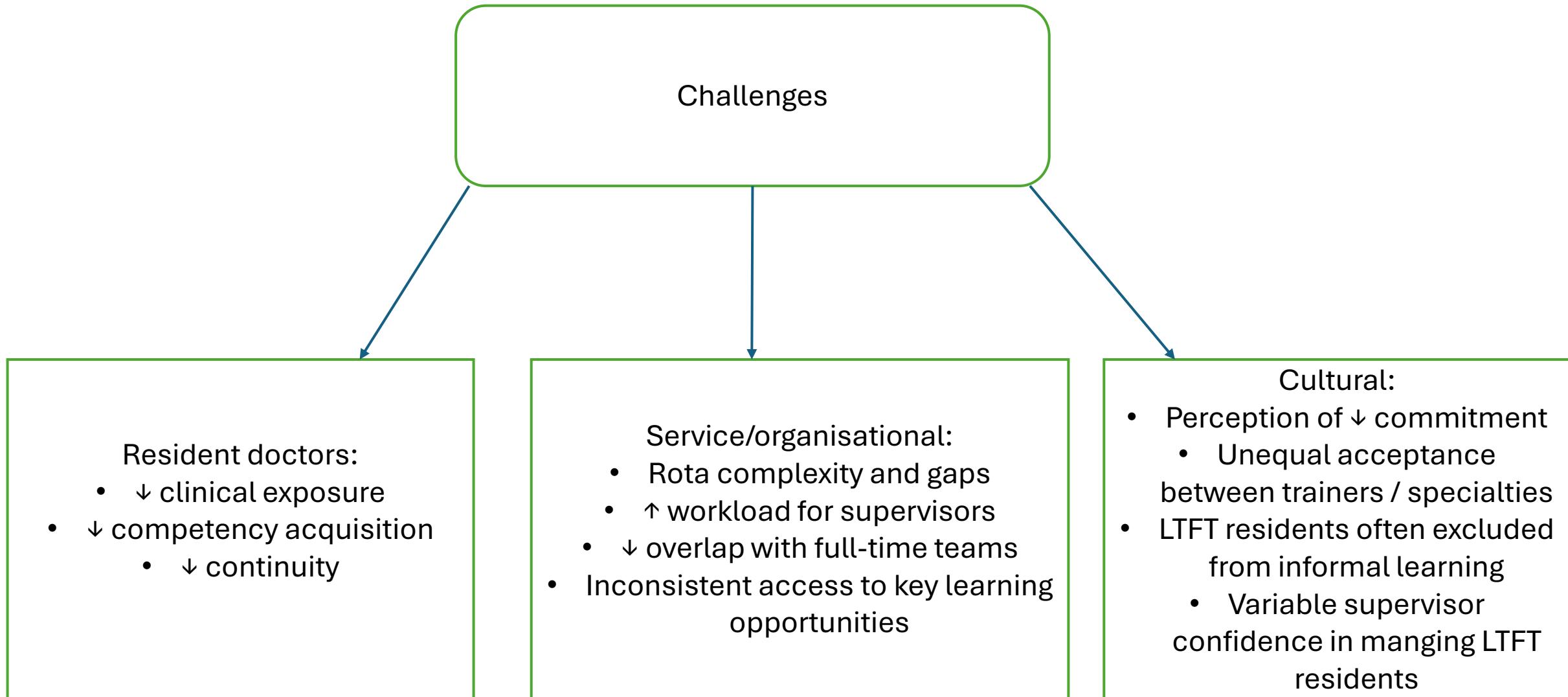
Why does flexible working matter?

- ↑ workforce pressures within NHS
- Burnout and workforce retention concerns
- Changing workforce demographics
- Post-pandemic expectations around work-life balance

Benefits of flexible working



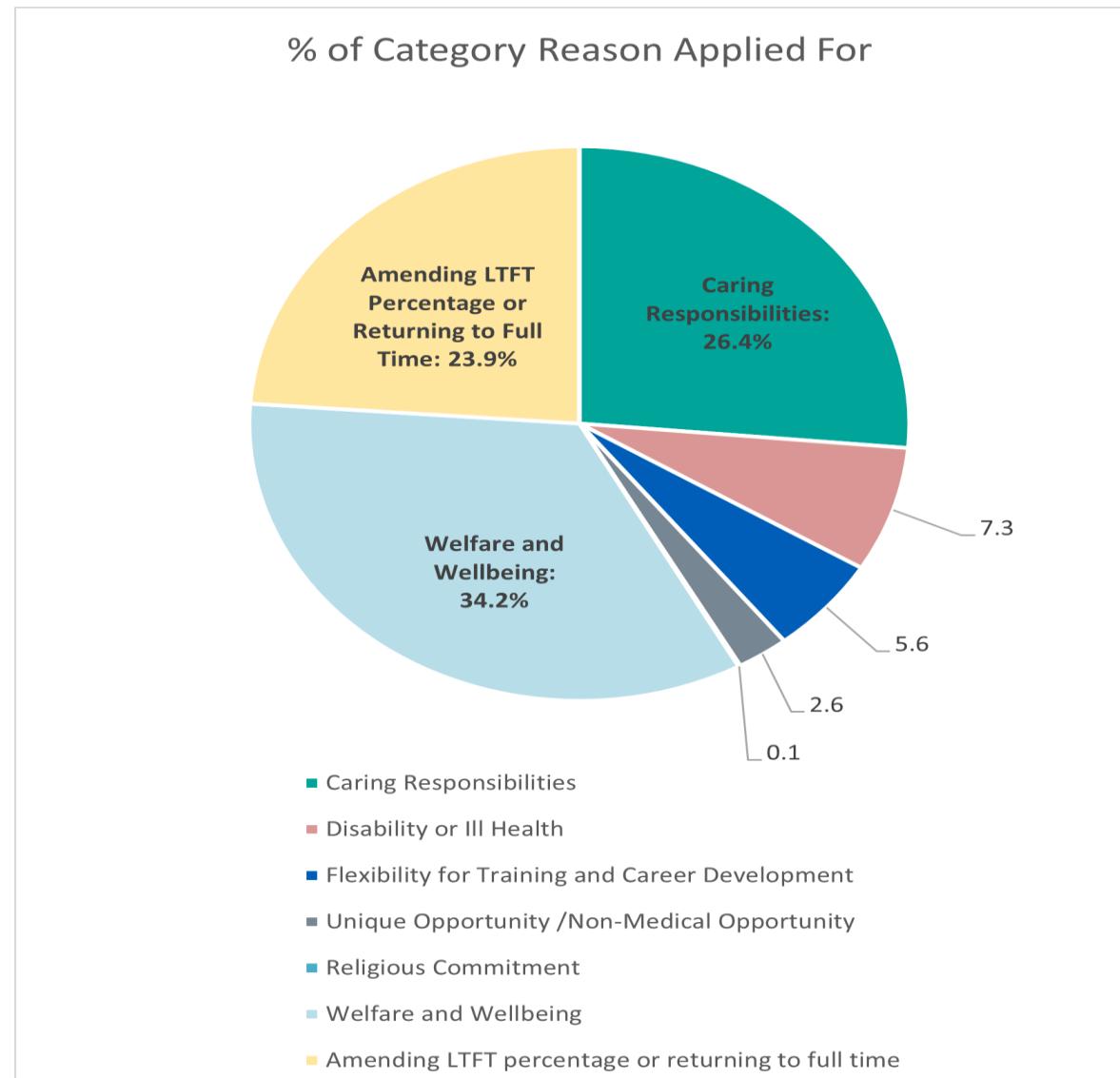
Challenges



LTFT

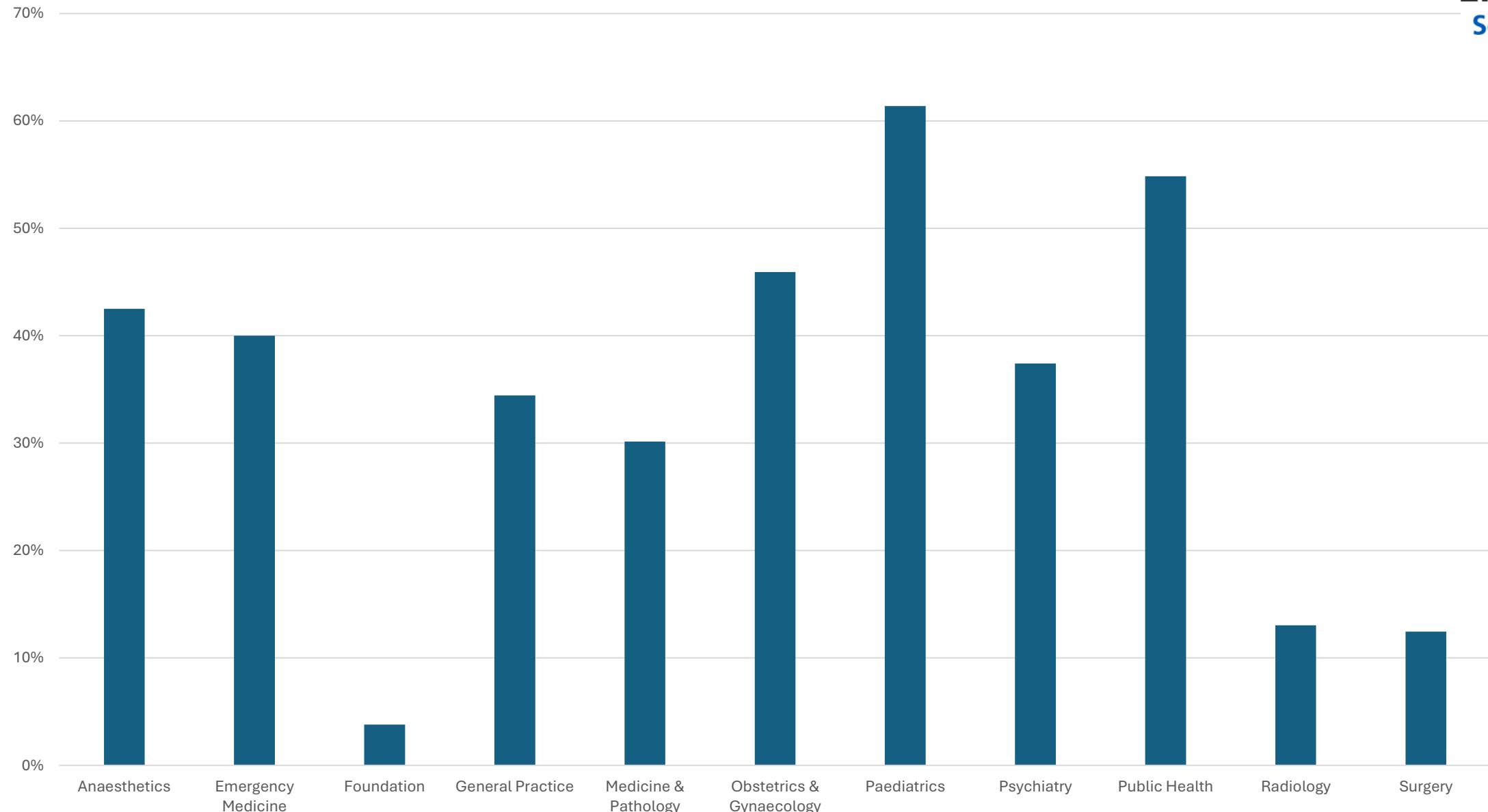
- ↑ no. residents undertaking LTFT working (from ~9.1% in 2013 to ~17.1% in 2022 – GMC survey data)
- 30% female residents and 15% male residents training LTFT (GMC National Training Survey, 2025)
- 66% working 80% LTFT
 - Childcare responsibilities (44%)
 - Work-life balance (66%)
- Burnout and work-life balance key drivers

Wessex LTFT data



Wessex LTFT data

- LTFT residents 26% of Wessex RD workforce (April 2025)
- Majority working 80% LTFT (61.5%), 60% LTFT (27.8%)



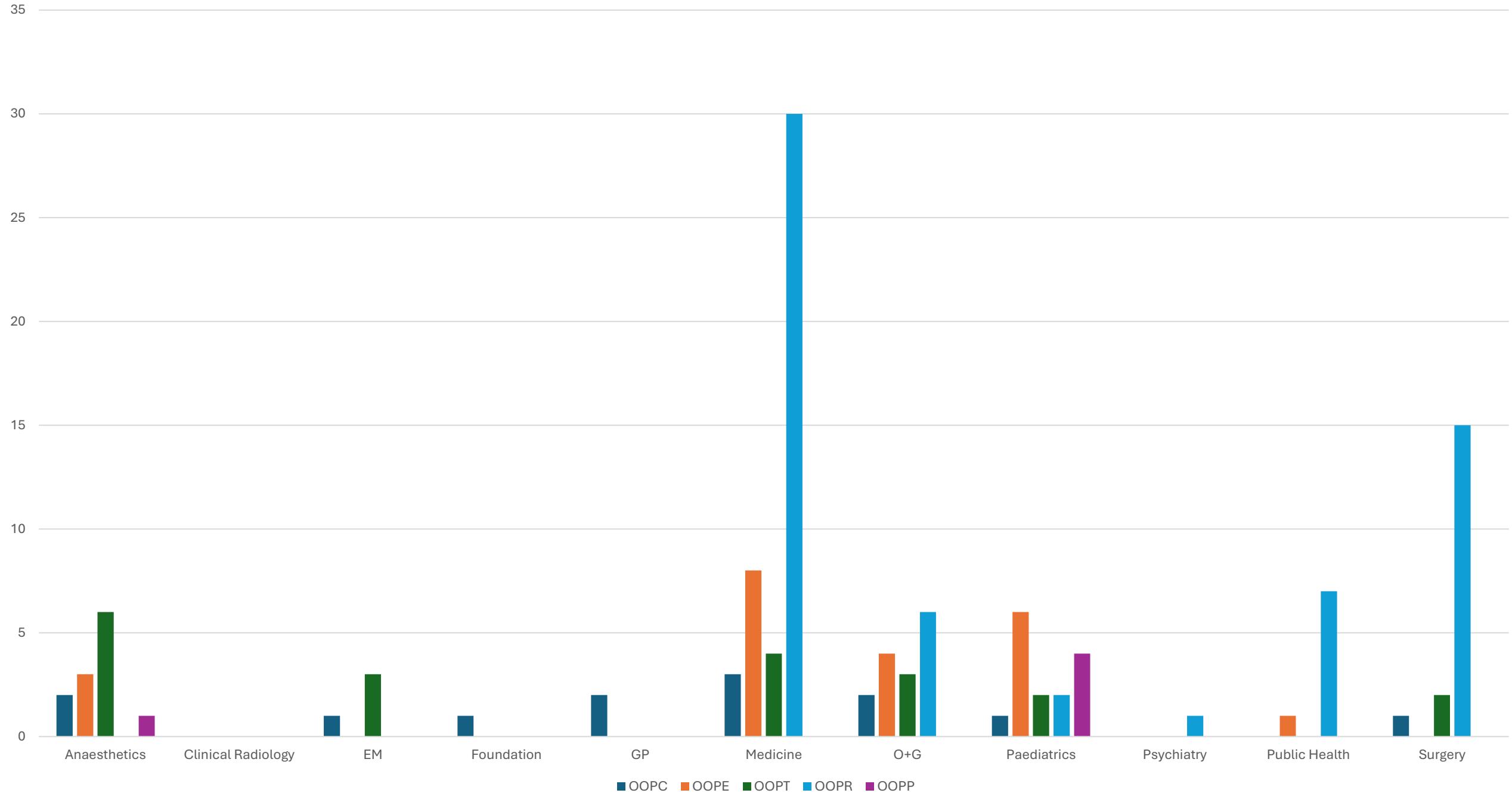
OOP

- OOPP now embedded; OOPE/OOPT/OOPR/OOPC
 - 12months OOPC (up to 2 years on Dean's discretion)
 - 3 years OOPR (up to 4 years on Dean's discretion)
 - 12 months OOPE/OOPT/OOPP
- OOP not normally permitted during Foundation/Core Training unless exceptional circumstances (GG rule 3.151, 3.156)
- OOP not permitted during first year run-through/higher specialty training unless exceptional circumstances (3.156)
- OOPR not permitted during final year of training (3.172)

OOP data

- % residents on OOP (3.78%) – total 3251 residents in Wessex; 123 residents on OOP
 - OOPC: 0.4%
 - OOPE: 17.89%
 - OOPT: 16.26%
 - OOPR: 49.59%
 - OOPP: 4.07%

OOP resident doctors in Wessex



Flexible portfolio training

- Initial RCP pilot and developed from Enhancing Doctors Working Lives (EDWL) programme; handed to HEE April 2022
- 1 day/week on FPT, 4 days/week clinical, full-complement of on-calls (assuming 100% WTE)
- Not affect training progression
- 4 workstreams: Medical Education, Clinical Informatics, Research, Clinical service improvement (QI)
- ST3/4+ doctors eligible
- Tailored to individual training programmes
- 12/12 allocation
- Requires TPD, DME/College Tutor and ES support

Questions for discussion

- How can you promote LTFT and FPT working within your organisations whilst balancing against challenges such as rotas?
- How can you promote OOP within your training programmes whilst balancing against training capacity? Can we simplify OOP counting towards training?
- How can we effect cultural change to promote flexible working?