

Standard Operating Procedure for Important Events – Doctors in Training

The Terms and Conditions of the 2016 Contract for Doctors in Training states that the employer must allow annual leave to be taken for important life events (Schedule 9 Paragraph 16).

Study or professional leave for important professional events such as membership examinations and specialty interviews must similarly be granted in order to ensure trainees are able to progress in their careers. Similarly, study leave for mandatory training days (as dictated by HEYH) must be granted to ensure trainees are able to meet the minimum requirement of teaching attendance needed to pass their ARCP. Requests for all other forms of study leave must be properly considered, but may be subject to the need to maintain NHS services. (Schedule 9, Paragraph 31).

The aim of this Standard Operating Procedure is to provide a standardised pathway for trainees to be able to take such leave, across all specialties and departments in LTHT.

The following stages have been developed to allow these entitlements to be met, whilst similarly reducing the need to arrange locum cover for such leave.

1. Trainees should be provided with their working pattern 8 weeks ahead of the start of their rotation as per the 2017 Code of Practice. This working pattern should not include any fixed leave, in order to provide the trainee with some flexibility (Schedule 9 Paragraph 19). In addition, trainees ought to be given a choice in their rota slot, where possible, to allow the trainee to accommodate for their own leave requirements as this will minimise the need for future cover to be arranged.
2. If, in spite of this, a trainee still requires time off for an important life event (or important professional event), they should give the department a minimum of 6 weeks notice (as per Schedule 9 Paragraph 14), assuming the working pattern has been released to the trainee within this minimum notice period. If due to circumstances beyond the doctor's control, a reasonable request is made for leave outside the minimum six weeks' notice period, then the employer will fairly consider this request whilst paying due regard to service requirements (Schedule 9 Paragraph 17)
3. The trainee's responsibility should then include making reasonable attempts to swap their shift(s) or arrange cross cover. This can include swapping into an unfilled shift in the rota. Reasonable attempts to swap shifts would be, for example, two rounds of emails to their colleagues over a two-week period. Any agreed swap must not breach the rota restrictions of the 2016 contract, and the Medical Deployment team will support trainees to ensure this.
4. If despite reasonable attempts the trainee remains unable to swap their shift, the trainee will inform the Medical Deployment Team. The Medical Deployment team will then liaise with the trainees on that rota to identify any other possible swap solutions (for example, more complicated three-way swaps).
5. If despite the above methods, no swap can be agreed, then the department will approve this leave and arrange locum cover for the shift in question (whether it's a standard day or out of hours shift).
6. Where acceptable agreements cannot be made within the department, the final arbitrators will be the Post Graduate Director of Medical Education (or deputy) for all study/professional leave requests, and the Chief Medical Officer (or deputy) for life events.