

Trainee Testimonial

Less Than Full Time Training (LTFT)

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| Name: | Laura Blackburn | | |
| Name of Trust: | The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kings Lynn NHS Trust | | |
| Specialty Training Programme: | Gastroenterology | Grade: | ST3 |
| What did you find most challenging about training prior to working LTFT? <i>Word limit: 80 (max)</i> | | | |
| <p>Having had my first child whilst still in Medical School and working 4 years full-time as a junior doctor I know I have experienced many of the challenges. For me the greatest strain was the 12 day stretches when I would leave for work before my child was awake and it was a rarity if I made it home prior to bedtime. I missed more bath times and bedtimes than I care to remember. Dropping him off for 10 hour days with a child-minder from an early age was emotionally challenging. Having said that, my eldest is a happy, confident and content child. If necessity dictates working full-time then it is something that is manageable.</p> | | | |
| How has working LTFT impacted on your training? <i>Word limit: 80 (max)</i> | | | |
| <p>Although I am always made to feel part of the team, I do feel the starting my first year as a registrar as a LTFT trainee did knock my confidence and also means that it has taken longer than I would like to get to grips with my new role. As a gastroenterology trainee I feel I have to make a greater effort to meet my endoscopy training needs. I still have two clinics a week and I find between this and ward referrals time is at a premium.</p> | | | |
| How has working LTFT impacted on your work/life balance? <i>Word limit: 80 (max)</i> | | | |
| <p>I now have two children. A seven year old and a 15 month old and I have returned to training as an St3 after 15 months out of clinical practice. I constantly struggle with finding the time to study and read up on cases. As I am at work three days a week I had planned that this should be done on these days. However, in reality it's near impossible to find enough time after work.</p> <p>The time I spend with my children does seem to put these struggles in perspective. My youngest knows no different. However, my eldest remembers the long periods without seeing me; the hours I spent away revising for my membership; the numerous school events I missed. The most precious hours for me are those I spend with both my boys after the school run.</p> | | | |
| Are there any other benefits you've enjoyed as a result of training LTFT? <i>Word limit: 80 (max)</i> | | | |
| <p>No particular benefits. I do feel working LTFT has challenged me more than when I worked Full-time from a work balance point of view, but I expected this.</p> | | | |
| How easy was the process for applying for LTFT in the east of England and how did you find the support you received during the application process? <i>Word limit: 80 (max)</i> | | | |
| <p>The application was extremely easy and I was very well supported by my Training Programme Director. When my placement hospital knew of my intention to work LTFT they liaised with me regarding which days I would work. The decision was mutual and discussed to enable to maximum benefit from a training point of view and also to accommodate my childcare needs. Once i'd commenced my placement I had meetings regarding my on-call commitment with the rota co-ordinator and the medical director to ensure my needs were being met.</p> | | | |
| What would you say to anyone considering applying for LTFT training in the east of England, and would you recommend it? <i>Word limit: 80 (max)</i> | | | |
| <p>Whether to train LTFT is a very personal choice. I've met gastroenterology consultants who have always worked full-time and those that have significantly extended their training by maternity leave and LTFT</p> | | | |

training. I've done both. I was extremely reticent to apply for LTFT as I thought professionally it might reflect poorly on me. In reality I have met with overwhelming support from both other registrars and also my consultants. I would like to think that this attitude is reflected across the east of England and would therefore whole-heartedly recommend it.

Is there anything else you would like to add? *Word limit: 80 (max)*

For me the key to success has been an honest and open communication and overall flexibility. There is an ongoing dialogue regarding any changes which could be made to my schedule and training. There are two gastroenterology registrars at present, including myself, and I couldn't ask for a more supportive counterpart.