

Supporting the COVID-19 response

Guidance on facilitating the return of trainees on flexible training pathways

During this national emergency, we are grateful to all doctors in training who have courageously provided frontline healthcare. We highly value their important contribution as the NHS faces unprecedented and rising demand for healthcare services.

HEE remains fully committed to supporting and developing doctors in training to improve care for patients. Many have chosen flexible training opportunities to expand their portfolio but now want to return to frontline healthcare to support the NHS response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the COVID-19 pandemic intensifies, HEE recognises concerns arising from the highly challenging circumstances and consequent changes in medical training processes. For trainees on flexible training pathways, many want to return or have returned to the frontline. HEE has produced this guidance to provide clarity in managing:

- out-of-programme doctors
- less than full time doctors
- doctors returning from parental leave

Management of Requests for Out of Programme (OOP)

It is currently not possible to accommodate OOP requests. We wish to reassure all trainees that processes to support OOP requests will resume once the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

New requests for OOPs

- Trainee requests to take up the following Out of Programmes will be suspended until further notice:
 - Out of Programme Research (OOPR);
 - Out of Programme Training (Out of Programme Training)
 - Out of Programme Experience (OOPE)
- Trainees may request Out of Programme Career Break (OOPC) where there are extenuating circumstances through agreement with the Postgraduate Dean
- Out of Programme Pause (OOPP) opportunities will be suspended.

Current OOP requests submitted but not agreed

- All current requests for OOPT, OOPR and OOPE will be paused until services return to normal planning and delivery. Trainees can be reassured that they will receive an email from the local office team supporting resubmission in due course.
- Where a trainee has submitted a request for an OOPC, this will be reviewed. These will be granted only on the basis of extenuating circumstances and in agreement by the PG Dean

Recently agreed OOPs where the trainee is yet to take up the placement

- All such OOPs are currently on hold as subject to the “delay” in training programme rotations as outlined by HEE’s national response

Extensions of OOPs for trainees already out of programme

- Unfortunately extensions will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. the trainee is abroad and unable to return due to restrictions

Management of Less than Full Time Training applications

HEE will support all less-than-full-time (LTFT) doctors in training who wish to increase their working hours and those on parental leave who wish to return early to contribute to the NHS COVID-19 response.

For current Less Than Full Time Trainees who wish to increase their working hours

- All such requests will be supported
- Doctors in training should be advised to liaise through the Trainee Information System (TIS) portal in the first instance
- It is anticipated that increased hours of clinical working maybe identified by lead employers through the exception reporting completed by doctors in training.

Management of trainees returning from parental leave

Requests from those returning from parental leave who want to work in NHS trusts to support the COVID-19 response should be managed as follows:

- All such requests will be supported and trainees will return to their last hospital placement unless exceptionally agreed by the PG Dean
- We will work with employers to identify and accommodate trainees where they have made contact
- We will contact other trainees to ensure they are aware that this option is available whilst respecting each individuals' choice.
- Trainees may be paid their accrued annual leave to enable a swifter response and return to clinical work.