Guidance for managing work scheduling in General Practice settings[1]

This guidance has been produced through joint working between the Committee of General Practice Education Directors (COGPED), the British Medical Association (BMA) and NHS Employers. The aim of this guidance is to support trainees and their employers (both lead employers and hosting practices) in managing the work scheduling processes for junior doctors, for GP specialty training rotations in practice settings.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the terms and conditions of service and with the associated template generic work schedule. The template is designed to be adapted by the host, acting on behalf of the employer, to match particular posts and will then be further modified as the personalised work schedule for a trainee. This template is appropriate for GP placements at any educational stage of GP training. You can also see worked examples of generic schedules for each stage of training:

- GPST1 example
- GPST2 example
- GPST3 example

Work scheduling is important because it sets out what trainees can expect with respect to their training, working hours and pay. Provided working patterns are planned and agreed in accordance with the template and contractual limits, a trainee's pay will be as outlined the template work schedule.

Providing information to trainees

Host practices acting on behalf of lead employers must ensure they are supporting those employers in meeting their obligations under the Code of Practice. This includes a requirement to provide trainees with their generic work schedule and template rota at least eight weeks in advance of them starting a post – which must be done by the employer (unless delegated to the host practice). This means that the host practice will need to provide the employer with a completed generic work schedule sufficiently early to allow the employer to issue the schedule on time; employers are advised to agree a time frame with practices and include it in any memorandum of understanding that underpins the lead employer arrangements.

For more information on the Code of Practice see fuller guidance from NHS Employers and the BMA.

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[1] This document has been produced jointly by NHS Employers and the British Medical Association following consultation with HEE, COGPED and individual lead employers of GP trainees.

Working patterns

The work schedule must reflect the sessional split outlined in the template and must be compatible with the working hours provisions (designed to ensure safety and work-life balance) outlined in schedule 3 of the TCS. Work within a single day can no longer be split into separate periods.

Working hours must also include paid contractual rest breaks (one 30 minute paid break for shifts exceeding five hours, two such breaks for shifts exceeding nine hours). These breaks form part of the 40 hours per week to be worked as part of a standard full-time contract. Breaks can be rostered or can be taken flexibly during a shift but should be evenly spaced wherever possible. Where two breaks are required, these would normally be taken separately but may if necessary be combined into one longer break. For more detail on breaks, see schedule 3, paragraphs 21-23 of the TCS.

Exception reporting

The work schedule sets out both the working hours and the intended educational opportunities available to a trainee in the post. These become the basis from which trainees will report exceptions, using the available exception reporting process.

It is important to appreciate that making an exception report is not a value judgement, and it is actively helpful for trainees to use the process to enable potential issues to be considered and addressed promptly. Employers and host practices should encourage trainees to raise exception reports wherever and whenever they feel a need to do so. For more information about exception reporting see fuller guidance from NHS Employers and the BMA.

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