

A practical guide to calculating on-call work

Introduction

One of the elements of the new contract that Trusts and consultants may find challenging is calculating the amount of work that is done on call and how to translate this into Programmed Activities. The purpose of this brief guide is to provide a possible mechanism and two methods for working this out.

It should be stressed that in 2003/04, all PAs have an average timetable value of 4 hours. However, since the average timetable value of PAs undertaken in premium time i.e. outside 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday, will be three hours from 1st April 2004 onwards, the examples shown have three hours as their average time content.

It is also important to remember that up to one PA per week on average can be allocated to unpredictable work until 31st March 2005, rising to an average of two PAs a week after this date.

Step 1

All consultants should undertake a diary exercise and note how much work is undertaken as a result of being on call. This should be divided into predictable and unpredictable emergency work. From this, an average amount of work for each weekday (Monday to Friday) and weekend (Saturday and Sunday) can be calculated. The total amounts for the whole team should be calculated at this stage, not allocated to individuals.

Step 2

The number of days consultants are available for on call work should be calculated. Normally this would be 52 weeks 1 day minus 6 weeks (plus one day in 2004/05 and 2 days in subsequent years) annual leave plus 10 bank holidays and lieu days, and 2 weeks study leave per year, unless a local variation has been agreed. This gives a total of 211 weekdays and 44 weekends reducing to 210 weekdays in 2004/05 and 209 in subsequent years.

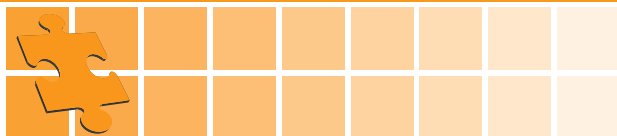
Step 3

There are two suggested methods of showing how the average amount of work undertaken by each consultant per week could be calculated. The second method is not a different calculation, but an arguably simpler way of showing the calculation.

Method 1

1. Calculate the number of PAs per year by multiplying the average number of PAs per weekday by 261 ($52 \times 5 + 1$) – **Figure 1**.
2. Multiply the number of PAs per weekend by 52 – **Figure 2**.
3. Divide the number of PAs per year undertaken on weekdays (**Figure 1**) by 210, multiply by 5 (there are 5 weekdays in each week) and divide by the number of consultants on the rota.
4. Divide the number of PAs undertaken at weekends (**Figure 2**) by 44 and divide the result by the number of consultants on the rota.
5. Add these two figures together to give the average number of PAs per week of on call work done by each consultant.

The following examples show how this calculation works. For simplicity, the annual leave entitlement for 2004/05 is used.



Example 1

Five consultants are on a rota. They have undertaken a diary exercise for three months and this shows that on average, each weekday night on call generates 1 ½ hours work, i.e. half a PA. In addition, each weekend they undertake ward rounds on both Saturday and Sunday mornings. Each ward round takes an average of 2 hours. In addition, there is a further 5 hours unpredictable emergency work over each weekend, giving a total of 9 hours or 3 PAs. In terms of predictable and unpredictable work, each week on call generates 12 ½ hours or just over 4 PAs of unpredictable work and 4 hours or 1 ⅓ PAs of predictable work.

- Over the whole year, this equates to 130 PAs on weekdays and 156 PAs at weekends.
- Weekdays – 130 divided by 210, multiplied by 5 and divided by 5 (number of consultants on the rota is 0.6)
- Weekends – 156 divided by 44 and divided again by 5 is 0.7.
- On average, the consultants undertake 1.33 PAs per week of on call generated work.

Example 2

A team of 10 consultants are on a rota. They have undertaken a diary exercise for 4 months. This shows that on average, a weekday on call generates 6 hours work, or 2 PAs in total, with the time being split roughly 3 hours of ward rounds and 3 hours of unpredictable work. They undertake ward rounds and theatre lists each Saturday and Sunday which last 4 ½ hours each day on average and in addition, each weekend generates 9 hours of unpredictable work, giving a total of 18 hours or 6 PAs of work. In total, therefore, each week on call generates 8 PAs of unpredictable work and 8 PAs of predictable work.

- Over the whole year, this is a total of 522 PAs during weekdays and 312 PAs at weekends.
- Weekdays – 522 divided by 210 multiplied by 5 and divided by 10 gives an average of 1.25 PAs per week.
- Weekends – 312 divided by 44 and divided again by 10 gives just under 0.75 PAs.
- On average, the consultants undertake 2 PAs per week of on call generated work.

Method 2

Multiply the average number of PAs per year for weekdays by 124.29% (261/210) and weekend PAs by 118.18% (52/44).

Example 1

Each week of on call generates 7.5 hours or 2.5 PAs of work during weekdays and each weekend generates 9 hours or 3 PAs of work. As there are 5 consultants on the rota, this equates to 0.5 PAs for weekday work and 0.6 PAs for weekend work.

$$0.5 \times 1.2429 = 0.62$$

$$0.6 \times 1.1818 = 0.71$$

Total PAs per week arising from on call = 1.33 PAs

Example 2

Each week of on call generates 30 hours or 10 PAs of work during weekdays and each weekend generates 18 hours or 6 PAs of work. As there are 10 consultants, this equates to 1 PA for weekday work and 0.6 PAs for weekend work.

$$1 \times 1.2429 = 1.24$$

$$0.6 \times 1.1818 = 0.71$$

Total PAs per week arising from on call = just under 2.

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