

POLICY DOCUMENT

Less Than Full-Time Training Policy – Guidance for Doctors and Dentists in Training

(Northern Ireland Deanery)

Policy Review Schedule

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Amendment Overview

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Role of the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency

The Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA) is an Arm's Length Body sponsored by the Department of Health (DoH) to train postgraduate medical and dental professionals for Northern Ireland. NIMDTA seeks to serve the government, public and patients of Northern Ireland by providing specialist advice, listening to local needs and having the agility to respond to regional requirements.

NIMDTA commissions, promotes and oversees postgraduate medical and dental education and training throughout Northern Ireland. Its role is to attract and appoint individuals of the highest calibre to recognised training posts and programmes to ensure the provision of a highly competent medical and dental workforce with the essential skills to meet the changing needs of the population and health and social care in Northern Ireland.

NIMDTA organises and delivers the recruitment, selection and allocation of doctors and dentists to foundation, core and specialty training programmes and rigorously assesses their performance through annual review and appraisal. NIMDTA manages the quality of postgraduate medical and dental education in HSC Trusts and in general medical and dental practices through learning and development agreements, the receipt of reports, regular meetings, trainee surveys and inspection visits. It works in close partnership with local education providers to ensure that the training and supervision of trainees support the delivery of high quality safe patient care.

NIMDTA recognises and trains clinical and educational supervisors and selects, appoints, trains and develops educational leaders for foundation, core and specialty medical and dental training programmes throughout NI.

NIMDTA is accountable to the General Medical Council (GMC) for ensuring that the standards set by the GMC for medical training, educational structures and processes are achieved. The Postgraduate Medical Dean, as the 'Responsible Officer' for doctors in training, has a statutory role in making recommendations to the GMC to support the revalidation of trainees. Revalidation is the process by which the GMC confirms that doctors are up to date and fit to practice. NIMDTA also works to the standards in the COPDEND framework for the quality development of postgraduate Dental training in the UK.

NIMDTA enhances the standard and safety of patient care through the organisation and delivery of relevant and valued career development for general medical and dental practitioners and dental care professionals. It also supports the career development of general medical practitioners and the requirements for revalidation through the management and delivery of GP appraisal.

NIMDTA aims to use the resources provided to it efficiently, effectively and innovatively. NIMDTA's approach to training is that trainees, trainers and educators should put patients first, should strive for excellence and should be strongly supported in their roles.

Policy Influences

This policy has been influenced by the following:

- Equality Summary Scheme
- Equality of Opportunity Policy
- European Law (EC Directive EC 93/16/EEC)
- The UK Foundation Programme Reference Guide (2017)
(<http://www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2018-07/Reference%20Guide.pdf>)
- The Gold Guide 2018 (A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Specialty Training within the UK)
- GMC Position Statement 'Conditions for Less than Full Time Training' (November 2017)

Policies Impacted

This policy may have an impact on the following:

- Allocations Of Placements to Doctors in training
- Special Circumstances
- Management of Trainees Requiring Support

1. Introduction

The purpose of less than full-time (LTFT) training is to retain within the health service doctors and dentists who might otherwise leave because they are unable to train on a full time basis.

The Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA) is committed to supporting doctors and dentists in training who find they are unable to work full-time.

The aims of LTFT training are to:

- retain in the workforce doctors who are unable or do not wish to continue their training on a full-time basis
- promote career development and work/life balance for doctors training in the HSC
- ensure continued training in programmes on a time equivalence (pro rata) basis

The process for appointment to a training programme is the same for both full-time applicants and those wishing to work less than full-time. Entry is through competition and is judged on merit alone.

2. Eligibility

Employment legislation setting out the statutory right to request flexible working sets the minimum standards with which an employer must comply. NIMDTA will consider all individual requests for Less than Full Time (LTFT) training. If the request is educationally appropriate this will be supported by NIMDTA and the Host Organisation, as placement provider will be advised. The Host Organisation should then consider how this request can be facilitated. The contribution of LTFT hours toward training is calculated on the basis on usual working hours only.

The clinical training commitment for trainee working LTFT should be no less than 50% as indicated in the GMC Position Statement '*Conditions for Less than Full Time Training*' www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/position-statements/less-than-full-time-training

Special Circumstances

NIMDTA recognises that there may be circumstances within this category where a trainee needs to remain within a specific geographical area in Northern Ireland for special family, caring or health circumstances. In this instance an application for special circumstances should be considered. The policy is available at www.nimdta.gov.uk/traineepolicies.

2.1 Prioritising requests for LTFT training

It has been agreed that the following categories should be used as guidelines for prioritising LTFT training requests, however these categories are not exhaustive. As LTFT will be dependent on the capacity of the programme, the needs of trainees in Category 1 will be prioritised.

Category 1

- Disability
- Ill-health
- Responsibility for caring for children (men and women)
- Responsibility for caring for ill/disabled partner, relative, or other dependant

Trainees with ill health or disability will be expected to have support from the occupational health department and have met with the Foundation School Director/ Head of School/ Director of Postgraduate General Practice Education/ General Practice Associate Director or Training Programme Director. They should also arrange to meet with a member of the Professional Support Unit (professionalsupport.nimdt@hscni.net).

Category 2

- Although consideration will be given to all trainees priority will always be given to those in Category 1.
- Unique opportunities for personal/professional development e.g. training for national/international sporting events.
- Religious commitment – involving training for a particular religious role which requires a specific amount of time commitment.
- Non-medical professional development such as management courses, law courses, fine arts courses etc.
- Doctors and dentists wishing to spend part of the week on research or an academic course e.g. a Master's Degree.

The fact that a doctor is deemed eligible for LTFT training does not imply that he/she should be appointed to a specific post. All allocations are made in line with the NIMDTA Allocation of Placements Policy <http://www.nimdt.gov.uk/trainee-policies-and-guidance/>.

3. Accommodating LTFT Training

NIMDTA will consider all individual requests for Less than Full Time (LTFT) training. If the request is educationally appropriate this will be supported by NIMDTA and the Host Organisation will be advised. NIMDTA will provide recommendations on how this could be facilitated however it is the responsibility of the Host Organisation to consider how this can be accommodated. Where possible this will take the form of a slot share arrangement.

Accommodating a LTFT training post is dependent on the availability and identification of a suitable training opportunity. Where a supernumerary post is the only option NIMDTA will seek to identify the funding required for a limited period of time.

Placement within training programmes will be determined by the relevant Foundation /Specialty School with the agreement of the Host Organisation and will normally coincide with the August and February changeover dates.

3.1 Slot Shares

Slot shares can be created by dividing the duties associated with a full-time substantive post between two trainees, where this is feasible. The percentage of time worked by each slot share partner will normally be on the basis of 50% or 60% of a full-time trainee. Any additional funding required to support slot-sharing arrangements (up to 60% per trainee) will be provided by NIMDTA and allocated to the Trusts subject to the availability of resources.

Where a change in circumstances impacts on existing slot shares e.g. due to statutory leave or out of programme, consideration will be given to the following options in order of decreasing preference:

- A slot share arrangement with another trainee
- Reduced sessions in a full-time post
- Exceptional funding to facilitate LTFT training in a supernumerary capacity
- Revert to full-time

3.2 Reduced Hours

Some part-time trainees may be placed in “full-time” slots but working less than full-time with the agreement of all those concerned. This may be particularly useful for those wanting to work 80% or 90% of a full-time trainee. However, this arrangement may create difficulties for service delivery and may not be feasible in some posts.

3.3 Exceptional Funding

After the above options have been fully explored, less than full-time training opportunities may be identified by the creation of supernumerary posts additional to the normal complement of training posts. Supernumerary posts can only be created if there is training capacity and funding is available. NIMDTA will provide funding to cover the percentage worked.

This option may be required for trainees who due to their disability or ill-health require allocation to a supernumerary post for a prolonged period. Trainees requiring this support will be considered by the Trainee Review Group (TRG).

3.4 Requests to undertake additional work

Less than Full Time Trainees wishing to undertake additional work requiring a licence to practise outside the training post must seek prospective approval from the Postgraduate Dean. LTFT Training for health reasons is unlikely to support additional working. Repetitive additional work should lead to a review of LTFT training schedule and eligibility.

As is required of all trainees any additional work requiring a licence to practise must be declared under Scope of Practise on the trainees Form R.

4. Application for Less Than Full-Time Training

Information on applying for LTFT training is available on NIMDTA's website www.nimdt.gov.uk. Application forms can be downloaded from the website. For advice contact the appropriate member of the School Education Management team.

The complete process from evaluation of the application to entry into a programme requires careful planning. Trainees must discuss their application for LTFT training with their Foundation School Director/ Head of School/ Director of Postgraduate General Practice Education/ General Practice Associate Director or Training Programme Director to explore a potential slot share or alternative arrangement. All applications will be considered by the relevant Training Committee within NIMDTA (Foundation Programme Director Meeting, GP Directors Meeting or Hospital Specialty Training Committee). Requests for LTFT training should normally be received four months in advance of change over (e.g. 31 March for commencement in August). When a LTFT training arrangement has been approved the applicant will be informed in writing of the type of arrangement, the location and the start date.

Commencement of LTFT training will normally coincide with placement changeover dates, although it is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances where arrangements have to be put in place at short notice.

Approval for LTFT training will be granted for a maximum period of one year, depending on the date of application and the commencement of the LTFT training arrangement. A review of all existing

LTFT arrangements will take place in April of each year and, for continuation of LTFT training, the trainee must confirm they wish to continue with their LTFT arrangement. Requests for LTFT training will normally not be considered in the absence of a formal application or without the support of the Foundation School Director/ Head of School/ Director of Postgraduate General Practice Education/ General Practice Associate Director or Training Programme Director as appropriate. Any request to change in hours must be discussed with the relevant senior educator. Trainees in Hospital Specialty Training programmes will be required to confirm their LTFT status annually via the allocations process.

5. Appeals Procedure

NIMDTA recognises that a trainee may wish to question or appeal against a decision regarding their application for LTFT training. If a trainee has been refused access to LTFT training he/she may wish to lodge an appeal with NIMDTA. This appeal should be made to the Postgraduate Medical Dean. The trainee must clearly outline in writing within 5 working days of receiving the decision the reason(s) they do not agree with this decision.

The Postgraduate Medical Dean will review the evidence provided in conjunction with a senior educator or senior manager who has not been involved in the original decision. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing within 5 working days of the review of the evidence. The decision of the Postgraduate Medical Dean is final.

6. Educational Approval

6.1 Foundation Training

In accordance with Foundation Reference Guide 2017 trainees undertaking less than full-time foundation training will need to complete an overall total of one year (full time equivalent) of F1 training and an overall total of one year (full time equivalent) of F2 training.

6.2 GP Training

Trainees granted LTFT training and allocated to a GP Training Practice will normally be required to work a minimum of 60% of a full-time trainee. Requests for 50% placements will not be considered unless in exceptional circumstances. GP trainees must submit a Less than Full Time Training Programme form on an annual basis to ensure this meets College requirements (Appendix 1).

6.3 Hospital and Dental Specialty Training

The LTFT trainee will need to discuss his/her training needs with Training Programme Director/Head of School. The TPD/Head of School will suggest appropriate training sessions, depending on the trainee's needs and the priorities of the Trust. Time for protected teaching/study/research/audit should be included within the normal working week pro rata, as organised for full-time trainees. In addition the out-of-hours commitment must be considered. In general a LTFT training programme should be equivalent pro-rata of a full-time programme to include out-of-hours. If, for example, a trainee is working 60% of full-time, she/he should be doing 60% of the out-of-hours. Trainees will be required to inform the relevant Royal College of the agreed WTE to ensure that the CCT date is revised, where appropriate. Arrangements for Hospital Specialty trainees are reviewed on an annual basis as part of the allocation process.

6.4 Dental Foundation Training

Further information on LTFT in Dental Foundation Training is available within the Recruitment and Selection and Allocation Policy for Nationally Co-ordinated Dental Foundation Training.

7. Contractual Arrangements

Trainees should liaise with HR in their Host Organisation for guidance relating to banding supplements.

The terms and conditions of employment should comply with those laid down in the Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook for Hospital and Medical Staff (Northern Ireland). The contract should be the same for both full-time and LTFT trainees, the only difference being in the hours of work contracted and the pro rata calculation of annual leave. For advice regarding the pro rata calculation of annual leave trainees should liaise with HR.

The length of the training programme is usually extended pro-rata of a full-time trainee so that an equivalent training is completed. Where trainees in specialty training programmes have already been given an expected date for the Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT), the date will require to be recalculated. As with full-time trainees, LTFT trainees in Hospital Specialty Training Programmes may request a 6-month period of grace post CCT. LTFT trainees should note that a Period of Grace is not pro-rata and is for a fixed period of 6 months only.

For LTFT trainees, should an extension to training be required following the award of an Outcome 3 at ARCP, this will follow the Gold Guide.

LAT posts are for a fixed duration i.e. one year and this applies whether working part-time or full-time. They are not extended pro rata.

8. Educational Supervision

Arrangements for Educational Supervision will be the same as full-time trainees. All trainees must have an educational supervisor i.e. a named consultant/trainer responsible for supervising their placement. All training programmes will comply with regional educational standards and GMC guidelines. Trainees will have their training needs assessed, be given educational objectives and the opportunities to achieve them. Trainees will be appraised and given feedback on their performance at appropriate intervals. All trainees will be formally assessed the ARCP process each calendar year.

9. Study Leave

Less Than Full Time Training (LTFT) trainees will receive the same funding allocation as full time trainees but will have access to study leave time pro rata. LTFT trainees will be expected to have developed a Personal Development Plan with their educational supervisor which conforms to exactly the same principles as agreed for full time trainees.

Study leave will be approved by the appropriate Head of School or Training Programme Director in accordance with NIMDTA's study leave guidance. Application forms can be downloaded from the website (www.nimdt.gov.uk) or by e-mailing studyleave.nimdt@hscni.net.

10. Statutory Leave

The number of weeks of annual leave is the same for both full-time and LTFT trainees, reduced on a pro-rata basis for those working LTFT. The annual leave entitlement is calculated on a pro-rata basis and determined by the trainees years of service. For example the total year's entitlement for a LTFT trainee working 60% (24 standard hours or 6 half days per week) and 5 weeks annual leave per year is 30 half days or 15 full days per year. Trainees should consult with HR for clarification regarding their pro rata calculation of annual leave.

A LTFT trainee is entitled to bank holidays pro-rata of a full-time trainee. The LTFT trainee should be able to claim Bank Holidays in proportion to their hours of work per week compared to full-time. As LTFT trainees can claim a proportion of Bank Holidays, in return they might be required to work some of these Bank Holidays.

Trainees must inform NIMDTA in writing if maternity leave is required and give an indication as to the date of return. When planning to return from maternity leave trainees should contact their programme director so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. As all training programmes are rotational it may not always be possible to place trainees in the post to which they were originally posted.

The NIMDTA Return to Training Guidance should be discussed with the Head of School/TPD prior to commencing leave to facilitate training requirements on return to work.

11. Reverting to Full-Time Training

A trainee wishing to transfer to full-time training or increase/decrease their percentage should inform his/her Programme Director and the Postgraduate Dean. The trainee may not be able to transfer until a full-time training post becomes available. It is best to give as much notice as possible for this to be planned. All changes in percentage worked must be discussed with his/her Programme Director and Host Organisation, following the process under Section 6.

12. Inter-Deanery Transfers

As with full-time trainees, those working less than-full time can apply for a transfer to another Deanery within the United Kingdom. Each application will be considered individually. LTFT status and funding will not transfer with the trainee.

13. Acting Up as a Consultant (AUC)

Trainees who are in their final year of training are eligible to 'Act Up' as consultants for a fixed period of time, up to a maximum period of three calendar months.

This also applies to Less than Full Time (LTFT) trainees for one single fixed period of time, which can be applied pro-rata. The period of 'acting up' cannot extend past the date of CCT but may be counted towards CCT or CESR (CP) with approval from the relevant Royal College.

14. Career Breaks

Where LTFT training cannot be immediately accommodated by the Host Organisation trainees may wish to consider taking a career break for which the approval of the Head of School and Associate Dean for Careers and Professional Support is required and the appropriate documentation completed.

Trainees will normally be entitled to one year in the first instance, and in total a career break of up to two years.

15. The Trainee's Responsibilities

NIMDTA is required to account for its use of financial resources and trainees need to play their full part in this by notifying NIMDTA in writing or by email if their circumstances change. For example, in the case of:

- Change of contact details

- Wishing to transfer to another region
- Withdrawal from the training scheme
- Taking unpaid or maternity leave
- Returning from maternity leave
- Wishing to change to full-time work or change the percentage whole time equivalent
- Taking sick leave
- Moving Overseas

Appendix 1 – LESS THAN FULL TIME TRAINING PROGRAMME FORM (GP Trainees)

THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED AND AGREED WITH YOUR CLINICAL SUPERVISOR (IF IN HOSPITAL) OR GP TRAINER (IF IN GP POST).

Trainee Full Name:	
Specialty Training Year (ST1/2/3):	
E-mail:	
Name of GP Trainer:	
Name of Clinical Supervisor (if in Hospital Post):	

LTFT TRAINING POST

Specialty of current post & location:	
Your % of full time:	
Your average working hours per week:	
Date of commencement in this post:	

Details of proposed weekly timetable. You should complete this table below stating hours to be worked and agree this with your Clinical Supervisor / GP Trainer. In a GP placement you are required to do pro rata that of a GP Trainee working in the practice full time. Please complete as much detail as possible as per the example below.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM	OFF	8.00 am – 1 pm surgery & house calls	8.00 am – 1 pm surgery	locality day (or surgery 8 am – 6 pm)	8.00 am – 1 pm surgery
PM	OFF	2 pm – 6 pm tutorials & Host Organisation home appointments	2 pm – 6 pm house calls & on call clinic	2 pm – 6 pm surgery	2 pm – 6 pm surgery

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM					
PM					

Alternatively, if you are based at a hospital and are doing shift patterns then please complete the timetable to give us an indication of what a typical month is like:

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							

In signing this Programme form I am confirming that I have met with and support the above-named doctor, and discussed and agreed the proposed weekly timetable:

Name of Clinical Supervisor (if in hospital placement) or GP Trainer (if in GP Placement):	
Signature:	Date:

In signing this Programme you are confirming that you have agreed to your proposed weekly timetable. You will also inform the GP Director of any changes to the timetable, rotations, maternity leave etc. A new form MUST be completed if any changes take place.

Trainee Name:	
Signature:	Date:

In signing this Programme form I am confirming that this proposed LTFT training post is suitable for GP Specialty Training and has approval:

Name of Associate Director / Director of Postgraduate GP Education:	
Signature:	Date:

PLEASE RETURN TO THE GENERAL PRACTICE SPECIALTY TRAINING TEAM AT NIMDTA

✉ gpspecialtytraining.nimdt@hscni.net

📍 GP Team NIMDTA, 42 Beechill Road, Belfast BT8 7RL