

Guardian of safe working report; 2020/21

Safe working requirements for doctors

Indicator No. P2	Requirements	2020/21			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Breaches to safe working requirements	Max 48 hour average working week	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Max 72 hours work in any 7 consecutive days	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Max 13 hour shift length	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Max 5 consecutive long shifts, at least 48 hours rest following the fifth shift	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Max 4 consec. long daytime/evening shifts, at least 48 hours rest following 4 th shift	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Max 4 consecutive night shifts. At least 46 hours rest following 3 rd or 4 th shift	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Max 8 consecutive shifts, at least 48 hours rest following the final shift	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Max frequency of 1 in 2 weekends can be worked	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Normally at least 11 hours continuous rest between rostered shifts	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	30 minute break for 5 hours work, a second 30 minute break for more than 9 hours	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	No consec. on-call periods except Sat & Sun. No more than 3 on-call periods in 7 consecutive days	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Day after an on-call period must not be rostered to exceed 10 hours	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	Rest while on-call is 8 hrs per 24 hr period, at least 5 hrs to be continuous between 22.00 & 07.00	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK
	No doctor should be rostered on-call to cover the same shift as a doctor on the same rota is covering by working a shift	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK	RULE:OK

Commentary

Summary: Recently the major factor of course has been the impact of Covid on working practice across all areas including for junior doctors. There was one exception report in recent months which was in November'20.

The challenges during the pandemic cannot be overstated. Clinical practice for junior doctors changed dramatically in order to be Covid-compliant and the trainees responded to the challenge very successfully. They literally formed part of the first-line of defence in supporting vulnerable service-users in the wards during these trying times, and they rose to this task ensuring continuity of service and safety of our patients.

Junior Doctors working in the Trust are subject to the TCS (terms and conditions of service) of the New Contract. Conditions to ensure safe working hours for doctors is integral to the New Contract. The rota-rules in this regard are summarised in the table above and a summary fact-sheet in this regard is enclosed.

Analysis of junior doctors rotas from the last quarter shows that it is compliant with all the rota-rules of the new contract.

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Commentary continued:

Exception reports: Exception reporting by junior doctors is the mechanism to highlight individual breaches to the rota-rules. For example : if a trainee doctor had to work over the stipulated hours during an on-call shift for any reason then he or she generates an Exception Report to highlight this breach. Please see the attached flow-chart for a summary of how exception reporting is managed. The Trust has implemented the DRS4 electronic software system , for exception reporting by junior doctors. This is in line with guidance nationally and represents a user-friendly way for junior doctors to raise any concerns regarding any training or working-hours issues.

Number of exception reports in recent months and since last report: 1

Details: The exception was raised in Nov'20 by a less than full time trainee pertaining to additional hours worked during her non-working day. This was a one-off incident which unfortunately meant that the doctor had to work during her off-day to complete a crucial medical report as per instructions given to her. The doctor conscientiously prioritized the task in the first instance and thereafter raised the exception report as an appropriate mechanism to raise concern and discuss further. She was supported throughout the process and she successfully resolved the matter through supervision sessions with her consultant supervisor. The trainee was happy with the outcome. No further action including payments etc. was required, and the doctor reflected on the event in the learning-log of her portfolio.

Other observations: The Junior Doctors Forum is now well established as per guidance in the New Contract to discuss and monitor issues related to safe working hours. In response to the Covid situation, the forum has been conducted virtually over MS Teams. Overall, no significant concerns regarding safe working hours have been raised recently; this is truly commendable given the Covid conditions and is a testament to the hard work by junior doctors and the support from their supervisors and consultants. By consensus we are utilising the forum additionally as a platform for junior doctors to discuss any concerns generally regarding working conditions and training in the Trust; in this regard it has proved to be a useful way to identify issues that require escalation to the Trust management. Recent example includes concerns around junior doctors tasked to swab Covid patients in the wards; this was escalated and resolved successfully .

Recruitment into Psychiatry has been difficult for the last few years and consultants have commented that this can potentially impact on the normal 9-5 junior doctor work and ward-cover arrangements in the future. It is encouraging to note that trainee recruitment has improved significantly in recent months.

– Dr Sarojit Ganguly