

Maternity, Paternity Shared Parental leave: An all Wales single reference book for trainees



Anaesthesia, Intensive Care & Pain Medicine
PROVIDING EDUCATION, TRAINING & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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Juggling parenting with a career in anaesthesia or intensive care can be a challenge, and the process of planning time away from training and the subsequent return to work is often a daunting prospect. For trainees working while pregnant there are additional considerations around the impacts of working long shifts, out of hours and emergency work, and other occupational health issues. All of this may be further impacted by the rotational nature of training, exams, and specialist module requirements.

Anaesthesia is a specialty that has long championed both working parents and less than full time (LTFT) training. In May 2024, 31.6% of trainees in the Welsh School of Anaesthesia, Intensive Care and Pain Medicine (WSA) were training on an LTFT basis. This is compared to 23% in July 2022, and 24.6% of trainees across all specialties in Wales¹. In addition to resources produced by the Royal College of Anaesthetists, the publication of the national guidance 'A guide to parenting during anaesthesia training' by the Association of Anaesthetists² raises the profile of this group of trainees.

Despite the wealth of experience and information available, trainees in Wales often find the process overwhelming. There are inconsistencies in region specific information, leading to variation in the experience of trainees across departments. This has been exacerbated in recent years by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of a Single Lead Employer for trainees in Wales.



Planning your maternity/ paternity/shared parental leave and return to work

A guidance for trainees in the Welsh School of Anaesthesia

Jennifer Myo & Jade Loughran



"Although you know lots of people have done this before, sometimes the process makes you feel that you are the first person."

In 2023 the Welsh School of Anaesthesia surveyed the experiences of trainees who had taken time out of training. When asked about where they sourced information for planning, trainees described it as 'piecemeal', often relying on ad-hoc advice from fellow trainees. Given the changes in recent years, this approach means trainees are not always getting the most up to date or relevant information, adding further stress and uncertainty. When asked about how things could be improved, trainee suggestions included "guidance specific for the Welsh School", "who to contact and when", and "a document full of tips and guidance from other trainees".

With this clear brief to deliver comprehensive, up to date information specific to the WSA, a team of trainees worked with the LTFT lead, the Head of School and Single Lead Employer to produce a reference book for trainees planning maternity/paternity/shared parental leave.

The information is centred around a timeline which acts as a quick reference guide and checklist. The information is presented in a chronological form, written by trainees for trainees. The booklet highlights national resources/guidance produced by the Association of Anaesthetists² and British Medical Association³, linking it with local guidance and requirements. There are practical explanations, advice and tips gathered from many trainees which are invaluable. The mandatory policies and application forms are hyperlinked, aiming to reduce the administration burden.

Congratulations! This is an exciting time, but organising leave arrangements can be daunting and overwhelming.

We have put together this guide specifically for trainees within the Welsh School of Anaesthesia to help navigate the various processes and aspects you need to consider.

For consistency, we will refer to our single lead employer (SLE) as NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) throughout the document.

The first thing to say is that you are not alone in any of this.

If you need help or support at any time, please use this guidance and the contacts provided.

We have hyperlinked as much as possible to the relevant information and forms so please let us know if any are not working or if you think anything should be included.

We aim to keep it as up to date as possible.

Jen and Jade

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Checklist of things to do

Use this page as an overall checklist for organising your maternity/paternity/parental leave. We hope it helps!

BEFORE

- Arrange risk assessment with departmental manager and forward to Single Lead Employer
- Apply for maternity/paternity/shared leave by 25th week of pregnancy *need MATBI form*
- Inform departmental manager
- Inform TPD
- Inform educational supervisor +/- college tutor
- Arrange pre-departure meeting and complete pre-departure checklist - send to TPD
- Amend professional subscriptions
- Consider signing up to mailing lists for return to work courses
- Apply for LTFT working (if relevant)
- Handover any ongoing projects/non-clinical work
- Change email address preferences on intrepid to receive relevant correspondence from HEIW
- Consider adding 'out of office' message to work email

DURING

- Organise KIT/SPLIT days
- Pre-return to work meeting (8-12 weeks before return to clinical work)
- Reinstate relevant professional subscriptions

AFTER

- Yearly renewal of RCOA reduced fees if LTFT
- Review governmental financial benefits

There is widespread recognition that trainees on leave may have limited access to work resources and peer support. Our reference book is designed to provide detail of the key considerations for those on and returning from leave to ease the transition. In our 2023 survey, 68% of trainees did not utilise keeping in touch days. A focus on the value of these days has been included, with ideas to maximise their effect. Details of locally run return to work courses and requirements for pre-return meetings are also available.

The final sections are dedicated to highlighting the support available to trainees, contacts for return to work champions within each anaesthetic department in Wales, trainee representative details, and some practical considerations around finances, exams and useful external links.

The reference book is accessible on the Welsh School of Anaesthesia website⁴, and has formed part of a wider HEIW project aiming to build on and improve support and resources available for trainees returning to work after a period away from training. Annual review of our resource with the WSA LTFT/return to training team will ensure it represents the most up to date local advice and quality guidance.

References:

1. HEIW data. 2024
2. Association of Anaesthetists. A Guide to Parenting During Anaesthesia Training All you need to know about pregnancy, leave and returning to work 2023. Available from <https://anaesthetists.org/Portals/0/PDFs/Membership/A%20Guide%20to%20Parenting%20During%20Anaesthesia%20Training.pdf?ver=2022-07-12-115831-177> (accessed 10 November 2023).
3. British Medical Association. Maternity, paternity and adoption. <https://www.bma.org.uk/pay-and-contracts/maternity-paternity-and-adoption> (accessed 10 November 2023)
4. Myo J S, Loughran J A. Planning your maternity/ paternity/ shared parental leave and return to work 2024. Available from <https://s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/cdn.webfactore.co.uk/3519-wsoa+guide+for+planning+maternity%2C+paternity+or+shared+parental+leave.pdf>