**GP Trainees in practice placements – notes on Annual Leave**

Trainees in GP practice placements are supernumerary to establishment. This means that if there is not a trainee in post, the establishment remains complete, and no locum is required to fill a gap. Trainees are however also employees. They are paid a salary and are expected to carry out duties – both clinical and developmental – for that salary. Those duties can and should be planned in advance.

As employees, trainees are subject to their terms and conditions of employment and to any employer policies that apply.

The terms and conditions require all trainees to request leave a minimum of six weeks in advance. Under the lead employer arrangements, host organisations act on behalf of the employer with regard to the management of annual leave. In fulfilling this responsibility, hosts should grant leave where it is possible to do so - but are not obliged to do so other than for "life changing events" (weddings etc).  If leave can be granted - fine. If not, then an explanation as to why not would be a reasonable expectation, and alternatives can be explored. The host and the trainee need to work together to ensure all leave can be taken at a time that works for the practice.

Whilst trainees in practice settings are supernumerary, they are still employees and hosts are entitled to consider leave requests from them in the same way as they would for other staff and in line with the employer’s policies.

The Royal Free guidance on leave therefore applies; an extract from this is below:

***Limits on planned absence:****In general, planned leave will be authorised on a first-come-first-served basis, the exception being where there is a need to distribute leave amongst teams during peak periods (e.g. Christmas / New Year, half-term breaks or summer). Individual service lines/specialties will determine the maximum number of employees permitted to be on leave at any one time. Depending on numbers, some services / specialties may also need to set the maximum number of consultants and juniors on leave at any one time, or require a certain amount of leave to be used over a period to ensure leave is taken and safe staffing levels maintained throughout the year. All approved leave requests must be compliant with these locally determined rules.*

There is nothing in a GP trainee’s supernumerary status that overrides their obligations to their employer/host in this regard. It is very clear from the contract that, while requests for leave should not be *unreasonably* refused, the host is entitled to place limits on when leave can/cannot be taken, and on how many of its employees may be away at any one time.

In short, a trainee does not have an absolute, unfettered right to have his or her leave approved and there is nothing in the terms and conditions of service giving trainees in practice settings more favourable treatment than is afforded any other staff group. If, for example, a practice takes all Xmas leave requests, from all staff, in, say, October, then it is not unreasonable to apply this to trainees as well. Supernumerary or not, while they are there, trainees are part of the team and should be expected to abide by the same rules as anyone else.

Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

(lead employer of GP trainees)

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