

# Taking time out of the training programme for foundation, core and specialty run-through Doctors

Taking some time out of training can provide an opportunity to explore Specialty options and gain evidence to help a future application. However, trainees who have returned report that it needs forward planning and organisation.

## What are the options?

Trainees typically take time out of training to undertake the following:

- **Working in a fixed term or non-training post in the NHS.** These are advertised on [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk) and are a way of gaining further experience.
- **Taking a further qualification** such as a master's degree.
- **Undertaking work experience**, which may be useful in a future specialty.
- **Working abroad:** this can include work in a mainstream healthcare system, voluntary or aid work or community development. Different places will have different risks and benefits in terms of cost, employment conditions, healthcare setting, health risks, personal safety etc.
- **Taking a career break.** This may include mix of work and travel.

## When is it possible to take time from training?

- **After F1:** Some Foundation Programmes (including Wales) allow doctors to take Time Out of Programme between F1 and F2. Contact your Foundation programme Director or Foundation Programme team for further information. In most cases, there will be a post to return to, but this cannot be guaranteed, so discuss this with your FPD before applying.
- **After F2:** You will be eligible to apply for Core or Specialty run-through Training posts, although after three years you may need to provide alternative evidence. Some specialty programmes e.g. GP will allow you to apply for a post during F2 and defer entry for a year, allowing you to secure a post to return to. Check the applicant guidelines for each specialty. The NHS are now also advertising "F3" posts which are usually for 12 months in duration and are opportunities to gain additional valuable work experience.
- **During Specialty Training:** There are opportunities for Time out of programme (TOOP) during Specialty Training, to undertake research, leadership, other or other career-related experience or even a career break. This allows you to return to resume your training programme after the period out. The procedures can be found here:  
**Gold Guide (national)**  
<https://www.walesdeanery.org/specialty-training/out-programme>  
**TOOP Guidelines in Wales**  
<https://www.walesdeanery.org/specialty-training/out-programme>

## Things to consider if working in a country outside the UK

Returning trainees tell us that it can take up to 2 years to plan for work overseas and needs thought well in advance to allow for contingencies:

- Visa application can be a lengthy process which can take up to 12 months.
- Some locations are competitive so you may need to be flexible.
- Your **GMC licence to practice** should ideally be if remaining in medical work and as a minimum, you will need a "certificate of good standing" to show overseas employers. Bear in mind that any incident reported to a local regulator abroad will also be investigated by the GMC, which could make re-

registration problematic on your return. GMC advise that you maintain full registration if working clinically.

- Prepare for the cost of flights, visa, injections, accommodation deposits etc.
- Plan for interviews: many employers/agencies are used to people needing time to return for interviews and some build this into the contract/work-plan. Some specialties publish interview dates very early and some allow you to book your slot via [Oriel](#). There is only one interview required for most specialties and some written assessments can be done online.
- Reflect on the transferable skills evidence you will build for applications and interviews e.g. planning, adaptability, awareness of other healthcare systems etc.
- If you're in a developing country, check IT systems so that you can make an online application or complete an SJT without problems.
- Keep in touch with colleagues at home and find out what's happening or changing.

### **Preparing for return to Specialty Training after time out**

- Check for specialty recruitment rounds frequently. Some recruit at various time throughout the year.
- Bookmark all sites relating to Specialty/GP Recruitment, especially <http://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/> and [www.oriel.nhs.uk](http://www.oriel.nhs.uk). Be on alert for recruitment process changes, which can vary year on year in some specialties.
- Make use of all the resources and information on our [Jobs and Applications](#) pages, which are open access.
- Keep collecting evidence for your Portfolio. You may need to take some or all of this to a specialty interview.
- Do seek advice from your Foundation programme Director, Foundation School or the GMC regarding what time out may mean for your [revalidation arrangements](#).

### **Building Added Value from a Career Break**

There are a number of ways you can use a break from training to demonstrate wider skills and attributes such as:

- Using the opportunity to switch off and returning recharged and with new focus
- Taking the time to reflect on things you need to clarify about your future career
- Wider experience/creating a better and more rounded person
- Appreciating the benefits of the NHS if working abroad. Not all health systems turn out to be as attractive as they look on paper or when presented by recruiting agencies and all have their challenges and pressures
- Learning independence, adaptability and 'openness' to new things
- Improving language and cultural awareness
- Developing budgeting and project planning skills, demonstrating self-management
- Obtaining feedback from other jobs and experiences – collect testimonials

We know from data that most trainees make a smooth and successful return to specialty training within 1 - 2 years of taking time out. If you provide an email address to us at: [HEIW.MedicalCareers@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:HEIW.MedicalCareers@wales.nhs.uk) we'll keep you posted with information about recruitment and developments in Wales.