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# HSE National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme

Open to doctors in recognised postgraduate training schemes



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## The HSE National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme

The medical workforce is changing and, over recent years, numerous reports have pointed to the importance of providing flexible working arrangements for doctors. Up until the July 2015 intake, the National Flexible Training Scheme was open to Higher Specialist Trainees & Streamline Training Year 3 onwards. The scheme was extended in July 2017 and is now open to all doctors in recognised postgraduate training schemes. This scheme is not recommended for final year trainees however, this is at the discretion of the relevant Training Body. This is a national scheme managed and funded by the Health Service Executive – National Doctors Training & Planning (NDTP).

The scheme provides for a limited number of supernumerary places to facilitate doctors to continue their training in a flexible manner for a set period. Trainees must be enrolled in a training programme under the auspices of one of the Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies recognised by the Medical Council in Ireland. Job sharing programmes are being rolled out across the Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies. To express interest in availing of a job sharing arrangement, please contact your training body. These opportunities for trainees are alternative options to the Supernumerary Flexible Training. Under this programme, 0.2 salary uplifts are available to facilitate both job sharers to work 0.6 WTE.

This guide sets out details of the HSE National Flexible Training Scheme and provides information for trainees, training bodies and employers about the programme.

## Principles of Flexible Training

The following principles have been agreed between HSE National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) and the Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies (Forum).

1. All doctors in training can apply for flexible training, with the exception of GP Practice posts (Year 3 & 4).
2. All efforts will be made to provide flexible training to every applicant where possible.
3. Applications for flexible training can be submitted within a defined period and will normally be processed within three months.
4. No existing trainee can be disadvantaged by the application for Flexible Training options. For example, a trainee cannot have their rotation changed without their agreement to accommodate a request for reassignment from another trainee.
5. The flexible training post must meet the training requirements and be appropriate to the trainees' stage of training.
6. Flexible training should not extend the duration of training beyond the parameters laid out in the training regulations of an individual training body.
7. Flexible trainees will have their equivalent full-time salary protected and will continue to hold the NCHD contract.
8. Supernumerary Flexible training posts funded by NDTP will be administered by the training bodies from the July 2025 training year.
9. The annual allocation process should maximise the opportunities for trainees to access flexible training posts.
10. Trainees who need flexible training at short notice and /or in exceptional circumstances should have their applications dealt with on a case by case basis by individual training bodies.
11. Appeals will be processed transparently and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the individual training bodies.
12. Trainees will also have the right to an independent appeals process, but only if they have utilised the training body appeals mechanism initially.
13. Data on Flexible Training applications and approvals will be collected centrally through the Forum, shared with HSE NDTP, and be made available publicly in order to monitor progress.
14. It is expected that the number of flexible trainees will increase in the future, subject to demand. This has been incorporated into the annual Service Level Agreement process between HSE- NDTP and each individual Training Body.
15. The requirement to enhance Flexible Training options is recognised by all and in this regard, each training body will designate a named advocate for Flexible Training Options.
16. The revised arrangements for access, implementation, promotion and feedback will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by a Steering Group representing all key stakeholders.

## **Who Can Apply to the National Flexible Training Scheme?**

All trainees in recognised postgraduate training schemes can make an application for flexible training. This scheme is not recommended for final year trainees however, this is at the discretion of the relevant Training Body.

To apply for the Flexible Training Scheme, trainees must be on a postgraduate training scheme or in the case of trainees between BST and HST, intend to apply to be on such a HST scheme. Trainees who have not commenced BST yet are not eligible to apply.

Trainees who are **between** BST and HST training are eligible for the flexible training scheme subject to securing a place on the HST programme.

Trainees must be enrolled in a specialist training programme under the auspices of one of the Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies recognised by the Medical Council in Ireland at the time of commencement of flexible training and throughout their flexible training post.

All applicants must have well founded individual reasons for flexible training. Applications for flexible training in order to pursue other paid work, paid non-medical interests or to engage in research will not be considered by NDTP. The most common reasons to date for individual trainees making an application to the National Flexible Training Scheme include:

- Responsibility for caring for others (e.g. children or elderly relatives)
- Physical and mental health
- Personal family circumstances.

## **When Can Trainees Apply to the National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme?**

Flexible training posts will be assigned for the period July to July each year, in line with the training year.

In order to allow the timely management of the allocation of trainees to clinical sites, and to minimise any potential service implications if an application for flexible training is successful, applicants must give as much notice as possible to both NDTP and their respective training body.

Applications for flexible training can be submitted from 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024 to 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application for the scheme by the end of 2024.

## **Structure of Flexible Training Posts on the National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme**

Applicants may propose the structure of flexible training posts within certain parameters. Flexible training posts working arrangements are at 0.5 WTE. The working pattern of a flexible trainee must be managed over a maximum of a two-week reference period, meaning that of every two-week period the agreed percentage of full time must be worked, with the exception of approved leave in line with the NCHD Contract 2010.

Examples of acceptable flexible training working arrangements are

- 3 days one week, 2 the next;
- 2.5 days on, 2.5 days off per working week;
- 5 mornings per week; or
- One week on, one week off

## Funding Arrangements and Flexible Training Places

Funding is provided by NDTP directly to the employing authority for each flexible trainee on the Scheme. The funding provided covers:

- Flexible trainee's salary
- Associated Employers PRSI

In addition, trainees on the National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme are entitled to apply through their training body for the HSE Specialist Training funding scheme (HST Trainees Only), the Training Supports Scheme through DIME, and through their employer for the HSE Clinical Course & Examination Refund Scheme.

Employers should note that all other costs, including on-call costs, other additional payments, trainers' grants, overtime payments etc. are not provided within NDTP funding for this programme.

Overtime is paid at single time extra until whole time equivalent hours are reached i.e. 39 hours per week.

## On Call Duties

It is important that a flexible trainee has similar exposure to learning and experience (including on-call duties) as their full-time colleagues. Therefore, trainees on the scheme will be expected to partake in on-call duties / on-call rotas on a pro-rata basis. GP trainees should refer to the notes section of this document.

On call costs are not provided by NDTP in the allocated funding under this scheme, and must be covered by the employer.

Overtime is paid at single time extra until whole time equivalent hours are reached i.e. 39 hours per week.

Trainees who are accepted onto the scheme will be managed on a supernumerary basis. This means that such trainees join their designated clinical service / department and will be additional to the allocated establishment of trainees in that service or department, excluding GP Registrars / Public Health SpRs.

## Duration of Flexible Training Posts

The number of available flexible training posts is limited. Each approved flexible training post will be approved for 12 months, and will commence in July each year, in line with the training year. Priority will be given to applications looking for 12 months on the scheme.

Any trainee appointed to a flexible training post and who wish to continue in flexible training after this period will be required to re-apply. No preference will be given to trainees already on the flexible training scheme for subsequent periods on the scheme.

Participation on the flexible training scheme will be restricted to a **maximum of two years** and will only be extended by NDTP in exceptional circumstances. This is to provide as many trainees as possible with the option to train flexibly.

Prospective applicants should note that deferral of flexible training places is not permitted. An applicant who cannot take up a flexible training post on the specified date of commencement must re-apply.

## Eligibility Criteria to Apply

Applicants to the National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme must meet all the following eligibility criteria:

1. Be registered (or registered on the date of commencement) on the **Trainee Specialist Division** of the Register of Medical Practitioners maintained by the Medical Council (of Ireland). It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that they are appropriately registered; the process for registration is entirely separate to the process for application for flexible training.
  2. Be enrolled on a BST/HST programme under the auspices of one of the Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies. This process is completely separate from the application process for the National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme and is managed directly by the relevant postgraduate training body.
- OR
3. Intend to apply for HST if not in streamlined training. Trainees between BST and HST are eligible for the flexible training scheme subject to securing a place on the HST programme.
  4. Hold the **NCHD Contract 2010** at the time of commencement of the flexible training post.
  5. Have a **valid reason** for applying for flexible training.
  6. Have completed and submitted all of the **required documentation** within the specified timelines, to the satisfaction of NDTP.

## Terms and Conditions of Employment

All individuals participating in the HSE National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme are issued with the NCHD Contract 2010 by the relevant employing authority, and are subject to the terms and conditions of that employment contract. Contractual entitlements such as Training Support Scheme are to be calculated and administered on a pro-rata basis. Please note that flexible trainees are employed and managed by their host site, not NDTP. All HR issues should be managed at a site level by the employer.

The employer in line with the agreed clinical work patterns of the individual trainee will manage issues like salary, annual leave, and educational leave etc. on a pro-rata basis. Trainees are to be matched to DIME with the correct WTE assigned.

It is essential that there is enough training capacity within the proposed department/service to enable the flexible trainee to continue to progress along their training pathway and achieve the required educational credit from their respective Postgraduate Medical Training Body.

In line with HSE regulations for the appointment of locum / temporary consultant posts, no flexible trainee is permitted to "act up" during their flexible training post.

## Application Process

The application process for the National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme is a two-step process. Each step is outlined below. Application forms referred to below are available in word format at [www.hse.ie/doctors](http://www.hse.ie/doctors).

### Application Stage 1: Expression of Interest

The purpose of this stage is to allow the trainee to formally register their interest in the National Supernumerary Flexible Training Scheme with NDTP and to provide information to NDTP which will enable the HSE to make an initial assessment of the application. All applicants must declare the following on their application form:

1. I have discussed my reason for seeking part-time training with my training scheme prior to applying.
2. I agree to adhere to the minimum hours per week including education release time and out of hours commitment as required by the training body
3. I have informed my future training post of my decision to train part-time
4. I understand that I will not be able to accelerate my training
5. All assessments have been satisfactorily completed to date

It is strongly recommended that trainees speak with their current trainer or NSD during the initial application stage, as their signature will be required at Stage 2 of the application process.

If you wish to apply for flexible training, you should:

Determine whether you are eligible to apply by consulting the eligibility criteria above and, if eligible, complete and submit an Application Form, which is available on the NDTP website ([hse.ie/doctors](http://hse.ie/doctors)).

NDTP will consider all applications positively. NDTP will contact the applicant, advising them whether:

1. They have been offered a place on the scheme, at which time the trainee may proceed to Stage 2 of the process, OR
2. A place on the scheme is not available but the application is appropriate for inclusion on the reserve list for vacancies. Vacancies will be filled in the order of the placement of applicants on the reserve list, OR
3. The application is not appropriate for a flexible training post.

All decisions by NDTP on each application received are final. GP Trainees are referred to notes section for further information prior to making their application.

### Application Stage 2 – Detailed Application Form

If an applicant is advised by NDTP that they may proceed to Stage 2 of the application process, the applicant must complete and submit to NDTP the *Approval Form*, a copy of which is provided to successful applicants at offer stage.

The purpose of this stage is to provide NDTP with both the training details and the employment details of the proposed flexible training post. The *Approval Form* must be signed by:

1. The applicant,
2. The relevant training body representative (Dean / National Speciality Director) and
3. The employer (HR Manager/ Medical Manpower Manager/ Hospital Manager).

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the necessary approval is obtained from both the training body and the employer in a timely manner. A deadline for submission of the Stage 2 form will be applied by NDTP in order to secure the flexible training post.

### **Refusing a Scheme Place**

If an applicant accepts a place on the scheme after relevant approvals have been completed, and subsequently decides not to proceed with Flexible Training the applicant must notify NDTP no later than **28<sup>th</sup> February 2025**. This is to provide applicants on the reserve list with sufficient time to make arrangements to accept a place on the scheme if they wish to. Late withdrawals may result in a Flexible Training place remaining unfilled.



## **Notes for General Practice Trainees applying for Flexible Training arrangements**

1. The Flexible Training Scheme is not available to trainees in GP Practice posts (Year 3 & 4).
2. Prior to application trainees must discuss their application for flexible training with the Programme Director/scheme to ensure that their request for flexible training can be accommodated on the scheme.
3. In making the application it will be assumed by NDTP that your application will be supported by the training scheme.
4. The training scheme should make every effort to accommodate and support the trainee's application for flexible training.
5. Training time will not be accelerated as a result of flexible training arrangements. All elements for nomination of CSCST including out of hours arrangements over the course of training must be achieved.
6. To safeguard quality and continuity in training, a close mentorship and communication between trainees, trainers and programme directing teams prior to application, and at regular structured individual reviews (3-6 monthly) throughout the period of flexible training should be undertaken. This is necessary to protect the progress of the trainee and to highlight deficiencies and areas of difficulty early.