

RestaRTT: A workshop supporting trainees returning from maternity/paternity leave in Wales

J Myo, J Loughran



RestaRTT workshop June 2023

INTRODUCTION

Returning to training after a period of extended leave, such as maternity or paternity leave, can be extremely challenging during a trainee's career. Health Education England (HEE) quote at least 10% of trainees are taking time out of training at any one time.¹

In 2017, at the time of contract negotiations, the Department of Health agreed to provide a recurring annual budget of £10 million to support trainees in England return to training. This led to the formation of suppoRTT as part of HEE's Enhancing Junior Doctors' Working Lives programme.

In Wales, there is no funding or formal support for this significant cohort, disadvantaging thousands of trainees in known a time of need.

BRIDGING THE GAP IN SUPPORT

Qualitative studies of surgical and anaesthetic trainees in Wales have highlighted this need of support, not only clinically, but also in non-clinical domains such as confidence. This reinforces the findings in the work done by HEE.

The authors and organisers are all mothers and trainees who organically came together, all looking to develop this support that was lacking. Drawing from personal experiences and a passion to improve this for other parents, restaRTT was developed: a Return To Training workshop.

The aim was to provide a day covering non-clinical topics, in a safe supportive environment. It would be pan-specialty, baby-friendly and free to ensure maximum inclusivity and overcome any challenges obtaining childcare. A pilot workshop was held in June 2023 and obtained funding provided 30 catered spaces. Nearly ¾ of spaces were filled within 48 hours. The subsequent event held in January 2024 echoed this even with an increased capacity of 35 delegates and a subsequent waiting list was instigated.

A vast range of specialties attended including anaesthetics, emergency medicine and psychiatry from foundation training doctors to newly-CCT consultants. Over half of the attendees brought their babies to both workshops.

FEEDBACK

Some comments from trainees who attended the workshop.

"Wish I had this before my previous return to work."

"This is such an important thing for mothers and I think it should be a regular event."

"... everybody feels the same way, you are not alone. However without these events you do not know that."

"It allowed mothers to attend guilt-free."

"Felt so empowered to return to work being surrounded by like-minded women."

"I wasn't really sure what to expect but got far more from it than I could have hoped for."

FEEDBACK

Pre and post workshop feedback was gathered to identify key concerns of trainees as well as assess areas of improvement for the faculty. Results from the two workshops were collated. This encompasses the feedback for over 50 trainees.

Most had concerns regarding confidence of returning to training and also highlighted worries about the challenges of works life balance, childcare and exams.

Prior to attending the workshop, the majority of attendees used online search engines and peers for information gathering regarding maternity leave and returning to work; only 17% quoted using any formal policies or Welsh school websites as a source of support. In addition to this, the average score for the perceived support was 3.9/10 on the Likert scale of satisfaction. It clearly highlights the lack of formal support and the huge need for this in Wales.

Feedback following the workshops have been overwhelmingly positive. Attendees felt their confidence increase an average score of 8.3/10. Attendees felt it addressed any non-clinical concerns they had (average score 8.4/10) and nearly 90% of trainees felt it essential that the workshop was face-to-face.

The support for baby-friendly workshop was unanimous which otherwise would have prevented some mothers attending due to difficulty sourcing childcare.

RestaRTT programme	
1 st February 2024	
Timings	Topic
09:00 - 09:15	Welcome and Introductions
09:15 - 10:45	Confidence and impostor syndrome
10:45 - 11:00	BREAK
11:00 - 11:30	Breastfeeding in work breakout
11:30 - 12:00	Maternal wellbeing at work
12:00 - 12:45	Maternal mindfulness
12:45 - 13:30	LUNCH
13:30 - 13:00	Professional Support Unit
13:00 - 13:45	BMA and pay matters
13:45 - 14:00	BREAK
14:00 - 15:00	Specialty breakout sessions
15:00 - 15:10	Close and feedback

Finalised, improved programme for RestaRTT
February 2024

"I think this day is an absolute necessity. Somehow felt like the only person who would be returning to work after maternity leave... It has the potential to go even further in terms of education and building a support network."

IMPROVEMENTS

Given the geography of Wales, it would be beneficial to develop a North Wales workshop to provide support for all trainees.

The hybrid platform trialled in the second workshop was not appropriate and once again highlighted the invaluable nature of the face-to-face element.

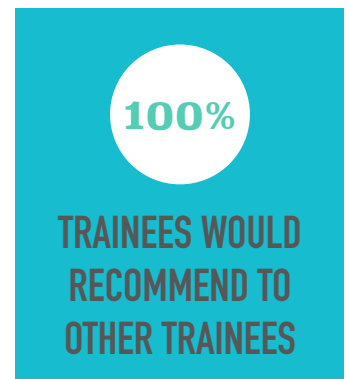
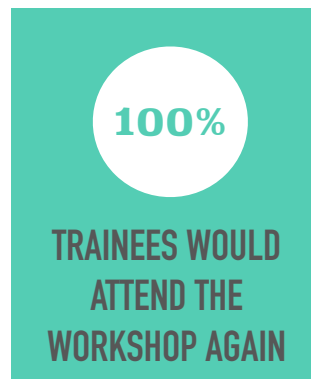
As more trainees are now taking shared parental leave, it would be beneficial to encourage fathers to attend as well as mothers.

FUTURE GAINS

Ongoing communications with Health Education and Improvement in Wales (HEIW) since the beginning of RestaRTT has led to positive progress. It is to become incorporated into the Generic Curriculum days run by HEIW, providing sustainability and financial support.

Being a trainee-led initiative, it is important to maintain this as it allows peer experiences to lead session development.

Since moving to Scotland, one of the organisers has replicated the workshop in the Scotland deanery.



REFERENCE

1. Health Education England. Supported Return to Training [Internet]. Health Education England. [cited 2024 Apr 18]. Available from: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Supported%20Return%20to%20Training.pdf>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the other organisers Frances Kent (Consultant Vascular Surgeon, East of Scotland), Hannah Bevan (General Practice Trainee, Wales Deanery), Azel Regan (Surgical Trainee, Wales Deanery)