

# Rota vacancies and compliance survey findings

**December 2011- March 2012**



Royal College of  
**Paediatrics and Child Health**

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## Background

In February 2012 a short questionnaire was sent to clinical directors responsible for all units in the UK providing general paediatric inpatient and neonatal services. The survey closed on 19<sup>th</sup> April and obtained an excellent response rate of 87.0% (194/223). This compares to 84% in the 2010 - 2011 survey.

The purpose of the survey was to collect evidence on the current state of compliance with the European Working Time Regulations (EWTR), the extent of rota vacancies and gaps, and the concerns of those responsible for managing these services. Clinical directors were asked to provide information as at 31 December 2011.

This is the third survey in consecutive years that the College has conducted about the impact of the EWTR on rota vacancies and gaps and to assess rota compliance.

## Summary of Findings

- **Non-compliance with EWTR**
  - Nearly all general and neonatal rotas are compliant on paper - only 1.3% are non-compliant. In practice 8.4% were reported as being non-compliant in December 2011, a fall from 16% a year earlier.
  - For tier 2 (middle grade) rotas non-compliance is more common, but has fallen from 23.9% of units in December 2010 to 16.1% in December 2011.
  - Rotas involving neonatal cover are more likely to be non-compliant.
- **Vacancies and gaps**
  - The overall number of gaps and vacancies recorded in our survey has fallen from 490 in 2010 to 402.4 in 2011, representing a reduction in the rate from 12.6% to 10.2%
  - On tier 1 rotas there were 57.7 vacancies due to failure to recruit and 39.5 gaps due to out of programme (97.2 in total). Vacancies and gaps represent 4.5% of the total WTE posts on tier 1 rotas – a fall from 6.4% reported in December 2010.
  - On tier 2 rotas there was a small reduction in the rate, with vacancies and gaps representing 16.3% of the total WTE on tier 2 rotas compared to 20.4% reported in December 2010. There were 214.6 vacancies due to failure to recruit and 90.6 gaps due to out of programme (305.2 in total).
  - Approximately half of the reported vacancies were filled by a locum.
- **Consultants**
  - Clinical directors and leads reported 283 consultants permanently working on tier 2, representing a 60% increase on December 2010.
  - Consultants permanently working on tier 2 rotas spent on average 2.65 PAs undertaking tier 2 duties.
  - In the 30 units where consultants provided unplanned cover in the 4 weeks before the survey, it occurred on average 1.6 times. This is a reduction since

December 2010, when 65 units reported unplanned cover occurring on average 3.3 times.

- **Concern about the future**

- 75.6% of clinical directors and leads stated that they were either very or moderately concerned that their service would not be able to cope with demands upon it during the next 6 months – down from 86% in December 2010. There are however considerable national differences with 93.8% of clinical directors and leads in Scotland and 92.3% in Wales very or moderately concerned.

## Detailed Findings

### 1. Rota compliance

For each tier 1 (junior) and tier 2 (middle grade) rota for general paediatrics, shared general/neonatal and neonatal services we asked if the rota was compliant on paper and in practice. The results are shown in tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1: Number of compliant and non-compliant rotas on paper**

	Yes	No	Total	% non compliant on paper
Tier 1 General Paediatrics	88		88	0.0%
Tier 1 General and Neonatal Shared	91	1	92	1.1%
Tier 1 Neonatal	69		69	0.0%
Tier 2 General Paediatrics	61	1	62	1.6%
Tier 2 General and Neonatal Shared	102	4	106	3.8%
Tier 2 Neonatal	51		51	0.0%
<b>All tier 1 and 2</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>1.3%</b>

A yes or no response was not provided for 3 rotas which have been omitted from this analysis.

Clinical directors (CDs) answered whether they were compliant on paper for 468 tier 1 and tier 2 rotas in the 193 units. Only 1.3% were reported to be non-compliant on paper.

**Table 2: Number of compliant and non-compliant rotas in practice - UK December 2011**

	Yes	No	Total	% non compliant in practice
Tier 1 General Paediatrics	87	1	88	1.1%
Tier 1 General and Neonatal Shared	87	5	92	5.4%
Tier 1 Neonatal	67	1	68	1.5%
Tier 2 General Paediatrics	56	6	62	9.7%
Tier 2 General and Neonatal Shared	87	19	106	17.9%
Tier 2 Neonatal	43	7	50	14.0%
<b>All tier 1 and 2</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>8.4%</b>

A yes or no response was not provided for 5 rotas which have been omitted from this analysis

CDs responded to the question on compliance in practice for 466 rotas. Of these 39 were (8.4%) reported as non-compliant in practice. The results show non-compliance was more common on tier 2 (middle grade) rotas where 17.9% of shared general and neonatal rotas and 14.7% of all 2 tier grade rotas were non-compliant in practice.

The data show that rotas involving neonatal cover are more likely to be non-compliant.

## Comparisons with 2010 WTD survey

The overall rate of non-compliance has fallen from 16.0% in 2010 to 8.4% in the current survey, and the rate for tier 2 from 24.2% to 14.7%. In December 2011, 31 (16.1%) of reporting units stated that they had at least one non-compliant tier 2 rota, compared to 23.9% of units in December 2010.

## 2. Rota vacancies

For each rota, clinical directors and leads were asked to indicate:

- a) the number of vacancies due to failure to recruit;
- b) the number of gaps due to OOP;
- c) the total number of positions and wte on the rota and;
- d) how many of the vacancies and gaps were filled by a locum.

Table 3 shows the number of vacancies and gaps, along with the vacancy rate for each type of rota on tier 1 and tier 2.

**Table 3: Rota vacancies, gaps and rate for each rota type – UK Paediatric inpatient and neonatal units**

	Vacancies due to failure to recruit	Gaps due to OOP	Total vacancies and gaps	Vacancies and gaps %
Tier 1 General Paediatrics	19.3	11.0	30.3	3.9%
Tier 1 General and Neonatal Shared	26.9	18.5	47.4	5.4%
Tier 1 Neonatal	11.5	10	21.5	4.0%
<b>Tier 1 Total</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>39.5</b>	<b>97.2</b>	<b>4.5%</b>
Tier 2 General Paediatrics	47.5	29.6	75.1	13.4%
Tier 2 General and Neonatal Shared	125.2	37.9	164.1	19.5%
Tier 2 Neonatal	41.9	23.1	65	15.9%
<b>Tier 2 Total</b>	<b>214.6</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>305.2</b>	<b>16.3%</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>272.3</b>	<b>130.1</b>	<b>402.4</b>	<b>10.4%</b>

On tier 1 rotas, there were 99.2 vacancies and gaps reported by the 194 units – a rate of 4.5% of the wte positions on these rotas. This compares to 6.4% in the 2010 survey and 3.4% in the College's Workforce Census 2009.

For tier 2 CDs indicated that there were 214.6 vacancies due to failure to recruit and 90.6 gaps due to OOP. These vacancies and gaps totalled 305.2 representing 16.3% of reported wte tier 2 posts. This compares with 20.4% reported in the 2010 survey.

The data show that there was a slight decline in the last year of vacancies/gaps on both tier 1 and tier 2 rotas. Tier 2 rotas continue to have higher rates of vacancies and gaps than tier 1 rotas.

It is also clear as in 2010 that the proportion of vacancies is higher for rotas which include neonatal services at both tier 1 and 2 compared to rotas relating only to general paediatrics

Table 4 shows that the number and percentage of the 402.4 vacancies and gaps which are filled by a locum is approximately half - 204.4 (50.8%) although for tier 1 the figure is 55.5% and for tier 2, only 49.3%.

**Table 4: Number and percentage of rota vacancies and gaps filled by locums**

	<b>Total vacancies and gaps</b>	<b>Number filled by locum</b>	<b>Filled by locum %</b>
Tier 1 General Paediatrics	30.25	15.8	52.2%
Tier 1 General and Neonatal Shared	45.4	27.1	59.7%
Tier 1 Neonatal	21.5	11	51.2%
<b>Tier 1 Total</b>	<b>97.2</b>	<b>53.9</b>	<b>55.5%</b>
Tier 2 General Paediatrics	77.1	36	46.7%
Tier 2 General and Neonatal Shared	163.1	84.7	51.9%
Tier 2 Neonatal	65	29.8	45.8%
<b>Tier 2 Total</b>	<b>305.2</b>	<b>150.5</b>	<b>49.3%</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>402.4</b>	<b>204.4</b>	<b>50.8%</b>

### 3. Consultants permanently rostered on tier 2 rotas

Clinical directors and leads reported 283 consultants permanently working on tier 2. If this figure were pro rata for returns not received, it would imply 325 consultants filling these roles, approximately 19% of the general and neonatal consultant workforce.

The figure of 283 consultants permanently rostered on tier 2 represents a 60% increase from the 176.5 reported in the 2010 Survey.

The 283 consultants worked in 53 units (27.5% of the total responding to the survey).

Consultants permanently working on tier 2 rotas spent on average 2.65 PAs undertaking tier 2 duties.

### 4. Unplanned cover

Survey respondents were asked how many times consultants have provided unplanned cover for rotas in the 4 weeks before the survey. Table 5 shows the number of units providing unplanned cover and how many instances. 164 of the 194 units did not report any instances of unplanned consultant cover.

The average number of times consultants provided unplanned cover in the 30 units where it occurred was 1.61.

These data show considerable improvement from 2010 when 65 units reported providing unplanned consultant cover on average 3.24 times over the 4 week period.

**Table 5: How many times have consultants provided unplanned cover for your rotas in the last 4 weeks?**

	Number of times unplanned consultant cover provided					
	0	1	2	3	4	12
Number of Units	164	18	8	2	1	1

## 5. Agreed plans for becoming compliant

Clinical directors of units with non-compliant rotas were asked if there was an agreed plan to become compliant. 30 respondents answered this question. 8 said there was an agreed plan to become compliant, 8 said there was no plan and the remaining 14 responded that it was not applicable.

Of those with an agreed plan, 7 out of the 8 stated that the agreed plan was funded.

## 6. Concern about future

Clinical directors were asked “How concerned are you that your service will not be able to cope with demands placed on it during the next 6 months?” and the response is reported in Table 6 below with the data sub-divided for each UK country.

**Table 6: Concern that service will not be able to cope during next 6 months by UK country**

How concerned	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	UK
Very	28 18.7%	2 33.3%	6 37.5%	7 53.8%	43 23.2%
Moderately	81 54.0%	2 33.3%	9 56.3%	5 38.5%	97 52.4%
Unconcerned	41 27.3%	2 33.3%	1 6.3%	1 7.7%	45 24.3%
<b>Total</b>	150	6	16	13	185
<b>Skipped question</b>	7		1	1	9

75.6% of all those answering this question stated that they were either very or moderately concerned. This compares with 86% who stated they were concerned in our 2010 survey. The table shows considerable national differences with 93.8% of clinical directors in Scotland and 92.3% in Wales very or moderately concerned.