

The College of Emergency Medicine

# Creating successful, satisfying and sustainable careers in Emergency Medicine



Summary Guidance for Executive Boards & Clinical Directors in Emergency Medicine

## Why now?

---

Emergency Departments (EDs) and the staff working in them are a vital component of any emergency care system. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition that the stresses placed upon the workforce, especially the senior medical decision makers within an ED, are significant and at times can be overwhelming (NHS Confederation report- Emergency care: an accident waiting to happen?). This has been one factor that has undermined recruitment to a specialty which hitherto was renowned for its excitement and attractiveness to young doctors. In addition, medical staff rightly expect a balance in their working lives to create satisfaction throughout their career.

Much work is ongoing to address issues of system design and appropriate resourcing to improve the working environment in the ED. Until now there has been little guidance on how to improve and sustain the working lives of the senior medical decision maker in the ED and to help ensure that staff can enjoy a successful career.

In recognition of this, the College of Emergency Medicine is pleased to publish a comprehensive strategy to understand and implement approaches that will improve workforce resilience for senior medical decision makers working in the ED and more importantly attract the emergency physicians of the future.

## What is the potential impact?

---

Creating workforce resilience is vital to the running of a safe and effective Emergency Department. Having senior medical decision makers in the ED who are able to work sustainably will help to ensure that their department delivers safe, high quality care and maintains system performance.

Having the right working environment combined with investment of resources to allow both the breadth and depth of senior medical cover (16 hours per day provided by a minimum of 10 to 16 consultants) in an ED is essential. If properly structured, these approaches, in conjunction with adequate nursing levels, appropriate skill mix and consistent system flow, will form the bedrock of a high performing ED.

There is widespread recognition that failure to produce a strategy that creates strong resilience for the ED senior medical workforce will lead to increasingly 'fragile' emergency systems developing. Such fragile systems as we know:

- produce poor system performance
- are overly expensive in terms of locum spend
- lead to fatigue, stress and burnout for all staff
- and most importantly, are unsafe for patients with resulting increased morbidity and mortality.

## What do organisations need to consider?

---

The College has produced a comprehensive set of guidance to support the planning, delivery and maintenance of an excellent senior medical workforce for the ED. The guidance aims to describe exemplars of practice that support the development of high performing systems for the long term. A range of important areas are addressed:

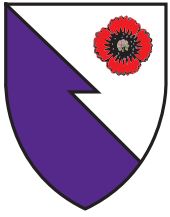
- Analysis of the complexity of EDs functions.
- Job planning strategies to create workable annualised job planning and sustainable solutions for evening, weekend and night time work by trained permanent staff.
- Strategies for flexible working for those who choose to work less than full-time.
- Suggestions on how trainees and trainers working in EDs can maximise the opportunities for dedicated training and education to best support and value trainees.
- Proposals and options for organisations to support the different stages of a clinical career in Emergency Medicine within each decade to maintain satisfaction, productivity and longevity.
- Support strategies at a departmental and organisational level to maintain wellbeing for ED staff.
- Leadership development within organisations to provide the opportunity and resources that enable team working and development.

## Recommendations to create successful change.

---

1. **Engagement:** We recommend that Chief Executives, Medical Directors and Trust Boards **actively engage** with Clinical Directors and their ED colleagues by reading the guidance and allocating resources to develop an implementation plan.
2. **Prioritisation:** Sustainable working practices for the medical workforce in the ED must occupy a **high priority within the acute and emergency care agenda** for commissioners and provider Trust Executive teams. Resources must be re-allocated from temporary spend strategies to address deficiencies. In the medium term, this will be money well spent and will deliver longer term savings.
3. **Sustainable working practices:** The importance of creating **sustainable working practices** for emergency physicians cannot be over stated. The ED has the most intense hospital working environment for senior staff and working patterns must be appropriately recognised and remunerated. Through excellent design and leadership of sustainable working practices, high performing EDs are able to deliver the very best quality of clinical care. Fragile systems or those on the edge, will need to produce enhanced recruitment and retention strategies until they are able to successfully embed sustainability and stability in their system.
4. **Maintaining wellbeing:** Implementation of the guidance will **help lead to a happier and more productive workforce**. Failure to do so will increase the attrition and sickness rate of the workforce leading to further fragility and unsafe care for patients. Harm can also occur as 'burnout' amongst emergency physicians is the highest of all medical specialties.
5. **Wider system solutions:** The College of Emergency Medicine has proactively produced clear guidance for the wider system (Acute and emergency care: prescribing the remedy 2014 and The Drive for Quality 2013). This guidance is vital in order to create the **right environment** for the delivery of emergency care and forms a key adjunct to also help create workforce resilience.

*Please visit the College website [Creating successful, satisfying and sustainable careers in Emergency Medicine](#) to read the [FULL REPORT](#)*



## The College of Emergency Medicine

The College of Emergency Medicine  
7-9 Breams Buildings  
London  
EC4A 1DT

Tel: +44 (0)20 7400 1999  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7067 1267  
[www.collemergencymed.ac.uk](http://www.collemergencymed.ac.uk)

Incorporated by Royal Charter, 2008  
Registered Charity number 1122689