

Exhausted and disengaged: a survey of wellbeing and burnout risk of senior anaesthetic residents in Severn Deanery.



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Introduction:

Stress and burnout can affect an individual's own health, patient safety, staff retention and cost to NHS. The Royal College of Anaesthetists 2017 survey identified a high level of burnout amongst residents, with 78% reporting a detrimental impact to their health as a direct result of their employment(1).

Aim:



In stage 2 and 3 Anaesthetic residents in Severn:

1. Identify their burnout risk
2. Assess general wellbeing
3. Identify current stressors in training.



Method:

Voluntary survey sent to all ST4+ anaesthetic residents in Severn Deanery in October 2024

Survey consisted of:

- Oldenberg Burnout Inventory (validated burnout risk score)
- 16 Wellbeing questions (Likert scale 1-5)
- Free text questions on stressors and improvement suggestions.

Results:

Response rate: **96%** (89/93)



81%

felt **satisfied** in their job overall



38%

agreed they felt happy with their **financial** wellbeing

62% High risk of **disengagement** (n=55)

73% High risk of **exhaustion** (n=65)

67% High risk of **burnout** (n= 60)



66%

rated the **quality of guidance and support** provided by educational supervisors as good or very good



49%

felt they had a **good work/life balance** that allows enough time to enjoy other things in their life



51%

felt they were given **supportive feedback** most of the time or all of the time



38%

felt comfortable discussing their **mental health** with supervisors or college tutors



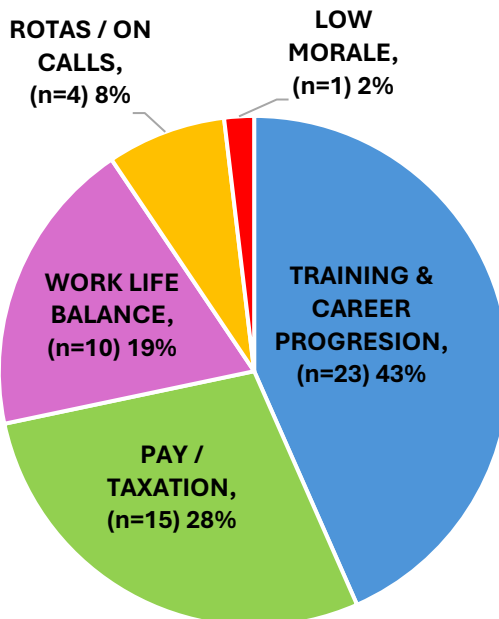
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"Anything at work contributing to higher than usual stress levels right now?"

Total of 58 responses

- Children/childcare stresses
- Significant life event
- Stressful home life
- Living apart from family
- Professional development encroaching on home life

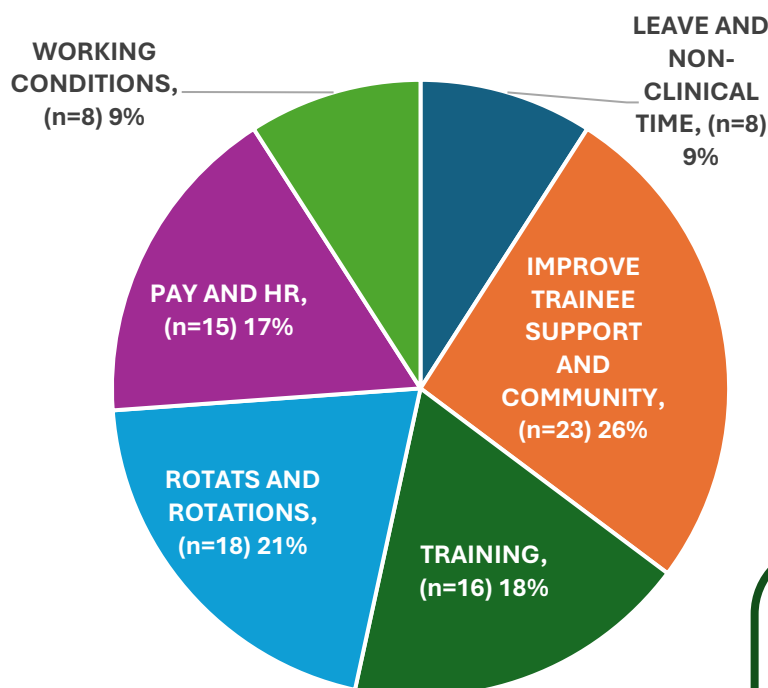
- Payroll issues
- HR issues
- HMRC issues
- General financial stress



- Consultant job applications/interviews
- Exam stress
- LLP and SLE stress
- Inter-trainee competitive nature
- Balance of solo and training lists
- Repeat Trust inductions

"Have you got any suggestions of things to do to improve physical and mental wellbeing of trainees?"

Total of 88 responses



- Rotas available earlier
- Shorter commutes
- Less frequent rotations
- Earlier notice of future hospital rotations

- More socials
- Peer support projects
- Improve resident connectivity
- More opportunity to debrief
- Access to a clinical psychologist

- Lead employer model
- Better HR and payroll support

- More frequent positive and constructive feedback
- Less rescheduling of regional teaching days
- Greater clarity and consistency in sign off expectations
- Better education for consultants on new curriculum and entrustment levels



Key messages:



Significant proportion of Stage 2 and 3 residents at **high risk** of disengagement, exhaustion and burnout



There remains a stigma around mental health in doctors, with only 38% feeling comfortable discussing their mental health with CT and ES



There are many modifiable individual and external factors affecting wellbeing and stress in residents.



Multiple stressors identified related to pay and HR issues that could be improved with a Lead Employer Model.



It is likely many issues raised will be common across anaesthetic training in the UK



Conclusions:

Attention to these factors and addressing them at both a **local** and **national** level could not only improve resident welfare, but may in turn improve clinical performance, sickness rates and organisational costs.

What is next?

- Improve resident support networks locally
- Encourage conversations between supervisors and residents on mental wellbeing
- Improve signposting to mental health support
- Continue to advocate for lead employer model
- Review rotations in order to reduce frequency of rotating between Trusts
- Improve knowledge of new curriculum amongst supervisors and consistency with sign off requirement
- Monitor burnout and wellbeing in Severn Deanery to ensure we are continuing to move in the right direction



References:

1. Royal College of Anaesthetists. A Report on the Welfare, Morale and Experiences of Anaesthetists in Training: the Need To Listen. 2017. <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2019-08/Welfare-Morale2017.pdf>

