Everything Wellbeing: SuppoRTT 💙

Estimated reading Time: 5 minutes

Hi guys, welcome back to another blog post for *Everything Wellbeing*!
Today, we're going to talk about something I had not even heard of before I started this fellowship.

Coming back after time out of training can feel daunting. Whether your break was for parental leave, health reasons, research, travel, or any other personal circumstance, it's completely normal to feel a mix of excitement and nerves about stepping back into clinical practice.

That's where SuppoRTT (Supported Return to Training) comes in. I didn't really know much about it until I started looking into what was available for colleagues — and honestly, I wish I'd known sooner. SuppoRTT is there to make your transition back smoother, safer, and less overwhelming.

🧐 What is SuppoRTT?

SuppoRTT is a national programme designed to support doctors returning after a break of three months or more. It was set up in 2018 to fill the gap many of us felt when coming back after time away.

Every return is unique. Someone coming back from parental leave may have very different needs compared to someone who's been off for health reasons or on a research fellowship. SuppoRTT is therefore flexible and tailored to you.

It's not just about clinical skills; it's also about confidence, well-being, and making sure you feel ready to thrive again.

🛫 Before you leave: things to think about

Planning for your return actually starts before you go. If you're thinking about taking time out, it helps to:

- Arrange a SuppoRTT meeting with your TPD/College Tutor to set expectations, confirm provisional return dates, and work out how you'll keep in touch.
- Complete a Pre-absence SuppoRTT Plan so there's a record of what's agreed.
- Sort out any e-portfolio admin (MSFs, ARCP reports, project handovers).
- Think about finances (pay, pension, college/defence fees, indemnity, government support).

- Let the right people know — NHS England, your Trust, supervisors, HR.
- However, not all leave is scheduled, and sometimes you may need to take leave for unforeseen circumstances like sick leave, and you may not get the chance to fill out pre-leave forms. Don't worry, this will not stop you from accessing SuppoRTT services

It sounds like a lot, but honestly, getting this sorted early makes your eventual return so much easier.

🌴 While you're out of the programme

Some people like to stay connected with work, others need a clean break. Both are fine.

A few things that might help:

- Don't feel guilty if you step away completely — you'll re-learn skills when you return.
- If you *do* want to stay engaged, focus on non-clinical skills (leadership, teaching) that are harder to do when you're full-time.
- Be mindful of what updates you want to receive — unsubscribe from emails if they cause stress.
- Remember: time out can also be a time of growth. Many of us come back with fresh perspectives, resilience, or new skills we didn't have before.

📋 Planning your return

At least three months before you're due back, arrange a planning meeting with your College Tutor/TPD. In that meeting, you'll:

- Review your time away — the positives, challenges, and transferable skills.
- Talk through concerns about coming back (both clinical and personal).
- Confirm your next placement and Less Than Full Time (LTFT) intentions if relevant, bearing in mind that LTFT applications could take up to 16 weeks to process
- Explore enhanced supervision (up to 10 paid days of shadowing before you're back on the rota).
- Complete a Pre-return SuppoRTT Plan - including any courses or funding requests.

- Discuss rota adjustments - ideally no nights or weekends in your first fortnight, unless you think it might help you boost your confidence

This meeting sets you up for success and gives you time to line up HR and personal arrangements.

If you experience any challenges with planning your return, you can also speak with your SuppoRTT Champion who can provide advice and guidance. SuppoRTT Champions are based in the trust and within GP Programmes. Please contact the Champion who is based at the trust/programme you are returning to. The contact list is available on our website.

👩‍⚕️ Enhanced Supervision

One of the most valuable aspects of SuppoRTT is the option of up to 10 paid days of enhanced supervision.

You're additional to the rota, giving you space to refresh skills, ask questions, and rebuild confidence. This might include:

- Shadowing ward rounds and handovers
- Refreshing clinical procedures
- Practising emergency scenarios or simulations
- Attending reduced clinics
- Shadowing out-of-hours before doing it solo

You don't need to use all 10 days, and you can tailor them to your individual needs. Just be mindful that this needs to be arranged well in advance

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💷 Funding & KIT/SPLiT days

Finances can feel like a barrier, but there's good support available that needs to be arranged with your trust.

- KIT (Keeping in Touch) Days – up to 10 days during parental leave (paid at basic rate, for shadowing, courses, induction).
- SPLiT (Shared Parental Leave in Touch) Days – up to 20 extra days if you're on shared parental leave.
- Study Leave – available even during parental leave.
- RTT-A Expenses – can cover course fees and travel.

🌱 Why does this matter?

I've seen first-hand how overwhelming it can be to come back after time away. Guidelines change, IT systems change, and sometimes the hardest part is simply stepping back into the rhythm.

SuppoRTT acknowledges this — it's not about weakness, it's about fairness. It gives you the time, space, and resources to rebuild confidence so you can flourish, not just survive.

🔗 Want to know more?

✨ Coming back is a journey, not a single day. SuppoRTT is there so you don't have to do it alone.

You can find more information here:
👉 **SuppoRTT East of England website**

As always, all feedback is welcome
👉 **Feedback form: https://forms.office.com/r/tzXAKhkB2S**

That's it from me for the time being.

As always, remember to take great care of yourself so you can take great care of others.

Your friendly Neighbourhood Wellbeing Fellow,
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