

## Departmental Annual Leave Protocol – Countywide Operating Theatres

<b>Department:</b> Countywide Operating Theatres
<b>Approved by:</b> Theatres, Anaesthetics & Sterile Services Governance Group.
<b>Date of Approval:</b> 19 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>Review Date:</b> 19 <sup>th</sup> June 2027 This is the most current document and should be used until a revised version is in place.
<b>Target Organisation:</b> Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
<b>Target Staff Categories:</b> Countywide Theatre Staff.

### Key Amendments

Date	Amendment	Approved by
April 2024	Document extended for 3 months whilst under review.	Stuart Coleman
June 2024	Document reviewed & the notice period for requesting leave has been altered to align with e-roster.	Theatres, Anaesthetics & Sterile Services Governance Group.
October 2025	Document reviewed.	Rebecca Price

### Theatre Annual Leave Protocol

This protocol sets out the process for requesting and booking annual leave within the operating theatres across Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

It is aligned with the following Trust Policies, which are available on the intranet:

- **Leave and Pay Policy,**
- **Sickness, Absence & Wellbeing Policy,**
- **Policy for the Management of Duty Rosters (WAHT-HR-088).**

This protocol applies to all staff working within the countywide theatre departments. The annual leave year runs from **1st April to 31st March**.

### Requesting Annual Leave

Annual leave requests must be submitted in advance through **Loop Online**. They will be reviewed and approved by the employee's line manager, and if the line manager is unavailable for an extended period, requests should be directed to the next level of management.

Employees **should not** make any travel or accommodation arrangements until they have received formal approval of their request.

Any annual leave requests that are for a duration of over **two weeks**, must be requested by letter or email.

### Leave Coverage

To maintain safe staffing levels, no more than **13–17%** of the workforce in each theatre department may be on leave at the same time. This requirement applies across all countywide operating theatres.

### Notice Period and Planning

Employees must give at **least twelve weeks'** notice when requesting annual leave.

Leave should be planned and taken regularly throughout the year to support staff wellbeing and ensure adequate service cover.

### Exceptional and Urgent Leave

Occasionally, exceptions to the usual procedures may be required. Such requests will only be approved where service delivery can still be maintained.

Emergency or urgent leave will be considered at the discretion of management following discussion with individual employees.

### Peak Periods

During school holidays, requests for leave are often higher. Theatres will make every effort to accommodate staff with school-aged children, but operational requirements and safe staffing must remain the priority.

### Approval of Leave

All leave must be pre-authorized by the department.

Unauthorized absence will be treated as a conduct issue in line with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy. Confirmation of approval or refusal will be communicated through Loop.

### **Annual Leave and Sickness**

If an employee becomes unwell during a period of annual leave and provides valid self-certification or a GP Fit Note, the affected days will be recorded as sick leave, allowing the annual leave to be rebooked for a later date.

### **Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of employees to plan and take leave regularly throughout the year.

Managers are responsible for ensuring effective allocation and approval of leave so that service delivery is maintained.

Annual leave is essential for rest, wellbeing, and a healthy work–life balance. Effective management by both staff and managers supports safe, sustainable theatre services across Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.