

Working life (plastic surgery)

This page provides useful information on the working week as well as any [on call](#) ^[1] and other commitments, along with information on who you will work with. The attractions and challenges of the job are also in this section.

“Plastic surgeons enjoy a varied and interesting working life with patients of all ages, from newborn babies onwards. The work is extremely rewarding as you’ll often have the opportunity to change people’s lives for the better.” **Dr Max Codispoti, Consultant Plastic Surgeon.**

How your time is spent

Time spent in operations can vary. Some surgery is lengthy and may involve collaboration with other surgical specialists. Patients undergoing complex surgery often need long-term follow-up. Other operations may require brief surgery (sometimes using a local anaesthetic), with relatively little follow-up needed.

As with any surgical specialty, your working week is not spent entirely in theatre. There’ll be the usual workload of outpatient clinics, ward rounds and meetings to attend. Before surgery you’ll meet with patients to discuss and explain procedures. You’ll also monitor patients after surgery.

Plastic surgeons regularly contribute to research and there will be the opportunity to present your results at conferences both in the UK and overseas.

[On call](#) ^[1] and working hours

Most plastic surgery involves a mix of planned or [elective](#) ^[2] surgery and emergency work. A high proportion of the non-emergency work involves treating patients with skin cancer. Emergency work involves dealing with severe burns, often for children and operating on patients following an accident or trauma. This can mean call-outs during the night on occasion.

The EU [Working Time Directive](#) ^[3] limits the working week to 48 hours.

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Who you will work with?

Plastic surgeons work with a wide range of medical and other professional colleagues. Some complex reconstructive surgery requires plastic surgeons to work closely with different surgical specialists.

Within the operating theatre you will work with:

- other surgeons [4]
- anaesthetists [5]
- theatre nurses [6]
- medical students
- doctors in training
- operating department practitioners [7]

Outside theatre you will also work with a wide range of people including:

- patients and their families
- pharmacists [8]
- physiotherapists [9]
- nurses [10]
- occupational therapists [11]
- other doctors and surgeons [4] including oncologists [12], maxillo-facial surgeons [13], orthopaedic surgeons [14], paediatric surgeons [15], rheumatologists [16] and ENT specialists (otorhinolaryngologists) [17]
- psychologists [18]

Once you are a consultant surgeon you will be leading and managing your team.

Attractions and challenges of the role

Plastic surgery is extremely rewarding as results can be obvious and patients very appreciative.

Naturally the aim of plastic surgery is to improve the quality of a person's life. An understanding of the psychological issues around trauma and disfigurement is important. This is particularly so for people who have suffered changes to their face, since this is such a vital part of identity. Plastic surgeons may refer their patients for psychological treatment to help them adjust to any changes.

This is a highly competitive specialty and one that you might not have encountered much during your medical school training. So if you think it is for you, it is important to

gain the right experience to enhance any application you make.

You'll use the latest technology and techniques in your work and the environment is fast-paced and interesting. And because you're not limited to one part of the body or patients of a particular age, the job is even more varied.

The funding for certain plastic surgery training can be limited, and you may have to pay for additional courses yourself.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/plastic-surgery/working-life>

Links

- [1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On_call
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Elective>
- [3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Working_Time_Directive
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- [18] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/clinical-psychologist>