

Working life (paediatric 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.

"Paediatric surgery is still the last bastion of general surgery. Surgeons may operate on a 500g premature baby, a 90kg 15 year old, the abdomen, the chest, perform endoscopy, laparoscopy and open procedures in a single on-call. It can be heartbreaking and also incredibly rewarding."

Dr Mark Powis, Consultant Paediatric Surgeon at the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

How your time is spent

Paediatric surgeons have a very varied and sometimes unpredictable workload, of which surgery is only a part. They also attend outpatient clinics and hospital ward rounds and have contact with children and their families.

Reassuring children and parents, and explaining surgical procedures is a vital part of the work. For the more complex and difficult cases this can be emotionally demanding. Parents are naturally anxious about their children undergoing surgery.

On call [1] and working hours

Surgery may be planned (elective [2]) or emergency. Much of the clinical workload involves children operated on as day-cases. In comparison to other surgical specialties the amount of emergency surgery is relatively low. Consultant paediatric surgeons generally participate in on call [1] rotas of between one in four and one in seven, to include nights and weekends.

The EU Working Time Directive [3] limits the working week to 48 hours. It is also possible to work part-time once you are consultant, or to train on a less than full-time (LTFT) basis (conditions apply). Find out more about LTFT [4]

- Who you will work with?

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You will work with:

- other surgeons [5]
- anaesthetists [6]
- theatre nurses [7]

- medical students
- doctors in training
- operating department practitioners [8]

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

- patients and their families
 - pharmacists [9]
 - specialist paediatric nurses [10]
 - play specialists [11]
 - psychologists [12]
 - physiotherapists [13]
 - other doctors including neonatologists, paediatricians [14], oncologists [15], radiologists [16], foetal medicine specialists and obstetricians [17]
 - healthcare science assistants [18]
- Attractions and challenges of the role

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Surgeons need a high degree of manual dexterity and this particularly so for congenital cardiothoracic surgeons working with babies and young children. (Some congenital surgery is done by paediatric specialist surgeons.)

There are exciting developments within paediatric surgery including laparoscopy and the potential for robotics. Due to cost this type of surgery has been limited to a few centres in the UK, but it is hoped that this may change in the future.

You'll probably be working closely with children with disabilities and many paediatric surgeons find this aspect of their work particularly rewarding. These are usually children who manage their significant difficulties with bravery and fortitude. The opportunity to make a difference to them and to their families is hugely satisfying.

The work can be emotionally draining as you are sometimes dealing with patients and their families during difficult times.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/paediatric-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
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/information-doctors/less-full-time-training-doctors>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/surgery>
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- [12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/clinical-psychologist>
- [13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/physiotherapist>

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[15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/radiology/clinical-oncology>

[16] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/radiology>

[17] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/obstetrics-and-gynaecology>

[18] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-support-staff/healthcare-science-assistant-and-associate>