



Workforce survey of Histopathology/Cellular Pathology Departments 2017

Summary of findings related to dealing with Specialty and Associate Specialist (SAS) Doctors

The College conducted a survey of Histopathology/Cellular Pathology Departments in Organisations between January – March 2017. It achieved a response rate of 73% of departments/organisations. The high response rate provides confidence that the results are likely to be representative.

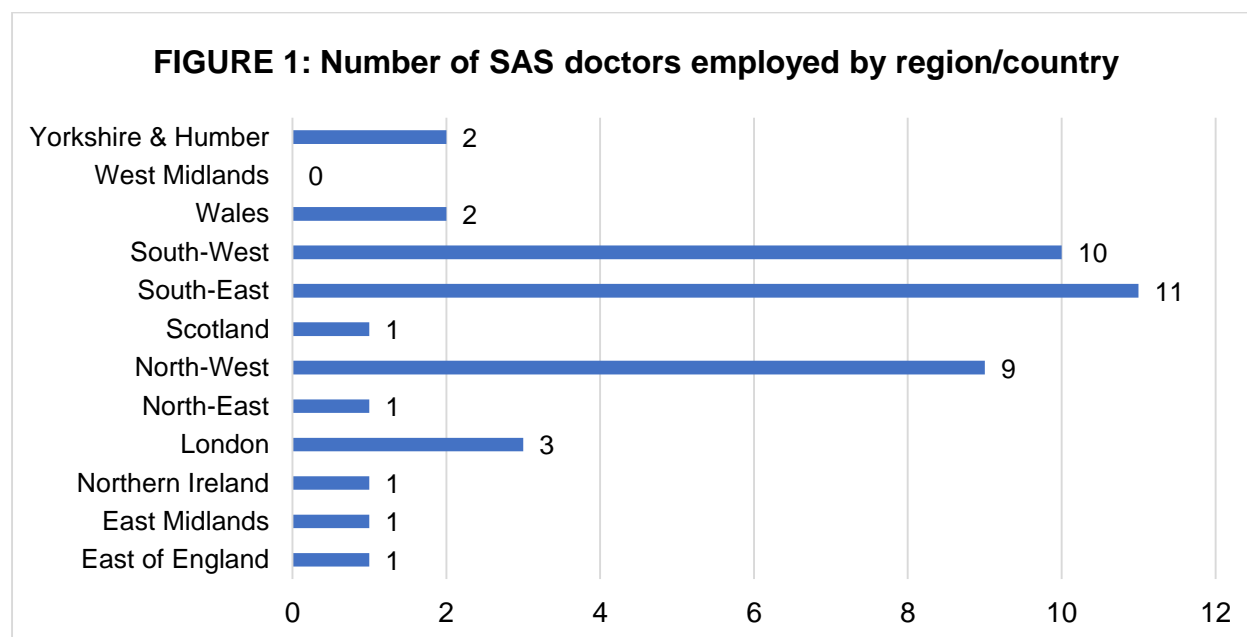
Findings

Specialty and associate specialist (SAS) doctors are non-training roles where the doctor has at least four years of postgraduate training, two of those being in a relevant specialty. SAS doctors are usually more focused on meeting NHS service requirements, compared to trainee or consultant roles.

Out of 103 responding departments, 24 (23%) said that they employed a total of 42 SAS doctors in their departments; this would extrapolate to **33 departments in the UK, employing 58 SAS doctors.**

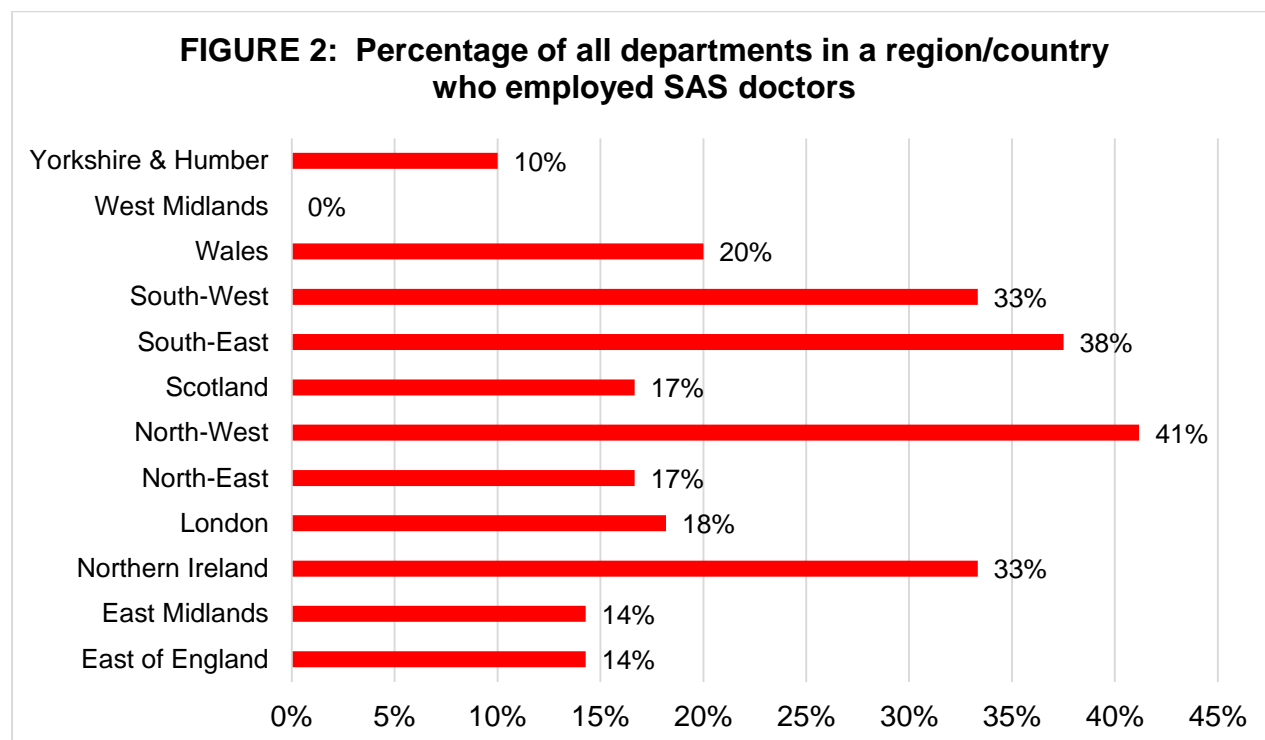
21 of the 24 departments (88%) employed 1 or 2 members of this grade in their department, with 2 departments employing 3 members and 1 department employing 8 SAS doctors.

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of SAS doctors employed by region/country.



Most SAS doctors were employed in the South East (26%), the South West (24%) and the North West (21%), which accounted for 71% of the total. There were relatively few employed elsewhere, and none from the West Midlands respondents.

Figure 2 indicates the proportions of each department in each region/country, which employed SAS doctors:



Over 40% of responding departments in the North West employed SAS doctors, followed by over 30% of departments in the South East, South West and Northern Ireland. Less than 15% of responding departments in the East of England and East Midlands said that they employed SAS doctors and only 10% in Yorkshire and Humber.

Contractual Arrangements

SAS doctors were employed using Direct Clinical Care (DCC) and Supporting Professional Activities (SPA) sessions like Consultant Pathologists.

Of those who responded about the SAS doctors' Job Plans:

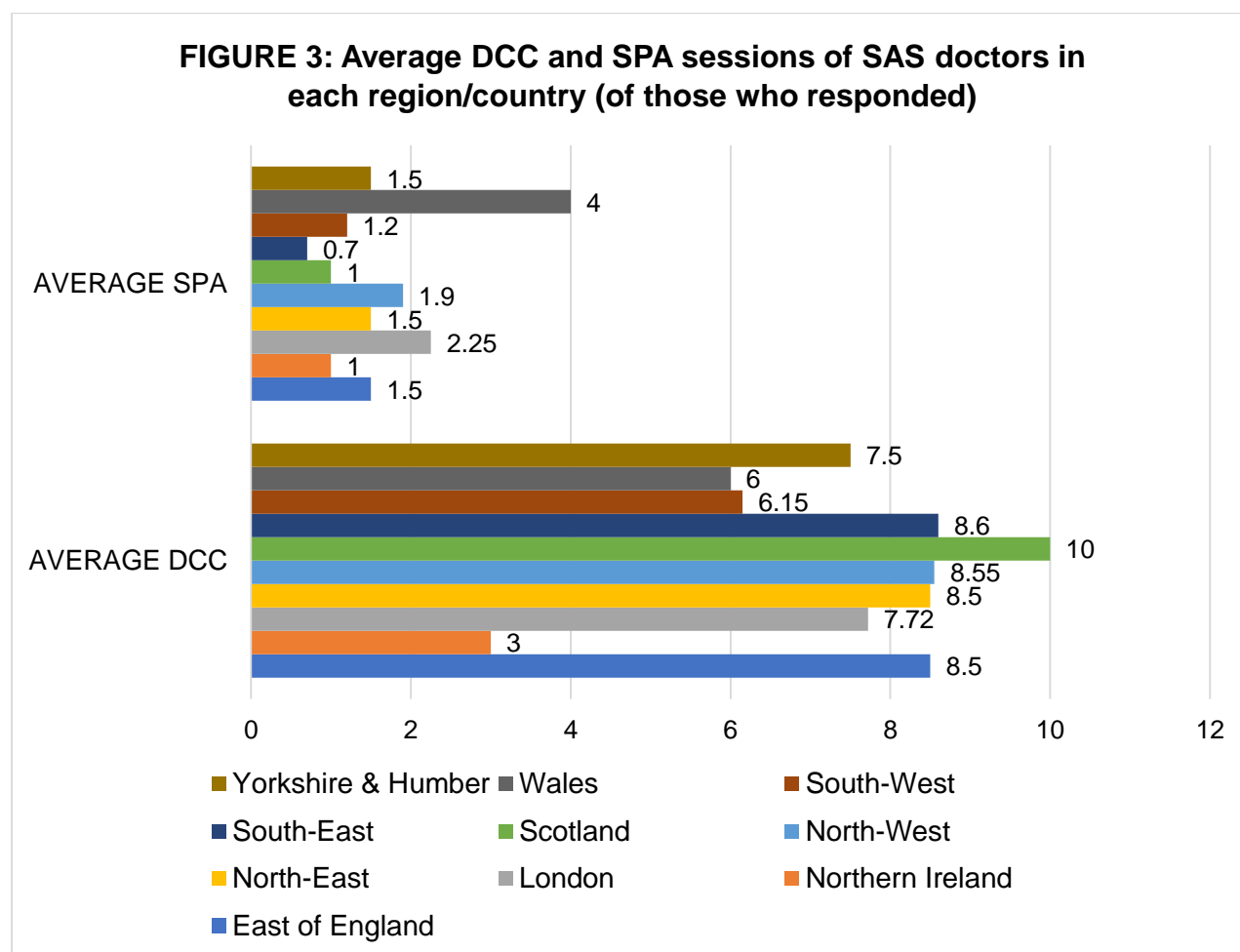
Average DCCs of all SAS doctors: 7.7PAs (range 3-10 PAs)

Average SPAs of all SAS doctors: 1.6 PAs (range 0-4 PAs)

Total PAs of all SAS doctors: 9.3 PAs (range 4-11 PAs)

Five out of 42 staff had 0 SPAs (13%) and the overall average DCC/SPA ratio was 8.3:1.7.

Figure 3 breaks down the DCC/SPA sessions by regional distribution (this information was not available from one region).



The average number of DCCs in a typical Job Plan appeared highest in Scotland and lowest in Northern Ireland, with the highest SPA sessions in Wales and lowest in the South East of England.

83% of respondents, with Job Plans, were full-time (10 PAs or more), 17% were part-time (up to 9 PAs).

13% of respondents, with Job Plans, had 0 SPAs, 33% had 1 SPA, 27% had 1.5 SPAs and 27% had 2 or more SPAs in their Job Plans.

It is perhaps somewhat concerning that more than 1 in 8 staff members have no time in their Job Plans for Supporting Professional Activities and a further 1 in 3 staff members only have 1 session worth of Job Planned time every week, in which to do all their non-clinical work and training.

58% of the SAS doctors were Female, whilst 42% of the SAS doctors were Male.

Table 1 highlights the breakdown of SAS doctors by age profile (where the data was provided):

AGE RANGE	NUMBER OF STAFF IN POST	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STAFF
<35yo	7	19%
35-39yo	3	8%
40-44yo	11	30%
45-49yo	7	19%
50-54yo	2	5%
55-59yo	4	11%
60-64yo	2	5%
65-69yo	1	3%
70+yo	0	0%
OVERALL	37	100%

The data provided suggests that the age profile of the SAS doctors is relatively young, with 57% of the respondents being below 45 years of age and 76% being below 50 years of age, with only 19% being above 55 years of age and 8% above 60 years of age.

If one assumes that all doctors above 60 years of age could retire at short notice, this means that **up to 8% of the staff in post could retire at any point**, although potentially **a further 11% of the staff group (55 years of age or more) could conceivably retire over the next 2 years** (if one excludes those below 55 years of age retiring in this time-frame). This indicates that around at least 81% of the staff are reasonably likely to be in post over the next 2 years, assuming none of them leave the profession for any other reasons.

In summary, extrapolating for the UK, potentially 5 SAS staff members, out of 58, are over 60 years age, and could retire with little notice, and 6 further staff members likely between 55-60 years age, who could conceivably retire in the next 2 years.

Thus, **potentially 11 vacancies, out of 58 staff members**, could arise over the next 2 years, from staff currently in post, **representing 19% of the total staff group**, almost 1-in-5 of all SAS doctors.

Vacancies

Two vacancies have been identified in the current SAS positions, of all respondents, which would extrapolate to 3 vacancies across the UK.

This indicates **95% of all SAS posts are currently filled**, representing 58 out of 61 potential posts in the UK, if extrapolated from responses. This indicates there is no acute shortage in this grade at this moment in time.

Prediction of new SAS staff members required

Six new SAS doctor posts are predicted to be required to deal with increasing clinical workload over the next two years from the respondents, extrapolating to **8 new posts for the UK in the**

next two years, taking the staff positions available from current 61 members, to 69 staff members (13% increase).

What does this all mean for the future?

Currently, with extrapolation, 58 staff members are in post, of the SAS grade, with 3 vacancies; within two years, 8 new posts will be needed, to meet rising clinical demand.

Potentially five current staff could retire within two years, being aged 60 years or more, and 11 current staff members that could retire if aged 55 years or more; thus potentially, 16 out of 69 posts (by then) vacant, if all those over 60 years retire, and a potential 22 out of 69 job vacancies, if those above 55 years of age all retire – **this represents up to 23% and 32% vacancy rates respectively, that would need filling (compared to current 5% vacancy rate) within two years.**

Clearly, these projections are likely 'worst case' scenarios, making many assumptions that may or may not turn out to be correct.

What is currently not known is how many of the current 'trainee cohort', as well as candidates outside the UK, would be interested in taking up an SAS position, and whether the required new SAS staff members would ever be advertised in the current financial climate. Equally, the number of retirements that could happen is a totally unknown quantity.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

1. 23% of responding departments said they employ SAS grade pathologists, employing 42 SAS doctors.
2. This could extrapolate to 58 SAS doctors in the UK.
3. 71% of all SAS doctors are concentrated in the South West, South East and North West regions.
4. The North West of England has the highest number of departments employing SAS doctors, with none recorded for West Midlands, and only 10% of departments in Yorkshire & Humber.
5. The average Job Plan for SAS doctors is currently 7.7 DCCs and 1.6 SPAs, totalling 9.3 Programmed Activities (PAs).
6. Highest average number of DCC sessions for an SAS doctor appears to be in Scotland, whilst the highest average number of SPA sessions is in Wales.
7. 83% of submitted Job Plans were of full-time pathologists and 17% were part-time.
8. 13% of staff had 0 SPA sessions and 33% had only 1 SPA session, which is concerning for sufficient time for training, CPD and other non-clinical activities.
9. Most of the doctors at this grade are female (58%).
10. Distribution of age profiles suggests most of the SAS doctors are relatively young, 57% being below 45 years of age, 19% is above 55 years and 8% being 60 or more years of age.
11. This suggests at least 81% of the staff could be in post over the next two years, if all people above 55 years of age (11 members) were to retire in that time-frame.
12. 95% of existing posts appear filled, with only a 5% vacancy rate (3 posts).
13. Eight new posts are expected to be needed over the next two years, in the UK, to meet increasing clinical demand.
14. Services should plan for a potential of 16 vacancies within two years' time, if all people that are 60 years or more decide to retire and 22 vacancies if people above 55 years or more all retire, representing 23% and 32% vacancy rates of total number of jobs needed by then.

Source: RCPATH Workforce Survey of Cellular Pathology Departments, 2017