

## Guidance on presenting multi source feedback (MSF) to trainees

This guidance is to assist Educational Supervisors provide MSF feedback to trainees, especially those whose feedback suggests they are experiencing difficulties in certain areas of their practice.

### 1 PRESENTING FEEDBACK

Make sure that the discussion focuses on areas of strength, as well as ensuring there is adequate discussion of any concerns. Where possible, if there are any problems try to review any other assessments or evidence available.

#### Identifying the problem

- Give the trainee the opportunity to present their views on the feedback first.
- Identify strengths and ensure these are highlighted during discussion.
- Clarify areas of concern, both in relation to absolute score (borderline/below standard) and to the rest of the peer group.
- Explore the trainee's insight into problem areas – do they agree with concerns raised? Try to use the evidence provided by the MSF to help the trainee gain a better understanding of their performance.
- Discuss whether problems are sufficiently clearly defined to be able to develop a remediation plan or whether more evidence is needed to help clarify the problem.
- Consider whether there are factors outside work (distractors), e.g. problems in home life, stress, ill health, etc. that may be interfering with the trainee's ability to function well at work.

#### Addressing the problems and supporting the trainee

- Ask the trainee to suggest ideas to address problem areas – how will they act to improve their performance?
- Set possible learning objectives and timescales for improvement. The objectives should be documented in a personal development plan and must be reviewed in the future. The learning objectives should be agreed and signed by both the trainee and the supervisor.
- Suggest targeted training and feedback in the areas identified as needing further development.
- Where the problem is not clear or where clarification of the nature of the problem is needed, agree on ways in which more evidence in relation to this area might be collected.



- Discuss ways in which you can help and support the trainee.
- Offer neutral support networks: local or Deanery counselling service, or national services such as the British Medical Association.
- Send a letter to the trainee following the meeting if you have discussed problem areas and agreed means of addressing them. This serves as a useful way of ensuring that both the supervisor and the trainee have a clear record of the discussion and its outcomes.

### **1.1 What to do if the MSF feedback does not reflect the view of the Educational Supervisor**

- Seek more detailed feedback from colleagues who work closely with this individual in different settings.
- Identify whether negative feedback in a specific domain has been observed frequently or is a reflection of a single incident.
- Check for discrimination or bias against the candidate ('halo or horns').

### **1.2 What to do if the trainee refuses to accept that there is a problem**

- Remind the trainee that a number of their assessors, not just one, have raised concerns.
- Reinforce that although the trainee perceives their behaviour to be appropriate, it might not come across to their colleagues as they would hope.
- If the trainee has consistently rated their own performance as much better than their assessor scores, it suggests the trainee may have a lack of insight into their problems.
- Be aware of any potential sources of discrimination that the trainee may feel contributes to a judgement of poor performance.
- Collect more evidence, either to confirm that there is a problem or to support the trainee's view that they are actually performing at a satisfactory level.
- Ensure that you have carefully documented all discussions, including telephone calls and emails.

## **2 TRAINEES IN SERIOUS DIFFICULTY**

A trainee can be said to be in serious difficulty if:

- a number of colleagues have raised significant concerns over practice in a number of different areas
- or**
- one or more serious incident(s) has been identified
- or**
- concerns have been raised about a doctor's ability to function safely because of personal difficulties, including ill health.

Trainees in serious difficulty may find receiving the feedback distressing. It is therefore suggested that:



- the first meeting should be short and acknowledge there are some difficult discussions that need to take place. Ask if they wish to bring anyone with them to a future meeting for support
- arrange the second meeting after a very short interval. Explain to the trainee that written notes will be taken and nominate a scribe
- following the meeting, send the trainee a record of the discussion and agreed actions and ask them to sign it, acknowledging it as a correct record
- if there is serious cause for concern, let the trainee know it will be the responsibility of the Educational Supervisor to inform the appropriate person(s).

**Remember the Educational Supervisor should not try to sort out this problem alone.**

The Postgraduate Deanery is able to provide useful advice and feedback. The Director of Postgraduate Medical Education or the Clinical Tutor often have experience dealing with trainees in difficulty, as do Programme Directors, Regional Advisors and College Tutors. These people are there to help you and the trainee.

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