



THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH SURGERY

SURGICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY: RESOLVING CONFLICT
PROFESSIONALLY – HOW CBS HELPED
A SURGEON NAVIGATE A WORKPLACE
GRIEVANCE

BACKGROUND

A consultant surgeon contacted the Confederation of British Surgery (CBS) Surgical Advisory Service Helpline after an incident with hospital administrative staff escalated.

Following a particularly busy and stressful clinic, a disagreement arose between himself and a member of the administrative team over scheduling and patient communication. The exchange became heated, and shortly afterwards, the administrative staff member lodged a grievance alleging inappropriate behaviour and unprofessional conduct.

The surgeon concerned for his professional reputation and that this may lead to disciplinary action contacted the Surgical Advisory Service Helpline.

THE CHALLENGE

Facing an allegation of inappropriate behaviour and unprofessional conduct – an experience that can be isolating, stressful, and confusing even for the most experienced professionals.

The surgeon was unsure how to respond to the allegations and felt anxious about possible escalation they turned to the CBS Surgical Advisory Service Helpline for confidential guidance and support.

CBS SUPPORT AND ACTION

Upon contacting the Helpline, the surgeon was asked for an overview of the situation. The surgeon was then connected with a member of the Surgical Advisory Service who had extensive experience in employment relations and NHS procedures.

The CBS team provided practical and emotional support throughout the process, including:

- Objective advice on how to respond to the grievance calmly and professionally, avoiding language that could be misinterpreted.
- Signposted to obtain the grievance and disciplinary policy and procedure from the NHS Trust
- Signposted to his union for support on drafting a written response and coaching for meetings with HR and management

CBS emphasised a proactive, reflective, professional approach and encourage the surgeon to seek further support from his union if required.



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OUTCOME

The surgeon responded calmly to the situation, taking the matter seriously.

The grievance was resolved informally without disciplinary action. The Trust acknowledged that the incident had been a result of high workload pressures and miscommunication, rather than misconduct.

CONCLUSION

This case demonstrates how the CBS Surgical Advisory Service Helpline offers practical, empathetic, and experienced guidance that helps surgeons navigate complex interpersonal and professional challenges.

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The Surgical Advisory Service operates as a subsidiary of the Confederation of British Surgery. Several surgical specialty associations utilise the service as a formal pathway through which their members can access professional support. The Helpline provides an initial consultation designed to offer signposting, guidance, and advice on appropriate next steps for surgical professionals facing challenges.

CBS is a union for the whole surgical team. Supporting members in difficulties, and advocates for the surgical profession.

☎ +44 7498 322935 (Helpline)

+44 7551 538035 (Office)

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📍 advice@cbsgb.co.uk

admin@cbsgb.co.uk