



THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH SURGERY

# SURGICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

## CASE STUDY

STANDING STRONG – HOW THE CBS  
SURGICAL ADVISORY SERVICE  
HELPLINE PROTECTED A SENIOR  
SURGEON'S CAREER

### BACKGROUND

Mr. A (name anonymised), an experienced consultant surgeon and member of the Confederation of British Surgery (CBS), found himself facing unexpected pressure from his NHS Trust as he approached retirement age. Despite a flawless clinical record and continued enthusiasm for his role, the Trust appeared intent on encouraging his departure, raising concerns of potential age-related discrimination and workplace bullying.

### THE CHALLENGE

Mr. A was informed by his Trust's management that his continued full-time employment might no longer be "sustainable" due to "future workforce planning." The language was ambiguous, but the implication was clear: it was time for him to step aside. No formal performance issues were raised, and no discussions around phased retirement had been initiated by Mr. A.

Feeling increasingly isolated and uncertain of his rights, Mr. A began to question whether he had any recourse. With his reputation, financial stability, and professional dignity at stake, he turned to the CBS Surgical Advisory Service Helpline.

### CBS SUPPORT AND ACTION

From the moment Mr. A contacted the Helpline, CBS provided swift, confidential, and expert support. The CBS team recognised that this situation may have constituted workplace bullying and age discrimination, and immediately advised Mr. A on how to document interactions and communications from the Trust.

Crucially, CBS helped Mr. A prepare for key meetings with his NHS Trust's HR department. This included:

- Reviewing all correspondence and providing strategic advice on tone and content
- Coaching on how to assert his rights under NHS employment policies and the Equality Act 2010



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- Offering guidance on how to reframe discussions around capability and succession planning into constructive conversations
- Providing a point of escalation, should the Trust's actions have required further intervention.

The CBS team also liaised, with Mr. A's permission, with CBS counselling support and ensured he had access to ongoing emotional support throughout the process, should he wish too.

## OUTCOME

Thanks to the timely and informed guidance from the CBS Helpline, Mr. A was able to challenge the Trust's assumptions with professionalism and confidence. As a result:

- He retained his full-time consultant post without restrictions
- The Trust agreed to regular performance reviews based on objective criteria, rather than assumptions based on age
- Mr. A's experience sparked internal discussions within the Trust on how to manage succession planning without discrimination

Most importantly, Mr. A felt seen, heard, and supported during what could have been a career-ending period of stress and confusion.

## CONCLUSION

This case exemplifies the critical role the CBS Surgical Advisory Service Helpline plays in protecting the rights, careers, and wellbeing of its members. In an era when workplace bullying and ageism can often go unchallenged, CBS stands as a powerful advocate for fairness, dignity, and professional integrity.

If you are a surgical professional facing employment issues, know that you are not alone. The CBS Helpline exists to protect you - whether you're starting out or approaching retirement.

## THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH SURGERY

A union for the whole surgical team. Supporting members in difficulties, and advocates for the surgical profession.

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