THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH SURGERY

SURGICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY: RESOLVING WORKPLACE CONFLICT EARLY

HOW THE SURGICAL ADVISORY SERVICE (SAS) HELPLINE SUPPORTED A TRAINEE SURGEON

BACKGROUND

A surgical trainee became increasingly concerned about rota arrangements and access to interesting and challenging surgical cases. Over time, these concerns developed into a feeling of being excluded from the wider team.

The trainee was unsure whether this perception reflected the reality of the situation and whether raising the issue directly with colleagues or senior staff might improve matters or risk further damaging working relationships.

Uncertain about how best to proceed, the trainee contacted the Surgical Advisory Service (SAS) Helpline, provided by the Confederation of British Surgery (CBS), for early advice and support.

HOW THE SAS HELPED

The SAS Helpline encouraged the trainee to pause, reflect and consider constructive steps before deciding how to address the situation.

The advice focused on three practical actions:

- Reflect and gain perspective: Consider the situation objectively, distinguishing between what had happened and how those events were being interpreted.
- Seek a trusted colleague's view: Speak confidentially with a valued colleague who could offer an honest, independent perspective on whether the trainee was being excluded and how the team dynamics might be understood.
- Take the initiative: Proactively express an interest in more complex or challenging cases, including asking to observe where direct participation was not possible. This could demonstrate enthusiasm, commitment and a willingness to learn while creating opportunities for greater involvement.

The trainee was also encouraged to consider how concerns could be raised calmly and constructively if further discussion became necessary.

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KEY LEARNING

Workplace disputes often begin with seemingly practical issues, such as rotas, access to training opportunities or the allocation of work. If left unaddressed, these concerns can develop into feelings of exclusion, frustration and a breakdown in professional relationships.

Seeking early advice can help individuals gain perspective, test their assumptions and identify constructive ways forward before difficulties escalate.

OUTCOME

By contacting the SAS Helpline at an early stage, the trainee was supported to reflect on the situation, seek a trusted colleague's perspective and take proactive steps to improve their engagement with the team.

The case highlights the value of early, confidential advice in helping surgical professionals navigate difficult workplace situations, strengthen communication and take ownership of their professional development.

THE SAS HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

The Surgical Advisory Service (SAS) Helpline offers support to surgical professionals experiencing workplace challenges, helping them explore their options and consider practical approaches to resolving concerns.

Don't wait for a workplace concern to become a formal dispute. Early advice can help you find a constructive way forward.

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☎ +44 7498 322935

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advice@cbsgb.co.uk

admin@cbsgb.co.uk