



*a union for the whole
surgical team*

20
25

End of
Year
Report



486

CBS members

1950+

surgical professionals
engaged with CBS

surgical advisory service - why you needed support

SURGICAL ADVISORY SERVICE TOPICS 2025



social media community

2,476

Instagram

1,356

LinkedIn

2,337

X

94

Facebook

150

Bluesky

communication



1950+

people reached via the CBS bi-monthly
newsletter

9

conferences
attended

5

webinars given

in the news

11

articles in the
industry press

7

CBS blogs



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Introduction

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Introduction

2025 has been a year of significant progress and consolidation for the Confederation of British Surgery (CBS). As the UK's sole certified trade union representing surgeons and the wider surgical community, CBS has continued to strengthen its role as the professional voice for surgery. Our work this year has focused on advocacy, workplace representation, and the delivery of practical support to surgeons at every stage of their careers.

Against a backdrop of increasing pressures within the NHS and the wider healthcare system, CBS has expanded its services, deepened engagement with trainee and specialty associations, and amplified the voices of surgical professionals through publications, events, and advisory services. These initiatives reflect our commitment to safeguarding the wellbeing, resilience, and sustainability of the surgical workforce, while ensuring that surgery remains a rewarding and viable career pathway for future generations.

This report highlights the key achievements and areas of focus for CBS throughout 2025, and sets the foundation for our continued work in 2026 and beyond.



CBS Executive Board Meeting
November 2025

In this image:
Mr Alistair Jenkins
Mrs Clare Belton
Ms Tingy Simoes
Mrs Ruth Waters
Mr Mark Henley
Mr Andrew Garnham
Miss Shireen McKenzie



Engagement

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Engagement with Surgical Trainee Associations

In Q2 and Q3 of 2025, CBS successfully established engagement with the surgical trainee associations ASiT and BOTA. This marks the beginning of our pledge to actively support the next generation of surgeons. Through these collaborations, CBS is committed to ensuring that trainees have access to the highest quality training, resources, and professional support.

By strengthening ties with trainee organisations, CBS aims to safeguard the future of surgery as a rewarding and sustainable career, while fostering a culture of excellence and inclusivity for those entering the profession.

Engagement with Medical Students

In 2025, CBS launched several important initiatives to strengthen support for medical students and those pursuing a surgical career pathway.

- **New CBS Medical Students Committee.** A dedicated committee has been established to ensure that medical students on surgical pathways receive appropriate guidance and representation, while also raising awareness of CBS across the student community.
- **Mentoring Scheme.** CBS introduced a new mentoring programme, which is now actively running. This initiative pairs students and trainees with experienced surgical professionals, providing structured support, career advice, and professional development opportunities. This has been established and implemented by the newly formed Medical Student Committee.
- **Electives Webinar Series.** A series of webinars has been delivered to support students undertaking surgical electives, offering practical guidance and insights into the realities of surgical training and practice.

These initiatives reflect CBS's commitment to nurturing the next generation of surgeons, ensuring that students have access to the resources, mentorship, and professional networks they need to thrive. We would like to express our thanks to the medical students on the committee.

Engagement with the CPOC

CBS has joined the Centre for Perioperative Care (CPOC). The Advisory Group is a multiprofessional, multi-specialty team guiding CPOC's strategic priorities. Its role is to:

- Establish, maintain, and improve perioperative guidelines, standards, and policies.
- Act as CPOC's first point of contact for consultation on guidelines and publications.



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Webinars and blogs

Webinars and Educational Support

CBS delivered a series of webinars during 2025, designed to provide practical guidance and professional support for surgeons.

Topics included:

- *Setting up Private Practice*
- *When a Complaint Lands*

In partnership with Chase de Vere, CBS hosted three dedicated webinars focusing on pensions and financial planning following the Autumn Budget. These sessions offered members timely and expert advice on navigating complex financial matters.

We extend our sincere thanks to our sponsors, Ballards LLP and Chase de Vere, whose support made these educational initiatives possible.

CBS Blogs

In 2025, CBS published a series of blogs that explored some of the most pressing challenges and debates within the surgical profession and the wider healthcare system. These pieces provided insight, provoked discussion, and highlighted the lived experiences of surgeons and trainees.

Featured blogs included:

- Everything but the Pay: Why Surgeons' Discontent Runs Deeper than Their Payslip
- Where Have All the Doctors Gone?
- Beyond the Frontline: How War Shapes Surgery
- Fit for the Future or Not Fit for Purpose: The NHS 10-Year Health Plan
- All Cut Up: Eight Out of Ten Aspiring Surgeons Say Training Ruined Their Relationships

Together, these blogs underscored CBS's commitment to amplifying the voices of surgical professionals by raising awareness of systemic issues, and fostering dialogue on the future of surgery.

Setting Up a Private Clinic: Shared Lessons in Resilience, Strategy, and Survival

In this FREE webinar you will discover how The Westbourne Centre overcame early challenges to build a successful private clinic—plus expert insights from Ballards LLP on tax and accountancy for private clinics.

Wednesday, 11 June 2025
7:00PM - End
Speaker
Mr Hiroshi Nishikawa MA MD FRCS
Plast

PRASIS **Ballards LLP**
Chartered Accountants



5

webinars



7

CBS blogs

All Cut Up - 8 Out of 10 Aspiring Surgeons Say Training Ruined Their Relationships

07 December 2025

• Trainee surgeons work up to 1000 more hours than 9-5ers
• 90% report burnout
• 81.5% report that romantic relationships have suffered due to training load
• 77% report relationship issues with family & 82% have seen friendships suffer and fall close friendships, and 90% saying they are experiencing burnout

The UK's sole surgical trade union has reacted to an alarming report which shows the true, non-financial cost of training on surgeons, with over 80% reporting significant and potentially devastating effects on family, romantic relationships, and even close friendships, and 90% saying they are experiencing burnout.

The Confederation of British Surgery (CBS www.cbs.org.uk), which is the UK's only trade union to be recognised under UK law to protect the welfare of surgeons, has responded to a report released by The Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT - https://asit.org) which highlights that our surgical trainees are burnt out, isolated, sleep-deprived and missing meals, yet still expected to be able to function safely and operate on patients. These previously unrecognised stresses on trainee surgeons, outlined in ASiT's *The Cost of Surgical Training (COST) Report - Aisi Financial*, underline the urgent need for psychological and occupational support.

CBS's clinical psychologist-in-residence, Dr. Richard Sherry, says:

"The findings of the report speak to the real practical, physical, and emotional impact of training surgeons' experience when proper care is not put into these trainees' wellbeing. 76.8% in ASiT stated that training has had a negative impact on them, and an even greater number, 84.3%, have said that their mental health





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In the press

CBS in the News

Throughout 2025, CBS has contributed to national discussions on key issues affecting the surgical profession. Articles authored by CBS representatives have appeared in leading journals and platforms, raising awareness and driving debate on matters of importance to surgeons and the wider healthcare community.

Is 'clamping down on failure' really the fix that will save the NHS?

Authored by Philippa Jackson. Consultant plastic surgeon Miss Philippa Jackson rails against health secretary Wes Streeting's plans for NHS reforms. Featured in Healthcare Today.

Healthcare Today

Patient Safety Litigation & Inquest Public Health Private Health Government & Policy Regulatory Technology & Innovation Biotech & Pharma Business Directory Jobs Board

Is 'clamping down on failure' really the fix that will save the NHS?

By Philippa Jackson | 3 JAN, 2025

GOVERNMENT & POLICY | PATIENT SAFETY | PUBLIC HEALTH



You're under investigation – what next?

Authored by Peter Sedman and featured both in the CSJ and Healthcare Today. The article highlights the steps to take and the support available to surgeons under investigation.

A Trade Union for surgeons...because one size does not fit all

Authored by Nigel Mercer and published in Healthcare Today. Mr Mercer makes a case for investing time, resources and thought into ensuring surgeons are kept happy and motivated – and describes why he thinks a surgical trade union is the way forward.

Healthcare Today

Patient Safety Litigation & Inquest Public Health Private Health Government & Policy Regulatory Technology & Innovation Biotech & Pharma Business Directory Jobs Board

A trade union for surgeons... because one size does not fit all

By Nigel Mercer | 3 JAN, 2025

GOVERNMENT & POLICY | PATIENT SAFETY | PUBLIC HEALTH




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featured articles

COMMENT with PETER SEDMAN

Under investigation? What's next?

Peter Sedman, Executive Board member, Confederation of British Surgeons, and Medical Director for the Federation of Cardiology at University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, offers some valuable advice to surgeons on how to deal with an investigation.

Being told you are under investigation is undoubtedly one of the most stressful times in a surgeon's career. It's natural to feel frustrated, overwhelmed, and even defensive, but there are steps you can take to help you navigate the process with professionalism and resilience.

It's crucial to understand that investigations are the default response to raised concerns, and the route the investigation takes will differ enormously depending on who is conducting it. This could be one or more of various bodies, including the GMC, the NHS, the police, or a legal body, and it will benefit you to learn the process for each. For example, the NHS follows the MHPS's (Maintaining High Professional Standard) framework, which is a structured, iterative process designed to ensure a consistent approach for all investigations, regardless of the concern.

If police are investigating alongside any other body, it is worth knowing that their investigation takes precedent over all others. They will have access to witnesses, and no other body is then allowed to speak to them. On that note, it is paramount that anyone under investigation avoids contacting witnesses, as doing so could jeopardise the process and lead to further evidence being gathered.

Maintaining your psychological health is essential for the resilience needed to navigate this process. I recommend swiftly identifying your support network and reaching out to them; this will not only help your emotional wellbeing but also help you gain perspective. Your network may include peers and it's important to know, at this point, the default position is for the person under investigation to continue working. Your investigation is deemed necessary to ensure you are fit to work during the entire process.

Try to remain as objective as possible. Even if you are certain that you have done nothing wrong, you are being investigated for a reason, and it is important that you understand what that is. Ask yourself uncomfortable questions: Is it possible that your clinical work fell under your usual standard? If not, why did somebody lodged a complaint? Could it be for a personal reason?

By breaking down the motivation behind the complaints, you will gain insight into the situation, which can help you respond more objectively. We can be quick to dismiss allegations as nonsense, but this is an opportunity to learn and adapt. It's essential to stay open-minded and avoid burying your head in the sand – in trying to understand the other party's perspective, you are more able to respond with professionalism while demonstrating your intelligence to engage with the investigation. As challenging as an investigation may be, it can provide you with insights and, regardless of the outcome, there's always an opportunity for learning and growth.

Honesty and humility are fundamental values in our work, and these qualities will help you through any investigation you may face. Always remember, you are not alone. CBS plays a crucial role when it comes to, or members of, the surgical team, is under investigation. Our Legal Advice Service provides you with experienced consultants, backed by legal experts, to assist and advise the entire surgical team.

• The Confederation of British Surgeons (www.cbs.org.uk) is the first and only trade union to be recognised under UK law to protect the welfare of surgeons, including the extended surgical team and their families. The Surgical Advisory Service (SAS) was established by CBS to support and advise its members who, for whatever reason, find themselves in dispute with the NHS. SAS members with CBS can legitimately advise on medical-legal matters and all issues relating to terms and conditions of employment, by virtue of their registered trade union status.



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In the press

CBS in the News

The Case for Surgical Hubs

Authored by Peter Sedman, examining the role of surgical hubs in improving patient care and efficiency. Featured in Healthcare Today and as the long read in the CSJ.

No Surgeon Too Small

Authored by Philippa Jackson after CBS research that identified gender bias. This article details CBS's findings and calls for the surgical community to take action. Published in the CSJ.

Workforce issues

'Too small to be a surgeon': cutting out gender bias

A new survey by the Confederation of British Surgery (CBS) has identified continuing gender bias in surgical disciplines. The feedback suggests that women face barriers that men do not. In this article, the surgical trade union comments on the latest findings and calls on the surgical community to take action.

The stats should startle, but sadly they are not unexpected. The Confederation of British Surgery's survey about gender bias in surgery found that 80 percent of female medical students and 90 percent of female consultants reported having experienced gender bias, while only 50 percent of male medical students and 60 percent of male consultants reported having experienced gender bias.

77.7% of female respondents reported that, yes, they experienced this particular message. "How explicitly told they were the reason for not being offered a postgraduate position in their career. To put this in context, zero percent of men reported experiencing any gender bias whatsoever during their navigation of the same landscape. What does this show us? It demonstrates that, while progress has been made, there is still a long way to go in ensuring equality and equality in the experiences in gender bias, and that there is a way to go when it comes to surgical careers, especially

Consultant plastic surgeon and Board

member at the Confederation of British Surgery, Miss Philippa Jackson, says, "There's the constant scrutiny over women's lives that men simply don't face. I've had people ask me about my career, my family, my partner, whether I want to have children, how many, and how I'd manage that alongside my career, as if it's anyone's business."

However, it's not just men who do this - women are guilty of it, too, perpetuating the idea that we have to fit into a system built for male

surgeons.

Philippa continues, "We stood in theatres and watched my male counterparts get opportunities I was overlooked for. Speaking about her experiences upon returning from maternity leave, she continues, "After maternity leave, I genuinely considered leaving surgery altogether. I had no idea what I was. We call orthopaedic skill half skills, the holistic empathetic approaches, but these aren't soft, they're essential. And yet they are often dismissed



as unimportant, when in reality, they're exactly what we need more of in surgery."

With 96.6% of female medical students and 88.8% of female consultants reporting having experienced gender bias, we wonder how many women have quit their dreams of a surgical career because of this entrenched misogyny.

A start that backs up this fear is that 87.5% of female surgical trainees and 85.7% of female surgical consultants are told they must pursue surgery careers, being told to, "...think about their 'future husband and children' before pursuing surgery."

Others have been told that they are "too small" for orthopaedics and mocked for making the choice to pursue this specialty, while some reported being told that they should choose surgery over orthopaedics because women are more conductive to family life as a GPS. One respondent even reported being told that she was "brainless" and that just didn't

surgeons are "largerly more conductive to family life than we are."

It's a depressing situation - for those women who manage to fight through the initial barriers, a lifetime of hurdles awaits. Female surgeons must be prepared to answer uncomfortable questions, to fend off queries about their fertility, and their family plans. Furthermore, they must be prepared to be told that they're not finding a male surgeon to marry, as they don't have to work, that their children will suffer for their career decisions, that they should freeze their eggs, make choices about life events that they aren't ready to even consider, or just simply, not be a surgeon.

The case for surgical hubs

By Peter Sedman | 18 FEB. 2023

REFRESH | PRINT



A call for change to break down barriers

APRIL 15, 2025



James Henderson is a Plastic and Hand Surgeon and Confederation of British Surgery* Co-opted Member (Neurodiversity Lead). He believes we need to break down barriers for neurodivergent surgeons.

As a neurodivergent consultant surgeon, I often feel thankful that I was not diagnosed with autism until I was 48. By that time, I had established myself in both my professional and personal life, and my diagnosis could not possibly thwart me on either front. This is a different story for many neurodivergent trainees, and surgeons diagnosed early in their careers. Often, they are told that it is not possible to have a successful surgical career, are shamed into giving up their dreams altogether. Those who persist are rarely offered any specific support.

Breaking Barriers: A Call for Change for Neurodivergent Surgeons

Authored by James Henderson, advocating for greater inclusivity and support for neurodivergent professionals in surgery. Published by the CSJ and Healthcare Today.



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In the press

CBS in the News

The Axe has Fallen on NHS England, and it Might Not be a Bad Thing

Authored by Alistair Jenkins, reflecting on structural changes within NHS England and their potential impact. Featured in Healthcare Today.

Comment: "Putting NHS England out of its misery"

By Alistair Jenkins | 28 Mar, 2018

[CONTINUE >](#)



Are Women Surgeons Still Facing Discrimination in the Workplace?

Authored by CBS Vice President Mrs Ruth Waters alongside Kajal Gohil, Eve McMahon, and Alicja Moore, following a CBS Surgery that highlighted ongoing challenges for women in surgery. Read the article [here](#). Published in the RCS Bulletin.

**Time to take action:
confronting systemic
gender discrimination
in surgery**

If surgery is truly merit-based, why does new UK data reveal persistent systemic gender bias?

These contributions demonstrate CBS's active role in shaping the national conversation on surgical practice, equality, and the future of healthcare delivery.



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Surgical advisory service

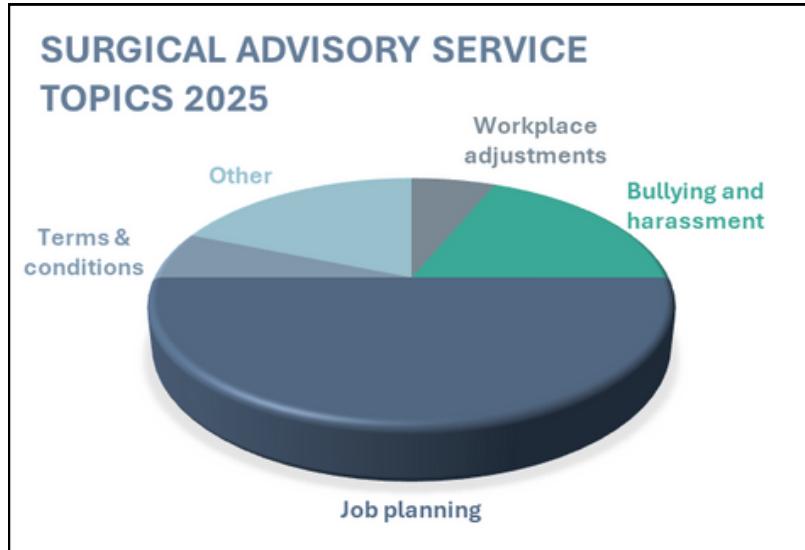
Surgical Advisory Service – Activity Report

Throughout 2025, the Surgical Advisory Service provided support to a wide range of surgical professionals across the specialty groups. Demand for the service continued to grow, with a notable increase in calls relating to bullying and harassment, as well as job planning.

Case distribution for 2025 was as follows:

- Workplace adjustments – 6%
- Bullying & harassment – 19%
- Job planning – 50%
- Terms & conditions – 6%
- Other – 19%

The Advisory Service remains a vital resource in ensuring that surgeons have timely access to confidential advice. Importantly, the service is now utilised by a number of surgical associations to ensure their members have access to an initial consultation for support. Reflecting the Surgical Advisory Services value across the profession.



In 2025, participating associations included:

- SBNS
- BAPRAS
- ENTUK
- ABS
- BAUS.

By offering specialist guidance on issues ranging from workplace challenges to contractual and professional matters, the Surgical Advisory Service continues to strengthen support for the surgical workforce and uphold standards of welfare and governance across the surgical community.



Advisory panel

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Establishment of the New Advisory Panel

2025 saw the creation of a new Advisory Panel to strengthen and support the Surgical Advisory Service Helpline. The Panel has been established to provide expert knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of the surgical environment, ensuring that the guidance offered through the Helpline is both authoritative and relevant.

The Panel's objective is to include representation from all surgical specialty groups. By drawing on expertise across the full breadth of surgical practice, the Panel ensures that the nuances and complexities of each discipline are fully appreciated. This breadth of representation guarantees that issues raised by members are clearly understood and that the advice and support provided are tailored specifically to the realities of surgical practice.

The establishment of this Advisory Panel marks a significant step forward in enhancing the quality, accuracy, and relevance of the support available to surgical professionals, reinforcing our commitment to safeguarding standards and wellbeing across the surgical workforce.

The screenshot shows the CBS website with a green header. The CBS logo and the text 'THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH SURGERY' are on the left. On the right, there are two purple buttons: 'Become a Member' and 'Members'. Below the header is a green navigation bar with links: Home, About CBS, Join CBS, Membership Benefits, Advice and Support (which is highlighted in purple), Events, News & Resources, and Contact. The main content area has a dark blue background with a photo of two surgeons in the top left and right corners. The text 'SURGICAL ADVISORY SERVICE' is prominently displayed in white. At the bottom, there is a white footer bar with links: Home, Surgical Advisory Service, and a call to action: 'Don't suffer alone - call 07498 322935 or email advice@cbsgb.co.uk for support!'. Below that is the text 'Surgical Advisory Service' and 'Support When You Need It Most'.



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Conferences and social media

Conferences and Professional Engagements

In 2025, CBS actively participated in a wide range of national conferences and professional meetings, ensuring strong representation across the surgical community.

These were:

BAAPS | Fifth Operating Theatre Show | Moynihan Academy | PLASTA | SBNS
Vascular Society | BAM | BAUS | ENTUK



9

conferences

Our presence at these events provided valuable opportunities to engage with members, share expertise, and strengthen collaborative ties across surgical specialties.

Social Media

CBS's social media presence continues to grow, strengthening engagement across multiple platforms. By year-end, our community spans:

- LinkedIn: 1,356 followers
- X (Twitter): 2,337 followers
- Instagram: 2,476 followers
- Facebook: 94 followers
- Bluesky: 150 followers



This expanding reach reflects CBS's commitment to sharing news, insights, and updates with a diverse and connected audience.

Newsletters

CBS has continued to produce a bi-monthly newsletter, providing members with news, views, and articles that highlight key developments and perspectives across the profession and CBS. The newsletter is as a valued communication channel, reaching more than 1,950 readers and strengthening engagement with the CBS community.



7

newsletters

1,950+

readers



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Presidents closing statement

Presidents closing statement

"As the year draws to a close, the Confederation of British Surgery reflects with considerable pride on the progress achieved in championing the interests of surgeons and surgical teams across the United Kingdom. Through sustained advocacy for fair working conditions and united professional engagement, we have continued to strengthen and elevate the voice of surgery at a national level.

We acknowledge the challenges that remain, but we also celebrate the resilience, innovation, and dedication of our members who continue to uphold the highest standards of patient care. Importantly, we continue to stand beside surgeons in difficulties, providing support, guidance, and advocacy when it is most needed.

Looking ahead, CBS remains committed to supporting surgeons in every specialty, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that the profession is equipped to meet the demands of the future.

Together, we will continue to build a stronger, fairer, and more sustainable surgical community. Thank you to all our members and partners for your contributions this year, we look forward to achieving even greater impact in the year ahead."

**Mr Mark Henley
CBS President**

