

SAS advocate guidance

Job purpose

This is a strategic role to promote and improve support for SAS doctor's health and wellbeing. It will be an additional role for an existing employee, and it is not intended to replace existing support for SAS doctors.

Organisations must ensure the post holder has adequate time and resources allocated to devote to the role. It has proactive and reactive elements.

Why is an advocate important?

Health and wellbeing of all staff is important. It delivers benefits not only to the member of staff but for the organisation and ultimately means better care for patients. Health and wellbeing is at the centre of the NHS People Plan in England, A Healthier Wales, and the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy.

Through contract negotiations, the parties involved had numerous discussions regarding the health and wellbeing of SAS doctors, in particular the experience of SAS doctors with bullying and harassment in the workplace. This has also been evident in numerous surveys by the British Medical Association, the General Medical Council and employers, and it was felt that the system needed to take further action to improve the experience of SAS doctors.

While processes are in place to support SAS doctors, they continue to report experiences of bullying and harassment and difficulties with receiving adequate support for their health and wellbeing.

Giving SAS doctors access to an advocate shows the commitment to improving their experience and will allow the sharing of good practice across the organisation and potentially across different organisations. The advocate will also help staff to understand and feedback on the relevant policies/processes and inform the employer about how these practices are working on the ground. They should help SAS doctors share their experiences and improve their visibility within the organisation. It is recognised that some organisations may already have similar responsibilities in place under different roles within the organisation, for example a SAS lead. This guidance is not intended to duplicate any work that is already ongoing but can help supplement any local agreements already in place.

Key results areas

The advocate will:

- Provide help and support and be a visible point of contact for SAS doctors in the organisation.
- Signpost SAS doctors to the relevant departments, colleagues, or information within the employing organisation to provide support on their health and wellbeing including bullying and harassment.

- Work with the trust board and LNC to ensure a consistent approach to SAS doctors health and wellbeing is adopted across the trust/organisation.

Suggested actions and activities

The most effective interventions to advocate for SAS doctors locally will depend upon the structure and context of each organisation. However, specific actions that could be considered for inclusion in the advocate role, if they are not already being undertaken elsewhere, include:

- Identifying all SAS doctors in the organisation – how and where they are working.
- Researching and collating information on their own organisation's performance in facilitating and supporting the health and wellbeing of SAS doctors. For example, doctors approaching the latter part of their career, occupational health and bullying and harassment.
- Creating a forum for SAS doctors - this could be a virtual forum to enable SAS doctors to exchange suggestions, seek and offer advice and discuss relevant topics.
- Including a regular item on agendas for reporting to relevant senior management meetings.
- Engaging with local negotiating committee as appropriate.
- Working in collaboration with other guardians and champions in the organisation, for example, freedom to speak up guardian.
- Engaging and sharing best practice with fellow advocates, for example through a facilitated network.
- Being available to help and advice individual SAS doctors where required, complementary to existing structures, including signposting internally and to external organisations.

- Collating information from informal and formal complaints on bullying and harassment, to help identify patterns and enable action to deal with contributory factors such as poor management practices or excessive workloads.

To support SAS doctors, it is recommended and is good practice to ensure:

- That the advocate has a page and their contact details readily available on the organisation's intranet.
- The advocate is introduced to new SAS doctors as part of their induction, explaining their role and suggesting areas which they can help with.

The duties and responsibilities outlined are to be regarded as broad areas of responsibility and do not necessarily detail tasks which the post holder may be required to perform.

This role is distinct to that of the SAS tutor and the two will cooperate where appropriate.

The role description may be subject to change in the light of experience and circumstances and after discussion with the post holder.

The post holder will be expected to act with full regard to the requirements of the organisation's policies and procedures, including those relating to health and safety.

Assignment and review of work

- The line management arrangements for the advocate are for local determination.
- The post holder is expected to generate work in response to areas of concern from SAS doctors.

- The post holder will agree objectives with the line manager, who will appraise the post holder. The system of performance management will include the opportunity for SAS doctors to contribute to the assessment, for example, through a system of 360-degree appraisal.
- At the advocates appraisal, it must be discussed whether the number of SAS doctors covered by the advocate is impacting the advocates' ability to provide support to them. If they feel their ability to support SAS doctors is being impacted by this, solutions should be mutually agreed
- Advocates must be offered sufficient resource and time to undertake the role. The number of hours required will vary from employer to employer and will be dependent on factors such as the number of SAS doctors within the organisation(s) that they cover, and the level of administrative support available.
- It is suggested that on average an advocate will require 2 hours per week to fulfil the role effectively, but this will depend on the numbers of SAS doctors represented. As per the paragraph above, where possible, employers should respond positively to requests from advocates for more resource/time where it is required.
- The necessary resources required to undertake the role should be made available to the advocate. This should include appropriate IT systems and access to information and data to undertake the role.

Competencies

To be effective in their role, the advocate should have, or be supported to develop:

- A thorough understanding of the needs of SAS doctors in their organisation(s).
- If applicable to the organisation(s) that they cover, a broad understanding of issues affecting SAS doctors in a range of settings including hospital, primary care, public health, and other non-hospital

settings and where necessary are able to signpost the SAS doctor to the relevant departments.

- Ability to advocate effectively, capable of challenging and effecting change with senior management.
- Ability to liaise with key stakeholders on health and wellbeing issues, including the medical director, educational/clinical supervisors, medical staffing/HR colleagues, occupational health, bullying and harassment officers and health and wellbeing leads. This may include involvement in local mediation processes, to input and advise where specific issues arise between SAS doctors and key stakeholders.
- Knowledge and understanding of the health and wellbeing challenges facing SAS doctors.
- Understanding of broader workplace equalities agenda.