

SAS advocate guidance

Job Purpose

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

Organisations have discretion to create a SAS advocate role, taking into account the benefits of the new role for SAS doctors financial implications, and other relevant factors. Where organisations establish this role, they 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 to the organisation and, ultimately results in better care for patients. Health and wellbeing is at the core of Government strategies across the three nations, as reflected in the NHS People Plan 2020/21 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 BMA, the General Medical Council (GMC) and employers and it was felt that the system needed to take further action to improve the experience of SAS doctors.

While processes are currently in place to support SAS doctors, SAS doctors 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 employer's 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 and 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 or SAS tutor. This guidance is not intended to duplicate any work that is already ongoing within an organisation but can help supplement any local agreements already in place.

Key results areas

The advocate will:

- Be a visible point of contact for SAS doctors in the organisation.
- Provide help and support to SAS doctors as required.
- 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 local negotiating committees (LNCs) to address issues for SAS doctors and 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 organisation's performance in supporting the health and wellbeing of its SAS doctors. For example, understanding the extent to which health and wellbeing conversations and career conversations with SAS doctors are taking place; whether SAS doctors have access to occupational health services; data on 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 SAS support leads, as well as guardians and champions in the organisation, for example, the freedom to speak up guardian.
- Engaging and sharing best practice with fellow advocates in other organisations for example, through a facilitated network.
- Being available to help and advise 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.
- Supporting decisions on how the SAS development funding, derived from contract reform, can be best used to support the development of SAS doctors (England only) in line with guidance.

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 the different ways which they can help .

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 demonstrate action 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.
- Employers should make available appropriate resource and sufficient time to the SAS advocate to undertake their role. This should include appropriate IT systems and access to information and data to undertake the role. It is suggested that on average an advocate will require two hours per week to fulfil the role effectively however 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.
- At the advocates appraisal, it must be discussed whether the advocate has the right resources to provide support to SAS doctors in their organisation. Where possible,

employers should respond positively to requests from advocates for more resource/time where it is required.

Competencies

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

- A thorough understanding of the needs and challenges 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 services and 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.
- Understanding of broader workplace equalities agenda.