

## A quick guide to raising concerns about member behaviour



# Contents

<b>Our behaviour principles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2-3</b>
<b>The BMA Resolution Process</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Options for members</b>	<b>5-6</b>
<b>Options for staff</b>	<b>7-8</b>
<b>Options for staff managers</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Resolving complaints</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Speak up guardian</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>How your concerns can be handled</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Other support for staff and members</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Contact</b>	<b>14</b>

# Our values and behaviour principles

## We are accountable and member-led



### Behaviour principles

- Our representatives and staff work in partnership for and on behalf of our members
- We are open and democratic

## We campaign, organise and represent



### Behaviour principles

- We win positive changes at work and in wider society
- We are the trusted collective voice of our profession, seeking progress for doctors, medical students, our patients and populations

**We are the trade union & professional association for doctors & medical students**

## We find strength in unity and celebrate our diversity



### Behaviour principles

- We seek to be fair and just, and foster respectful discussion of our differing (potentially conflicting) perspectives and contributions
- We fight prejudice and discrimination of all kinds
- We are committed to creating a culture that is inclusive of all members and staff
- We extend solidarity to each other and other groups

## We are expert and trusted



### Behaviour principles

- We grow professional communities of practice to provide credible information, guidance and support
- We use our influence to champion advancement, innovation and professional development for the benefit of health and society

# Introduction

The **BMA Code of Conduct** sets out the standards of behaviour that are expected of members and provides guidance on the type of conduct that is in line with our values and supports the work that we do. Every BMA member is bound by the code when carrying out BMA business or discussing matters related to the BMA. The code is based on a set of behaviour principles that provide guidance to members on what they should aspire to embody when representing the BMA.

Examples of how these principles can be put into action can be found in Appendix 1 of the Code of Conduct.

# Introduction

The code embodies the responsibility of BMA members to role model and promote positive behaviours and to challenge poor behaviours. It also brings together (and provides links to) the relevant guidance and policies that apply to BMA members and ensures that members are held to a similar standard of conduct to staff.

If any BMA member or member of staff encounters behaviour from a member that they feel may have fallen below the standards outlined in the code, they can raise their concerns under the **BMA Resolution Process**.

# The BMA Resolution Process

The **BMA Resolution Process** covers any complaints made about the behaviour of members when they are representing the BMA. It's important that poor behaviours are challenged but also that positive behaviours are supported and promoted; the Resolution Process highlights that the preference, wherever possible and appropriate, is to deal with matters informally.

If you are concerned about poor member behaviour you have experienced or witnessed, there are a number of options available to you.



# Options for members

## Code of Conduct support line

- BMA members' first point of contact for raising concerns about member behaviour is the **BMA Code of Conduct support line**. The support line is a free, independent and external service that provides support and guidance to BMA members and staff in order to help them deal with their concerns and the impact of behaviours exhibited by BMA members, and to discuss possible resolutions.
- The support line is staffed by accredited counsellors from 9am to 8pm on Monday to Friday, and from 10am to 6pm on Saturday. The contact number for the support line is **0800 028 2092**.
- You can discuss your concerns confidentially and explore whether informal resolution is possible and what support you might need to achieve this, or whether it should be dealt with through a formal investigation. The support line will provide advice and suggestions, but you will be the one to decide how to go forward.

## Informal resolution

- The BMA's preferred approach is to address poor behaviour informally through support, training and feedback wherever possible.
- If you are comfortable doing so, and having discussed your concerns with the Code of Conduct support line, you may wish to seek support from the relevant secretariat staff or committee chair, who may be able to support you in addressing the issues directly and informally. The Resolution Process (pages 4-5) provides guidance on the ways you might do this.
- Should informal resolution be attempted or undertaken, a record should be sent to Joel Summers, Head of complaints and member liaison on [JSummers@bma.org.uk](mailto:JSummers@bma.org.uk), so that details can be logged.

# Options for members

## Formal investigation

- There may be circumstances in which the behaviour that has been encountered requires formal action – the Resolution Process outlines how these matters can be raised directly.
- Formal investigations might be required where, for example, the matter raised is serious (eg bullying, harassment, discrimination, or behaviour that has the potential to cause harm to others or to the BMA\*) or it is not appropriate to manage the complaint informally (eg where there is a pattern of behaviour and previous attempts have been made to address the concern through informal action, or where the complainant prefers formal resolution).
- If the complaint does need to be managed formally, it will be referred (via the BMA) to an external, independent investigation service. The process for this is set out in the Resolution Process (pages 6-9).

\* This is not an exhaustive list.

## Listserver Assessors

- If your concerns relate to postings made on BMA listservers, you have the option to refer the concerns to the independent Listserver Assessors ([listserverassessors@bma.org.uk](mailto:listserverassessors@bma.org.uk)) for an independent view on whether further action might be necessary.



# Options for staff

## Code of Conduct support line

- BMA staff members' first point of contact for raising concerns about member behaviour is the **BMA Code of Conduct support line**. The support line is a free, independent and external service that provides support and guidance to BMA members and staff in order to help them deal with their concerns and the impact of behaviours exhibited by BMA members, and to discuss possible resolutions.
- The support line is staffed by accredited counsellors from 9am to 8pm on Monday to Friday, and from 10am to 6pm on Saturday. The contact number for the support line is **0800 028 2092**.
- You can discuss your concerns confidentially and explore whether informal resolution is possible and what support you might need to achieve this, or whether it should be dealt with through a formal investigation. The support line will provide advice and suggestions, but you will be the one to decide how to go forward.

## Informal resolution

- The BMA's preferred approach is to address poor behaviour informally through support, training and feedback wherever possible.
- If you are comfortable doing so, and having discussed your concerns with the Code of Conduct support line, you may wish to seek support in addressing the concerns informally. You might wish to discuss your concerns with:
  - your manager or a colleague;
  - the relevant secretariat staff; and/or
  - the chair of the relevant committee
- If you are a GMB member, you may wish to seek support from a GMB representative.
- The Resolution Process (pages 4-5) provides guidance on the ways you might do this.
- If you would rather contact somebody outside your directorate, you can get in touch with Emily Baker, BMA Director of HR, or the HR team who have accountability for staff concerns in relation to member behaviour.

# Options for staff

- Should informal resolution be attempted or undertaken, a record should be sent to Joel Summers, Head of complaints and member liaison on [JSummers@bma.org.uk](mailto:JSummers@bma.org.uk), so that details can be logged.
- If the concern does need to be looked at formally, the complaint will be referred (via the BMA) to an external, independent investigation service. The detailed process for this is set out in the Resolution Process (pages 6-9).

## Formal investigation

- There may be circumstances in which the behaviour that has been encountered requires formal action – the Resolution Process outlines how these matters can be raised directly.
- Formal investigations might be required where, for example, the matter raised is serious (eg bullying, harassment, discrimination, or behaviour that has the potential to cause harm to others or to the BMA\*) or it is not be appropriate to manage the complaint informally (eg where there is a pattern of behaviour and previous attempts have been made to address the concern through informal action, or where the complainant prefers formal resolution).

## Listserver Assessors

- If your concerns relate to postings made on BMA listservers, you have the option to refer the concerns to the independent Listserver Assessors ([listserverassessors@bma.org.uk](mailto:listserverassessors@bma.org.uk)) for an independent view on whether further action might be necessary.

\* This is not an exhaustive list.

# Options for staff managers

If a staff member raises concerns with you about member behaviour, and depending on the circumstances, you can consider the following options:

- In discussion with the staff member, consider if it's appropriate to speak to the member yourself or raise the concern with the chair of the committee so that they can address the behaviour.
- Encourage the staff member to contact the Code of Conduct support line.
- Contact the support line yourself for guidance on how to support the staff member (while respecting any wishes the staff member might have around maintaining confidentiality).

Staff behaviour is not managed through the BMA Code of Conduct or BMA Resolution Process. If the behaviour concerns relate to a member of staff they should be raised with the relevant manager or staff director or with BMA HR so that it may be dealt with through the staff disciplinary or grievance process if appropriate.

# Resolving complaints

## Informal resolution

There are many ways in which a concern can be dealt with informally. Members and staff can discuss the best options with the independent BMA Code of Conduct support line in the first instance. These options include (but are not limited to):

- advice being given to the person about whose behaviour concerns were raised as to their future conduct;
- the matter being raised with them and their acknowledgement of, and apology for, the impact of their behaviour;
- mediation or facilitated meetings between the parties; and/or
- training or other ongoing support for the person whose behaviour led to concerns being raised.

## Formal investigations

In cases where, after discussion with the BMA Code of Conduct support line, it is decided that the concerns raised are not suitable for informal resolution, they will be referred for formal investigation. The matter will be passed to external, independent investigators who will speak to those involved, gather evidence and report back with a conclusion on whether there is a case to answer under the Code of Conduct before a Resolution Panel (in line with the Resolution Process). The panel will then hear the case and decide whether there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct and whether any sanction outcomes or supportive outcomes should be applied.

# Speak up guardian

The speak up guardian is an independent and objective person with whom elected BMA members and BMA staff members can speak in order to raise any concerns about their work at the BMA that they feel unable to raise by other routes.

This service can offer information and emotional support in a strictly confidential, non-judgemental manner and in an off-the-record discussion.

The service can help you:

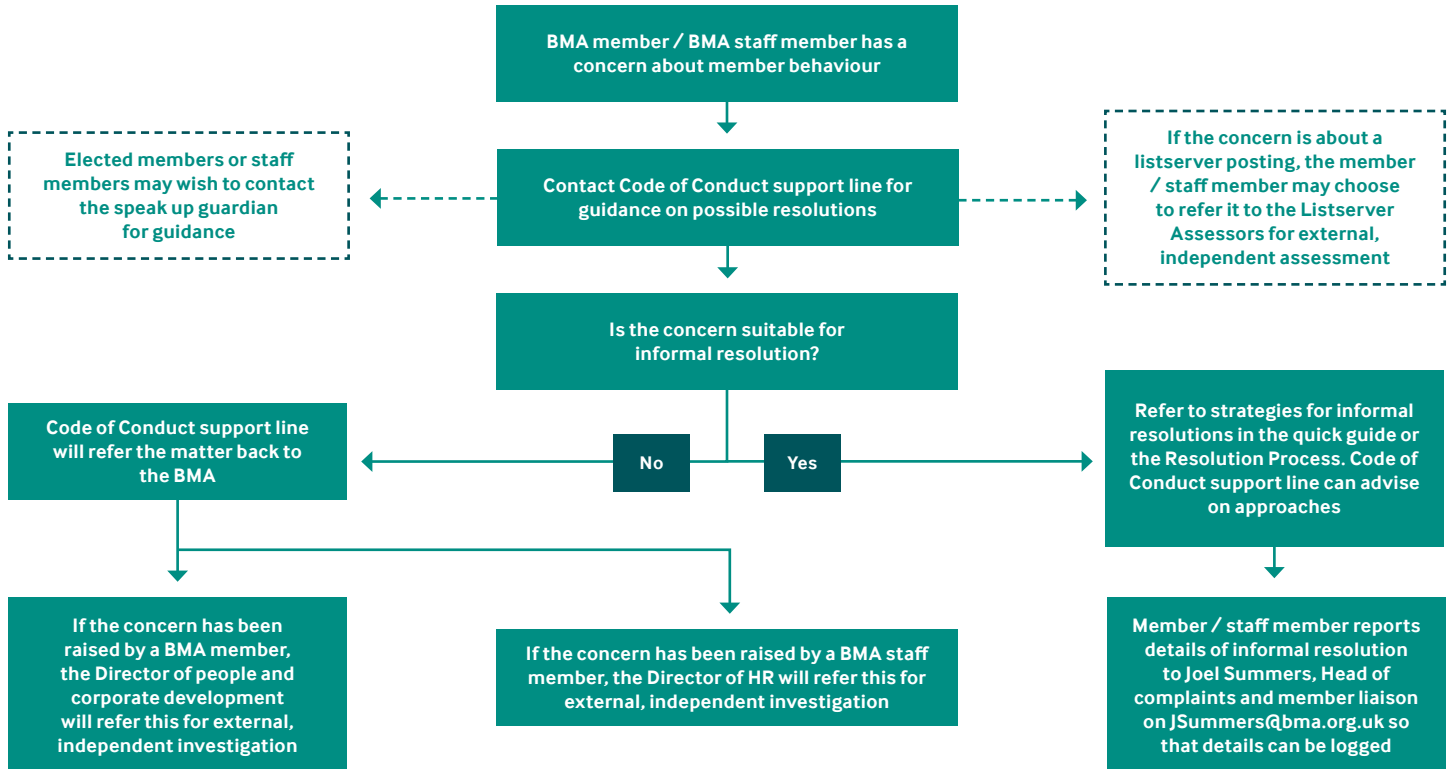
- articulate your concerns;
- understand your options in resolving them;
- decide what actions you may wish to take;
- offer support as an independent facilitator; and/or
- by request, bring an issue to the attention of an appropriate executive or management team member (anonymously or 'named').

\* Please note that should a concern about member behaviour be referred for external, independent investigation, this cannot be done anonymously.

The speak up guardian service does not undertake investigations into member behaviour or recommend any sanctions relating to allegations about member behaviour.

The BMA's speak up guardian is Mary Walsh from The Guardian Service who can be contacted between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday at **0333 577 6116** or [contact@theguardianservice.co.uk](mailto:contact@theguardianservice.co.uk).

# How your concerns can be handled



## Other support for staff and members

Wellbeing support is available to all BMA members. Further information is available [here](#).

As well as the support available to staff from their line manager and colleagues, any member of staff who would like advice or help (including on health, wellbeing and financial matters) can access the **Employee Assistance Service**.

Further information is available [here](#).



# Contact

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Joel Summers, Head of complaints and member liaison on [JSummers@bma.org.uk](mailto:JSummers@bma.org.uk).





**British Medical Association**

BMA House, Tavistock Square,  
London WC1H 9JP  
[bma.org.uk](http://bma.org.uk)

© British Medical Association, 2025

BMA 20240837