

Doctor supporter – role profile

The BMA is commissioned by the GMC to provide the Doctor support service, a dedicated emotional support service for any doctor currently subject of a GMC fitness to practise process, or at risk of losing their licence due to non-engagement with revalidation (whether or not they are a BMA member). This is in recognition of the fact that these processes can be an incredibly stressful experience.

The service is completely independent of the GMC.

Through the Doctor support service, free, confidential emotional help is provided from fellow doctors, independently of the GMC. The role of the Doctor supporter is purely to give emotional support and 'buddying', not advice.

You will not provide any medical diagnosis, treatment, legal advice or counselling. Nor will you act as an advocate in any way for the doctors you support. You will signpost, if appropriate, to other sources of support here.

As a Doctor supporter you will be expected to provide up to six hours of emotional support, over the phone or by video-call, to a doctor notified by the GMC that a provisional enquiry or fitness to practise investigation is taking place, or that their licence to practise is at risk.

The service is also available to any doctor who has been erased from the register (voluntarily or enforced) following a fitness to practise issue, or who has applied for restoration to the register following a previous fitness to practise issue.

Where required, you will also provide the doctor with a maximum of two days emotional support in person at a Medical Practitioners Tribunal hearing (or attendance at a virtual hearing) or other GMC proceeding (assessment, appeal panel or meeting) requiring the doctor's attendance.

The work is in response to need, but we anticipate you will deal with approximately one new case per month. You will also attend training days.

Doctor supporters are remunerated on an hourly basis for time spent supporting the doctor, plus appropriate expenses incurred for in-person support.

You will not be an employee or agent of the BMA; however, you will have the benefit of BMA insurance whilst providing the Doctor support service for and on behalf of the BMA.

Key responsibilities

1. Attend training days (three per year) – a mixture of virtual and face-to-face at BMA House.
2. Attend an annual online 1:1 check-in meeting with a member of the Wellbeing team.
3. Contribute to anonymised, confidential case discussion at training days.
4. Provide confidential peer support to colleagues in difficulty, with an emotional focus.
5. Maintain individual doctors' confidentiality.
6. Ensure that record-keeping associated with cases is timely and accurate.
7. Guarantee to destroy any paper records held about individual doctors once cases have been closed. When records are held in their own home, guarantee to store these securely (lock away).
8. Ensure communication is made with colleagues on days/times that it has been agreed.

9. Liaise with the Wellbeing team if personal circumstances or details change, or if availability to provide support to colleagues changes.
10. Alert the Service Manager immediately if there are any serious concerns about any cases under your management.
11. Help to promote the Doctor support service, wherever possible.
12. Assist in writing clear, written materials as necessary.

Requirements:

- GMC registered doctor, with or without licence to practise
- Not subject of an open fitness to practise investigation or any active fitness to practise action
- A good knowledge of the National Health Service
- An empathetic approach whilst maintaining professional distance
- The ability to quickly analyse complex situations
- A constructive and thoughtful approach to problem solving and seeking solutions
- Excellent listening and communication skills
- Good time management and organisational skills
- The ability to maintain confidentiality
- The ability to focus on detail and the 'bigger picture'

Desirable:

- Experience supporting colleagues in difficulty
- Interest in doctors' wellbeing and related issues
- Experience of appraising colleagues
- Experience of providing mentoring and/or counselling
- Understanding of GMC processes