

Professional Support for Doctors in Training

Guidance for trainees, trainers, and employers within Health Education England, East of England

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Document Status

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Executive Summary

The updated version of the original document (published 2014) continues to outline the key principles and processes of the Professional Support Unit and how it provides specialist support for trainee doctors and dentists working across the East of England. Trainee doctors and dentist can experience difficulty in a personal or health capacity which affects their ability to train, and the purpose of this guidance is intended to provide information to the employer and Health Education England, East of England (HEE EoE) on how an individual can be supported through a difficult time. The main changes are to include all trainee doctors that are within HEE EoE remit, therefore includes Foundation, GP, speciality and dental trainees. There has been a separation of the policy around the Professional Support Unit and the [Trainee in Difficulty Policy](#).

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1 Acknowledgments

1.1 The following resources have been used in preparing this policy:

- [A Reference Guide for Postgraduate Speciality Training in the UK](#) (Gold Guide, Seventh Edition, 2018) – Section 7
- [Supporting Trainees: A guide for Supervisors](#) (The National Association of Clinical Tutors (NACT) UK, 2018)
- [The UK Foundation Programme Reference Guide](#), May 2017
- [General Medical Council \(GMC\) guidance](#) for potential and actual Fitness to Practise (FtP) cases and where revalidation might be affected
- [National Clinical Assessment Service \(NCAS\)](#) for more serious case consideration
- Local Education Provider (LEP) policies
- Policy and Protocol documents from several other HEE's in the UK, including Kent Surrey and Sussex, South West, Thames Valley, Yorkshire and Humber, East of England and Northern Ireland.

2 Guidance Statement

2.1 HEE EoE is committed to providing excellent education and training for doctors and dentists in its postgraduate training programmes. Despite training being rewarding, there are occasions where a trainee may need some extra support to help them through a difficult situation.

2.2 This policy is intended to provide a practical overview of the additional professional support available to all postgraduate and dental trainees who come under the remit of HEE EoE. It applies to the financial year 2018/19 onwards.

2.3 Its purpose is to ensure that the relevant issues are identified, understood and addressed so that the trainee may complete training successfully and continue to contribute to the work of the NHS.

3 Scope

3.1 This guidance applies to all doctors and dentists in training with HEE EoE. However, the appropriate policy of the relevant employer (for example, occupational health, disciplinary or grievance policy) would need to be followed as applicable to the individual trainee or trainer.

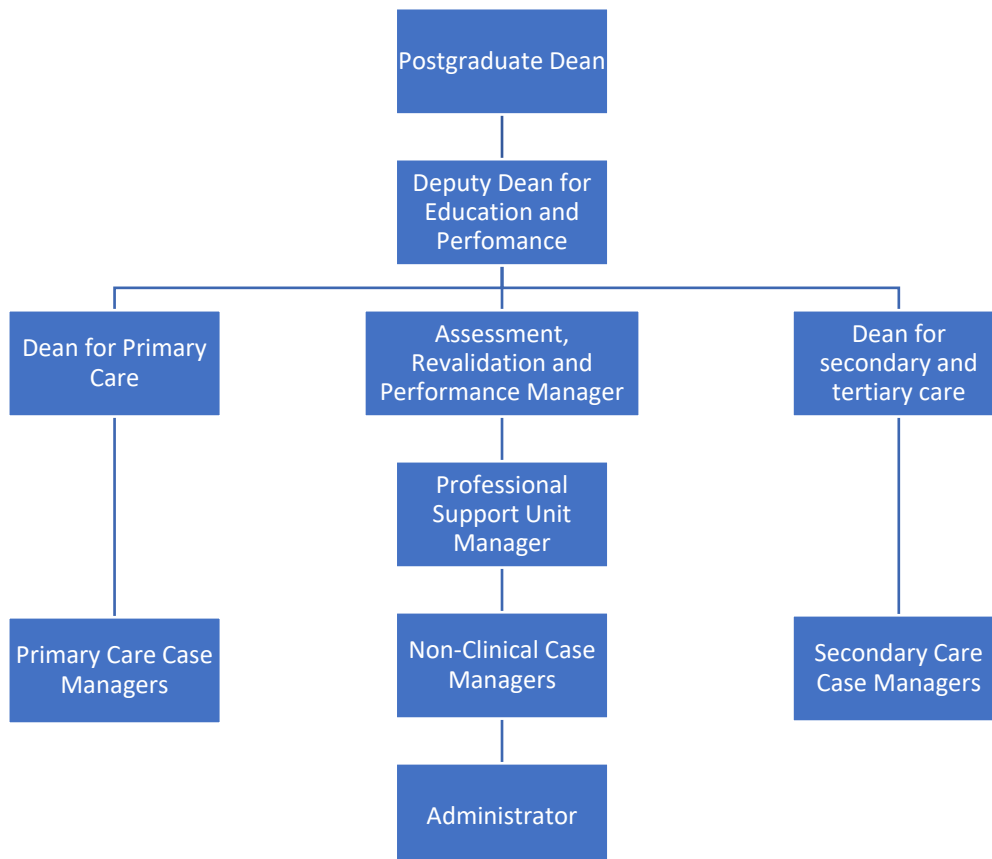
3.2 The policy recognises that trainees within HEE EoE may be employed by a number of different organisations and placements within a number of different host training organisations (LEPs). Due to the employment complexities of trainees and acknowledging the variance of individual policies between employers, the guidance highlights a common approach for trainees and trainers.

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- 3.3 Trust employed doctors not on a training programme should follow their own Trust policies and procedures.
- 3.4 The Complex Care Advisory Group (CCAG) will provide a resource for discussing and analysing complex trainee cases based on facts of a PSU referral, or disclosure of information during a PSU review meeting, or information received from an external source, including but not limited to the Employer, Hospital Trust, General Medical Council (GMC), General Dental Council (GDC), NHS England (NHSE) and Royal Colleges and UK Foundation Programme (UKFPO).
- 3.5 The CCAG may deem it appropriate to escalate the case to the Responsible Officer (RO) where there are significant concerns regarding the trainee's licence to practice.

4 Aims and structure of the Professional Support Unit (PSU)

- 4.1 The PSU aims to provide expertise, a consistency of approach, additional support for trainees and trainers, and access to resources.
- 4.2 The PSU is led by two Deputy Deans (one clinical and one non-clinical) with responsibility for professional support, who work with the PSU's management, administrative staff and a team of clinical and non-clinical case managers. These are drawn from different specialty backgrounds and all take part in a programme of specific training and continuing development.
- 4.3 Lines of accountability for the PSU include:



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5 Principles of the Professional Support Unit (PSU)

5.1 The following sets out the principles for professional support:

- Transparent and understood by all
- Evidence based
- Clear criteria for assessment and decisions
- Consistent application of guidelines and process
- A culture built around support
- Patient safety is paramount
- Responsible use of funding and resources
- Focussed on areas for development

6 Confidentiality

6.1 Whilst the PSU provides access to confidential services, it forms part of the overall governance structures relating to postgraduate medical and dental training and as such reports to the Postgraduate Dean. It may be appropriate to escalate any concerns to the Responsible Officer (RO), GMC, GDC, NHS England (NHSE) or other appropriate governing body.

6.2 The PSU Confidentiality Statement is on all PSU referral documentation and correspondence:

The PSU Confidential Statement

Other than a brief summary sent to the referring doctor (following meeting), information divulged to the PSU will only be shared outside of the PSU where concerns raised are considered to be in breach of the professional, ethical guidelines of the GMC/GDC. This includes the need to ensure the safety of patients, self and the public and abide by the law. If the Professional Support Unit (PSU) believes that professional ethical principles or laws are being broken by the individual, the trainee will be advised of this and information will be shared with the Postgraduate Dean or nominated representative to determine appropriate action.

7 Referrals to the PSU

7.1 For all referrals, the PSU will request that a referral form is completed.

7.2 The completed form will be sent to psu.eoe@hee.nhs.uk to be triaged. The flowchart (see Appendix A) highlights the referral process.

7.3 For almost all referrals, [Referral Form F](#) (see also Appendix B) is to be completed. The referral will be given a level of 1 to 3 for administrative purposes in order to triage the referral appropriately

- Level 1: low level concern
- Level 2: intermediate level concern
- Level 3: high level concern

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- 7.4 For trainees with level 1 and 2 concerns, advice on how to manage the trainee locally (without the need for the trainee to be seen in the PSU) may be given at this stage.
- 7.5 Self-referrals to the PSU are only accepted for examination failure of two or more attempts, or where there is pattern of consecutive failure of different examinations. To make a request for the PSU to support repeated exam failure, [Referral Form E](#) (see also Appendix C) is completed.
- 7.6 All other concerns need to be supported in the referral by, but not exclusively, the trainees Training Programme Director or Educational Supervisor.
- 7.7 Once the referral has been received by the PSU, the PSU team will aim to respond within 5 working days.

8 Identifying the issues: early diagnosis and prevention

- 8.1 There may be a number of different types of behaviour indicate a trainee needs help and support. The following list highlights this range:

Clinical Performance, Knowledge and Skills	Health and Social Issues	Professional Behaviour and Attitude	Communication, Team Working and Time Management	Significant Life Event
Environmental Issues	Engagement with Education and Training	Training Environment / Support Issues	Repeated Exam Failure	Conduct, Capability and Probity

9 Individual Case Management in the PSU

- 9.1 When a referral is accepted, the trainee will be assigned a case manager, and in the first instance, will be invited to take part in a phone conversation or a face-to-face meeting to discuss the concerns raised.
- 9.2 The duration of an initial review meeting can depend on the level of concern but typically will not last more than 1 hour.
- 9.3 During the meeting, an action plan will be agreed upon with the trainee. Written notes of each meeting will be shared with the trainee, who will be given an opportunity to comment on the accuracy and revise them if necessary. The record of meeting is confidential, and the action point section will only be shared after the trainee has consented. The trainee will have 5 working days to respond to any inaccuracies, thereafter will be considered a true record.
- 9.4 The contents of the meeting will not generally be shared by the PSU unless the trainee has good reasons to object. The actions and overall outcomes will be shared with the trainee's referrer and TPD, if they are not the referrer. The trainee should be informed in advance of the distribution list of any documentation that is shared.
- 9.5 The agreed action plan will include referrals to other agencies and may include specialist occupational health advice, psychological support, communication skills, screening for

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neuro-diverse conditions, individual exam skills coaching, group exam support workshops and careers support.

- 9.6 At the end of the meeting, the Case Manager will inform the trainee that the action notes taken will be shared with the referrer. This will not include the summary of the document. These will be sent to the referrer within 5 working days of the meeting.
- 9.7 Further meetings will be scheduled to review progress within 3 months of their previous meeting, unless acknowledged there is no further input required.
- 9.8 All communication with the trainees and educators are saved and stored securely and are password protected.
- 9.9 Complex cases may be discussed with other members of the PSU in confidential meetings. Where there are extremely serious concerns (for example, if a referral to the GMC is being considered), the PSU may refer a trainee to the trainee's Responsible Officer (RO), the Postgraduate Dean. The trainee will be prospectively informed if this action is going to be taken.

10 Conduct of PSU Review Meetings

- 10.1 Concerns need to be documented and objectively evidenced and ideally shared with the trainee before the meeting.
- 10.2 Factors which should be considered include:
- 10.2.1 Background Information
 - 10.2.2 Relevant Issues identified during selection
 - 10.2.3 Remedial training
 - 10.2.4 Exploring the issue(s) that resulted in the event, meeting or concern
 - 10.2.5 Mitigating circumstances
 - 10.2.6 Evidence of pre-existing concerns and:
 - Evidence these concerns have been recorded
 - Evidence the trainee is aware of these concerns
 - Evidence of attempts to address these concerns
 - Evidence of trainee's response to these concerns
 - Evidence of previous satisfactory performance (which has subsequently declined)
 - 10.2.7 Exploring the issue(s) that resulted in the event, meeting or concern

Supporting evidence and results of further investigations	Learner's awareness of these concerns and transparency of the process	Attempts to address concerns e.g. educational support	Progress to date
Evidence of an underlying cause e.g. health issues	Unresolved educational issues	Proposed attempts to address these – including an estimation of any extra time or resources that might be required	Proposed methods to assess progress

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11 PSU Support Services offered

11.1 The PSU Support Services are offered to trainees on a need basis and whilst there will be some idea surmised from the referral received. A referral will not be made to our support services until an initial Case Manager meeting has been completed. The only exceptions for this are, there is a need to put a support service in as a priority or it is through a self-referral. The support services that we offer include:

- Neuro-diverse condition screening and strategic coaching
- Exam support workshops and 1:1 sessions
- 1:1 Communication skills for accent reduction, workplace observations, confidence building, conflict management, CSA practice and team working
- Careers support and 1:1 sessions
- Psychological support
- Specialised Occupational Health
- Emotional Intelligence testing
- Mentoring scheme
- International Medical Group workshops

12 The PSU and the ARCP process

12.1 When a decision is taken during an ARCP to refer a trainee to the PSU, the person who will making the referral should be clearly identified and should make the referral in a timely way.

12.2 ARCP panels will only be informed of the details of the actional plans arising from PSU meetings; they will not be informed of the contents of the meetings.

12.3 Copies of all other PSU documentation will be kept in a confidential file and will remain separate from the ARCP process.

13 What the PSU is not responsible for

13.1 The PSU is not responsible or qualified to make any ARCP decisions, nor can the PSU prescribe on employment related matters including any disciplinary hearings and grievances.

13.2 The PSU takes no responsibility for an individual's actions or decisions, the PSU can only provide advice and guidance during the period of which the trainee is in training.

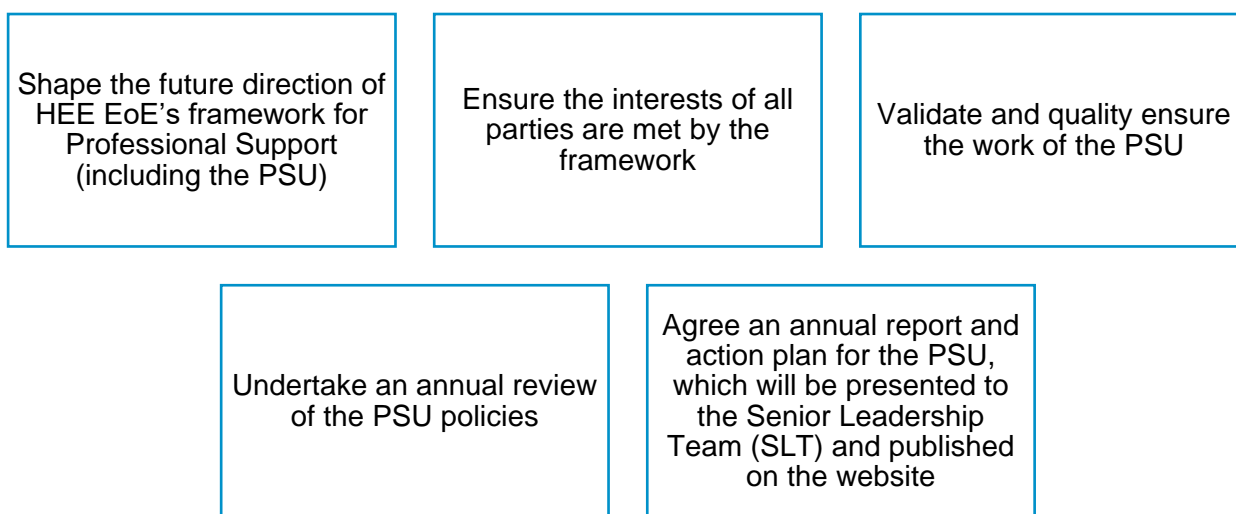
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14 Professional Support for Educators

- 14.1 The PSU recognised the need to provide additional resources to trainers to help them to work with trainees with additional needs. Where necessary, this might involve the trainer meeting with the Deputy Deans responsible for professional support or a referral for psychological support.

15 Quality Assurance

- 15.1 This will be provided by the Professional Support Annual Reference Group, which will include:



16 Self referrals

- 16.1 At present, a trainee can only self refer to the PSU for repeated exam failure, completing Form E.

16.2 Exam Support

- 16.2.1 Form E [See Appendix C] should only be used where trainees have experienced exam failure after 2 or more attempts, or there is a pattern of consecutive exam failure, and require access to specialist support only available by the PSU.
- 16.2.2 When a trainee exceeds 5 failed attempts then it would be up to the college to allow for an exceptional test
- 16.2.3 A trainee will be offered a range of services to support them in passing their exam, this can include coaching, neurodiversity screening, 1:1 exam support and an invitation to exam support workshops
- 16.2.4 Where a trainee has agreed to be screened for neuro-diverse conditions (such as dyslexia), the trainee may be granted additional time for their exams and any other adjustments for their training. Therefore, we advise not to book onto an exam until the results have been received.
- 16.2.5 The trainee can be offered a number of refresher sessions if they do not pass after the support given. This will be agreed with the trainee on an individual basis.

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16.2.6 If the trainee displays any other concerns to the PSU, then they would need to contact the trainee's Training Programme Director as the PSU would require a different referral form to be submitted [see Appendix B]

17 Failure to attend scheduled review meetings

17.1 The PSU ask trainees to ensure that they attend the meetings they have agreed to attend. However, there is an understanding that sometimes this is not always possible but would expect that the PSU is given as much notice as possible prior to the meeting.

17.2 Where a trainee does not attend without any notification, their TPD and referrer (if different) will be notified. The trainee will have one more opportunity to attend a meeting.

18 Withdrawing from PSU support

18.1 The PSU will conduct an annual review of the current caseload and will contact the trainees where communication has ceased over that year to enquire whether they still require PSU support

18.2 Where the trainees have not responded within 5 working days, the case will be closed.

18.3 When the PSU close a case, a feedback form will be sent to the trainee to invite their views of the support they have received.

19 PSU Meetings

19.1 There are a number of meetings, the PSU are involved with:

Weekly Triage meeting	•Review and decide appropriate course of action for each referral
Foundation Advisory Group	•Monthly meetings held to review Foundation trainees who may require additional support, training time and programme management
General Practice and Lead Employer Advisory Group	•Monthly meetings held to review GP trainees with ill health, GMC concerns and long term absence
Complex Case Advisory Group (CCAG)	•Monthly meetings held to review trainees of particular concern
Monthly GMC update meeting	•Meeting between PSU and Revalidation team to discuss trainees of mutual concern
PSU Quarterly Strategic meeting	•Attended by all PSU case managers and administrative staff to agree and record strategic decisions
Annual Reference Group Meeting	•Similar to the PSU quarterly strategic meeting, with the inclusion of major stakeholders, Lay representatives and service users

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20 Quality Oversight, Management and Improvement

20.1 To ensure the quality of the support provided to trainees, the following processes are in place:

Annual Report Prepared in advance of annual meeting to report on activity	Trainee Feedback Survey Continuous feedback to learn from trainee's experience
Stakeholder Feedback Provided by Heads of Schools at the Annual Reference Group Meeting	Contracts and Commissioning Continue to review the services provided, adhere to contracts and commission relevant services
Case Managers Case Manager appointment, selection, training, assessment and appraisal	Records Ensuring the use of structured referral forms, review meeting templates and telephone discussion notes
Policies Adhere to the PSU and TID policies	Values and Behaviours Ensure a consistent approach of access to services, inclusivity, working together for patients and to improve services

21 Legal Responsibilities

21.1 This guidance and related procedures are produced in accordance with the quality standard for deaneries as stipulated by the GMC, GDC, the Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans (COPMED) and the UK Committee of Postgraduate Dental Deans and Directors (COPDEED) and within the context of the Gold Guide and Dental Gold Guide which stipulates the arrangements agreed by the four UK Health Departments for training programmes.

21.2 Under the Equality Act, the need for public bodies in England to undertake or publish an equality impact assessment of their policies, practices and decisions was removed in April 2011 when the 'single equality duty' was introduced. Public bodies must still give "due regard" to the need to avoid discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for all protected groups when making policy decisions and are required to publish information showing how they are complying with this duty.

22 Monitoring Compliance and effectiveness

22.1 The effectiveness of the policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and as such should be considered a live document.

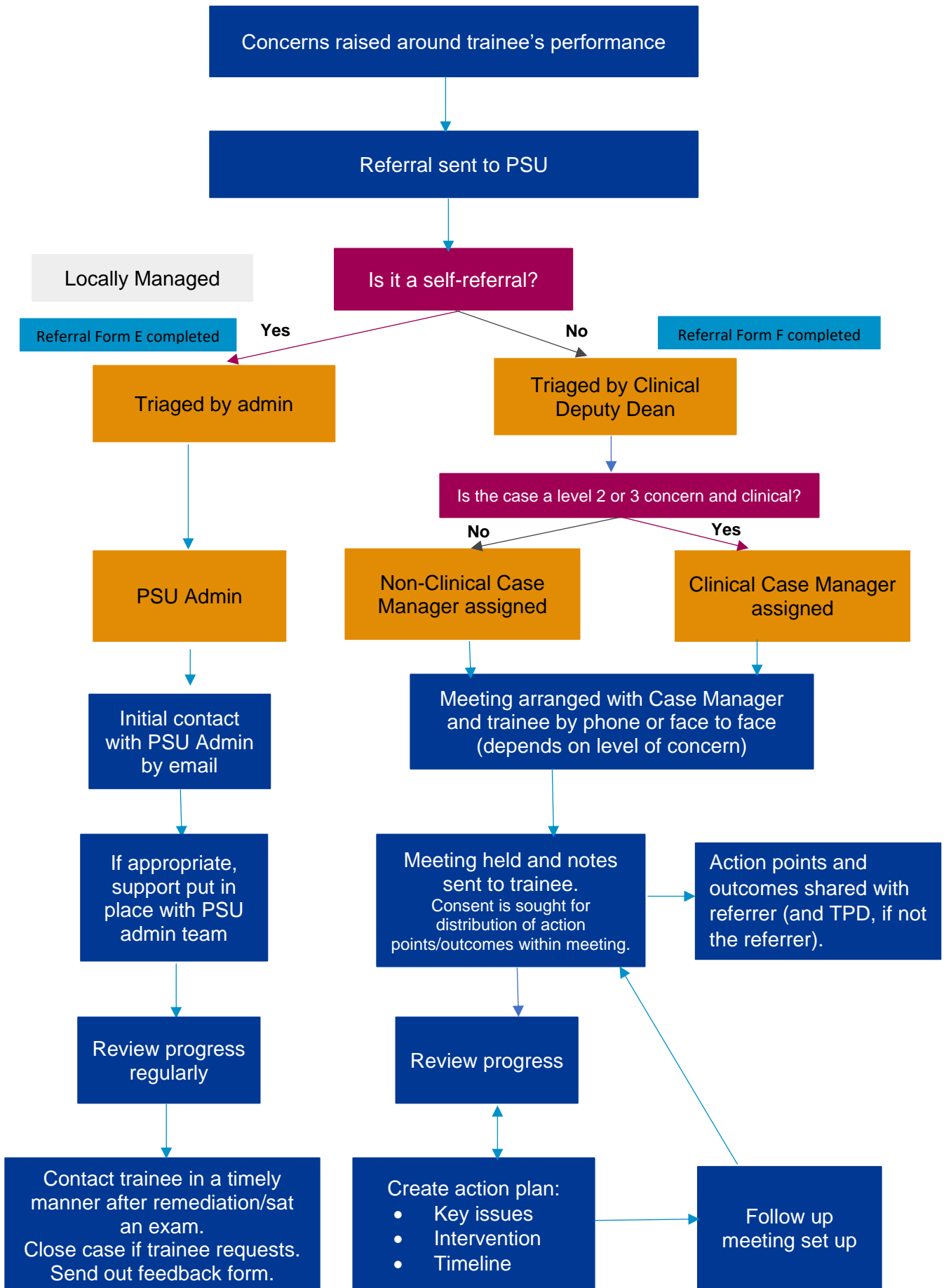
23 Associated Documentation

23.1 The HEE EoE documentation includes:

- [HEE EoE Training in Difficulty Policy \(2018\)](#)
- Terms of Reference for [Annual Reference Group](#), [Complex Case Advisory Group](#), [Foundation Programme Advisory Group](#), [GP and Lead Employer Advisory Group](#)

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Appendix A Professional Support Unit (PSU) Referral Flowchart



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Appendix B Referral Forms - Form F: Trainee Referral Framework

Can be found at <https://heeoee.hee.nhs.uk/psu/psu-documents>

Trainee Demographics			
Trainee Name Click or tap here to enter text.	GMC/GDC/PH number Click or tap here to enter text.		
Email address (Please do not use Trust email) Click or tap here to enter text.	Mobile number Click or tap here to enter text.		
Specialty Click or tap here to enter text.	Training grade Click or tap here to enter text.		
Current Placement Click or tap here to enter text.	GP Training Scheme (if applicable) Click or tap here to enter text.		
Educational Supervisor name Click or tap here to enter text.	ES email Click or tap here to enter text.		
Clinical Supervisor name Click or tap here to enter text.	CS email Click or tap here to enter text.		
Training Programme Director name Click or tap here to enter text.	TPD email Click or tap here to enter text.		
Does this trainee have GMC undertakings?			
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have concerns about Fitness to Practice (FtP)?			
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of any current investigation: Click or tap here to enter text.			
Type of Concern			
(please put an x in the relevant boxes and use the free text box below to provide further information)			
Clinical Performance, Knowledge and Skills	Click or tap here to enter text.	Health and Social Issues	Click or tap here to enter text.
Professional Behaviour and Attitude	Click or tap here to enter text.	Communication, Team Working and Time Management	Click or tap here to enter text.
Significant Life Event (i.e. divorce, relationship break up etc)	Click or tap here to enter text.	Environmental Issues (i.e. Inappropriate workload, poor culture, training environment, lack of support in the workplace)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Engagement with Education and Training	Click or tap here to enter text.	Training Environment/ Support Issues	Click or tap here to enter text.
Repeated Exam Failure (if this is the only concern please use the Form E)	Click or tap here to enter text.	Conduct, Capability, Probity	Click or tap here to enter text.

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Other: Click or tap here to enter text.				
Please provide the reasons for the concerns you have about this trainee and attach any relevant supporting documentation which you think will be useful (E.G. MSF, TAB etc). (If repeated exam failure is raised as a concern, please state the number of attempts)				
Click or tap here to enter text.				
Please use an 'x' to indicate the actions/support/intervention which have already taken place. (If you wish to provide further detail, please use the 'other' box below)				
Occupational Health Referral	<input type="checkbox"/>	Repeat MSF/TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Additional Supervision/ Coaching/Mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trust investigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Access to Work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): Click or tap here to enter text.		
Referral Made By				
Name of individual completing this form: Click or tap here to enter text.				
Position	Click or tap here to enter text.	Contact details	Phone: Click or tap here to enter text. Email: Click or tap here to enter text.	
Signature of referrer		Signature of trainee		
Risk Assessment: (Please use an 'x' to indicate the overall level of concern. This will only be used for administrative purposes in order to triage the referral appropriately)				
	Trainee	Patient	Employer	Other
Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intermediate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Appendix C Referral Forms - Form E: Self-referral Exam Support

Can be found at <https://heeo.ee.hee.nhs.uk/psu/psu-documents>

Trainee Demographics	
Trainee Name Click or tap here to enter text.	GMC/GDC number Click or tap here to enter text.
Email address (Please do not use Trust email) Click or tap here to enter text.	Mobile number Click or tap here to enter text.
Specialty Click or tap here to enter text.	Training grade Click or tap here to enter text.
Current Placement Click or tap here to enter text.	GP Training Scheme (if applicable) Click or tap here to enter text.
Educational Supervisor name Click or tap here to enter text.	ES email Click or tap here to enter text.
Clinical Supervisor name Click or tap here to enter text.	CS email Click or tap here to enter text.
Training Programme Director name Click or tap here to enter text.	TPD email Click or tap here to enter text.
Referral information	
Referral date Click or tap here to enter text.	Name of referrer Click or tap here to enter text.
Trust HR Contact Click or tap here to enter text.	Head of School Click or tap here to enter text.
Exam information	
Exam failed (e.g. MRCA, AKT) Click or tap here to enter text.	Part failed (e.g. Part A, B, 1 or 2) Click or tap here to enter text.
Number of attempts to date Click or tap here to enter text.	Next sitting Click or tap here to enter text.
Action already taken Click or tap here to enter text.	Further actions Click or tap here to enter text.

If the TPD/HoS is making this referral, please tick to confirm that the trainee has been **notified that a referral to the PSU has been undertaken.**

If you are self-referring, please tick to confirm that your TPD/HoS has been notified that you are making this referral to the PSU.

Signature:

Date:

Please send this referral to psu.eoe@hee.nhs.uk

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Appendix D HEE PSU EoE Case Notes Template

Trainee Name:	
Trainee GMC number:	
Case Manager name:	
Date of meeting:	
Venue:	HEE Offices, Victoria House, Fulbourn
Follow Up	

DISCUSSION POINTS

<p>Confidentiality discussed and agreed: <i>Other than a brief summary sent to the referring doctor, information divulged to the PSU will only be shared outside of the PSU where the concerns raised are considered to be in breach of the professional and ethical guidelines of the GMC/GDC. This includes the need to ensure the safety of patients, self and the public and abide by the law. If the Professional Support Unit (PSU) believes that professional ethical principles or laws are being broken by the individual, the trainee will be advised of this and information will be shared with the Postgraduate Dean or nominated representative to determine appropriate action.</i></p>			
Reason for referral			
History:			
Current perspective:			
Other factors: (e.g. health, social, finance, regulatory):			
Training progress			
Plans and strategies in place:			
Options discussed:			
Outcomes and actions	Trainee has confirmed their understanding that these action points will be shared with the referrer (and TPD, if not the referrer)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Trainee			
HEE EoE			
Other			