



## Trainee Support Policy

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## 1.0 Purpose

The trainee support process is a framework designed to facilitate the provision of support to GP trainees who find themselves in difficulty during their training. Trainees are considered to be in difficulty if they are not progressing or performing as expected for their stage in training, or if they are experiencing health or other difficulties that are impeding their progress.

The policy and procedures:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities;
- Ensure that there are effective and fair procedures for identifying, managing and supporting trainees;
- Clarify how trainee support links to the Competency and Progression Committee (CPC) process;
- Provide suggestions on how to identify and support trainees;
- Provide an approach to support planning for trainees and;
- Outline paths for escalation.

## 1.1 Legislation

Poor professional performance is defined by the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 as a failure by the practitioner to meet the standards of competence (whether in knowledge and skill or the application of knowledge and skill or both) that can reasonably be expected of medical practitioners practising medicine of the kind practised by the practitioner. As such, the College is bound to provide a GP Training Programme that meets the requirements and standards of the Act and the Irish Medical Council (IMC) and provide reasonable levels of support to trainees on their journey to graduation.

## 2.0 Scope

This policy and corresponding procedures are applicable to all trainees enrolled in the National Specialist Training Programme in General Practice.

This policy should not be used in isolation where performance is impacted due to a trainee's physical or mental disability. Situations where a trainee requires long-term reasonable accommodation such as in the case of a disability may be identified through the support process but the management of these is out of scope of this policy. The reader is referred to the Trainee with Disability Policy for more information.

Trainees who breach principles of disciplinary conduct, face disciplinary action or who exhibit notifiable conduct reportable to the IMC should be managed under the Disciplinary Action Policy.



Environmental and organisational issues such as lack of appropriate clinical management or other lack of reasonable adjustments needed for the fulfilment of the trainee's employment contract with the HSE are outside the scope of this policy. Trainees should refer to their relevant Human Resources department for support.

Furthermore, this policy does not cover those who are unable to complete training due to conflicts with the scheduling of training, transitions between hospitals, or the general administration of their training programme. Trainees should refer to their relevant scheme directing team for more information on how to address these issues.

### **3.0 Policy statement**

#### **3.1 General principles**

Trainees will be afforded reasonable and proportionate support. A failure to demonstrate capability to undertake training, including a failure to meet the stated outcomes in the support plan, may result in referral for consideration of the trainee's fitness to continue training.

The College reserves the right to deny additional support where relevant supporting documents are not provided or if the College believes the trainee's request for support (if such is the case) is disingenuous.

#### **Safety**

Issues of patient and personal safety take precedence over all other considerations. Refer to the Disciplinary Action Policy in cases of apparent trainee misconduct or where there are concerns about patient safety.

#### **Data Protection and confidentiality**

All aspects outlined in this policy must be carefully documented by those implementing it. Strict confidentiality of any case where a trainee may need or is receiving additional support will be maintained. Information will be disclosed only on a need-to-know basis and within the rights to privacy afforded to the trainee by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). GP Trainee's personal data must be processed in accordance with the College Data Protection Policy.

As participation in this support process is voluntary, only the most necessary personal data must be processed by the College. Personal data collected through the GP Trainee may be processed on the basis of Article 6(1)(b) and special category data such as Health Data or related information may be processed in accordance with Article 9(2)(a) i.e. Explicit Consent of the GP Trainee. As reliance is placed on explicit consent, Article 7 of the GDPR states elements that must be satisfied for consent obtained to be appropriate:



1. Consent sought must be demonstrated through an affirmative action that the individual undertakes such as checking an unchecked box. Once consent is obtained the College must record the date when the consent was provided by the individual.
2. Consent must be sought in clear and plain language that must be easily accessible and specific as to the data and the activity that it relates to.
3. The individual must be informed about the right to withdraw consent at any time during the processing activity. It is essential that the withdrawal of consent is as easy as possible for the individual. The withdrawal of consent can only stop prospective processing of data and not the processing that has already been carried out prior to the exercise of the right.

Any health-related information may be obtained from the GP Trainee will only be used for the purposes of providing adequate support to the trainee. While there is no data sharing envisioned as a part of providing GP Trainee support, patient safety is at the centre of the policy and procedures and disclosure of health-related information may be made to the authorities should there be a legitimate or vital interest to protect patient safety or the safety of others.

Health-related information will be kept by the College for the purposes of supporting the GP Trainee under this policy and procedures. Health-related data will be securely destroyed in accordance with the College's Records Retention Policy upon conclusion of the support process, including review by the Fitness to Continue in Training Committee.

GP Trainees should be provided with a [Privacy Notice](#) that can be found on the College's website. This notice must be easily accessible and can be attached as a hyperlink.

Any concerns regarding data protection matters may be raised with the College's Data Protection Officer (DPO) at [dataprotection@icgp.ie](mailto:dataprotection@icgp.ie). The DPO must also be informed at the earliest regarding any Data Subject Access Request or Data Breaches/ Incidents that may be received or occur respectively by email.

### **Progression and certification**

Successful participation in the trainee support process will not act as an impediment to progression and certification. Nevertheless, obtaining additional support does not allow a trainee to be exempt from completing any mandatory and/or regulated programme requirements.



## **Clinical supervisors and the employer interface**

It is the responsibility of the clinical supervisor/trainer and other colleagues with whom the trainee is working to identify early warning signs of struggle and report these to the Scheme Directing Team, particularly where the trainee may not be fully aware of what is required of them by the training programme.

## **Trainee engagement**

Lack of engagement with the support process, a demonstrated lack of professionalism and/or major misconduct as described in the Disciplinary Action Policy may result in disciplinary measures, termination of the support process, and exit from the training programme. Refer to the relevant Policy for further detail.

### **3.2 Identification of trainees requiring additional support**

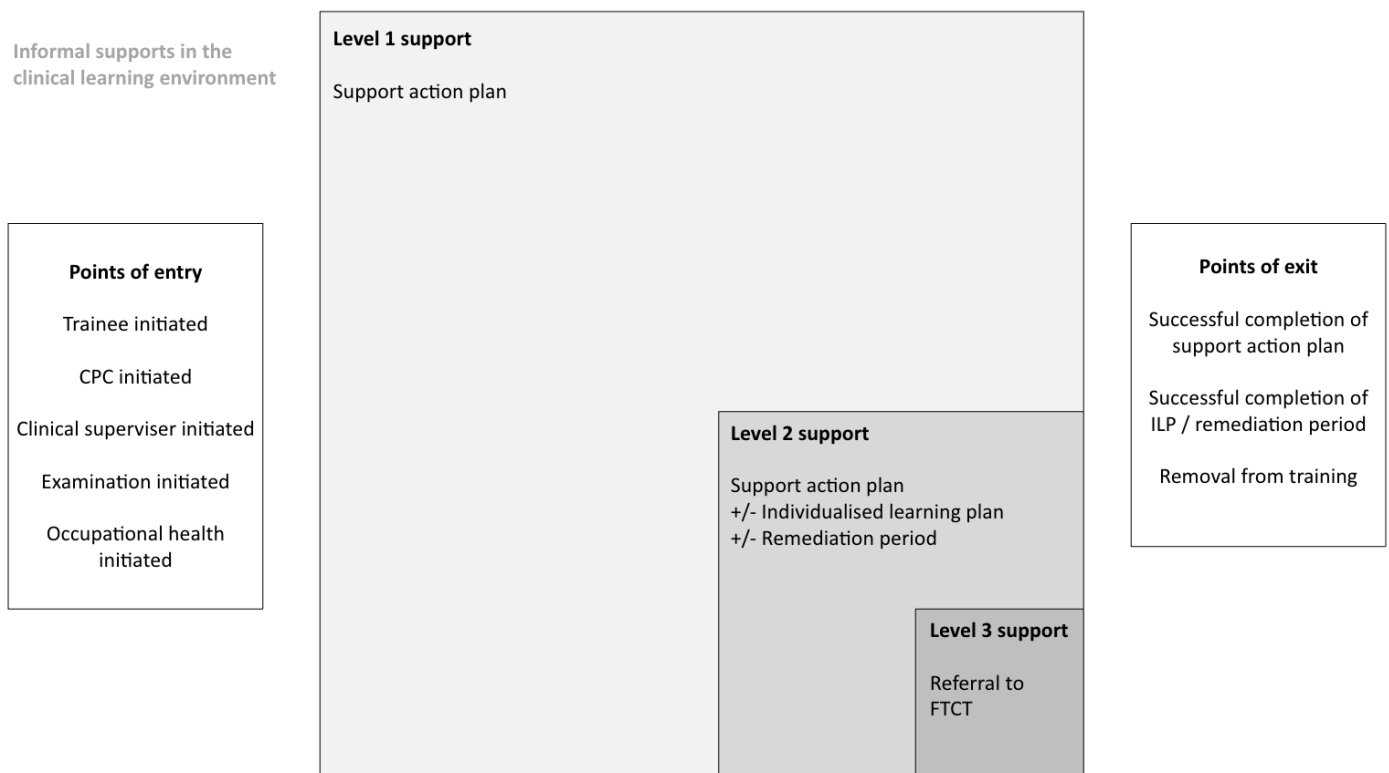
Trainees requiring support may be identified in several ways including but not limited to the following:

- The scheme Competency and Progression Committee (CPC) determines that the trainee is not progressing as expected for their stage of training and recommends that the trainee receive additional support;
- The Scheme Directing Team (SDT) receives a notification of concern from a clinical supervisor;
- The SDT receives a notification that the trainee has completed an occupational health assessment through the employer; or
- The trainee has failed an MICGP exam module on two or more occasions.

Trainees may also request additional support if they are encountering difficulty in training; this will usually be via their clinical supervisor or their scheme mentor.

### **3.3 Support levels**

There are three levels of trainee support. Although in most instances progression through the support flow is linear, trainees may enter the process at level 2 or, rarely, level 3.



**Figure 1: Support process**

Support planning at each level is developed and agreed with the trainee and coordinated by the College. At any level of the process, a plan should not exceed three (3) months in duration and reviews between the trainee and scheme directing team should be completed and documented frequently.

### 3.3.1 Informal approaches and clinical learning environment support

Support can be provided informally in the clinical learning environment unless the supervisor has concerns for the safety of the trainee, patients or those around them in which case the scheme directing team, and the employer should be alerted. The involvement of other consultants, colleagues and peers is encouraged.

### 3.3.2 Level 1 support

Level 1 support may be provided to trainees who are encountering difficulties in training but are progressing as expected for their stage of training.

Level 1 support will entail an exploration of concerns and contributing factors, a consideration of support options, and the development and implementation of a support action plan. This is usually done by the mentor at the scheme directing team level.

### *3.3.3 Level 2 support*

Level 2 support is provided to trainees who are encountering difficulties in training and are not progressing as expected as determined by the scheme competency and progression committee (recommendation B and C).

Level 2 support will entail the development or continuation of a support action plan (level 1 support) and other specific measures which may include:

- The implementation of an individualised learning plan; and/or
- A remediation period, including additional time in training

### *3.3.4 Level 3 support*

Should the conditions agreed to at Level 2 not be met, the scheme having provided maximal support to the trainee, the CPC may issue recommendation G and refer the trainee to the progression review committee for assessment of their fitness to continue training.

## **3.4 Documentation and criteria for assessments**

The clinical supervisor and scheme directing team must ensure that complete and accurate documentation is available to ensure the best support options are selected and the goals of the support plan are clear and specific to the needs and underlying causes. This may include but is not limited to feedback sessions, Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs), In Training Evaluation Reports (ITERs), support plans, individualised learning plans, occupational health reports, referrals to external experts (e.g. psychology), meeting minutes.

Clear criteria must be agreed to for the assessment of support needs and plans, with decisions supported by written evidence that have been shared with the trainee. In assessing needs, all parties involved in the review and decision-making process will consider if support options:

- Are reasonable and justified, and the supports can be accommodated
- Negatively or unduly impact the College's obligation to the wider community, public interest, and patient safety
- Conflict with existing regulations and policies
- Are considered fair and reasonable
- Disadvantage others undertaking the same training programme
- Appear to show bias.



## 4.0 Roles and responsibilities

For detailed roles and responsibilities, refer to the Trainee Support Procedures.

Role	Level 1 Training scheme support	Level 2 CPC	Level 3 Fitness to Continue Training Committee
<b>Clinical Supervisor (CS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and manage problems at an early stage</li> <li>• Escalate serious concerns to the SDT</li> <li>• Provide timely and up to date records to College staff</li> <li>• Develop and implement a support plan with the trainee and SDT</li> </ul>	Provide timely and up to date records to College staff	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level
<b>Scheme Directing Team (SDT) / trainee mentor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to resolve, if necessary, trainee–supervisor/teacher relationship issues that cannot be resolved locally.</li> <li>• Manage support process</li> <li>• Develop a support plan with the supervisor and trainee</li> </ul>	Implement CPC recommendations	Ensure complete records are available to the Progression Review Committee
<b>Scheme Director (SD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign member of the Scheme Directing Team to manage the above-mentioned responsibilities</li> <li>• Monitor progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage support process</li> <li>• Meet with the trainee to discuss CPC decision and next steps</li> </ul>	Provide complete records as requested by the Fitness to Continue Training Committee

<b>Competency Progression Committee</b>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice, support and management oversight to Scheme Directors who are supporting trainees</li> <li>• Make progression decisions</li> <li>• Refer the trainee to the Fitness to Continue Training Committee, if necessary</li> </ul>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level
<b>Regional Competency Progression and Advisory Committee</b>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise the scheme CPC on measures that may be necessary to support the trainee and on how best to implement them</li> <li>• Advise the CPC on progression decisions</li> </ul>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level
<b>Regional Programme Director (RPD)</b>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level, but may wish to be involved in the dialogue surrounding the trainee where there are more elaborate adjustments are put in place to accommodate the trainee's needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available for advice and guidance</li> <li>• Closely monitor progress and ensure documentation of all meetings held with the trainee</li> <li>• Provide advice on possible alternative for maximal support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular communication with the CPC and ND, and RCPAC as needed</li> </ul>

<b>National Directorate of GP Training (ND)</b>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level	Available for advice and guidance	Reviews case as part of the fitness to continue in training committee
<b>Fitness to Continue Training Committee</b>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess a trainee's progression in the GP training programme based on their performance and the support provided to date</li> <li>• Consider whether the trainee is safe / fit to continue training</li> </ul>
<b>Appeals Committee</b>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level	Review the decision of the Fitness to Continue Training Committee and the trainee's case records for procedural fairness should the trainee appeal the Fitness to Continue Training Committee decision
<b>Irish Medical Council</b>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this stage	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this stage	May be notified of a trainee's removal from the Training programme by the Fitness to Continue Training Committee
<b>GP Trainee Health and Wellbeing Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available for advice and guidance</li> <li>• Assist in signposting trainees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support and guidance to trainees with short or long-term physical or mental health challenges, including disabilities</li> <li>• Assist in signposting trainees to available resources</li> </ul>	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level

<b>Head of Doctors Health Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist with the current level of difficulty and to focus on prevention activities related to prevention of deterioration</li> </ul>	Provide support and guidance on the resources available for remediation, as requested	Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level
<b>Employer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unlikely to have direct involvement at this level</li> <li>• Available for advice and guidance</li> </ul>	Should be made aware of the support process and ensure it follows employer's policies	Should be aware / involved in ongoing remediation and outcome
<b>Trainee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform their Scheme Director and where relevant, their employer, if they are subject of a formal complaint, involved in a serious incident or if they have been referred to the IMC.</li> <li>• Engage with the support process</li> </ul>		

## 5.0 Definitions

Disability (Disability Act, 2005)	In relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry out a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an <u>enduring</u> physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.
Substantial restriction	A restriction that is <u>permanent (or likely to be permanent)</u> which results in significant difficulty in communication, learning or mobility and means that the person has a need for services to be provided on a continuous basis.
Health	The trainee's physical and mental health enables fulfilment of expectations for the training position, appropriate to the stage of training. This includes personal, financial or other stressors impacting wellbeing as well as disability and illness.
Competency	The trainee's application of knowledge, skills and professional behaviour is appropriate for the stage of training. This is directly linked to the relevant training programme curricula.
Disciplinary	Action which may be taken when the trainee fails to comply with the College training programme requirements and/or adhere to College policies. This element is out scope of this policy. Such cases will be managed in accordance with the Disciplinary Action Policy and Procedure.

## 6.0 Related and supporting documentation

- Trainee Support Procedures
- [Disciplinary Action Policy](#)
- [Trainee with Disability Policy](#)
- Process for Assessment of the Fitness of a Trainee to continue training

## 7.0 Contact

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

[qae.training@icgp.ie](mailto:qae.training@icgp.ie)