



**ROYAL
COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS
OF IRELAND**

Referral to the Health and Wellbeing Department Policy

September 2024

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Approvers	Executive Board
Author(s)	Health and Wellbeing Department
Applies to	RCPI Postgraduate Trainees and Trainers
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Table of Contents

1.0 Policy Overview	4
1.1 Health and Wellbeing Remit.....	4
1.2 Purpose	4
1.3 Scope.....	4
2.0 Procedure	6
2.1 Informal Process	6
Early Identification	6
Early Intervention.....	6
Informal Advice from RCPI Health and Wellbeing.....	6
2.2 Formal Process	7
Types of Referrals	7
Self-Referrals.....	7
Third Party Referrals	9
Urgent Referrals.....	12
3.0 Confidentiality	13
4.0 Review	13
5.0 Appendix One – Referral Form	14

1.0 Policy Overview

1.1 Health and Wellbeing Remit

The Health and Wellbeing department supports Trainers and Trainees through difficulties, promotes health and prevents ill health where possible. When the Health and Wellbeing Department is informed of a Trainee in difficulty, they work closely with Trainers, NSDs and Deans to ensure that the Trainee has access to available support. Supports can include adjustment around call rota, flexible training, leave, access to additional training & resources, coaching, mentoring and, where appropriate, help with claiming expenses related to professional psychiatric or psychological services.

The services provided include but are not limited to:

- Working with the Deans, Clinical Leads and NSDs to support trainees on RCPI training programmes.
- Remediation of Trainees with professionalism competencies deficits such as communication skills.
- Appropriate referral to relevant bodies (i.e. Health Committee, NCHD Hub) or individual support (i.e. mentors).
- Liaising with NCHD Hub, HR, MMP, Health Committee, Psychiatry, Psychology where appropriate. Liaison includes referrals and collaboration on variety of issues related to Trainees and preventions and promotion of health and wellbeing.
- Supporting Trainers and Clinical Leads who are managing a Trainee in difficulty.
- Providing on-going regular review of progress and recommendation.
- Facilitating Trainee handover from rotation to rotation and activating support.
- Identifying reasonable accommodation for Trainees with a known disability.
- Providing advice regarding maintaining health whilst in training (i.e. leave, flexible training, mandatory courses, examinations).
- Working closely with RCPI teams and staff to better support Trainees in difficulty.
- Promotion of wellbeing via seminars and workshops nationally and internationally.

1.2 Purpose

The policy defines the procedures for referrals of RCPI Trainees and Trainers to the Health and Wellbeing department.

1.3 Scope

This policy applies to all RCPI's registered Trainers and Trainees enrolled in approved RCPI training programme at any year or specialty within the Republic of Ireland.

The RCPI Health and Wellbeing department is there to support the Training Bodies in all areas as mentioned above, it exists to enhance the support given to trainees and trainers.

It is noted that there are a number of supports available at training body level and through local training hubs/sites, the health and wellbeing department exists in order to build on these supports.

This policy is designed to provide guidance and information for those who are involved in supporting Trainees at various levels, including:

- Trainees
- Trainers
- NSDs
- Programme Directors
- Deans and Chair of all six Training Bodies
- Directors of Training
- RCPI Staff

2.0 Procedure

2.1 Informal Process

Early Identification

It is important to identify Trainees needing specific help and support as early as possible. Early identification and intervention are in the best interests of patients, the Trainee and the whole clinical team.

Identification of a Trainee in difficulty is made easier through regular assessment and engagement with the Trainee by the Trainer/Supervisor and the training teams. This engagement/assessment provides an important opportunity to identify and deal with most problems within the Trainee's current training setting. The continuous engagement with the Trainee is an essential aspect of positive remediation outcomes.

Early Intervention

Once an issue has been identified, early interventions are paramount. Past experiences have demonstrated that issues tend to persist over time if not addressed and some are likely to worsen the situation for those involved. Where possible and where mandatory referral is not indicated, local interventions are to be sought. These could include:

- Local HR/ MMP
- Occupational Medicine
- HSE free of charge Employee Assistance Programme or equivalent
- Feedback
- Additional training
- Local mentors
- Support from RPD/NSD
- Projects or QI initiatives

Informal Advice from RCPI Health and Wellbeing

Prior to any official referral participants (Trainers, RPDs, Trainees, NSDs, Medical Training, HR reps, Trainee Reps, Regional Coordinators, Deans etc) are strongly encouraged to informally discuss any issues or concerns with the Health and Wellbeing Department for advice and guidance on potential pathways and referral process. This includes self-referral inquiries. At any time, participants can call the Health and Wellbeing direct line at 086 1923402 or via email wellbeing@rcpi.ie.

2.2 Formal Process

Types of Referrals

The health and wellbeing departments accepts three types of referrals into the service:

- Self-referral
- Third-party referrals
- Urgent referral where the potential for or actual self-harm or harm to others has been identified.

Self-Referrals

The Health and Wellbeing service is available to all RCPI registered Trainers, and all Trainees registered on the RCPI training programmes. Self-referral is advisable as a means of receiving support and information about possible pathways whilst in training or whilst delivering training. It is acknowledged that both Trainers and Trainees may at any point need access to support and information. It is a recommended self-care strategy to seek out support without delay, rather than putting it off until problems seem too unmanageable. Most of the referrals to Health and Wellbeing to date have been self-referrals and participants find it useful to discuss issues relating to training in confidence. Service users also found information regarding additional available supports to be very helpful.

In order to self-refer, Trainers/Trainees must read and understand the Confidentiality Policy, fill in the referral form (appendix 1) and email the completed form directly to wellbeing@rcpi.ie

Self-Referral – Trainees

Some examples where self-referral to Health and Wellbeing is highly recommended are:

- When a Trainee lodges an official complaint through the College as per Grievance Policy.
- When a Trainee decides to exit the training scheme.
- Prior to taking an extended leave of absence (of over 12 months).
- Known disability or mental health related diagnosis (e.g. anxiety or depression).
- Conflict in the workplace that is impacting on training.
- Difficulty with any aspect of the training programme.
- Significant loss or bereavement.
- Communication difficulties such as:
 - Lack of assertiveness
 - Inability to deal with conflicts
 - Difficulties with building strong relationships with colleagues
 - Uncertainty around career in medicine
 - Difficulties getting and remaining organised
 - Feeling burnt out, anxious or low
 - Feeling unable to cope
 - Work-life balance issues which are impacting on training progress such as significant loss or illness in the family

Self-Referral - Trainers

Self-referral by Trainers seeking support from the RCPI Health and Wellbeing Department is welcome for any issues relating to training such as:

- Establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries with Trainees.
- Giving effective feedback.
- Interpersonal difficulties with Trainees.
- Difficulties with Trainer role.
- Difficulties with training programme.
- Time management relating to competing training/service demands.
- Being new to the role of Trainer/NSD and requiring support/mentoring.
- Ethical issues related to training.
- Progressing through training and education career.
- Difficulties supporting Trainees with mental health issues.
- Complaints made against Trainers by a Trainee.
- Being accused of bullying by a Trainee.
- Working relationships and/or environment and its impact on training.

Third Party Referrals

Third-party referrals of Trainees to the Health and Wellbeing Department are different to self-referrals as they are:

- Made following specific referral reasons, indicating a mandatory engagement by Trainee with the Health and Wellbeing Service.
- Made following a considered discussion regarding the Trainee's specific situation with the relevant stakeholders.
- May only occur in situations where a significant risk to the integrity of the training programme or training progress has been identified.
- Can only be submitted by an NSD or their equivalent. Trainers and RPDs must first discuss with the Associate Dean for BST GIM or the NSD when they believe that a referral to Health and Wellbeing is required. The referral decision is made by the NSD or the Associate Director only.
- Should not to be viewed as a punitive measure but as a triggered support mechanism, where the aim is to assess the level of distress and identify the level of support required.
- Made as soon as practically possible.

Why are third-party referrals required?

Third-party referrals are designed to ensure that:

- All appropriate stakeholders are informed.
- Trainee receives best support possible as well as follow up to ensure no further escalation is required.
- Professionalism issues are addressed as early as possible.
- Trainees are remediated to meet training standards.
- Trainers receive support so that they are better able to address any difficulties.
- Proper documentation and handover between rotation follows best-practice.
- Trainees do not rotate from one training site to the next without issues being addressed.
- The level of support required is assessed appropriately.
- Development of a clear pathway is undertaken.
- Early identification and intervention become the norm.

Reasons for Third Party Referrals

It is important to promote early identification of Trainees where there may be concerns (i.e. Referral Triggers) regarding their performance and/or their training progress.

Third-party Referral Triggers examples (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Upon returning to training after a long absence indicated by a Trainee (over 12 months, as per Returning to Training Policy).
- When a Trainee fails to progress due to professionalism issues as identified at evaluation.
- After a serious event during training such as gross misconduct. Examples of gross misconduct are:
 - Inappropriate relationships and behaviour
 - Inappropriate patient examinations
 - Fraud or dishonesty
 - Serious breaches of a patient's confidentiality
 - Any serious criminal offence
 - Contravention (infringement) of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007
 - A conviction in the State for an offence triable on indictment or if convicted outside the State, for an offence that would be triable on indictment in the Irish courts
- When a formal complaint is made against a Trainee (the complaint could be from any source such as patient, Trainer, colleague) and knowledge of that complaint is made known to any RCPI official (i.e. Trainer, Medical Training, NSD).
- When an inappropriate or unprofessional behaviour is observed during mandatory courses or examinations such as but not limited to:
 - Rudeness towards staff or other colleagues
 - Abusive or aggressive tones when corresponding with staff

Third Party Referral Process

Generally, Trainers would be best placed to identify any health and wellbeing referral triggers during training, but other times, issues can be identified during assessments, inspections, mandatory training courses, study days etc. As a result, Trainers may or may not be aware of such triggers and would rely on other training officials to discuss these with them. Several potential training officials/stakeholders may be able to discuss these triggers with the Trainer:

1. Other Trainers
2. RCPI Staff members
3. Regional Programme Directors (RPDs)
4. Other Trainees
5. National Specialty Directors (NSDs)
6. Training Site Human Resource/Medical Manpower Managers Reps
7. Trainee Reps
8. Regional Coordinators
9. RCPI Faculty/Institute Deans

Process

1. Referral reason identified (by any of the above sources).
2. If the reason for referral was identified by anyone who is not a Trainer, they should discuss it with the Trainer/equivalent.
3. The Trainer discusses observations and reasons for referral or potential referral to health and wellbeing with the Trainee where possible.
4. Trainer/equivalent discusses with RPD/NSD.
5. RPD/NSD discusses with Director of Training or their equivalent. If appropriate, Director of Training informally discusses with Health and Wellbeing and then decides whether to refer to Health and Wellbeing or not.
6. Director of Training or their equivalent refers the Trainee using a referral template (appendix 1) in writing, copying the Trainer and the Trainee.
7. The Trainee must fully engage with the referral process and the indicated remediation plan where indicated.
8. When an initial meeting between Health and Wellbeing Department rep and the Trainee has been arranged, the Health and Wellbeing Department rep will notify the Trainee, Director of Training or their equivalent and the Trainer in writing
9. After the initial meeting was held, the Health and Wellbeing Department rep will share the action plan and review process with the Director of Training or their equivalent, Trainer and where appropriate, next rotation Trainer.

When Trainees are referred to the Health and Wellbeing Department, attendance and full engagement with the agreed process becomes a mandatory (non-optional) part of their training programme.

Urgent Referrals

If a Trainee is at risk of physical or psychological harm to self or others (i.e. suicidal ideation or harm to patients) an urgent referral to Health and Wellbeing should be made without delay. Any source of referral can urgently refer Trainees at risk. Risk of harm should be taken seriously and should be addressed immediately without delay.

Trainees at risk can self-refer to the Health and Wellbeing Department as per Self-Referral previously outlined.

Anyone can contact the RCPI Health and Wellbeing Department at any point, if there are concerns regarding risk of harm. We will guide and support you to ensure all necessary steps are followed.

In the event of risk of harm to self or others, we recommend following these steps:

1. If your training site has an emergency department or an occupation health department, attend (we recommend physically walking with the individual at risk) and seek support.
2. Use the out of hours emergency contact number if the occupational health department in your training site is not occupied.
3. If either of the above are either not present or not available present at an Emergency Department. If you are escorting another person who is at risk, walk with them to the Emergency Department and explain the circumstances and seek psychiatric support/assessment.
4. Contact the GP or if escorting a person at risk, obtain their name and number and call the GP to explain the circumstances.
5. If out of hours and with no access to local support, contact the Samaritans on 116 123 or SMS: 087 260 9090 for 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Follow-up

Once the risk has been managed, we recommend that you do the following as soon as practically possible:

6. Contact the Trainer
7. Contact the RCPI Health and Wellbeing Department by using the direct line at 086 1923402 or email wellbeing@rcpi.ie even after if the risk has been locally managed. If emailing or leaving a voice message, include your own contact details and the name and contact details of the person at risk.

3.0 Confidentiality

For information regarding the confidentiality of the service, limits to confidentiality, informed consent and record keeping, please refer to the Health and Wellbeing Confidentiality Policy.

4.0 Review

This Policy shall be subject to review every three years from the date of approval of this document by the Training Committee

Approved By:	Date
Training Committee	September 2024
Review	
Review by Training Committee	September 2027

RCPI is GDPR compliant should you have any queries on GDPR please contact dataprotectionofficer@rcpi.ie.

5.0 Appendix One – Referral Form

Referral to Health and Wellbeing Form

Date:			
Name:			
Who are you referring to the service?			
<input type="checkbox"/> myself			
<input type="checkbox"/> trainee – if ticked, please provide trainee's name:			
Training level	<input type="checkbox"/> BST	<input type="checkbox"/> HST	<input type="checkbox"/> Trainer
Year of training			
Training site/hospital:			
Rotation (if applicable):			
Trainer's name (if applicable):			
Reasons for referral (Tick all relevant/applicable)	Low	Moderate	High
Performance			
Patient safety concern			
Risk of harm to self or others			
Medical council referral/investigation			
Unsatisfactory annual evaluation relating to professionalism			
Serious adverse incidents			
Career guidance/mentoring			
Complaints made against a trainee			
Concerns regarding behaviour at mandatory courses			
Communication difficulties			
Boundaries issues			
Interpersonal conflict			
Lack of confidence			
Conduct			
Lack of professionalism			
Gross misconduct			
Health			
Physical ill health			
Mental health			
Returning to work after a long absence			
Substance misuse			

Reasons for referral (Tick all relevant/applicable)	Low	Moderate	High
Environment			
Dysfunctional work environment			
Home & family environment difficulties			
Adverse event (2 nd victim)			
Learning difficulties			
Dyslexia			
Other – please specify			

Please provide additional information:

- Observed behaviour
- Supporting documentation
- Any other information