

Workplace Behaviour Report, TEF 2021

Authors: Sarah Quinn, Ellen Knox

Background

Workplace behaviour (WPB) has been a focus for the RCOG since it was highlighted in the 2013 GMC Trainees survey (1). Key actions have included the introduction and recent revamp and relaunch of the [RCOG/RCM WPB Toolkit](#), which has been produced in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and Civility Saves Lives. The RCOG WPB Champion network continues to function, meeting virtually.

The effects of bullying and undermining are widespread and well documented. For the purposes of this report, the relationship between WPB and quality of training have been shown in previous reports and have not be re-assess this year.

More recently, the concept and negative impact of incivility in the workplace has become clearer. Incivility, or rudeness, has been shown to negatively impact the wellbeing and performance of both recipients and witnesses (2). Nationally there has also been a push from NHS England and Improvement to promote positive workplace culture (3).

Training Issues/ Questions

Previously the rates of bullying/undermining have been essentially static, at around 5%, and the types of behaviours and preparators have been consistent year on year. We also know that behaviours are not always reported.

This year new questions have been added to address a wider range of behaviours and now incorporates incivility and commendable behaviours. The questions relating to the Regional WPB Champion network were also improved. We also aim to use the opportunity to highlight deaneries with specific issues and commend reports of positive behaviours.

Contents:

- (A) Did bullying and undermining of trainees look the same as previous years?
 - 1. What are the rates of undermining/bullying?
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 - 4. Who is subjecting trainees to these unprofessional behaviours?

- (B) Is negative workplace behaviour being managed effectively? if not then why not?
 - a) Is undermining and bullying being reported? If not, why not? If so, what was the outcome?
 - b) How effective is the WPB Champion Network?

- (C) Other important workplace behaviours
 - a. Incivility
 - b. Feeling valued

- c. Sense of belonging
- d. Commendable behaviours

(D) Regional/Local Focus

Executive Summary

(A) Did bullying and undermining of trainees look the same as in previous years?

Summary:

- **Rates of bullying and undermining have increased by around threefold (15.3%).** Trainees also reported witnessing other trainees (18.5%) and non-trainees (10%) being subjects to undermining/bullying.
- Rates were higher in those who considered themselves to have a disability, long-term illness or health condition and in those who did not wish to disclose.
- The rate amongst trainees who were International Medical Graduates was higher (21%) and trainees who reported their ethnicity as 'white' had a relatively lower rate (13%) compared to peers.
- The top two reported negative behaviours still remain 'Persistent attempts to belittle and undermine your work' (17.2%) and 'Persistent and unjustified criticism and monitoring of your work' (13.0%).
- The top two groups most frequently reported to have displayed these behaviours remain 'Consultant in your department' (38.7%) and 'Senior Nursing or Midwifery Staff' (21.6%)

Suggested Actions for the RCOG WPB Team:

- ⇒ Useful to cross-reference with GMC survey when results are released- does this correlate with a national picture?
- ⇒ Consider campaign to raise awareness of issue (which is likely to be wider than just trainees and wider than just in O&G) and promotion of positive workplace culture and WPB toolkit which has practical suggestions to help individuals, trusts and deaneries
- ⇒ Present to WPB Champion network who will feedback to their respective Schools
- ⇒ Present to Race Equalities Taskforce group and Support Our Doctors group
- ⇒ Further discussion with Educational Supervisor lead and suggests linking with educational supervisor's toolkit

(B) Is negative workplace behaviour being managed effectively? if not then why not?

Summary:

- Less than half of trainees who were subjected to bullying/undermining reported it (45.3%). Only a third of those who witnessed such behaviour reported it.
- The most common reasons for not reporting were concern for the impact that it would have on the individual's career and concerns that it could make the situation worse.
- When issues were reported, the majority of trainees felt listened to which is encouraging. However, only one third of trainees who reported the behaviour felt that it has been or was likely to be addressed.
- 65% of trainees knew that their deanery had a WPB champion, although just over half of these knew who the champion was.
- Only 2.3% of trainees had contacted their regional WPB champion but 73.5% of these said that they found it helpful.

Suggested Actions for the RCOG WPB Team:

- ⇒ Consider: how can the Workplace Behaviours Toolkit recommendations be disseminated, trainees empowered and supported to utilise this and “calling it out with compassion” be recommended to departments?
- ⇒ How can the culture of not reporting for fear of impacting careers be addressed?
- ⇒ Profile of WPB Champions need to be improved. Maybe useful to promote that 73.5% of trainees found them helpful.
- ⇒ Ensure WPB champions continue to be supported by school boards to present TEF report and regional issues to board and attend regional teaching/ARCPs to highlight their role. Ensure each region has a WPB Champion and there is succession planning for the role

(C) Other important workplace behaviours

- a. Incivility
- b. Feeling valued
- c. Sense of belonging
- d. Commendable behaviours

Summary:

- 23% of trainees reported incivility in the workplace. However free text comments suggested that the definition of incivility was unfamiliar to some.
- 1 in 10 trainees did not feel valued in the workplace and a similar proportion said that their unit did not have a sense of community and belonging.
- However, only 4% of trainees disagreed that they had witnessed ‘commendable’ behaviours in their unit.
- Most trainees felt valued and almost all said they have seen commendable behaviours
- The commendable behaviours most reported were ‘Values trainee wellbeing’ (21.1%) and ‘Good support following adverse events’ (20.0%) and ‘A positive environment’ (19.6%)

Suggested Actions for the RCOG WPB Team:

- ⇒ Improve awareness of incivility
- ⇒ Provide definition of ‘incivility’ in next year’s TEF
- ⇒ Commendable behaviours need to be harnessed and grown to ensure all trainees feel a sense of belonging and value.
- ⇒ Ask WPB Champions to include feedback on commendable behaviours in their reports to their School Board
- ⇒ Ask trainees committees to share examples and promote commendable behaviours

(D) Regional Variations

Summary:

- The national context of a fall in indicator scores has been noted
- The South West, Scotland, NI, Wessex have a commendable performance

- A positive improvement in the score for Thames Valley has been noted
- The performance in West Midlands remains relatively low
- The Trusts who had very low scores in 2019 have improved considerably
- Seven new Trusts have been highlighted with concerning scores for WPB

Suggested Actions for the RCOG WPB Team:

- ⇒ Deeper analysis of the situation in West Midlands Deanery is recommended. However, scores for some units in this region are high and there is known ongoing intervention for the lowest scoring hospitals.
- ⇒ Inform Regional WPB Champions for the seven Trusts who scored below 50 and ask for feedback on the current situation and any actions taken or planned
- ⇒ Explore and share learning from Thames Valley Deanery where considerable intervention has taken place since the last report and from individual Trusts with high scores.

Analysis

(A) Did bullying and undermining of trainees look the same as in previous years?

Summary:

- **Rates of bullying and undermining have increased by around threefold (15.3%).** Trainees also reported witnessing other trainees (18.5%) and non-trainees (10%) being subjects to undermining/bullying.
- Rates were higher in those who considered themselves to have a disability, long-term illness or health condition and in those who did not wish to disclose.
- The rate amongst trainees who were International Medical Graduates was higher (21%) and trainees who reported their ethnicity as 'white' had a relatively lower rate (13%) compared to peers.
- The top two reported negative behaviours still remain 'Persistent attempts to belittle and undermine your work' (17.2%) and 'Persistent and unjustified criticism and monitoring of your work' (13.0%).
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Suggested Actions for the RCOG WPB Team:

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- ⇒ Consider campaign to raise awareness of issue (which is likely to be wider than just trainees and wider than just in O&G) and promotion of positive workplace culture and WPB toolkit which has practical suggestions to help individuals, trusts and deaneries
- ⇒ Present to WPB Champion network who will feedback to their respective Schools
- ⇒ Present to Race Equality Taskforce group and Support Our Doctors group
- ⇒ Further discussion with Educational Supervisor Champion and suggest linking with educational supervisor's toolkit

1) What are the rates of undermining/bullying?

Q 17.1.1 In this post, I was **NOT subjected to** persistent behaviours by others which have eroded my professional confidence or self esteem

Year	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neither agreed/ disagreed	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total responses
2021	481	642	124	168	57	1472
	1123 (76.3%)		124 (8.4%)	225 (15.3%)		
2019	684	813	152	77	22	1748
	1479 (85.6%)		152 (8.7%)	99 (5.7%)		

2018	722	839	112	62	19	1754
	1561 (89.0%)		112 (6.4%)	81 (4.6%)		
2017	597	697	98	54	11	1457
	1294 (88.8%)		112 (6.7%)	65 (4.5%)		

TEF Q17.2.1 'In this post, I did **NOT** witness other specialist trainees being subjected to persistent behaviours by others which has eroded their professional confidence or self esteem'

Year	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neither agreed/ disagreed	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total responses
2021	371	654	175	209	63	1472
	1025 (69.6%)		175 (11.9%)	272 (18.5%)		
2019	586	843	209	84	26	1748
	1429 (81.8%)		209(12.0%)	110 (6.3%)		
2018	608	864	179	84	19	1754
	1472 (83.9%)		179(10.2%)	103 (5.9%)		
2017	512	721	157	60	7	1457
	1233 (84.6%)		157(10.8%)	67 (4.6%)		

TEF Q17.4.1 In this post, I did **NOT** witness other healthcare professionals (e.g. non-trainee doctor, midwife, AHP) being subjected to persistent behaviours by others which have eroded their professional confidence or self esteem

Year	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neither agreed/ disagreed	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total responses
2021	371	744	177	150	30	1472
	1115 (75.7%)		(12.2%)	(10.4%)		

Comments indicated many different colleagues being affected and included, midwives, nurses, HCAs, non-training doctors, consultants, labour ward, theatre and outpatient teams.

2) Which trainees are most affected by undermining/bullying-demographic trends?

Rates of undermining/bullying (disagree or strongly disagree with Q17.1.1) by demographic subgroups are below.

- Describe self as:

Male	41/305	13.4%
Female	180/1140	15.8%
Non-binary, prefer to self-describe, prefer not to say.	4/27	14.8%

- Considered self to have a disability, long-term illness or health condition:

Yes	13/50	26%
No	200/1388	14.4%
Do not wish to disclose	12/34	35%

- ST Year:

ST1/2	56/373	15.0%
ST3-5	114/678	16.8%
ST6/7	55/417	13.2%
Post-CCT	0/4	0%

- Primary Medical Degree awarded from:

EEA	13/91	14.3%
IMG	63/299	21.1%
UK	149/1082	13.7%

- Ethnicity:

Unspecified	20/84	23.8%
Asian-British	12/56	21.4%
Black-other	21/100	21.0%
Asian-other	35/190	18.4%
Mixed	11/63	17.5%
Other	23/172	13.3%
White	102/787	13.0%
Black-British	1/20*	5%

*noted that total number of individuals in this category is low rate therefore easily skewed but a few responses

- Full-time vs LTFT:

Fulltime	155/1033	15.0%
LTFT	67/434	15.4%
'other'	3/5	60%

3) What types of negative behaviours are reported?

TEF Q 17.3.1 Please identify the types of behaviour you have witnessed or being subjected to (please select ALL that apply)

2021 Top 5 Unprofessional Behaviours reported	Number of times reported (606 total)	Rank in 2019	Rank in 2018
Persistent attempts to belittle and undermine your work	104 (17.2%)	1	1
Persistent and unjustified criticism and monitoring of your work	79 (13.0%)	2	2
Persistent attempts to humiliate you in front of colleagues	49 (8.1%)	3	3
Constant undervaluing of your efforts	47 (7.8%)	4	4
Undermining your personal integrity	47 (7.8%)	Not in top 5	4

Additional reports of behaviour to note for 2021:

Discrimination on racial, gender or sexual grounds or other protected characteristics	21
Unwelcome sexual advances	1
Physical violence	0

4) Who is subjecting trainees to these unprofessional behaviours?

TEF Q 17.3.2 Please state who has subjected you or other work colleagues to inappropriate behaviour (please select ALL that apply)

Role- top 5 (5 th position joint)	Number of responses (287 total)	Rank in 2019	Rank in 2018
Consultant in your department	111 (38.7%)	1	1
Senior Nursing or Midwifery Staff	62 (21.6%)	2	2
Junior Nursing or Midwifery Staff	27 (9.4%)	4	3
Medical staff from another department	19 (6.6%)	Not in top 5	Not in top 5
Senior trainee (ST3+)	16 (5.6%)	3	4

Your College tutor	12
The Clinical Director for your department	10
Your Educational Supervisor (ranked 5 th in 2019 and 2018)	6
The Workplace Behaviour Champion	2

(B) Is negative workplace behaviour being managed effectively? If not then why not?

Summary:

- Less than half of trainees who were subjected to bullying/undermining reported it (45.3%). Only a third of those who witnessed such behaviour reported it.
- The most common reasons for not reporting were concern for the impact that it would have on the individual's career and concerns that it could make the situation worse.
- When issues were reported, the majority of trainees felt listened to which is encouraging. However, only one third of trainees who reported the behaviour felt that it has been or was likely to be addressed.
- 65% of trainees new that their deanery had a WPB champion, although just over half of these knew who the champion was.
- Only 2.3% of trainees had contacted their regional WPB champion but 73.5% of these said that they found it helpful.

Suggested Actions for the RCOG WPB Team:

- ⇒ Consider: how can the Workplace Behaviours Toolkit recommendations be disseminated, trainees empowered and supported to utilise this and "calling it out with compassion" be recommended to departments?
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1. Is undermining and bullying being reported? If not, why not? If so, what was the outcome?

TEF Q 17.1.2 Did you report it?

102/225 (45.3%) trainees who reported being subjected to undermining/bullying went on to report it. This compares to 49.5% in 2019.

TEF Q 17.1.5 Why did you not report it?

	2021 Responses	2019 ranking
I was concerned about the impact reporting the issue would have on my career	29	1
I was concerned reporting the issue would make the situation worse	28	1
I felt I would not be supported if I reported the issue	14	1

Other	9	
The behaviour stopped and has not recurred	6	
I did not know who to report the issue to	3	
The issue was already reported by another person	3	
The person I would normally report the issue to is the perpetrator	2	

84/272 (30.1%) of trainees who witnessed undermining/bullying went on to report it. This is similar to 2019 when the figure was 31.9%.

Outcomes from reporting

	Subjected to	Witnessed	2021 combined
I felt listened to BUT I feel the behaviour has not been or is unlikely to be addressed	51	34	85 (45.7%)
I felt listened to AND I feel the behaviour has been or is likely to be addressed	26	35	61 (32.8%)
I did not feel listened to	17	8	25 (13.4%)
Other	8	7	15 (8%)

2. How effective is the WPB Champion Network?

17.6.1 I am aware that my deanery has a REGIONAL Workplace Behaviour Champion

Strongly agree	270	964 (65%)
Agree	694	
Neither agree nor disagree	179	
Disagree	261	
Strongly disagree	68	

17.6.2 I know who my Regional Workplace Behaviour Champion is

Yes	585 (39.7%)
No	887

Only 65% of trainee were aware that their deanery has a regional WPB champion and even fewer, 40% knew who this champion was. This is similar to 2019 when 39% of trainees reported that they knew who their WPB champion was.

TEF Q 17.6.3 Have you contacted them?

TEF Q 17.6.4 If you contacted them did you find this helpful

34 trainees (2.3%) had contacted their regional WPB champion. Of these 25 (73.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that they found this helpful.

Comments to support when the interaction was helpful describe

- Approachable

- Supportive
- Raises issues
- Initiated or involved in a School visit/investigation

Comments to support when the interaction was unhelpful describe

- No response-1
- Response was not effective in stopping behaviour-1

For comparison 20 trainees (1.1%) made contact with their WPB champion in 2019 and 70% said that their regional WPB champion was helpful in tackling the issue.

(C) Other important workplace behaviours

- a. Incivility
- b. Feeling valued
- c. Sense of belonging
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Summary:

- 23% of trainees reported incivility in the workplace. However free text comments suggested that the definition of incivility was unfamiliar to some.
- 1 in 10 trainees did not feel valued in the workplace and a similar proportion said that their unit did not have a sense of community and belonging.
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a) Incivility

TEF Q 7.5.1 In this post, I was SUBJECTED TO or WITNESSED behaviour that I would classify as ‘incivility’

Year	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neither agreed/ disagreed	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2021	68	276	165	636	327
	344 (23.4%)				

Note- several comments suggest that the definition of 'incivility' was unfamiliar.

b) Feeling valued

TEF Q 17.7 As an O&G trainee in this unit, I feel valued in the workplace

Year	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neither agreed/ disagreed	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2021	373	717	230	114	38
	1090 (74.0%)			10.3%	

1 in 10 trainees did not feel valued in their workplace.

c) Sense of belonging

TEF Q 17.8 This unit has a sense of community and belonging

Year	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neither agreed/ disagreed	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2021	404	625	259	141	43
	1029 (69.9%)			184 (12.5%)	

d) Commendable behaviours

TEF Q 17.9.1 In this post, I have witnessed behaviour which I would consider commendable

Year	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neither agreed/ disagreed	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2021	474	713	227	44	14
	1187 (80.6%)			58 (3.9%)	

TEF Q 17.9.2 Please identify the type of commendable behaviour that you have witnessed (please select ALL that apply)

Values trainee wellbeing	778 (21.1%)
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Good support following adverse events	737 (20.0%)
A positive environment	721(19.6%)
A 'can do' attitude	593
A sense of trainee empowerment	449
Proactively addresses poor workplace behaviour	343
Other	64
Total	3685

(D) Regional Variations

Summary:

- The national context of a fall indicator scores has been noted
- The South West, Scotland, NI, Wessex have a commendable performance
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Suggested Actions for the RCOG WPB Team:

- ⇒ Deeper analysis of the situation in West Midlands Deanery is recommended. However, scores for some units in this region are high and there is known ongoing intervention for the lowest scoring hospitals.
- ⇒ Inform Regional WPB Champions for the seven Trusts who scored below 50 and ask for feedback on the current situation and any actions taken or planned
- ⇒ Explore and share learning from Thames Valley Deanery where considerable intervention has taken place since the last report and from individual Trusts with high scores.

Nationally the indicator scores for WPB have deteriorated, and the following should be interpreted in this context.

A score of 100 is the top score i.e. least reports of undermining/bullying. The national average was 70.88.

Commendable deaneries in 2021:

1. HE South West, indicator score for WPB 77.15
2. NHS Education for Scotland, indicator score for WPB 75.04
3. Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency, indicator score for WPB 74.84
4. HE Wessex, indicator score for WPB 74.80
9. Thames Valley, indicator score for WPB 70.61

The South West, Northern Ireland and Wessex have ranked highly for several years. Scotland has a commendable improvement in performance in this area, now ranking second with a score of 75.04. Thames Valley has seen considerable improvement as its rank improved from 16th in the previous three years (last) to 9th and its overall indicator score has improved in the context of a national decrease.

Deaneries with possible concern in 2021:

West Midlands Deanery has ranked 16th in 2021, and was 15th in 2019. Its score is concerningly low at 66.14. The drop in performance since 2019 may warrant deeper analysis and targeted action.

Commendable Trusts in 2021:

Six trusts scored over 90, however only two of these Trusts had more than two trainee respondents. In 2019 three trusts had scores under 50. It should be noted that these trusts have all seen very significant increases in their score for 2021 which is commendable.

Trusts with possible concern in 2021:

Seven trusts scored below 50. All had more than 2 trainee respondents:

Report authors

Trainee representative for Workplace Behaviour, Dr Sarah Quinn
RCOG Workplace Behaviours Advisor, Dr Ellen Knox

References

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3. NHS Improvement '[Civility and Respect Toolkit](#)'2021. Available at: <https://www.socialpartnershipforum.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/NHSi-Civility-and-Respect-Toolkit-v9.pdf>