

## Practitioner Performance Advice Insights

### Bullying and harassment reported in our advice cases: an overview

August 2021

It is a sad fact that bullying and harassment are reported to be prevalent issues within the health and social care sector. The 2019 NHS staff survey showed that [19% of staff](#) have experienced bullying or harassment in the last year from colleagues. According to the latest Medical Workforce Race Equality Standard [report](#), the experience of bullying is even more prevalent within the doctor workforce, especially for doctors from ethnic minority backgrounds. Studies [suggest](#) bullying and harassment are damaging for both staff wellbeing and the quality of patient care – but there is also excellent work being taken forward to help to understand and address the impact of poor behaviour (see, for example, the work of [Civility Saves Lives](#)).

Data from the cases Practitioner Performance Advice were requested to advise on in the financial years from 2015/2016 to 2019/2020 shows that almost [70% of our cases](#) involved problems associated with behaviour. We have looked at the data in more detail to consider the prevalence of bullying and harassment in our cases.

### Bullying and/or harassment by the practitioner

# 6.2%

of our cases were initiated because bullying and/or harassment was one of the concerns about the practitioner.

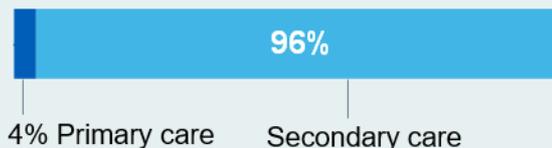
#### Gender

Male practitioners are overrepresented in cases where bullying and/or harassment were identified as a concern by the employing organisation, but this gender distribution is similar to what is seen in our casework in general. In 2020, male doctors made up 53% of all licensed doctors\*.



#### Sector

There is a higher prevalence of cases where bullying and/or harassment was a concern in secondary care cases when compared to our casework more generally – where 80% of practitioners work in secondary care and 20% work in primary care.



Data from cases opened in financial years 2016/17 to 2020/21 involving doctors, dentists and pharmacists.

\* The state of medical education and practice in the UK, General Medical Council, 2020.

## Bullying and/or harassment concerns as a feature of cases

# 11%

of our cases featured bullying and/or harassment as outlined in our advice about the case.

### Why the higher figure?

- As a case progresses more areas of concern may come to light about the practitioner who is the subject of a case.
- Once contact is made with the subject of the case, the practitioner may share that they themselves have been subject to bullying and/or harassment.

*Data from cases opened in financial years 2016/17 to 2020/21 involving doctors, dentists and pharmacists.*

The reported level of bullying and harassment needs to be tackled urgently to help ensure both staff and patients are safe. As outlined in our publication [Being fair](#), moving away from fear and blame is key to building the restorative just learning culture needed to provide safe patient care. Over the next year, we will be looking more closely into cases where behavioural concerns feature, and exploring ways of identifying these and resolving them earlier.

There is no minimum threshold for contacting Practitioner Performance Advice and we encourage healthcare organisations and practitioners to contact us as early as possible when concerns come to light, including bullying or harassment. In addition to advice, we offer a range of services to support organisations and practitioners facing these issues, such as [behavioural assessments](#), [professional support and remediation](#), [assisted mediations](#) and [team reviews](#). To find out more, please contact us directly at [advice@resolution.nhs.uk](mailto:advice@resolution.nhs.uk).

Our *Insights* publications share analysis and research which draw on our in-depth experience providing expert, impartial advice and interventions to healthcare organisations. By sharing these insights, we aim to support the healthcare system to better understand, manage and resolve concerns about doctors, dentists or pharmacists. You can find all past reports [here](#).

If you are interested in hearing more about our research and insights programme, please get in touch with us at [Advice.ResearchAndEvaluation@resolution.nhs.uk](mailto:Advice.ResearchAndEvaluation@resolution.nhs.uk).

If you'd like to learn more about our work and the services we offer, please visit our dedicated [Practitioner Performance Advice webpages](#). Our Education service offers [training courses](#) to provide healthcare organisations with the knowledge and skills to identify and manage performance concerns locally.