



COPDEND guidance on education and training with close family members

National guidance on education and training with close family members

This document is in line with the National guidelines by AoMRC and signed off by COPMED December 2010

COPDEND recognises that there is significant risk of perceived and actual probity issues if dentists in training are trained, assessed or otherwise educationally supervised by close family members. It is in the best interests of the dentists in training, those involved in their training and assessment, and the wider educational establishment that such risks are avoided.

This paper provides explicit guidance on this issue and offers clarity for all those involved in postgraduate dental education and training. This is in line with the current guidance given to appraisers about who it is appropriate for them to appraise.

A dentist or dental care professional in training under the quality assurance or management of HEE, NES, NIMDTA or HEIW should not be placed in an educational environment where there may be any conflicts of interest that could be seen to affect the objectivity of their trainer or supervisor. Placing a dentist or DCP in training in a clinical placement, training post or programme, where any close family member owns, part owns, or has business interest with the learning environment; or is directly involved in the training, supervision (clinical or educational) and/or assessment of the dentist in training could be seen, potentially, to compromise that objectivity.

In this context the main educational roles affected by such concerns are the trainer, assessor, clinical and educational supervisor, training programme director (TPD) and Head of School (Dental Foundation Training/ Dental Core Training or specialty) or national equivalent.

These principles also extend to those individuals directly involved in:

- Review of Competency Progression (RCP) as outlined in "A Reference Guide for Dental Foundation Training in England, Wales and Northern Ireland" (*the Dental Blue Guide*)
- Review of Competency Progression (RCP) as outlined in "A Reference Guide for Dental Core Training in the UK" (*the Dental Silver Guide*)
- Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) as outlined in "A Reference guide for Postgraduate Dental Specialty Training in the UK" (*the Dental Gold Guide*), including where relevant the external specialty advisor

The issues can be summarised:

- There is a potential lack of objectivity/influence around feedback and/or assessments.
- There is a risk of decreased validity of the multisource feedback (MSF) and the Patient Survey Questionnaire could also be at risk, as patients are quick to recognise relationships (this is particularly relevant in GDP).
- This could cause a strong conflict of interest in any potential situation of assessment with respect to the marginally competent dentist in training.
- The trainer could be vulnerable should any subsequent issues arise with respect to the professional or educational performance of the dentist in training, for example with regard to competency and/or probity.

- The trainer could be vulnerable to accusations of inequity and/or discrimination where the results of assessment or other elements of supervision lead to access to limited educational or training opportunities.
- Where a workplace is owned / part owned by a close family member – the trainee may be vulnerable to pressure not to report negative issues that relate to: quality of support staff, equipment and clinical facilities (within the workplace) and factors that might put the training environment in bad light with regards to HEE quality performance.
- Trainers and Clinical and Educational Supervisors may be conflicted when making assessment of trainees who are close family members of an owner, part owner or business partner of the workplace.

DFT, DCT and Dental Specialty Training programmes should not allocate trainees to such placements. It is a clear professional probity issue that dentists in training and trainers/supervisors are honest enough to inform the programme of any such conflict of interest. This includes the need to notify the TPD, Associate Dean or PG Dental Dean of any material change in a relationship that could cause a conflict of interest in the context of this guidance.

Recommendation;

A trainer or educational supervisor must neither train, supervise or assess a member of his or her immediate family or a member of a partner's or a GDP Performer's (in the same practice) close family in a general dental practice setting, nor participate in any other arrangement where there could be a perceived conflict of interest with respect to education and training issues.

In circumstances where a dentist in training or trainer/supervisor are uncertain about the result of a change in personal circumstances in relation to this guidance they should discuss the issue with the PG Dental Dean or nominated deputy.

+ close family relatives include those individuals to whom the supervisor is related by birth or by virtue of a change in legal status (adoption or marriage or civil partnerships) or any similar but not legally confirmed relationship.

*Signed off by COPDEND
13 February 2020*