

Guidance for Foundation Schools

Incoming F1 Doctors who are in the Shielding Category

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to offer advice for foundation schools on how to manage cases where incoming F1 doctors (i.e. those who are supposed to be starting their Foundation Programme in August 2020) are shielding.

Background

Shielding is a measure to protect people who are deemed to be at high risk from COVID-19 coming into contact with it, by minimising interactions between them and others. Information regarding categories of shielding and government advice is available on government websites.

Shielding will be coming to an end on 1st August but for the purposes of this paper all trainees who are not able to undertake their normal (and curriculum required) work because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will be described as shielding, regardless of which category of shielding they fall into.

Generally speaking, trainees who are shielding are not classed as being on sick leave and from a training perspective, shielding should not be considered as such since those affected are still able to undertake work and gain competences.

In the case of new foundation year 1 trainees, because of their lack of clinical experience there is limited activity that can be undertaken remotely, which presents a significant issue in achieving all the foundation curriculum competences. However, trainees who are shielding may be able to acquire some competences through non-clinical activity such as quality improvement projects, education projects and leadership and management work.

Key Principles

It is important to maximise support for this group of trainees during the time they are shielding, to optimise education and training development, and to reduce the impact on the return to/commencement of work when they are able. In order to achieve this, it is recommended for foundation schools to ensure the following steps are taken: -

1. Risk Assessment

All trainees who are considered to be in the shielding category are required to undergo a risk assessment. This is likely to involve seeking advice from specialists and/or occupational health to determine whether it is appropriate for a trainee to be shielding and to provide advice on whether clinical work is advisable. An individual risk assessment should be carried out before any decisions are made around a potential return to/commencement of work.

2. Individual Training Discussion

For all trainees, the foundation curriculum must be completed including the requirement to complete a 12-month (pro-rata for LTFT trainees) Foundation Year 1 programme. Once the risk assessment has

been performed, an educational assessment should be undertaken to discuss the trainee's personal development and training opportunities whilst shielding.

Trainees may consider the possibility of deferral and the associated implications of this. This should be discussed with the Foundation School Director (FSD) and Postgraduate Dean.

Depending on the reason for shielding, it might be appropriate for a trainee to commence/return to work in a different environment/specialty with less exposure to COVID-19. Foundation schools/employers may have the flexibility to facilitate an appropriate placement in a safe environment, recognising that this might not always be possible. It would be considered acceptable for a trainee to complete their rotations in a different order for example. Any changes would need to align with specialist/OH advice.

3. Curriculum Requirements

If a trainee is shielding and undertakes development activity remotely, it should be made clear that competence progression during this time **may** be counted towards their Annual Review of Competence Progressions (ARCP). Remote developmental activity alone, will not be sufficient to complete the foundation year 1 curriculum.

Procedures

- All foundation schools should ensure a robust log is kept of all shielded trainees with regular reviews documented to consider circumstances, support needs and training/employment options.
- Shielding is very isolating and, in conjunction with the distress caused by disruption to training, may lead to significant wellbeing issues. Foundation schools/employing organisations need to develop policies for regular pastoral support for these trainees, either through regular educational supervision or through additional routes, e.g. options for coaching and/or peer support should be considered.
- In the event of sickness whilst shielding, the absence should be recorded as sickness with the most appropriate reason for absence selected (for example respiratory problems). Under the related reason field, if applicable, Coronavirus (COVID-19) would need to be selected.

Commencing/Returning to work

- The decision as to when the trainee returns to work will be based on medical advice (e.g. occupational health) in consultation with the trainee, in the context of guidance provided by government.
- The decision as to whether shielding trainees returning to training will be asked to return to their previous post, or enter what would have been their next post, and are otherwise fitted back into the program, is a complex one that will be managed by the foundation school.
- Trainees should meet with their educational supervisor to discuss the following as soon as they have a commencement/return to work date. This meeting could be virtual.
 - Wellbeing matters.
 - A review, and if appropriate, sign off, of competences gained during shielding.
 - An assessment of immediate actions including the need for a formal return to training programme. Foundation schools should provide information on all return to training courses/support to inform this meeting.

- A discussion of how missed competences can be gained during the rest of the training programme.
- A review of any occupational health and employer recommendations regarding ongoing adjustments to work and assessment of the impact on training.
- Discussion about the details of extension to training and any future implications related to this, e.g. specialty applications, etc.

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