Referrals to PSW exam support

There are no fixed criteria for referral to the Wessex PSW for exam support. A good educational supervisor should be able to support trainees following initial exam failure without the need to routinely refer to PSW for exam support. The list below might be useful as a prompt when discussing exam failure with a trainee.

* **Have they done enough work?** Trainees may fail at their first attempt because they have underestimated the amount of work involved in the preparation of a postgraduate exam. Usually 3 months of good quality revision is required as a minimum for post graduate exams.
* **How have they revised?** Some may have attempted to pass the exam largely by doing MCQ question banks rather than learning the breadth and depth of information required. Did they have a good revision plan? How are they learning and checking they have good recall? Ideally they should work for shorter, focussed sessions (in the order of 40 minutes) without the distractions of social media.
* **Are there any distractions to their work?** Some may have failed because of distractions in their life outside of work that have prevented them working as they would like. As ES, it is helpful to discuss this and help consider any ongoing circumstances that need to be factored into the decision as to when to attempt a resit. Despite the pressure within training programs to pass exams within a designated time frame, it may be better to wait until the trainee can work to their full potential rather than rush into an early retake and risk low morale if they have a further failure. This should be discussed with TPD.
* **Have they failed exams at med school / earlier professional exams?**
* **Motivation and rebuilding confidence.** Often it may be the first time the trainee has failed anything and they may need their self confidence rebuilding. Your support and belief in them is important plus any tips you can offer them. Taking a short break, giving themselves some rewards for study, talking to colleagues and creating an exam study group with peers can often be useful.
* **Any difficulty reading the questions or significant difficulty finishing within the time?** Please ask you trainee to complete the learning differences screen on the PSW website.

**Exam support from the PSW is most useful for those who**

* Feel it is their technique or ability to perform the exam, rather than lack of knowledge that is the root cause.
* Anyone with learning difficulties who fails an exam but feel they have gained the level of knowledge required.
* Anyone that you suspect could have learning difficulties but has not been assessed.
* Anyone for whom English is not their first language who fails an exam, but feel they have gained the level of knowledge required.
* Anyone who has failed two or more times unless known distractions from working have been the likely cause.
* Anyone for whom you feel low morale is more of a factor than usual post exam failure.
* Anyone for whom anxiety is affecting them to an extent that they need help managing this.

An early referral is most helpful to allow the trainee to develop new strategies if required and to maximise the time available before the next attempt.

If you would like to discuss any potential referrals please contact PSW in the first instance.

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