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Context:

Annual GP appraisal is a supportive conversation with a peer to review practice and formulate personal development plans. As well as being necessary to revalidate with the GMC it provides an important opportunity to help grow, develop, retain and nurture our workforce. Coaching is recognised as useful in goal setting (1). Following the devastating impact of the pandemic in the last 2 years the emphasis has moved away from "widget counting" and more towards personal and professional wellbeing (2). As part of this appraisers could provide coaching conversations.

Questions:

What is the current level of skill and confidence in our appraisers at using coaching techniques?

Can we identify ways that appraisers use coaching to support their appraisees and in turn better support our appraisers?



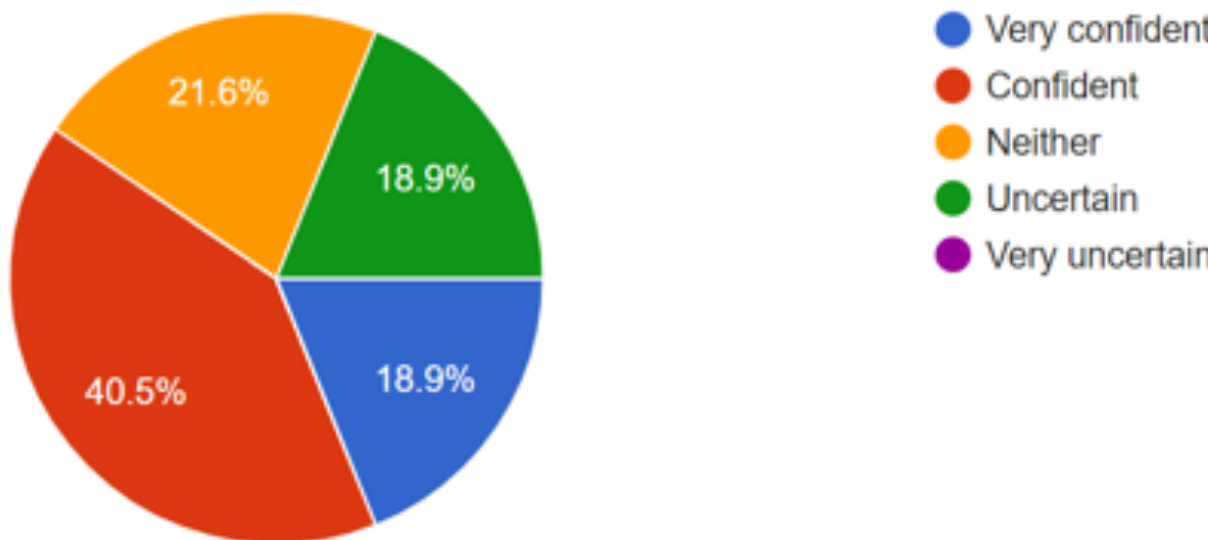
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Methods:

An online survey was sent to all 204 appraisers in the Wessex Appraisal Service. 37 appraisers responded.

Results:

How confident do you feel in coaching your appraisees?



Very confident

Confident

Neither

Uncertain

Very uncertain

33% of respondents had a formal coaching qualification; most commonly ILM level 5

59% of respondents felt confident in coaching appraisees, whether or not they had a formal qualification

16% said they never use coaching in appraisals

Examples given of coaching within appraisals

"My appraisee was anxious about an upcoming interview for a medical role that they really wanted. We spent some time exploring the reasons for their anxiety and their self-limiting beliefs. We moved on to how they could prepare for the interview and rehearse how to demonstrate the skills that they would need to get the job (which they did)"

"This week we discussed the job plan that a senior medical leader was defining for their next role and then demolished those and looked at the jobs only they could do and how to ensure they spent more of their time working at the top of their game and in what they most enjoyed. It involved a tour around credibility, imposter syndrome, assertiveness and other themes. We ended up with a clearer understanding of what they really want to aim for and why it would be a benefit to the organisation as well as to them if their job plan was full of the things they enjoy most."

- Coaching opportunities reported:
- Exploring anxiety, self limiting beliefs & imposter syndrome thereby increasing self-awareness
 - Understanding and re-evaluating decisions made previously to provide clarity around decision making and lessons learned
 - Questioning intrinsic vs extrinsic motivation for choices
 - Encouraging being kinder to, and more accepting of, themselves
 - Shining a light on system problems e.g. culture of self-sacrifice
 - Identifying/clarifying transition points e.g. career dilemmas
 - Enabling career planning – both in the short and long term – including changes in work volume, pattern, or portfolio
 - Personalising retirement plans
 - Developing effective PDP goals

- Themes promoting coaching opportunities:
- Vocabulary is vital: appraisers don't recognise they are providing coaching despite most GPs using coaching/ mentoring most of the time, at home, work or in appraisals
 - Words that imply **needing** qualifications may inhibit confidence
 - Providing frameworks, structure & vocabulary will grow these skills
 - Even in Wessex, the majority of the appraisers are not using coaching/mentoring skills all the time despite leadership support and training recognising the value of the intervention
 - To encourage appraisers we developed a FAQ – see QR code

"The key to getting formative and supportive appraisals right is seeing how a once a year intervention is predicated on superb coaching and mentoring skills without the frequency of touch points of a formal coaching or mentoring relationship."

Conclusion:

Our annual medical appraisals are an opportunity for self development and reflection. The majority of appraisers do not have coaching qualifications but 59% of respondents reported confidence in deploying skills associated with coaching. The recent Medical Appraisal Guide 2022 (3) encourages appraisees to use their appraiser's coaching skills and support, particularly to refine their PDP goals

Take home message:

Coaching is an invaluable appraisal skill particularly at periods of transitions e.g. newly qualified, career dilemmas, approaching burnout, and retirement. Appraisers can support GPs by actively recognising opportunities to use simple coaching techniques.