

Determining whether there is an appropriate link between a doctor and a Suitable Person

- 1 A Suitable Person must have a clear and rational link with all doctors for whom they are responsible. There are a number of characteristics which are likely to increase our confidence that a Suitable Person has an appropriate link with a doctor and will be able to make robust revalidation recommendations about them.
- 2 These characteristics are set out below with examples, but are non-exhaustive. We will review each application against [our Suitable Person criteria](#) on a case by case basis. For example, we may need to approve special arrangements relating to an individual doctor and will look in detail at any specific, tailored arrangements that are in place.

Employment relationship

- 3 An employment relationship is appropriate where the Suitable Person and the doctor work for, or are contracted to, the same organisation and where the doctor does not have a prescribed connection elsewhere, as set out in [The Medical Profession \(Responsible Officer\) Regulations](#).
- 4 The applicant should demonstrate through relevant and satisfactory evidence that:
 - the proposed cohort of doctors is easily identifiable by a specific, demonstrable relationship with the employer, such as a contractual arrangement, and
 - the doctor(s) do not have a prescribed connection elsewhere.

Example: An applicant works for a charity which contracts with a number of doctors. As the individual doctors are not directly employed by the charity they will not have a prescribed connection to that organisation. However, the working arrangements are sufficiently similar to allow the Responsible Officer (RO) for the charity to access information and systems required to have robust oversight of these doctors' practice and to make revalidation recommendations about the doctors who contract with them.

Sector of work

- 5 Where the doctor or doctors practise in a small and niche area or sector of work, a person may be suitable to assess the doctor's practice and provide a recommendation as a result of their common understanding of or involvement in the area or sector and the fact that contact between them is facilitated and governed by a specialist or sector network.
- 6 The applicant should demonstrate through relevant and satisfactory evidence that:
 - the applicant has knowledge of the area or sector in which the doctor works
 - the area of practice is niche and clearly defined, and that it will be possible to clearly identify the doctor(s) covered by the scope of the approval
 - the applicant practises or is qualified to practise within that niche area, or has sufficiently detailed knowledge of the area of work, to enable them to provide the relevant support to doctors and appraisers on matters relating to revalidation
 - the doctor(s) do not have a prescribed connection elsewhere.

Example 1: An applicant is qualified as a Clinical Neurophysiologist, a rare and niche specialty. They are approached by a doctor who qualified in the same field wanting them to be their Suitable Person by virtue of their knowledge in the field.

This is an example where we may consider the link appropriate if the applicant is able to provide evidence that formal arrangements have been established to give them proper oversight of the doctor's practice.

Example 2: A doctor works for a CCG as part of NHS England and does not have a connection as CCGs are not designated bodies. The RO from an NHS England Area Team applies to be their Suitable Person.

This is an example where we may consider the link appropriate due to the common sector of work between the doctor and the applicant and the applicant's knowledge of the sector and setting where the doctor carries out the majority of their work.

Governance arrangements

- 7 There may be circumstances where specific governance arrangements in place as a result of a statutory regime or otherwise, provide a framework for a Suitable Person comparable to that of an RO in relation to a group of doctors. These arrangements give the Suitable Person access to information and systems which allow them to make robust and informed revalidation recommendations for a group of doctors.

- 8 The applicant should demonstrate through relevant and satisfactory evidence that:
- the regulatory or statutory role provides the applicant with sufficient powers and authority to allow them to fulfil all requirements of the Suitable Person role
 - the connection within the particular regulatory framework is clearly defined in such a way that it will be clear which doctors are covered
 - the doctor(s) do not have a prescribed connection elsewhere.

Example: The Channel Islands put legislation in place to establish doctors with similar roles to those of Responsible Officers. This legislation provides a framework that allows these doctors access to information and systems required to make robust revalidation recommendations. On this basis we recognised these doctors as Suitable Persons for doctors working in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Last updated September 2016