



**BAPRAS**

British Association of Plastic  
Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons

## SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN SURGERY – RESPONSE TO WORKING PARTY REPORT

London – 12 September, 2023 The British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS [www.bapras.org.uk](http://www.bapras.org.uk)); today reacts to the Working Party on Sexual Misconduct in Surgery report, which highlighted not only a toxic environment within the NHS where bullying and harassment are rife, but also disturbing incidences of sexual misconduct and assault.

According to consultant plastic surgeon and immediate past President of BAPRAS Ruth Waters;

*“These recommendations are certainly a step in the right direction, as one of the fundamental problems is not only that these behaviours occur, but that complaints are often not believed, not investigated, or under-investigated, thus nurturing permissiveness.”*

*“It is imperative that immediate, comprehensive, and decisive action is taken for the profession as a whole – and in particular from a bystander capacity to call out negative behaviours, such as inappropriate ‘banter’ that can progress to more damaging actions.”*

*“We are pleased to highlight that, in conjunction with the Confederation of British Surgery, we have launched a bullying and harassment helpline to advise colleagues who may need advice from an independent source.”*

*“It is time for the culture to change, to work to protect our colleagues and patients alike, and to ensure that the NHS works to set a far-reaching and inspiring example of a safe and respectful workplace for all.”*

According to consultant plastic surgeon, former BAPRAS President and CBS President Mark Henley;

*“This report is shocking, but sadly not as surprising as it perhaps should have been. Misogyny is a complex and deep-rooted societal issue, affecting the work culture within many professions and sectors. This systemic malignancy, often a culmination of micro-aggressions within a permissive environment, not only harms colleagues but also puts patients at considerable risk. If predators can act with impunity towards their colleagues, and get away with it, there is a significant risk that this behaviour could be extended to patients.”*

Many consultants lament the loss of a ‘firm’-style of training, which could have helped junior doctors feel less isolated and more of a part of a supportive community<sup>1</sup>. Mr Henley adds;

*“Organisations are perceived to be lenient when dealing with complaints, often offering minimal repercussions. A change of culture is required. It is also a shame that we have lost the sense of community and supportive wellbeing that ‘firms’ could provide individuals in*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bmj.com/content/365/bmj.l4105/rr-5>



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*training.*

*“The NHS carries an inherent responsibility in establishing the foundations for change across Britain. It is the UK’s largest employer with over 1.5 million employees and is the fifth biggest employer globally. Changing the very foundations of this vast working culture will certainly cause a positive ripple effect that can inspire change in other sectors. We know that change does not happen overnight, and that such a seismic shift may span the course of a generation – think, for example, of the adoption of seatbelts – we are hopeful that younger people will be more vigilant of inappropriate behaviours.”*

The report makes recommendations for an independent reporting body, which would streamline the complaints process and allow for an unbiased investigation; it also recommends a code of conduct and appropriate sanctions for those who violate it.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors:**

**About the British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS)**

The British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons is the voice of plastic surgery in the UK, advancing education in all aspects of the specialty and promoting understanding of contemporary practice. BAPRAS speaks for the majority of reconstructive and aesthetic plastic surgeons providing services to patients in the UK today. For more information visit [www.bapras.org.uk](http://www.bapras.org.uk) or @BAPRASvoice on Twitter/Instagram.

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