

# You said, we did: an International Medical Doctor's experience

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“She was both isolated and unsupported,” said Helen. “She had just moved from India into a speciality registrar post, leaving her family to learn more from our National Health Service and take back the benefits for her patients. She was a lead in her medical field in India. “Whilst she was exceptionally competent at medicine, her inexperience of how the NHS functions – the countless abbreviations and the secret idiosyncrasies we have – were making her transition very difficult. Her relationships with her team were becoming strained and busy workloads made conversations difficult and behaviours unsupportive.”

**“Without knowledge of how the system works, I found myself helpless and low in confidence,” said the doctor. “This led to low self-esteem which affected my sleep, my emotional and physical stability. My mind was blocked from fear.”**

Helen suggested she talk to her educational supervisor and write a statement about the behaviours from one particular doctor, which were investigated and resulted in a facilitated conversation.

“When we first met, she wanted to leave and go home but the strength she got from speaking up and calling out this behaviour made her complete her full placement and even stay longer to support the first wave of COVID-19,” said Helen.

The International Medical Doctor was happy to share her experience of speaking up with others and filmed a short “you said, we did” video which Helen used to share a staff story at Trust board and used throughout the trust to encourage others to speak up.

Helen also shared the doctor's experience with the medical educational lead to better understand how the international medical workforce was supported. An International Doctors Support Initiative (IDSI) programme was just being put into place and consisted of five key elements including induction, integration and wellbeing forum, teaching programme and career development.

The Freedom to Speak Up team attended this forum to listen to IMGs discuss and raise concerns about various issues including contracts, bullying and discrimination. With the support of the FTSU team, the IMGs' confidence of their medical ability and career choices as well as their health and wellbeing have been restored and loneliness and isolation has been reduced.

**One of the IMGs said, “When I was going through a bad time, somebody from the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians checked on me every week and even offered to take me for walks, which made me feel that I have someone to look out for me”.**

As a result of one person speaking up, a forum has been established to mitigate feelings of culture shock and social isolation by the international workforce and helped to promote a culture of speaking up.