

SAS Appraisal

During a SAS Doctor listening exercise across Wales recently, while standing and hearing of the continuing concerns and challenges, it occurred to me I would ask a SAS Doctor to do my annual appraisal, to show my support to my valued colleagues.

I made clear my wish and a 'volunteer', trained in medical appraisal by the Welsh Deanery, was identified. I entered my data and reflective narratives onto the Medical Appraisal and Revalidation System (MARS) (used by all doctors in Wales) and a date was set. I admit some uncertainties as it approached – would my appraiser really appreciate the challenges in my professional role as a Deputy Chief Medical Officer in government and be able to help this be the positive developmental experience it should.

When I arrived in West Wales (I wanted to come to him rather than him to me) I was reassured. A colleague's light and spacious office had been borrowed, two chairs arranged for conversation with the computer system on a screen nearby, but not the centre of attention. I was offered coffee and Christmas pudding flavoured cookies. It was clear in our attempts to put each other at ease that my supporting information and reflections had been read in detail.

The next 75 minutes was spent in friendly dialogue that was not without its challenge – 'did anything go wrong for you this year?', and 'what exactly is the CPD requirement for your role?' and 'what is your aspiration?'. It all felt absolutely as it should, a constructive, mutual reflection on my partial successes and failures but at the end I felt energised and renewed as a doctor.

This doctor in government has been beautifully appraised by an SAS Doctor in community psychiatry and I still feel the benefit.