Differential Attainment case study

Paediatric mentoring programme – How a local intervention in Health Education Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS) is building peer support networks for doctors entering specialty training

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What is the problem?
Doctors in training can feel isolated or overwhelmed as they join a new training programme. This may be even more so for those who have moved region, are new to the specialty and have no established support network or who have other changes going on which may be difficult to discuss with colleagues. Research has shown that for some, this can have a negative impact on attainment and progression.

Having experienced the positive effect a mentor can have, Dr Storring felt this approach could be of great benefit in developing trainees’ professionally but also help maintain a positive work/life balance. Using peers would help develop broader networks and could help to build resilience for the longer term.

What is the solution?
Dr Storring wanted to set up an intervention that could help with any issues both in and out of work. Her peer mentoring programme is in its second year and matches doctors who are new to the training programme with more experienced peers for personalised support. Trainees can ask to be matched with someone with particular experience, for example of a certain career path or a similar life situation such as working less than full time or with a young family. Volunteer peer mentors go through a training programme so they understand their role of a mentor and develop feedback skills. This allows trainees to speak to someone who is confident and constructive and who understands their individual situation and can give helpful insight.

What were the challenges?
Initially volunteer mentors were struggling to attend the face to face training day, particularly as KSS covers a wide geographic area. To make this more accessible, working
with colleagues in Health Education England, Dr Storring established the Medical Mentoring e-learning programme. This has increased the number of mentors taking part and the programme is now available across the UK.

Similarly having face to face meeting with mentees has also been a challenge but the programme is very flexible and encourages mentors and mentees to use Skype, WhatsApp, text and other social media to interact with each other.

**What were the results?**

Mentors and mentees were surveyed after completing the programme and all said they very much enjoyed taking part and found the additional support very valuable. The majority of mentors have continued for a second year. The mentees found that their mentors really helped them resolve some issues and that being part of the programme enhanced their wellbeing.

Dr Storring hopes to have more quantitative data after the second year of trainee mentee and mentors have completed the paediatric mentoring programme.

**Want to know more?** Please contact Dr Nicola Storring on: 
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