
Enhanced junior doctor forums: An implementation guide

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Welcome to our implementation guide to enhanced junior doctor forums.

While junior doctor forums have existed in various guises throughout the United Kingdom, the implementation of the new junior doctor contract (2016) in England has put a fresh emphasis on this crucial aspect of medical engagement between trainees and their trusts and health boards.

As illustrated in '[Supported and Valued – a trainee led review into morale and training in psychiatry](#)', there were a range of issues that were perpetuated by poor communication between trainees, senior doctors and management. This led us, as trainees, to look for a desired commitment from our local education providers to establish 'enhanced junior doctor forums'.

In line with [British Medical Association guidance](#), we recommended expanding beyond the remit set out within the new contract, and establishing enhanced junior doctor forums across all local education providers within the four nations. This would tackle the wider determinants of morale and training that are having an impact on the recruitment and retention of psychiatric trainees.

This implementation guide, which is a collection of case studies with supporting advice, is designed to help collate existing good practice, highlight different models that could be implemented, and inspire trainees, senior doctors and management alike, to either establish or improve their own local forums. We do not set out to provide a formula that will work for all, but to showcase good examples, where ideas can be taken and adapted to suit local arrangements.

We hope that you find this guide useful and look forward to seeing many more enhanced junior doctor forums being established.



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A gold standard forum?

Background

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS FT established their forum in August 2016, spearheaded by the deputy medical director. This came in response to multiple trainee concerns that resulted in referrals about training to both the Local Education and Training Board and the General Medical Council.

Formal governance was arranged as a sub-group of the Medical Negotiating Committee with the following standing membership (who must all be present to be quorate) co-producing formal terms of reference which extended beyond the contractual requirements of the new junior doctor contract (2016) in England.

The forum is co-chaired by a core and higher trainee. There are trainee representatives covering all grades and localities alongside an open invitation for any trainee to attend pending consultant approval and clinical cover. The agenda and minutes are shared openly throughout the trust. They meet monthly for 2 hours and administrative support is provided by the medical services team.

Invitation to other key stakeholders (i.e. nursing directors or industrial relations officers etc.) can be suggested by the membership and is determined on an ad-hoc basis via the approval of the chair.

Standing membership

- Trainees (co-chairs, representative and open invitation)
- Guardian of Safe Working (or nominated deputy)
- Medical Director (or nominated deputy)
- Director of Medical Education (or nominated deputy)
- LNC Chair (or nominated deputy)
- Directorate representative
- Medical Services team representative

Achievements and challenges

Achievements	Challenges
Recruitment of healthcare assistants to provide phlebotomy and electrocardiography services throughout the Trust.	Quorate attendance due to location and timing of meetings: minimised through negotiation with standing membership.
Establishment of Trust 'bank' junior doctors to reduce time to remuneration from locum shifts worked.	Maintaining authority due to transition of original stakeholders: minimised by active stakeholder management and relationship building.
Rota negotiation and agreement.	Continuity of trainee representatives: minimised by active and regular communications.

Top tip

- **Having formal governance arrangements, terms of reference, and the support of senior medical leadership was vital to provide the authority required to implement change effectively.**

A forum in the making

Background

Trainee presentation of 'Supported and Valued' to the Trust Board combined with reduced morale and low applications for core and higher training in the area provided enthusiasm to establish an enhanced junior doctor forum that extended beyond the remit of the new junior doctor contract (2016) including work facilities and educational issues.

The forum was established in 2017 and is sponsored by the medical director and deputy medical director. We meet quarterly for 2 hours and have elected trainee co-chairs, invite representatives from not just psychiatric training but from GP and Foundation training too and receive support from HR staff for room bookings and minutes. We also have a small budget for refreshments as agreed with the Director of Medical Education (DME).

Protected time to attend has been confirmed with DME and all trainees clinical supervisors.

Standing membership

- Trainees (Chair, representative and open invitation)
- Guardian of Safe Working
- Deputy Medical Director
- Dean of Medical Education
- Training Programme Directors (TPDS)
- Two representatives from HR one who takes minutes

Achievements and challenges

Achievements	Challenges
All higher trainees allocated mobile IT.	Finding a suitable time and location with protected time for trainees to attend.
Establishment of a permanent on-call room.	Overcoming initial scepticism amongst trainees and others to secure engagement.
Engagement with management & attendance of Chief Executive.	Attendance and support of supervisors and TPDs who are a key to ensuring actions are completed.

Top tip

- **Engagement is key. Presenting 'Supported and Valued' helped secure support from the consultant body, medical staffing and management and communicating outcomes rather than a list of minutes through focussed "you said, we did" actions helps show trainees we are making a difference.**

A well-established forum

Background

Recognising the need to improve dialogue between junior doctors and management, the trainee’s forum in 2gether NHS Foundation Trust was established in 2008.

The forum meets bimonthly for 2 hours. Standing agenda items include previous minutes, actions arising, patient safety concerns, rotas, exception reports, and an open section decided by trainees in advance of the meeting. The forum receives administrative support to facilitate room bookings, invitations and minutes.

Standing membership

- Trainees (representative and open invitation)
- Medical Director
- Director of Medical Education
- Inpatient Services Assistant Clinical Director
- Guardian of Safe Working
- HR Representatives

Achievements and challenges

Achievements	Challenges
Trainees are routinely involved in rota designs which are structured to ensure attendance at teaching, training and the MRCPsych course.	Making clear action points and ensuring they are followed up in a timely manner.
All psychiatric trainees receive funding to attend RCPsych physical health training days.	Avoiding the risk of standing items on the agenda becoming a parking place for difficult issues.
Honest and frank dialogue between trainees and senior management who have a genuine desire to improve the lives of trainees.	Managing relationships between all parties in the forum despite competing interests and priorities.

Top tip

- **Ensure consistent human resource and senior representation.**

Trainees leading and implementing change

Background

Established in 2017 following the Northern and Yorkshire Division’s ‘Supported and Valued’ focus group, trainees in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust valued a safe space to share concerns about training and morale.

The ‘Trainees Leading and Implementing Change Forum’ is therefore only open to trainees and is additionally used as peer-support to encourage trainee-led local improvements to work life and training issues.

The forum meets quarterly for 2 hours and discusses issues related to training. There are several smaller working groups tackling specific projects within the forum. Medical Education facilitates room bookings and provides a small budget for refreshments. Matters arising are fed back by forum facilitators to the Guardian of Safe Working Forum and the Director of Medical Education, who also approves proposed change projects.

There is an open invitation for any trainee to attend pending consultant approval and clinical cover.

Standing membership

- Trainees (open invitation)

Achievements and challenges

Achievements	Challenges
Gaining mobile devices for all second on-call doctors enabling them to access electronic patient records.	Maintaining motivation for change by having an action log and sending reminders and offering support to working groups.
Presentations to the Trust Board and medical staff committee raising profile of training issues at several levels within the Trust.	Ensuring that we do not “re-invent the wheel” by having close liaison with the Director of Medical Education about meeting outcomes.
Reflective tool developed for trainees’ involvement in the forum as portfolio evidence for ARCP.	Minimal administrative support is available. Minutes and invites are managed by trainees which is in keeping with the ethos of the group but allocated time would be helpful.

Top tip

- **Meet first thing in the morning – trainees are unlikely to have been diverted by clinical activity and therefore more likely to attend. Breakfast is a great encouragement.**

A national forum



Background

Local PTC reps implemented a junior doctor forum in Wales in 2017 following the momentum gained by the “Supported and Valued” focus groups.

As it is not subject to the new junior doctor contract (2016), the group maintains flexibility with agenda items and membership and is held at the Welsh RCPsych offices. They meet quarterly, and support is jointly provided by the Deanery and RCPsych in Wales.

The meeting is co-chaired by PTC representatives for Wales. There are trainee representatives for each Health Board and there is an open invitation for all psychiatric trainees to attend using professional leave pending consultant approval and clinical cover.

Standing membership

- Trainees (representative and open invitation)
- Foundation doctors and medical students (open invitation)
- Head of School for Psychiatry in Wales
- Members of the Specialty Training Committee
- College tutors
- Training programme directors
- Local medical school representatives

Achievements and challenges

Achievements	Challenges
All new Welsh psychiatric trainees awarded bursary to subsidise exam fees.	Diary clashes – minimised by providing at least 6 weeks’ notice and scheduling meetings in advance for the whole academic year.
Free attendance for medical students at RCPsych Wales’ annual meeting.	Geography of Wales – minimised by rotating location and providing video- and/or/ tele-conferencing facilities.
Matters related to the local MRCPsych course, recruitment, psychotherapy competencies and the ARCP process have been discussed and raised collaboratively to with the Deanery.	Local issues are tackled by the Health Board’s trainee representatives which are not part of this forum where ‘Wales-wide’ issues are discussed.

Top tips

- **An agenda of some sort is important, even if it is loose.**
- **Try to keep good minutes to help keep projects on track and provide absent trainees with a record of proceedings.**

Enhanced junior doctor forum toolkit

While we have ideas about what makes a good Enhanced Junior Doctor's Forum, as you'll have seen through these case studies, there's no right or wrong way and any approach must be adapted to suit the local situation.

However, here are some key things to consider if you're looking to establish or improve your local forum, no matter what shape it takes:

- **Do you need to reinvent the wheel?** If there are existing forums, could you expand these to consider wider issues, could they be more inclusive by including a wider range of trainees or management, and is there the psychological safety to allow trainees to be open about their ideas?
- **What structure suits your area?** Depending on the area and number of trainees, your forum might be more effective if it covers a single hospital, health board or trust, or a whole school of psychiatry. Whatever structure suits your area, remember to gather the right stakeholders to implement the changes you want.
- **Who do you want to attend?** Do you think it's best to invite all trainees or should you invite representatives? If so, how inclusive do you want to be? Will you only invite psychiatric trainees or do you want to be more inclusive inviting staff grade doctors, GP trainees or foundation doctors too? Clinical support staff are important too, so do you want representatives from medical education and staffing to help implement actions?
- **What support do I need?** Your forum needs formal governance arrangements and senior support to be effective – how are you going to gain this? Do you need a small amount of admin support to book rooms, circulate the agenda, write and disseminate minutes and action plans?
- **How often, when and where should you meet?** Whether you decide to meet monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly, regularly schedule your forums, ensure calendar invites are sent well in advance and make sure the location and timing is suitable for your key stakeholders.
- **How can you encourage people to attend?** Could consultants release trainees without using their study leave? Could you provide certificates of attendance or other evidence for trainees' portfolios? Remember people are motivated by autonomy, mastery and purpose – how will you provide this?
- **How are you going to implement change and feedback to others?** Will you share your agenda, minutes and action plan – who will you share these with? Could you partner trainees and clinical support staff to lead on changes? How will you share your improvements?
- **Will your efforts be sustainable?** Is the forum only running because of a few motivated individuals? What happens when they leave? What safeguards can you implement to keep the forum running?

Good luck!

Thanks for taking the time to read our guide and show an interest in either establishing or improving your own junior doctor forum.

In our experience, both personally and from hearing evidence from around the UK, junior doctor forums are not only a great way of helping trainees feel supported and valued but they help in driving local improvements to improve morale, working lives and the care delivered to patients.

We strongly believe that if you are motivated to make a change in your local area then this is one of the best steps that you can make and we hope you've found our guide helpful.

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