How I got involved in promoting recruitment

It is regularly reported that medical students and junior doctors are discouraged from applying to psychiatric rotations for a variety of reasons – the perception that psychiatry is remote from mainstream medicine, is ‘unscientific’, with ‘difficult’ and ‘untreatable’ patients and that it is held in low esteem by other doctors. When there is poor recruitment to core training, there is a knock-on effect on recruitment to Intellectual Disability. I have enjoyed my career in Intellectual Disability psychiatry, and I wanted to play a part in encouraging students and young doctors to consider psychiatry (and possibly our sub-specialty) as an option. I find working with young people rewarding and energising, and explaining my choice of career reminds me of my core working values i.e. maintaining and improving the lives of our patients.

In 2011 the Royal College of Psychiatrists recruitment strategy was set up to increase recruitment to the CT1 grade of Psychiatry Training, aiming for a 50% increase in applications and 95% fill rate by 2015. The strategy focus is on school students, medical students and foundation trainees and also addresses factors that have a negative influence.

Recruitment Strategy:  
http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workinpsychiatry/recruitmentstrategy.aspx

I was already involved in recruitment work in Severn Deanery when the Strategy launched and I was asked to lead the work in the South West.

Issues and rewards of promoting recruitment

The campaign is co-ordinated centrally through the Promoting Recruitment into Psychiatry (PRIP) committee, but most of the work is done through College Divisions and I am the SW Division consultant representative.  
As I planned my strategy I was a bit daunted by the scope of the project and also the geographical size of the SW Division! I had plenty of contacts in Severn Deanery but wondered how I could influence projects in Peninsula (Devon and Cornwall).

However, friendly and supportive psychiatrists soon came forward to help me. I now run two PRIP Network Groups of consultants, trainees and medical students in Severn and Peninsula Deaneries to coordinate the work, which has maintained a high level of activity.
National recruitment to CT1 increased in 2013 by 19% to a 90% fill rate by round two nationally. The exact figures for 2014 are still being analysed. In the South West, although recruitment this year was not quite as robust, there is still a general impression that overall training has improved.

**How to get involved in activities to promote recruitment**

The College PRIP committee are in the process of putting resources onto a ‘Promoting Recruitment’ section of the College website (under the ‘Discover Psychiatry’ tab) for members to download when the opportunity to do recruitment work arises. This website area should be up and running by the end of the year.

**School students:**
- Give presentations in schools. There is a teaching package on DVD available on request from Nikki Cochrane (College Head of Training and Workforce Operations) or from helen.sharrard@blueyonder.co.uk.
- Take sixth-formers for work experience-I regularly have school students shadowing my work and my patients enjoy meeting them. The College PRIP committee liaised with all mental health organisations around the UK to enable access to good quality work experience placements for students over 16/17yrs, see guidance: [http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/Position%20Statement%20on%20Work%20Experience%20in%20Psychiatry.pdf](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/Position%20Statement%20on%20Work%20Experience%20in%20Psychiatry.pdf)

**Medical students:**
- Support the local medical student Psychiatry Society by attending events organised by enthusiastic medical students. For example MedFest events are held early in the year round the country:- [http://www.medfest.co.uk/](http://www.medfest.co.uk/)
- Look at the Student Associate area of the College website (developed by ID psychiatrists Holly Greer and Maggie McGurgan)
- Contribute to the local Medical School admission panels-it is important to have influence here.
- Offer electives or other projects to students
- Attend regional careers fairs or Summer Schools

**Foundation trainees:**
- Offer Taster Days to foundation trainees. The College PRIP committee contacted all foundation schools and mental health organisations to encourage them to set up schemes. This is another chance to promote Intellectual Disability. Severn Deanery set up an innovative trainee-led taster day scheme which received positive feedback from all involved, and it has been replicated in Peninsula Deanery.
For information:
If possible get involved in an Autumn School for foundation trainees. In both SW deaneries, psychiatry trainees organise a two day event in October/November full of lectures, masterclasses, clinical experiences and networking events. Last year feedback was excellent and many who attended went on to apply for core training posts. There were several placements in Intellectual Disability (run by trainees) thus raising the profile of our specialty.

Attend careers fairs for foundation trainees.

A last word:

As a Faculty, we need to ensure that there is a constant supply of trainees coming forward to fill posts in psychiatry of Intellectual Disability, and this promoting recruitment work is helping to make that happen.