

Understanding Barriers to Intellectual Disability Psychiatry Recruitment - Results of a National Survey

Lead Authors: Fergus Lewis (ST5) and Alisha Patel (ST5), Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
Additional Authors: Rohit Shankar, Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Nwamaka Uchendu, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Niall O’Kane, North London NHS Foundation Trust, Nicole Eady, East London NHS Foundation Trust



AIM & HYPOTHESIS

To understand the patterns and barriers in Psychiatry of Intellectual Disability (ID) recruitment nationally to inform improvements in training and recruitment strategies.

BACKGROUND

A 2025 survey of core psychiatry trainees (CT) in South London identified **low interest in ID Psychiatry as a career**. Contributing factors included **limited exposure** in training and **lack of role models/mentors**. National recruitment data revealed **40.57% of posts in England filled** in 2023 [1]. A **national survey** was developed to determine if these findings reflect experiences of resident doctors across the United Kingdom.

METHODS

- Cross-sectional online survey distributed nationally** to resident and specialty doctors of all grades.
- Information was gathered on **exposure to the specialty, career intentions, perceived barriers and benefits of choosing the specialty**.
- Likert scales** were used (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree) and quantitatively analysed with **free-text responses** analysed thematically.

RESULTS

99 doctors responded to the survey (77.8% England, 18.2% Scotland, 2% Northern Ireland, 2% Wales)

- Exposure to ID Psychiatry** – 27.3% in medical school and 40.4% in CT rotations
- 48.5% deem it an academically stimulating specialty**
- 34.4% deem it not well-respected**
- 34.3% reported inadequate teaching**
- 48.5% would consider applying** for ID Higher Training
- Role models (69.7%) and training exposure (63.6%)** were strongest factors encouraging applications

Respondents demand more: Teaching and availability of training posts (core and higher level)

FACTORS ENCOURAGING OR DISCOURAGING APPLICATIONS

Factor	Encouraged (%)	Discouraged (%)
Exposure in training	63.6	27.3
Role models	69.7	15.2
Clinical variety	50.5	31.8
Development of generic skills	52.6	25.1
ID-specific on calls	36.4	34.9
Consultant job availability	39.4	31.8
Peer and supervisor attitudes	61.6	14.9

Role models and training exposure were the strongest factors encouraging applications.

RESPONDENT CONCERNS: QUALITATIVE COMMENTS

- Concerns about research opportunities
- Lack of dual training options
- Availability of consultant posts
- Lack of recognition of specialty abroad
- Lack of private practice opportunities

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Exposure to the specialty and access to positive role models and mentors are the strongest modifiable factors influencing career choice. Future training and recruitment strategies should focus on increasing clinical exposure in undergraduate and postgraduate curriculums through placements in mental health trusts, simulation-based learning, greater visibility of career opportunities and strengthen mentorship programmes [2].

1

INCREASE EXPOSURE

Increase the number of undergraduate and postgraduate placements and embed ID Psychiatry in teaching programs, including access to ID clinical simulation.

2

STRENGTHEN MENTORSHIP

Increase access to positive role models and mentors throughout undergraduate and postgraduate training.

3

IMPROVE VISIBILITY

Promote dual training, academic pathways and the breadth of career opportunities within ID Psychiatry.

REFERENCES

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CONTACT

Dr Fergus Lewis | fergus.lewis3@nhs.net

Dr Alisha Patel | alisha.patel6@nhs.net

DECLARATIONS

No conflicts of interest.

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