

Evaluation of the Peer mentoring programme: Providing support for trainees in Psychiatry.

Introduction and Aims

It is important for all doctors to feel supported in specialities such as psychiatry where trainees are often spread out over a large geographic area and can feel isolated compared to acute hospitals where trainees work in teams with peers.

Mentoring is known to have a range of benefits including participation in a supportive network, enhanced confidence, reduced stress and increased feelings of control¹. It is encouraged by the Royal College of Psychiatrists at any stage of career².

The aim of the programme was to provide peer mentoring support to trainees who were joining a particular geographical region within the Trust (West Hampshire).

The role of the mentor included: providing peer support, being a point of contact to respond to general queries about working in psychiatry, exams, career advice, the on call rota and useful contacts. Some mentors provided teaching sessions with support from the Clinical Tutor. Contact between mentors and mentees was informally arranged and took place as face to face meetings, through email and online communication such as Whatsapp.

Method

Five trainees from Core Psychiatry and Higher Specialist Psychiatry training volunteered for the role of mentors. A formal teaching session on coaching and mentoring skills was offered to mentors through the Trust.

The mentees consisted of Core, GP and Foundation trainees.

At the end of the placement an open ended questionnaire was sent to mentees to complete. The responses were analysed in order to identify key themes and suggestions for improvement.



Results

All trainees who responded felt that the mentoring scheme had been helpful to them.

Positive themes identified included trainees feeling more supported, better bonding with colleagues and having a named contact for practical advice.

Core trainees valued the Registrar to Core trainee mentoring relationship with regard to thinking about future career development.

Although some trainees liked the informal nature of the mentoring arrangements the majority of feedback suggested that they would like more frequent or more structured meetings to take place

Conclusions

We plan to implement the suggestions from the feedback as well as focussing on how we can improve it to meet the needs of GP and FY trainees so they get the most from their psychiatry rotations. We will continue to measure and evaluate this as well as considering the experience of the mentors in future work.

Peer mentoring feedback

Did you find it helpful?

'Very helpful for CV building advice, work through tricky team dynamics; source of support re exam difficulties'

'Really valuable resource; provides more informal platform for trainees to ask for support. Helps with bonding between colleagues and leads to culture of openness and peer support'

'Lots of helpful advice re exams, psychotherapy patients, on calls, career'

What worked well?

'Nice space outside of clinical or educational supervision to reflect and discuss issues relating to all matter of life at work. I appreciated the fact it existed as a system as have not come across it in other areas I have worked and really valued the flexibility'

'Having a more informal environment to discuss issues/concerns with training. Advice/guidance from a senior re CV building'

'Helpful to meet and talk through my thoughts about higher training, and to hear perspective from a current higher trainee including things I had not already considered'

What would you like to be different?

'I think perhaps a more formal schedule of meeting would be better in the future-say once a month before Wed afternoon teaching. It was useful to have a core trainee advise us especially re any on call issues that came up'

'I think that if mentoring sessions were available around teaching time it would have been more useful'

'if the first mentoring session took place as a group session with other mentees it would provide that friendly opportunity for everyone to meet'

Contact

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References

1. Steven A, Oxley J, Fleming WG. Mentoring for NHS Doctors: perceived benefits across the personal-professional interface. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine 1 Nov 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1258/jrsm.2008.080153>
2. Guide to mentoring for psychiatric trainees. Psychiatric Trainees Committee (PTC) March 2021. [guide-to-mentoring-for-psychiatric-trainees.pdf \(rcpsych.ac.uk\)](https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/guides-to-mentoring-for-psychiatric-trainees.pdf)