

## SuppoRTT Fellowship for HEE April 2021 to April 2022

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### Personal aims:

My own personal aim for this fellowship year was to develop my leadership and management skills. As well as delve into the unknown of a non-clinical role.

I have had multiple times out of training and I wanted to help develop the SuppoRTT programme which I think is a hugely useful, but under used programme.

I was also keen for a chance to work with others on a project, utilising my team work skills. Having an opportunity to work together on a common theme of supporting trainees back to work and to help aid retention within the general practice workforce.

### Aims for the project:

The aim at the outset of the fellowship was to

- Research the experiences of GP trainees in Wessex, of their time out of programme or proposed time out of programme, and to find out what it is they wanted out of the SuppoRTT programme.
- Prior to the fellowship starting I had some ideas about looking at how the coronavirus pandemic may have had an impact on trainees out of programme at the time. In particular looking at how they could be supported back to training in an environment that may have looked very different to the one they left.
- Promotion of the SuppoRTT programme within the GP trainees and trainers.

### What have we achieved

At the start of the year we met the heads of school and the associate deans to discuss the SuppoRTT programme. To gather any ideas or thoughts they had on what could work well to help support trainees back to work after absence. This process was helpful in setting the scene for the various patches, their trainee demographics and needs.

We also had a meeting with the AiT chair as a representative of the trainee body to gather their thoughts on SuppoRTT. We spent some time on researching what other deaneries were doing in term of the SuppoRTT programme for GPs to ensure we were not reinventing the wheel.

We went on to research the experiences of trainees of their time out or proposed time out. We achieved this by conducting an online survey of all trainees, as to their thoughts and wishes. This was followed by conducting small focus groups with the trainees that were keen for further discussion.

As a result of this research key areas were highlighted that the trainees felt could be improved upon. The **administrative side** of having time out of training was a big issue for the trainees so we have developed documentation and an info gram to support trainees with this process. These documents have been sent to the local patches and due to be uploaded to their websites and the local SuppoRTT pages soon. We have also worked with

Fourteen Fish, the national eportfolio system, to embed SuppoRTT links into the portfolio to ease the administrative process. This is a national change and something we are hugely proud of.

The trainees also expressed a desire to have a **return to training course** so we designed and delivered this course. We received very positive feedback. We first ran this course in December 2021 as a face to face course and then again in March 2022 which we delivered virtually. We are planning the sustainability of it going forward and hope to be able to provide it again for future trainees.

Towards the end of this fellowship year we have been meeting with trainees and trainers throughout the deanery to **increase awareness** of the SuppoRTT service. To engage the trainers to signpost their trainees there and for trainees to think about what is on offer prior to their absence and on their return.

### **What I have achieved**

My personal learning has been vast. Firstly, I have developed my leadership skills. At the start of the year I successfully completed the Edward Jenner Leadership Course. This gave me a solid background on leadership and what it looks like in the NHS. I then went on to practise these skills when leading on meetings, with our mentor as well as when presenting our work to trainers, heads of schools and trainees. I have used these leadership skills when working within our team as well, leading on different aspects of the project and knowing what my strengths and weaknesses are.

I have practiced my negotiation and influence skills when designing the RTT course. Having to design the course, organise the venue and logistics and working with the deaneries to promote it. Due to COVID restrictions that were ever changing we had to plan for all eventualities and managing this successfully has been very rewarding.

We have built a collaborative team to allow us to achieve so much. Spending time at the beginning getting to know each other was hugely valuable. At the time it felt like unproductive time but I think we flourished on the project due to this investment time.

I have learnt many new practical skills that aren't practiced in my clinical role such as organising and chairing meetings as well as writing agendas and minutes for meetings. My IT skills using MS teams, Dropbox, Trello and PowerPoint have also greatly improved.

### **Challenges**

There are four fellows working on this SuppoRTT fellowship, at the start of the fellowship year, the other three fellows were working on a Wednesday and I was working on an alternative day. This was therefore tricky to meet as a group and work together collaboratively. Most meetings were set to be on a Wednesday and I had assigned my fellowship day to be a Tuesday, with clinical work on a Wednesday. As a result of this, I approached my surgery and asked to change my clinical working days. Unfortunately, I was unable to have the whole day on Wednesday off but they allowed me to have Wednesday afternoon to work on the fellowship. This change could not happen until August, 5 months into the fellowship. I do feel I may have had missed opportunities due to this work pattern.

To help overcome this challenge we have used dropbox, an IT system that allows you to share files and update them for the group, allowing us to work on the same documents across the working week. We have written agendas and minutes for meetings and this has allowed us to keep the team up to date with progress and discussions.

I have tried to send an email update most weeks on my progress from the Tuesday so that others can pick this up on the Wednesday and continue to move it forward.

I have found that during the fellowship I have been very task driven. I think this is partly because of my work pattern and the lack of sharing ideas space I had with the team.

On a more team level we have had various challenges. Navigating our way through various red tape to plan and deliver our course was tricky but rewarding. On a similar theme embedding the SuppoRTT links into the fourteen fish eportfolio was again full of challenges such as getting approval from the right people and stakeholders. I feel has had a massive impact on how accessible the SuppoRTT programme is to GP trainees so hugely worthwhile.

### **Next Steps**

In my extension of the fellowship I would like to further develop areas we have been working on, such as the Return to Training Course, and promoting the SuppoRTT programme.

I would also like to look at a new angle and work with trainees that have not yet had time out of training. Achieving this by running a course / webinar so that any GP trainee in Wessex who is thinking of having time out will be better informed prior to any absence. The use of the preabsence form for SuppoRTT, which is currently under used, could be further developed and promoted in line with this education.

Another area could be to work with the trust champions in hospitals to look at ways that GP trainees needs in the hospital setting can be improved. Ensuring GP trainees are getting the best they can out of their hospital placements.

### **Conclusions**

This fellowship year has been a brilliant learning experience for me. I feel I have learnt lots of new skills as well as practising older ones. I think the challenges of building a collaborative team have been hugely beneficial for future work, both clinically and non clinically. I feel we have managed to do this well and we are working effectively and efficiently together.

I think we have built on the SuppoRTT programme and helped promote it to the GP schools in Wessex. I hope that the trainees and trainers alike feel that the programme is accessible and helpful.