

An Acting Up as Consultant Pilot Programme facilitates successful transition from trainee to consultant

Background

Transition - in paediatrics a term commonly used to describe changes in healthcare provision from paediatric into adult services. However, trainees also go through periods of transition throughout their training.

The trainee-consultant transition can be a stressful and difficult time. Many newly-appointed consultants report feeling adequately prepared for medical/clinical aspects of work but unprepared for non-clinical competencies including supervision, leadership and management^{1,2}. Perceived lack of preparedness correlates with higher scores for burnout and emotional exhaustion in consultants². Progressive independence of trainees facilitates transition³.

Time spent Acting Up into consultant duties have long been recognised by the RCPCH but availability is variable and dependent on local circumstances⁴.

Methodology

An NHS Foundation Trust developed a three month pilot AUC programme and one ST8 trainee was selected.

Programme was divided into:

- 80% clinical (attending weeks, outpatient clinics and out-of-hours daytime/evening cover)
- 20% non-clinical, for development of leadership and management experience. This included regular consultant and management meetings and planned mentoring with Service Line leads, Divisional and Clinical Directors and the operational team.

Outcomes were drawn from structured feedback at end of programme.

Aim

The aim of the Acting Up as a Consultant (AUC) Pilot Programme was to determine whether a formal training programme aided ST8 transition to consultant role.

Trainee experiences and reflections



"I had first-hand experience of what the job is, not what I expected it to be from a trainee perspective. When I started my first consultant role, I did not feel overwhelmed or unsure, I was happy and able to just get on with the job."

Non-clinical experience	Key points from discussion
Operational management team members	Bed meetings Complaints management Outpatient administration
Weekly Paediatric consultant meetings	Service/departmental plans Practical issues (site, technology)
Meetings with Divisional Director, Senior Operational manager, Clinical Director and sub-speciality leads	5 year vision: Trust direction, STP Directorate/departmental strengths and challenges Advice for newly-appointed consultant
Monthly Directorate meetings	Operational and financial aspects of directorate/department Actions following CQC report Current directorate/department successes and challenges and future plans
Workforce projects manager	Role of workforce vs human resources New junior doctor and consultant contracts Appraisal and revalidation
Legal team	Complaints and litigation: process, Trust experience, key cases in Paediatrics Statement writing Role of consultant
Finance manager	Monthly reports of income, expenditure and QUIPP
Meetings with Paediatric consultants and nurses, Anaesthetics consultants, PARRT, CAMHS, Hospital School	Listened to personal journeys, current roles, achievements, concerns and challenges Advice for a newly appointed consultant

Results

Attending weeks were important clinical opportunities as being the responsible and accountable physician developed trainee self-belief and stronger negotiation and decision-making skills.

The trainee reported timetabled non-clinical time enabled greater development of leadership and management skills including critical thinking, diplomacy and collaborative working and stronger practical understanding of the department's operational and financial structure and challenges.

Consultant supervision and mentorship emphasised non-clinical learning including situational awareness. The trainee experienced first-hand what is expected from a newly-appointed consultant.

Consultants requested training focused on supporting trainees through transition. Furthermore all recognised the benefit of mentorship for senior trainees and newly-appointed consultants.

Recommendation

We recommend that more AUC programmes are developed within ST8 training to facilitate smooth, stress-free transition to consultant.

Conclusions

The AUC Pilot Programme successfully prepared the trainee for transition to consultant. The most successful aspects for effective transition were having allocated non-clinical time and mentorship.

References

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