

Chapelgreen practice, Sheffield: Connecting with our future

What is this about?

We are a large (16k) practice on the northern edge of Sheffield that has changed hugely with the loss of the coal and steel industries. Like all GPs we have struggled to meet growing demand but the focus on being 'providers' has distracted us from our role as leaders in the community. We wanted to grow beyond just being a 'service', to becoming a true partnership especially with the next generation.

As GPs we can't look after our patients and help them with their needs and problems without the involvement of the whole team, not just the doctors. Despite the workload, our lives are rich and fulfilling and we believe passionately that a career in the NHS is a great way to live a life.

This thinking led us to Ecclesfield School, the largest secondary school in Sheffield, and the development of a project with the inspiring careers adviser, Lesley Cassell. We had three aims:

- Firstly to engage with the community and as a practice 'give something back' in a way that would help the next generation and at the same time reinforce our team's values and develop the team's leadership abilities.
- Second, to encourage schoolchildren in our (far from affluent) area not to write themselves off as potential future doctors. As we prove everyday, you need a good heart but not Einstein's brain to be a doctor!
- Third, we wanted to show that *all* careers in the NHS are valuable and their variety means that there is something for everyone.



How did we do it?

In stage one of the process two GPs attended two assemblies for years nine and eleven in late September at the start of the school year, as these pupils were thinking actively about career choice and were not yet fixed in their views.

Each assembly, lasting 15 minutes, included 300 to 400 pupils. The purpose of their address was to explain the different careers and opportunities available within the health service, not just general practice, and the steps they would need to take.

We conducted a survey following this stage, which showed a reasonable level of understanding of the range of career choice and also showed that over 40% would consider a career in the NHS!

The pupils also gave us permission to record their career choice in the future to see if intention was later converted to commitment.

The second visit two months later was attended by administration staff, nursing staff and GPs and was open to pupils that attended the first talks and expressed an interest in careers within healthcare. 40 pupils attended along with their parents, for the opportunity to discuss what courses would be required and what advice and experience would be helpful. We were able to connect pupils to individuals who could help them further with advice on, for example, midwifery and sports physiotherapy.



In the third stage groups of students came to the practice to observe it in action across all disciplines. Witnessing how the practice operates first-hand gave the pupils a real insight into life, teamwork and a career within primary healthcare. We were proud of the initiative shown by our team members, for example in writing and performing a mock consultation on breaking bad news about a cancer diagnosis, which the students said was a highlight of the day.

In the final stage during the summer a small number of pupils who were more seriously committed, shadowed a member of the team in their specific area of interest for a day, learning in more detail what the job involves and its challenges and rewards. The feedback also showed that one of them who had thought that Medicine would be beyond him because no-one from his family had ever gone to University, was now thinking again!

What have been the benefits?

As a practice, this has really captured our imagination. This wasn't just the pet project of a couple of people; we decided together that this was an area of work that we wanted to support. There have been many opportunities to get involved at greater (presenting to hundreds of pupils) or lesser (talking one on one) levels of anxiety. People have been courageous. Some of the least confident members of the team put themselves forward for the most challenging tasks, without being pushed to do so and with the intention of helping themselves to develop further as individuals. Some of the newest and youngest members of the team have played an active role, inspired by the opportunity to help a generation close to their own.

The feedback from the school has been very good. The pupils have been stimulated to think more broadly about their possibilities and not to write themselves off from considering some of the more competitive careers.

At a system level, Lesley wanted to get local employers from other walks of life to see what we are doing and inspire children in their own ways. The good news is that a couple of local employers including the supermarket Aldi have now implemented our programme and adapted it for their own circumstances.

The icing on the cake was that we were commended by CQC in July 2016 and told that our leadership and school project were 'outstanding'

What have we learned?

We have seen how collaborative working between GP practice and local school has not just added, but multiplied our effectiveness. This has been a very stimulating exercise that has helped to raise morale at a difficult time for primary care. Many feel that the work is important because we are actively

helping the children of the community, some of whom are children and grandchildren of our team members. Those involved have grown in confidence and skill and many others have become interested in taking part in the future. As the knowledge and impact of what we is becoming more widely known, professional colleagues in other practices are thinking of doing something similar or of engaging in the community in some other way.

What next?

We will continue our work and improve the process in response to feedback. We will also encourage other employers to work first-hand with the children. Our relationship with the school is growing stronger and new ideas for collaboration will quickly emerge. The latest is to offer our waiting-room walls to the Arts department for the children to creatively express their interpretation of the importance of health and healthcare. So, watch this space...literally!