

Oxford Buddy Scheme: Description and Terms of Reference

Background

The Oxford Buddy Scheme aims to improve support and careers advice for doctors in training and medical students. The scheme introduces the concept of “buddy families” where doctors and medical students at different levels of training and similar career interests are grouped together to provide peer support and careers advice.

The scheme will complement the Career Workshops provided by HEETV and the educational support provided by clinical and educational supervisors. In addition to general advice, potential areas of support relate to:

- Preparation for specialty applications
- Teaching
- Quality improvement projects
- Research/publications
- Sharing of resources
- The e-portfolio

The scheme will begin as a buddy scheme (tier 1 support). The aspiration is to provide additional formal mentoring in due course (tier 2 support).

Potential benefits of the scheme

- 1) Improve connection between undergraduate and postgraduate trainees in the region
- 2) Support morale of Doctors in Training by providing opportunities to speak freely and honestly about the challenges they face within a supportive family network

Who is eligible?

Final year undergraduate students and trainees in foundation years will be invited to the scheme. Trainees in core specialty training, including VTS trainees, , most likely at times of transition to higher training or to year 3 VTS.

Buddies will be drawn from:

- Core and Specialty Trainees on placement at University Hospitals of Oxford
- Trainee GPs in the Thames Valley Region
- Consultants, GPs and specialty and associate specialist (SAS) doctors

How will it work?

Potential buddies will be offered advice and guidance on how to provide appropriate buddying support. Key aspects will include skills in listening, facilitating discussion, knowledge of boundary issues (confidentiality, disclosure, ethical code of practice).

A Buddy Family in secondary care will consist of: Consultant, 1-2 SpRs, Core Trainee and up to 5 foundation doctors. In primary care the Family will be headed by a member of ‘first five’ (GP within their first five years post CCT) and will include a VTS 1/2 and VTS 3. The role of consultant or ‘first five’ member will be supervision of the Buddies and provision of support if required.

It is expected that each family should arrange a meeting every 6-8 weeks as a group, with more frequent contact by appropriate individual family members contingent on the type of support needed.

Scheme Structure

The Oxford University Medical Education Fellows (OUMEF) will lead the development of the Scheme. There will be a development and management committee.

The development committee will oversee the setting up of the family buddy scheme and a later addition of a mentoring tier. It will do so by supporting the management committee in forming:

- Links with the Medical School, GP school, HEETV (e.g. PSU), and OUMEF
- Recruitment of buddies across the medical grades
- Provide training opportunities

The development committee will be chaired by the Lead for the Management (FY Scheme) Committee. Members will include: representatives from: OUMEF, OFTRG, GP trainees, Core and Advanced Trainees. The role of the Development Committee and OUMEF will be reviewed as the scheme develops.

The management (operational) committee sits within OUH Foundation Year representatives group. There will be a FY Programme Director linked to the operational committee, with responsibility for greater links between the Medical School and OUH, thus supporting undergraduate transition to FY training.

People may request to change buddy family. The management committee will have arrangements to respond to these transfer requests.

Sustainability

The responsibility for the continuation of the Scheme within OUH will rest with OUH. The management committee will oversee preparation for the new intake in August, including allocation of new entrants to a family prior to taking up post in August. This may require help from the OUH HR department.

Ethics and Professional Conduct

Rules of disclosure of information and professional conduct requirements of buddies are as specified by the GMC (Good Medical Practice, 2013). These include: Domain 2, Safety & Quality, particularly the duty to respond to risks to safety; and Domain 3, Teaching Training Supporting & Assessing, particularly items 42,43. Mentors will be expected, as required by Thames Valley and Wessex Leadership Academy (TVWLA), to adhere to the European Mentoring & Coaching Council Code of Ethics (<http://www.emccouncil.org/>).

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