

# Near-peer GP Taster Programme *Health Education England*

## for final year GP trainees and Foundation Year One (FY1) doctors

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### Context

General Practice (GP) is currently viewed negatively as a career choice compared to other specialties leading to GP training programmes struggling to fill posts.<sup>1</sup>

Opportunities to change this mind-set in the early years of training are limited. Trainees may find themselves applying for entry into GP specialty training just three to four months after completing their Foundation Year 1 (FY1), yet there are few GP attachments during FY1 that can provide experience of primary care and positively inform career choice. To help ameliorate the current crisis in GP recruitment and retention initiatives are required to provide relevant experience of GP early in medical careers so more doctors can make an informed decision to choose GP as a career.<sup>2</sup>

### GP Taster Scheme

All FY1 doctors have been given the opportunity to shadow GPST3 trainees working in Wessex in clinical practice for up to five days since 2015, following a successful small pilot study in 2014.<sup>3</sup> The voluntary scheme showcases life as a GP from a trainee perspective in addition to gaining community clinical exposure.

In 2015 & 2016 53 FY1 doctors undertook the taster opportunity for between two and three days. Variability in duration depended on Foundation and GP mentor availability. For 2017 39 FY1 doctors have signed up to the scheme.

"... having had my GP Taster days I will now be applying for GP training and very much looking forward to starting my career in GP." [FY1 P10, 2016]

"I got to see a variety of different presentations and [this] reminded me [of] management. It also gave me the viewpoint from GPs with hospital liaising, and so I feel more eager to contact GPs." [FY1 P8, 2015]

"I may still do CMT prior to GP but I am now more certain that this is where my career will head ultimately. GP taster prompted this and gave me time to think." [FY1 P9, 2016]

"An opportunity to show young doctors the potential for GP as a career - it's not all doom and gloom." [GPST3 P3, 2016]

"It made me consider ways in which to involve a trainee whilst still getting on with service provision." [GPST3 P7, 2016]

"This was a really good reminder for me about why I chose GP. Good teaching experience and really nice to have a fresh face in the practice for a week." [GPST3 P16, 2015]

*Illustrative quotes from FY1 trainees and GPST3 near-peer mentors about the taster scheme (P = participant number)*

### Evaluation and findings

After the taster all participants completed an electronic feedback survey, which explored their learning, feedback on the scheme and any change in career choice.

The scheme has been positively received by both FY1s and GPST3 mentors. FY1s reported it had positively changed their view of primary care, that it had changed their clinical practice, and that they had developed in other ways. The majority of FY1 doctors said that they would recommend the taster scheme, and reported that they were considering GP as a career, with 8 stating their career intentions had been changed by the taster experience. FY1s found it helpful to have a trainee's perspective, gain an overview of what to expect, including wider opportunities available to them.

The GPST3s were enthusiastic about GP, which appeared to 'rub off' on FY1s. The majority of GPST3 respondents felt the taster helped them to develop their educational skills and would recommend being a near-peer mentor. The majority also expressed an interest in developing an educational role in GP in the future.

FY1 participants from 2015 were re-contacted in 2016 to establish any lasting impact. Five respondents (33%) gave additional thoughts, which presented the taster experience as useful and valuable in reaffirming a career choice of GP.

"I already thought I would apply for GP but it help consolidate that confidence and gave me an opportunity to experience it as a FY1 doctor rather than previously as I had as a medical student....I really enjoyed the enthusiasm of the GPs who were all keen and willing to teach and discuss with me openly the disadvantages as well as advantages" [FY1 P8 in 2015, re-surveyed in 2016]

### Conclusions

Using GPST3 trainees as near-peer mentors for FY1 doctors is educational for both groups and can have a positive impact on GP recruitment.

The taster demonstrated how varied GP is, and challenged some negative perceptions of primary care. GPST3s gained confidence in their knowledge about GP and greater insight into educational roles.

Attachments at different stages of training appear to provide contrasting learning and exposure to the nuances of GP. We will continue to support the GP taster scheme in future years to improve GP recruitment through giving FY1s experience of primary care.

@NHS\_HealthEdEng @GP\_education #nothinggeneral #GP #TeamGP @RCGP

#### References

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