

TWO MINDS, ONE JOURNEY: ILLUMINATING FUTURES WITH RECIPROCAL MENTORING OF EAST OF ENGLAND DOCTORS

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION RECIPROCAL MENTORING PROJECT OF EAST OF ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

East of England Deanery [EoE] initiated a Reciprocal Mentoring Programme (RMP) for junior and senior across dental, medical and surgical specialities to foster cultural awareness and inclusivity across all levels of the organisation. Reciprocal Mentoring (RM) is a process in which mentors (junior trainee, locally employed, clinical fellow doctors from underrepresented groups) and mentees (Heads of school, Deans, Deputy Deans, programme directors) engage in a trusting relationship in which both equally commit to learning and work together in a journey of exploration and commitment to change.

RM benefits organisations by promoting diverse perspectives and inclusive culture and enhances trust in leaders. A sense of belonging among staff are crucial for creating a positive and supportive work environment. By focusing on both systemic and individual levels, this programme provides the potential to bring about meaningful lasting changes within the EoE.

AIM

- To establish effective communication and a positive rapport between a junior doctor from a minority group (mentor) and a senior doctor (mentee), while reducing the informational divide among senior leaders overseeing training programs, recruitment, promotion, career advancement, professional development, annual reviews, and policies.
- To enhance mentors' confidence in advocating against injustice, bias, and prejudices within the NHS by constructively influencing mentees.

METHODS

Advertising included posters, tweets, newsletters and emails across the region with links to an application form using NHSE WT&E (former HEE) channels. The selection process ensured that all participants were from the EOE region, and their expectations aligned with the RMP's values and aims. Mentors were paired with mentees from a different speciality, different race and/or gender to avoid conflict of interest unless mentors stated a specific preference.

14 mentor-mentee pairs from dental, medical and surgical specialties.

Virtual induction for mentees [1 hour] and mentors [4 hours] were conducted separately. All participants were provided RMP handbook and online bulletin Padlet with EDI resources (e.g., blogs, books, articles). Mentors were offered optional monthly virtual drop-in sessions to discuss any challenges.

Learning agreement was completed at commencement. 1 hourly mentoring session every month for 6 months.

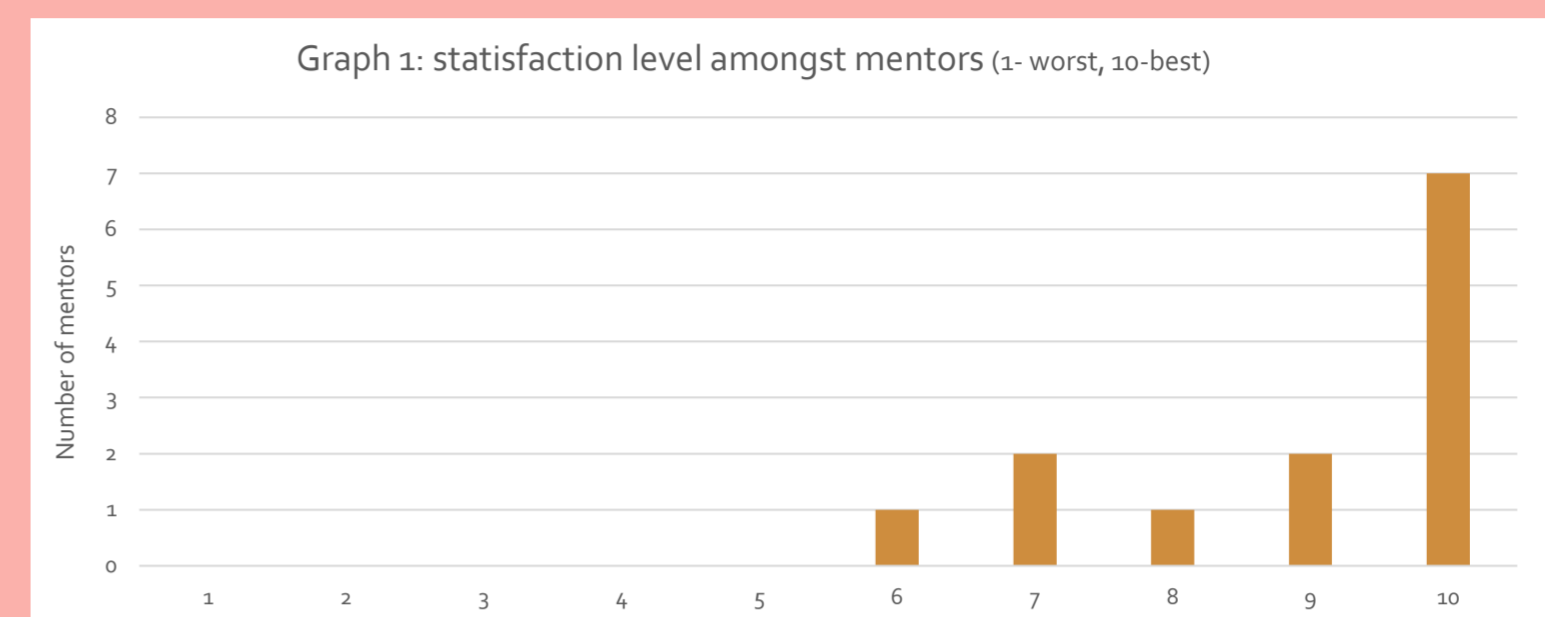
Surveys were undertaken at the beginning, mid-point and end of the cohort.

LESSONS LEARNED

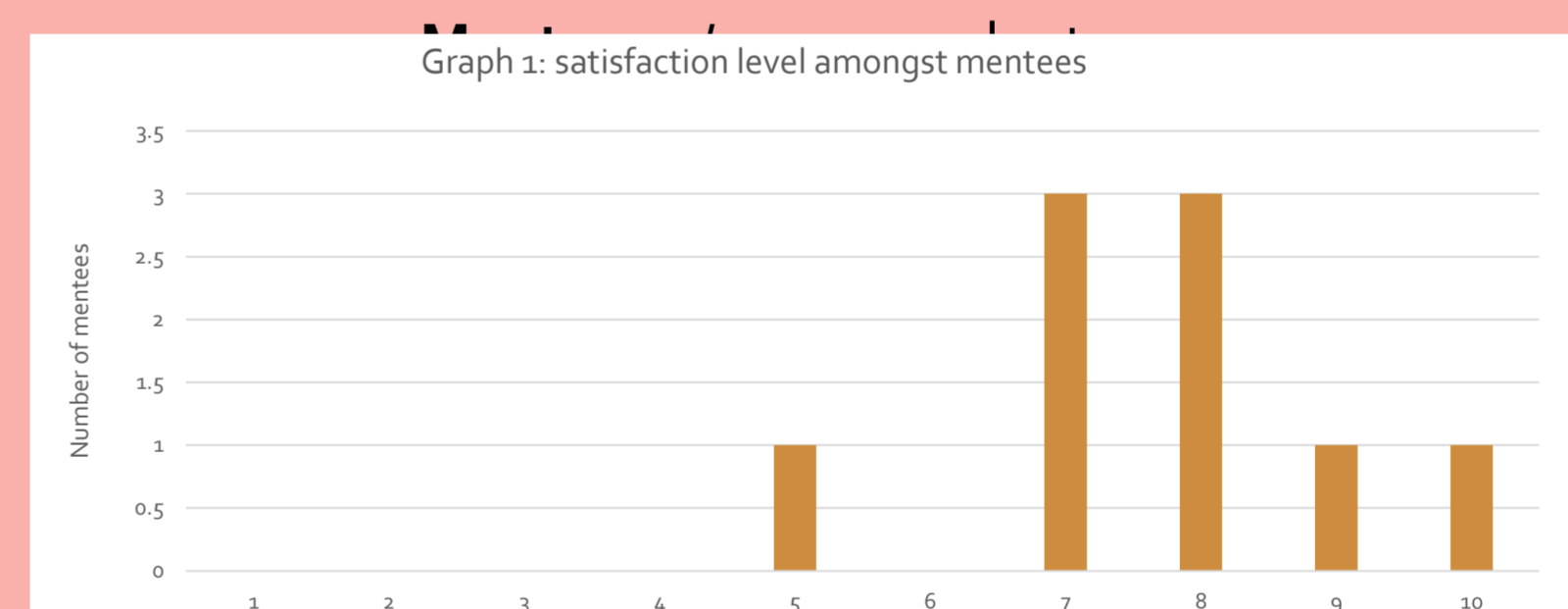
- Challenges with the initial advertisement of the programme.
- Most activities throughout the programme focused on mentors (junior doctors). This might have inadvertently de-emphasised the engagement of mentees in the programme.
- Lack of networking opportunities and sense of community among certain participants.

RESULTS

Mentors 13/14 respondents



- 92% of mentors achieved all their initial goals and the remaining achieved them partially.
- Acquired **capabilities** included communication, confidence, growth mindset, and self-esteem, and reflection.
- Professional milestones** stated: networking, presentations, insight into the senior leadership system and NHS organisation.
- 85% of mentors would re-participate in the programme whilst 15% of mentors wish to give other junior doctors a chance to give their input.
- 100% of mentors would recommend this scheme to their colleagues.
- RMP offered mentors the opportunity to gain experience in leadership activities otherwise out of their access, networking and future mentoring opportunities for members of underrepresented groups.
- "The reciprocal mentoring scheme was a very good opportunity to learn, grow and improve my leadership skills. I had very insightful conversations with my mentee. We designed bright ideas that either strengthen existing support structures or inspire new changes to provide a better work experience for doctors within my specialty"
- "Get involved and be the change you want to see. This has opened doors for me I did not know existed"



- Topics** discussed: EDI in training, differential attainment, IMGs and how to influence change across organisations.
- Attained knowledge**: greater awareness of backgrounds and experiences, celebration of diversity, modification of behaviour, offer active t, improvement of IMGs' experiences, and empowerment for change.
- 67% of mentees would participate in the programme again.
- Recurrent comments** - discussions exhausted after 3-5 meetings
- "This is an excellent programme that helped both mentors and mentees alike. It aided with a greater understanding, though hearing about lived experiences. It enabled both organisational and personal changes plus development."

CONCLUSION

Reciprocal mentoring is crucial for influencing and growing diversity plus inclusivity in organisations by focusing on individual and systemic changes. Promoting conversations in an open and safe space for junior doctors from minority backgrounds enhances belonging and empowers them to drive positive change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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