



Guidance for registrars preparing for the transition to consultant roles: maximising the opportunities during training

It is recognised that preparing for the transition from registrar to consultant can be an anxious time; it represents a move from the relatively protected position of a 'trainee' to a role as a senior member of a public health team, with all the responsibilities that entails. This move may be to a team and/or location that the registrar knows well or may be to a completely new organisation or even part of the country.

This guidance, which has been informed by surveys of recently appointed consultants who have completed speciality training and current registrars, aims to smooth that process as far as possible by providing recommendations to enable registrars to make the most of the opportunities available during training to gain practical experience in a range of areas and feel confident in the transition to holding a consultant portfolio.

It is suggested that registrars (StRs) use this guidance document to inform discussion with their educational supervisors (ES) at the start of each training placement and, more formally, towards the end of training, for example as part of KA10 preparations, in order to maximise opportunities to gain these skills during placements.

It is also suggested they might be considered by TPDs to provide guidance and support to ESs to ensure that a consistent approach is taken and all StRs and ESs are aware of the resources available locally and further afield.

Background

During 2016 and 2017, the Speciality Registrar Committee (SRC) of the Faculty of Public Health (FPH) conducted three surveys with current registrars and newly-qualified consultants to understand how training and support post-qualification could be improved to prepare registrars for future employment.¹

¹ Survey 1 - Katie Ferguson and Alice Walker, Results of a survey of former Public Health Specialty Registrars completing training since April 2013, conducted on behalf of the Faculty of Public Health's Specialty Registrar Committee, January 2017 – available from SRC on request

Survey 2 – Katie Ferguson and Adeola Agbebiyi, Results of a survey to map current provision and ideas for improving support for the transition from Registrar to Consultant during the first five years, June 2017– available from SRC on request

Survey 3 - Katie Ferguson and Adeola Agbebiyi, Mapping provision of support for Registrars in the transition to becoming Consultants: Results of National Survey, October 2017 – available from SRC on request

The 15 recommendations from this work were agreed by the FPH Workforce Committee in February 2018 and the SRC were asked by the FPH Workforce and Education Committees to create a set of recommendations outlining key skills and areas of support to help registrars with the transition to working at consultant level, putting the curriculum requirements into the context of preparing for consultant roles.

Overview

This document makes 12 recommendations of good practice. These are divided into two sections: 1) skills and experiences to prepare for consultant portfolios and 2) support for career planning and getting a consultant role. These recommendations are based on the findings of the above surveys and are intended for consideration by training programme directors (TPDs), educational, academic and project supervisors and registrars. It is recognised that there is a balance between what is provided by local training programmes and self-directed action by registrars.

Cutting across many of these recommendations is the underlying principle that it is good practice for registrars post-final membership examination to start to 'act as' consultants within their placements. This might include taking on broader portfolios, demonstrating that they can manage competing priorities and aiming to get all their competencies / learning outcomes signed off at least 6 months before their CCT so that they can focus on preparing to work at consultant level.

It is recognised that some of the skills and experiences recommended are explicitly reflected in the requirements of the 2015 curriculum, such as managing staff and managing a budget. They have been included here as they are skills which the newly-qualified consultants surveyed wished they had had more experience of during training, and to encourage registrars and their supervisors to maximise the experiences they use to sign off these learning outcomes, to ensure they feel competent to do these tasks when working at consultant level.

Current registrars and new consultants were asked by the SRC regional representatives to share ideas for how they have gained some of these skills and experiences. Responses received have been outlined by theme. The current and ongoing 'light touch' review of the curriculum will result in more examples of how learning outcomes can be achieved, to also guide Registrars and Educational Supervisors in this.

1) Skills and experiences for taking on a consultant portfolio

Key skills and experiences	Examples of how registrars have achieved these and training programmes have supported registrars
<p>Service planning, commissioning*, and evaluation experience (* the process of planning, agreeing and monitoring services)</p> <p><i>2015 curriculum, relevant learning outcomes to make the most of this experience include:</i></p> <p><i>4.6 – costing the resources needed for a project and contributing to a business case for a service development.</i></p> <p><i>7.2 - applying ethical and legal frameworks to resource allocation</i></p> <p><i>7.3 - drawing up a service specification</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During local authority placement worked with commissioner to draft a service specification; then sat on procurement panel, evaluating bids to deliver the new service • Gained commissioning and procurement experience during ‘national treasure’ placement at Department for International Development (DFID) • Gained experience in this during 3 month ‘acting up’ role • Undertaking a service development project during a healthcare attachment • In London, Kent, Surrey and Sussex (LKSS), Health Education England (HEE) has advertised when they are doing a procurement for a registrar to sit on panel
<p>Budget-holding experience</p> <p><i>2015 curriculum, relevant learning outcomes to make the most of this experience include:</i></p> <p><i>4.6 – Demonstrate an understanding of methods of financial management and show experience of how they are used. Full evidence requires that the registrar will be competent to take responsibility for managing a budget when a consultant, ideally from direct experience of so doing. If not from direct involvement, evidence may be gained by shadowing the management of a budget that their supervisor holds, or by working with other budget holders or finance staff to understand and gain experience of the processes involved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadowed departmental finance meetings; talked through the team budget with the DPH during local authority placement • Being in charge of the budget as part of the committee for the annual registrar conference • Went on a financial management course as part of ‘core training’ offered in the region (LKSS) • It’s important that trainees are not protected from difficult meetings, for example around finances • Seek this experience as part of ‘acting up role’ • Consider roles to gain the experience outside of work, for example being a school governor

<p>Project management experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing a project management course • Gained project management experience during 'national treasure' placement at DFID • Gained experience in this during 3 month 'acting up' role
<p>Having 'portfolio holding' experience Although Registrars may not have a formal 'portfolio' the key experience needed is working on multiple workstreams / projects at the same time, managing the competing demands and priorities and being able to manage their own time. This should also include responding to 'unexpected' demands or urgent pieces of work that suddenly arrive on the desk (or more likely, in inbox).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was generally my experience throughout second half of training (post MFPH examination) and would expect that to be the case for many registrars. As became more senior the level of responsibility increased. • In more senior roles, try to take on work areas rather than just projects
<p>Staff management experience (line management, dealing with staff issues, recruitment) <i>2015 curriculum, relevant learning outcomes to make the most of this experience include:</i> 4.10 - Guide, support and develop staff and junior colleagues, receiving and giving constructive feedback and showing an understanding of the potential role of coaching and mentoring. Evidence that the registrar has supported both staff and colleagues and is competent to take on staff management if required. The registrar should be able to assess when a coaching or mentoring approach might be helpful for themselves or others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit on interview panels in your placement • Seek this experience as part of 'acting up role' • Involve registrars in 'behind the scenes' senior level meetings where HR issues may be discussed • Being involved in supporting colleagues / appraisals • Craft supervisory roles in your placement for example managing volunteers, GP trainees • Act as a mentor for local schemes, such as 'Team Up' in London – a volunteering programme, which partners trainee doctors and dentists, healthcare students and public health professionals with community organisations to deliver sustainable health and wellbeing projects for disadvantaged communities. Projects are supported by a network of public health registrars, consultants and practitioners who act as 'buddies', providing advice, support and public health expertise throughout the 3-6 month long projects.- https://www.lpmde.ac.uk/training-programme/specialty-schools/public-health/teamup • Consider roles to gain the experience outside of work, for example being a school governor or as a trustee of a charity

Media and advocacy experience

2015 curriculum, relevant learning outcomes to make the most of this experience include:

4.9 - Work collaboratively with the media to communicate effectively with the public - evidence that the registrar has handled unexpected press or other media enquiries in a timely and professional manner, has considered the management of information for the public, and has used the media pro-actively to successfully communicate with the public

- Attending media courses
- Being a co-chair role in Scottish registrar group was useful for this, plus acting up experience working in child health. Role as charity trustee (outside professional role) was also great for this
- Working on media statements or briefings about outbreaks in a health protection setting

Leadership experience

2015 curriculum, relevant learning outcomes to make the most of this experience include:

4.1, 4.4, 4.8 and 10.8 all require demonstration of leadership skills

- Chair local registrar groups (note depends how the groups function as to how much leadership role involved, rather than just meeting chairing)
- During 'acting up' role
- Spend time shadowing those in leadership roles, witness how they deal with difficult questions etc in different situations and build in reflection time with the person you are shadowing to maximise learning from the experience
- National treasure placement (1 year) at DFID
- Do a leadership or management course, in person or an online course. Courses that have been suggested include e.g:
 - [Organisational development, Leadership & Learning, Scotland - https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/797/leadership-and-management-zone/programmes](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/797/leadership-and-management-zone/programmes)
 - [CMP - https://www.cmpsolutions.com/training/](https://www.cmpsolutions.com/training/)
 - King's Fund, London - <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/courses>
 - Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management - <https://www.fmlm.ac.uk/>
- Also other types of course which help with aspects of leadership e.g. someone reported finding chairing a STAC training useful and witness familiarisation training
- Consider experience outside of professional posts, for example being a school governor
- Use out of programme experiences e.g. Darzi Fellowship in Clinical Leadership

2) Support for career planning and getting a consultant role

Types of support for career planning and getting a consultant role	Examples of how registrars have achieved these and training programmes have supported registrars
<p>Registrars should have opportunities to explore a diversity of placements, both within and outside their region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training programmes offer a diversity of placements and registrars are able to suggest ideas for new training placements and work with their TPD to develop them • Registrars have the flexibility to access placements outside the region (as long as they meet local training programme requirements); national placements consider registrars working remotely from a local base • Registrars have the opportunity to gain practical healthcare public health experience. For example, placements are available in NHS Trusts, CCGs and NHS England
<p>Registrars have the opportunity to undertake roles where they ‘act as consultants’ at the end of training by taking on a senior workload across a range of areas (portfolios) and demonstrate the ability to manage competing priorities</p>	<p>Opportunities to ‘act as consultants’ (formally by taking up a vacant role or informally by assuming the level of responsibility) are advertised to relevant cohorts of registrars to ensure equal access</p> <p>The benefits of this cited by newly qualified consultants include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Demonstrated my ability to handle challenge, a large portfolio of work and give concrete examples of the expectations of working a consultant level standard when interviewed. Could provide real examples that didn't refer to 'training'. I was also able to demonstrate my ability to different stakeholders and organisations, and build my confidence that I was ready to be a public health leader and could work within political environments” • “It is essential for StRs to gain experience in acting up as a consultant role is very different to being a registrar. I was lucky to cover a gap in the consultant team, which became the post I was successful in achieving. I also gained budget and staff management experience which is difficult to get in training.”

Types of support for career planning and getting a consultant role	Examples of how registrars have achieved these and training programmes have supported registrars
Interview support – registrars have the opportunity to be interviewed in mock consultant interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try and sit on an interview panel for the recruitment of senior staff and observe the process or be part of a ‘stakeholder panel’ if that is on offer locally for interviews (discuss with ES or DPH) • FPH Interview Skills for Public Health Consultant Posts - https://www.fph.org.uk/news-events/events-courses-and-exams/ • Book – Oliver Picard, Dan Wood, Sebastian Yuen, Medical Interviews: A comprehensive guide to CT, St & Registrar Interview Skills 2011 – useful for Registrar interviews - maybe similar one for Consultant interviews • BMA resources - https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/career/applying-for-a-job/becoming-a-consultant • Advice from two recently qualified consultants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I had a mock consultant interview with two consultants which was very useful. I also looked up questions online for consultant interviews and made sure I had answers for the questions. It is good to go and visit the place you are hoping to work or try and get a fixed term or locum contract – that way you can see if it is a good fit too” • “I did a mock interview with my ES. However, being interviewed for the acting up post and subsequent locum post was more helpful prior to starting to apply for substantive posts... if I had been aware of the STAR method of preparing interview responses for example that would have made a big difference. For the interview where I was appointed, my experience was that the informal meeting with DPH prior to application was probably almost (perhaps more) important than the interview itself, and so some thought required for this as well – I prepared as much for this as for interview and it paid off”
Career guidance and support –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East of England, East Midlands and West Midlands jointly run a registrar-led ‘Becoming a Consultant Day’

Types of support for career planning and getting a consultant role	Examples of how registrars have achieved these and training programmes have supported registrars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider holding an annual/ biennial regional/ supra-regional/ national public health careers event to support placement planning and career decisions • Registrars have the opportunity to receive tailored career advice, such as a bespoke TPD meeting, at least once during training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FPH Careers in public health document https://www.fph.org.uk/media/1144/fphsrc_career-profiles-2nd-edition.pdf • Sim F and Wright J eds. (2015) <i>Working in Public Health. An Introduction to Careers in Public Health</i>, London: Routledge • Advice from one recently qualified consultant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Local networking and proactively finding mentors is probably more important than attending an event (not sure as I didn’t go to any). Speak to new consultants just ahead of you to learn from them as well as more established consultants. In the end, I realised that the remit could and would change (which it has substantially over 18 months), so I applied for jobs based on the team I wanted to work with rather than the job description (i.e. based on individuals I respected, size of team, location I could move to).”
<p>Mentoring and peer support –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrars are signposted to existing regional forums / supported to form new forums for peer-support with other newly qualified Consultants at the end of training • Registrars have access to mentoring support as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One newly qualified consultant commented “having a group of peers that you are in regular contact with is really helpful in terms of figuring out the complexities of being a new consultant. Somewhere you can ask the daft questions about appraisal, job planning and similar” • An ‘action learning set’ for new consultants – which could be set up in ST4/5 and continued • Look for other local opportunities e.g. leadership academies • Newly qualified consultants also recommended setting this up yourself based on trusted relationships, rather than necessarily participating in a formal mentoring programme, and setting it up before becoming a consultant • Some registrars report finding it useful to have a mentor from a non-public health specialty to talk more generally about leadership issues