“More Communities: connect, communicate, create and collaborate.”

**January 2020**

Dear All,

The last few months have been quite a rollercoaster of experiences for me, a number of firsts and many many different conversations with fascinating, inspiring people. Amongst other things, in the last 3 months I have: attended my first RCGP conference as the Vale of Trent First 5 Lead, I have been involved in running and delivering the [Next Generation GP Leadership programme](https://nextgenerationgp.co.uk/) for the 2nd Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, I have attended a Strength Finders course, taken part in the first ever “First 5 Leaders” hakathon, delivered a workshop to newly qualified GPs on leadership and personal development for the [Phoenix Preceptorship Programme](https://www.phoenixprogramme.co.uk/) as well as working towards the [upcoming RCGP First 5 conference](https://rcgpportal.force.com/s/lt-event?site=a0d0Y00000AeOP6QAN&id=a1U1i000000Bff0EAC).

Similarly, to my previous Blog entry, I feel that my experience of this has been really defined by the wonderful people I’ve met, the groups I’ve been a part of and the experiences and conversations that I have had along the way. Therefore, I would like to kick off the first blog of 2020 entitled **“Communities – connect, communicate, create and collaborate.”** I hope here to expand on some of the themes from last month’s entry!

The RCGP conference was a great example of this. Following being appointed as the Co-Lead for the local faculty in March of 2019, whilst I had been part of the monthly gatherings in Nottinghamshire for a long time, it was difficult to know how I fit into the bigger system. I think that as the scope of our practice grows and the system that we work in becomes more complex to navigate, knowing where we fit in on a greater scale is increasingly helpful. I met, spoke to at length, ate, drank and learnt with First 5 leaders from Cornwall to Aberdeen and was able to share in their leadership experiences and triumphs and the way they supported their members. It has allowed for collaboration and friendship helping knit together GPs all around the country. I think the solidarity gained from understanding that we are part of something much bigger gives strength and resilience in changing and uncertain times. Whilst I would certainly urge people to get involved in [First 5 communities](https://www.facebook.com/groups/first5notts/) country wide I think that this can definitely be addressed locally too. The [Vale of Trent and Leicester First 5 annual conference](https://rcgpportal.force.com/s/lt-event?site=a0d0Y00000AeOP6QAN&id=a1U1i000000Bff0EAC) is a great example of this – this has been a truly collaborative effort between the leads around the east midlands and is focusses around the support and diversity that is available in the area and gelling together the community that is the First 5s. (Incidentally there are **still a few places left** for the day and offers a great opportunity to build this community and gain some interesting CPD too – Free for RCGP members and small fee for others – more info here!)

As mentioned in December’s blog, the First 5 Leaders hakathon event in Birmingham was a great success. This project was led by Jazz Singh of NHSi in Birmingham, and was another example of what CCG and ICS First 5 Leaders from across an area can achieve! For the uninitiated a Hakathon is a creative process often used by tech companies an on this day 70 or so First 5s from across the region worked from conception, to design and prototype on 10 different ideas for quality improvement in primary care. These were pitched to a team of “dragons” and the winners are being taken forward with mentorship and guidance to make them a reality. This day was really rewarding and has shown how our community of First 5s can produce something incredible when brought together. Whilst this day was fantastic and great fun, one of the most valuable results of this day was the meeting and continual collaboration of the First 5 ICS leads from around the country. Until this point, we had been vaguely aware of each of other’s existence but not who they were, what they were like and how they were approaching their roles around the country. There had been previously a “First 5 Network” attempting to connect together different leads however this was unexpectedly and rapidly dissolved, losing these community’s cohesion and communication. We all felt that this was greatly missed and so since then we have been in communication, looking to arrange meetings and share ideas, thoughts and experiences of working in our CCGs/ICSs/STPs etc. This has already born fruit and we are looking to continue to see how we can help each other and collaborate.

Finally, communities are building on smaller scales across Nottinghamshire. Through organisations like the [Training Hub](https://www.facebook.com/NottsAllianceTH/) and the [Phoenix programme](https://www.phoenixprogramme.co.uk/), communities of learners are being formed. Monthly educational events on a range of topics help people find their Tribe of likeminded people, not only for CPD but also to find out about the work experiences and ways of doing things. The Phoenix preceptorship programme has a growing attendance of First 5s, learning how to navigate the first few years of practice from peers a little further up the ladder. Some of the most honest and helpful conversations have been born through these interactions – helping guide people in applications and the realities of jobs or directing towards opportunities or simply providing a safe space for consolation, empathy or catharsis (which is often the thing most required).

I think the breadth of the opportunities and communities available in Nottinghamshire is fantastic and there are areas that are looking to recreate some of the success. I would definitely urge people to get involved with the different programmes going on (links included in the above) and consider how we fit into the national communities of First 5s. I think that going forward, this will give us strength, influence, resilience and the power to change primary care and our profession for the better.

Check back next month where I look and try and untangle some of the changes happening in the organisation of Primary Care! Complex, but interesting!