



Nottinghamshire GP Phoenix Programme

We are a small team offering advice on employment and career development for GPs across Nottinghamshire. We provide a range of support including one-to-one career advice and a variety of GP workforce schemes starting in GP training through to later career.

Concerns regarding GP recruitment and retention are well documented and were highlighted pre-covid [1]. The NHS People Plan stresses the importance of growing our workforce for the future with a parallel emphasis on nurturing staff and encouraging belonging [2]. Recently there have been reports that the pandemic has worsened predictions for GP careers, particularly around retention [3], partially in response to the increasing workload pressures in primary care.

This report aims to summarise the work that the Phoenix Programme has done in since its inception in 2019 and briefly covers plans for the future. Our overall aim is to address GP recruitment and retention and to make Nottinghamshire the best place to be a GP.

Overall impact of the Phoenix Programme

We have now supported over 200 Nottinghamshire GPs and we interact with over 100 GP trainees each year.

September 2019	FTE	March 2021	FTE
All GPs	685	All GPs	708
Partners	378	Partners	351
Salaried	122	Salaried	149
Retainers	2	Retainers	7
GP trainees	152	GP trainees	176
Locums	31	Locums	26

This data is taken from NHS digital and represents numbers of all GPs in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (STP and CCG) full time equivalent (FTE). The dates correspond to when our first Phoenix led workforce schemes began in August/September 2019 and the most recent data available. The numbers of FTE GPs has risen in Nottinghamshire during this time period and compares favourably to national figures [4].

Phoenix in words and figures

Overview of our activity in financial year 2020/21.

- **Engaged with > 200 GPs and > 100 GP trainees** *“My GP friends in other areas are jealous. They wish they had a Phoenix Programme.”*
- **Funded and supported >30 (4PCN + 5TB +5 NATH GPs + Kirran + 17 others) undertaking project work or upskilling to benefit local primary care** *“I love that this fellowship exists! It has helped me link to a practice who can be passionate about the same things I am and will hopefully mean that I can stay local for a long time to come”*
- **Created 9 new GP posts** *“We have not been able to recruit for so long and now have a choice of several applicants who would all be a great fit”*
- **Delivered >70 educational sessions for early career GPs** *“Supportive and friendly environment...best virtual teaching I’ve had with respect to interactivity”*
- **Facilitate 10 supportive WhatsApp groups for peer support** *“Great as used appropriately with useful resources and answering queries from people”*
- **Appointed 15 mentors** *“The mentor scheme has been great. It has been an invaluable asset in starting out as a GP”*
- **Provided opportunities for 13 GPs with interest in medical education** *“I have gained confidence in teaching and medical education”*
- **Expanded our website and created numerous resources to support GPs including induction materials, returning to work during covid and wellbeing** *“The information has been particularly helpful. Increased my confidence with returning. Lots of practical helpful advice. The Phoenix Programme website has lots of helpful links/resources”*
- **Engaged with stakeholders and collaborated with other organisations including Nottinghamshire LMC, Nottinghamshire Alliance Training Hub (NATH), Nottingham and Sherwood Forest GP Specialty Training Schemes, Deep End Group Nottingham, HEE and NHSE.**

Case Study 1

I joined at a time where I was having difficulties...and was uncertain whether I would be able to continue with my career in General Practice. Through the supportive and collaborative work that I have done with [members of the Phoenix Programme] I have gained confidence and have definitely found my career path moving forwards. Without the opportunities afforded by the Phoenix Programme I doubt this would have been possible. Many thanks and very best wishes for the future as Phoenix continues to grow from strength to strength and help more GPs to continue with the career they love.

Case Study 2 (PCN fellow)

There are a variety of ways to measure achievements and success, however some of the most notable would include the creation of system-wide clinical templates [relating to care homes]. These have been widely well received. Secondly, would be the creation and ongoing support of the care homes team including two care coordinators and two clinical leads. Lastly would be the development of clinical reports to monitor performance and ensure...more importantly patient care improved.

Early career GPs

Closer examination of the growth in numbers of local and national GPs shows that this is in part due to increasing GP trainees. This is an acknowledged part of the national strategy for GP recruitment and retention and we now have increasing year on year numbers of GPs qualifying. Therefore, it is crucial that we engage with these colleagues proactively and encourage them to stay in Nottinghamshire.

The Phoenix Programme runs several schemes aimed at early career GPs in including the [New to Practice Fellowship](#), the [Trainee Transition Programme](#), [PCN fellowships](#), [Trailblazers Fellowships](#) and [Next Generation GP East Midlands](#).

During 2020 we facilitated the creation of nine new posts for early career colleagues, five of these being Trailblazer fellowships that are in practices in areas of deprivation that have historically struggled to recruit. We hope to provide similar opportunities in 2021.

We are the local provider for the New to Practice Fellowship, which is a programme for all GPs within two years of qualification funded by NHSE and started locally in early 2021. Nottinghamshire have the highest number of New to Practice GP fellows nationally. Our success in this area is due to a number of factors including early adoption of precursor schemes and involving our early career colleagues in scheme design. This resulted in a focus on offering support, mentorship and facilitated employment discussions for many early career GPs supporting them to stay locally. Our close links to Nottinghamshire LMC have been invaluable in making these connections, as has our involvement with local GP Specialty Training Programmes via the Trainee Transition Programme and collaboration with other organisations such as NATH. Over the next year we need to continue to innovate and ensure that our local offer is of high quality. We will be focusing on developing our mentoring programme and portfolio working opportunities.

Mid-Career and Senior Career GPs

Whilst nationally the focus for recruitment and retention has been on early career GPs we are keen to also support colleagues at all stages. The recent BMA survey suggests that both mid and late career colleagues are considering leaving the profession in high numbers following the pandemic [3].

A number of mid-career colleagues were undertaking funded project work and study prior to covid and several have completed their work however some were disrupted due to the pandemic. Interviews with colleagues nearing the end of their career suggested that many were keen to become mentors and give back to the system. In 2021 we recruited and trained 15 mentors from this group to support our New to Practice colleagues.

We are currently launching our mid-career fellowships for 23 colleagues to undertake innovative quality improvement work based in PCNs and ICPs. This is

a retention initiative, enabling colleagues to pursue an area of interest that is closely aligned to system need.

Other initiatives

Our [return to work](#) scheme has helped over 30 colleagues who have had a break of three months or longer with targeted support including education, peer support and employment advice.

As a workforce support provider it is important to be agile and reactive as workforce issues arise. This has been crucial during the pandemic. We offer advice to locum colleagues and instigated the roving GP scheme, now transitioning into the locum chambers. Our roving PM scheme continues to be a success and has continued during the recovery phase. We worked closely with colleagues at GP Task Force in Derbyshire to run a New to Partnership Programme in early 2021 to address concerns regarding the falling numbers of partners, which is reflected in the national picture and we are proud to support the recently formed Racial Equity and Diversity Working Group.

And finally...

With GP recruitment and retention high on local and national agendas we are confident that we remain an important part of the solution to GP workforce in Nottinghamshire. We value working closely with organisations such as NATH who are developing and supporting other workforce streams for primary care including GPNs and ARRS, however it is vital to not lose sight of a focus on continuing to build GP numbers alongside this excellent work [5].

We recognise the significance of discussions both locally and nationally to address the increasing workload faced by GPs and our other primary care colleagues, which must also be addressed in tackling recruitment and retention. Our close links to the LMC ensure that we remain apprised of latest developments in supporting workload issues.

Overall, we look to provide an effective, coordinated and collaborative approach to tackling local GP workforce issues, whilst supporting our GP colleagues to find fulfilling and sustainable careers. We are always keen to reflect and improve on our existing provision and would welcome feedback to info@phoenixprogramme.co.uk.

References:

1. <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/closing-gap-health-care-workforce>
2. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ournhspeople/>
3. <https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/workforce/more-than-a-third-of-gps-considering-early-retirement-within-a-year-bma-reveals/>
4. <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/nhs-delivery-and-workforce/pressures/pressures-in-general-practice>
5. <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/positions/general-practice>