

# Empowering GP practices to plan for a sustainable future



**Skills for Health and BEMS+ worked with 27 GP practices in Bath and North East Somerset to develop a sustainable, evidence-based programme of workforce development and collaborative working – which we believe could benefit GP practices throughout the UK.**



## The challenge

We were commissioned to develop a programme of support for 27 GP practices as part of a broader BEMS+ change initiative in Bath and North East Somerset. Our first strand aimed to help practices develop a between practices approach to collaborative working that promoted efficiency and sustainability. And our second strand supported workforce development solutions in order to enable GPs to provide high-quality services now and in the future.

The main drivers for the programme were increasing pressures on GPs to deliver care for an ageing local population with complex needs, and the need to replenish an ageing workforce via clear recruitment pathways. We were also conscious of longer-term business goals within practices: balancing financial sustainability with legal considerations and high-quality care provision.

## How we did it

Our workforce development work started by conducting research into the needs of the local patient

population and primary care workforce – which we presented to GP practices through practice meetings, individual meetings, workshops, GP Forum meetings and an e-newsletter. This research also informed our collaborative working planning and approach.

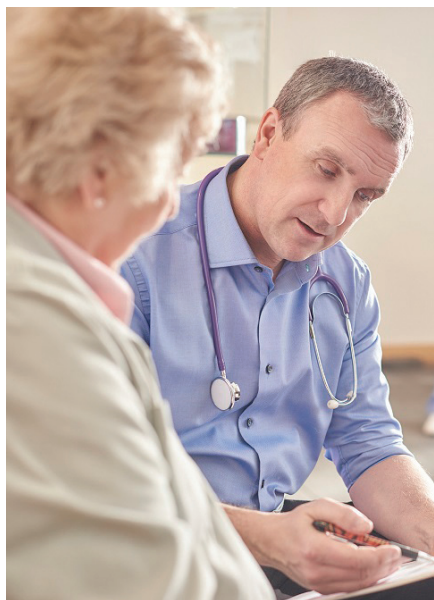
Together with the GP practices we identified specific workforce issues, which we developed into five priority areas: 1. A New Personal Assistant role 2. GP with Special Interest Development Pathway 3. Sharing Good Practice 4. Practice Nurse Supply Pathway 5. Shared Back Office Functions. In collaboration with GP steering groups, we scoped what they would need to implement change – for example, off-the-shelf Practice Nurse job descriptions and person specifications.

For our collaborative working programme, we engaged with local practices to understand specifically what collaborative working would mean for them. We listened to their concerns and needs, helped them to identify how and why they could best work with others – for example sharing back office functions. As well as facilitating these conversations, we developed tools and resources for GP practices to use in implementing collaborative working.

## Our approach

We chose to ground our work in collaborative working principles, so we identified and involved key stakeholders from the start. We set up working groups of practice managers, clinical staff and project clinical champions. We made sure that work took place flexibly when convenient for practices. And we involved the area Clinical Commissioning Group, Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust (for GP with Special Interest work) and NHS England.

As well as presenting general research findings, we gave each GP practice a report tailored to their locale in order to establish a clear, quantifiable evidence base supporting the need for change and helping them make robust, evidence-based decisions. This encouraged GP practices to have confidence in our recommendations for both programmes, and use the tools and resources we developed to support them on an ongoing basis.



increase workforce flexibility, and secure a more sustainable financial future. And through workforce development and planning, you'll ensure you can attract and employ the best people, provide increased flexibility, and more efficient delivery of services.

Our area-specific, locally driven solutions aim to support you in the ways you need – maintaining quality of services, improving efficiency and managing organisational change. If you're interested in our collaborative working and workforce development programme, we can tailor our approach to your specific population and practice needs. Please contact your local regional director to find out more.

## Benefits to practices around the UK

Both workforce development and collaborative working programmes are a way of ensuring that your GP practice is sustainable in the future. Through collaborative working, your practice may be able to release resources to develop new services and income streams,

Collaborative working	Workforce development
1. Improved communication between GP practices	1. Deeper understanding of future workforce needs
2. Greater efficiency through shared functions	2. Practical guidance and support on meeting current workforce demands
3. Tools and resources to support collaboration	3. Readily accessible workforce development materials

Skills for Health continues to support the development of competence based approaches to the design and redesign of roles and services. As part of this we are helping health care organisations strengthen their professional development programmes. Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector (the National Health Services, independent healthcare providers and voluntary organisations). Our purpose is to help develop solutions that can deliver a skilled and flexible workforce to improve health and healthcare.



### Get in touch

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