



Establishing an inter-deanery paediatric clinical exam revision programme (PACER): a success story of near-peer education

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1 INTRODUCTION

Passing the MRCPCH clinical exam is an essential step in Paediatric training and helps develop vital skills. Feedback from trainees in the South West previously highlighted the need for a formal revision programme. Due to the geographical challenges of our region and a wide variety of training settings, revision support had been inconsistent.

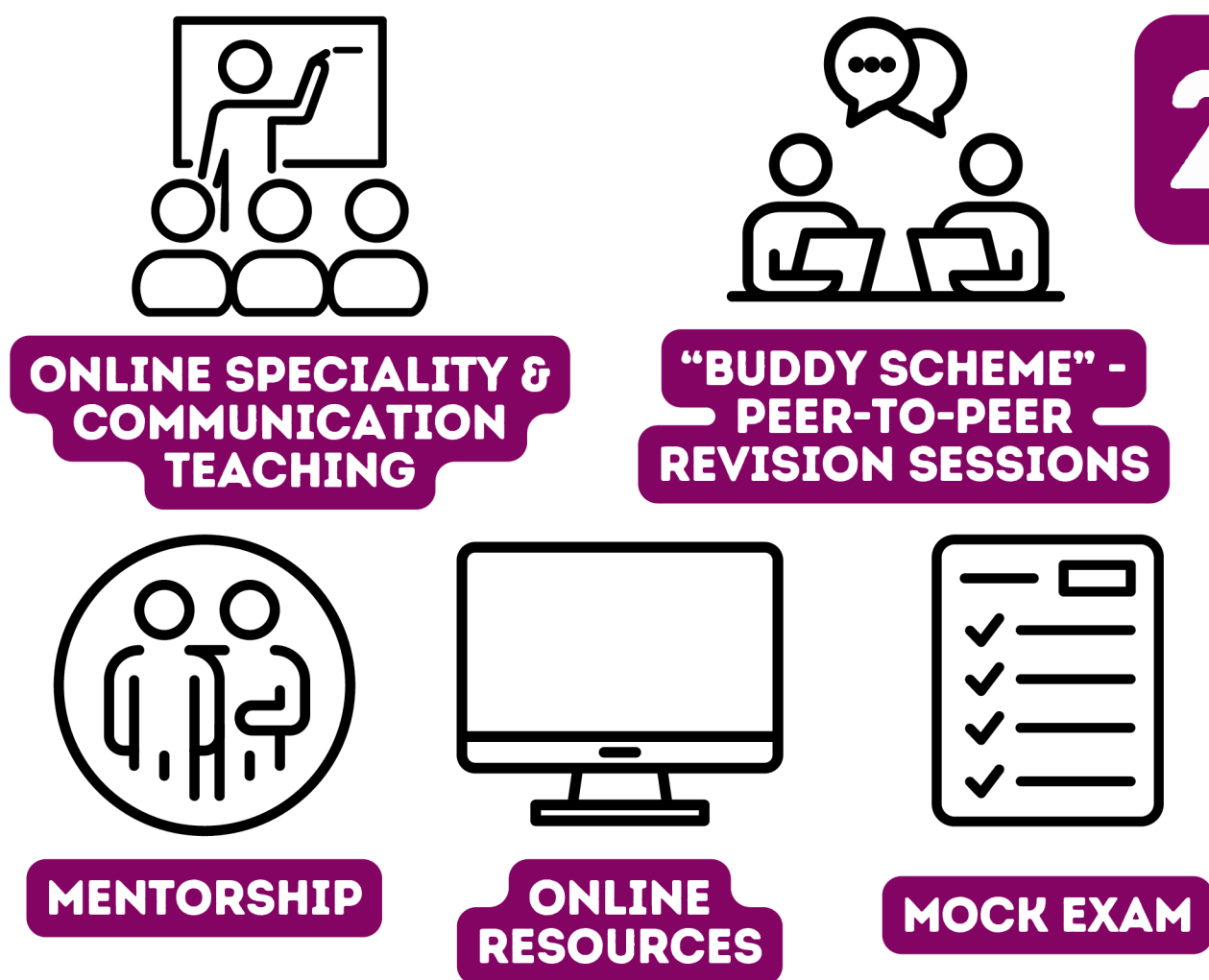


Figure 1. Features of the PACER programme

3 WHAT DID WE FIND?

Since June 2023, we have run six cycles of PACER with a total of 69 participants and feedback from 54 trainees (78% response rate).

Results have showed:

- Consistent high overall rating (mean 4.8 out of 5) and teaching session rating (Fig 2).
- Mock exams were universally rated 5 out of 5 (n=23).
- Individual comments were largely positive (Fig 3). Constructive feedback centred around increased provision of bedside teaching, an area of on-going development alongside college tutors.
- After PACER, 75% of participants were interested in becoming teachers and mentors themselves.

With each Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, course re-evaluation has led to improvements including:

1. Increased recruitment of registrars enabling greater range and availability of specialty teaching.
2. Creation of a logo and website with excellent user feedback.

2 WHAT DID WE DO?

We designed a free, comprehensive 8-week paediatric clinical exam revision (PACER) programme to support South West trainees and unify access to revision opportunities and speciality teaching. Fig 1 shows the elements included.

Regional ‘exam representative’ roles were created to lead PACER and facilitate teaching across deaneries. Educators recruited included consultants, senior registrars and trainees that had recently passed the exam. This use of ‘near-peer’ education ensured up-to-date knowledge of the assessment process and provided trainees with the opportunity to develop their skills as teachers, a core component of the RCPCH curriculum.

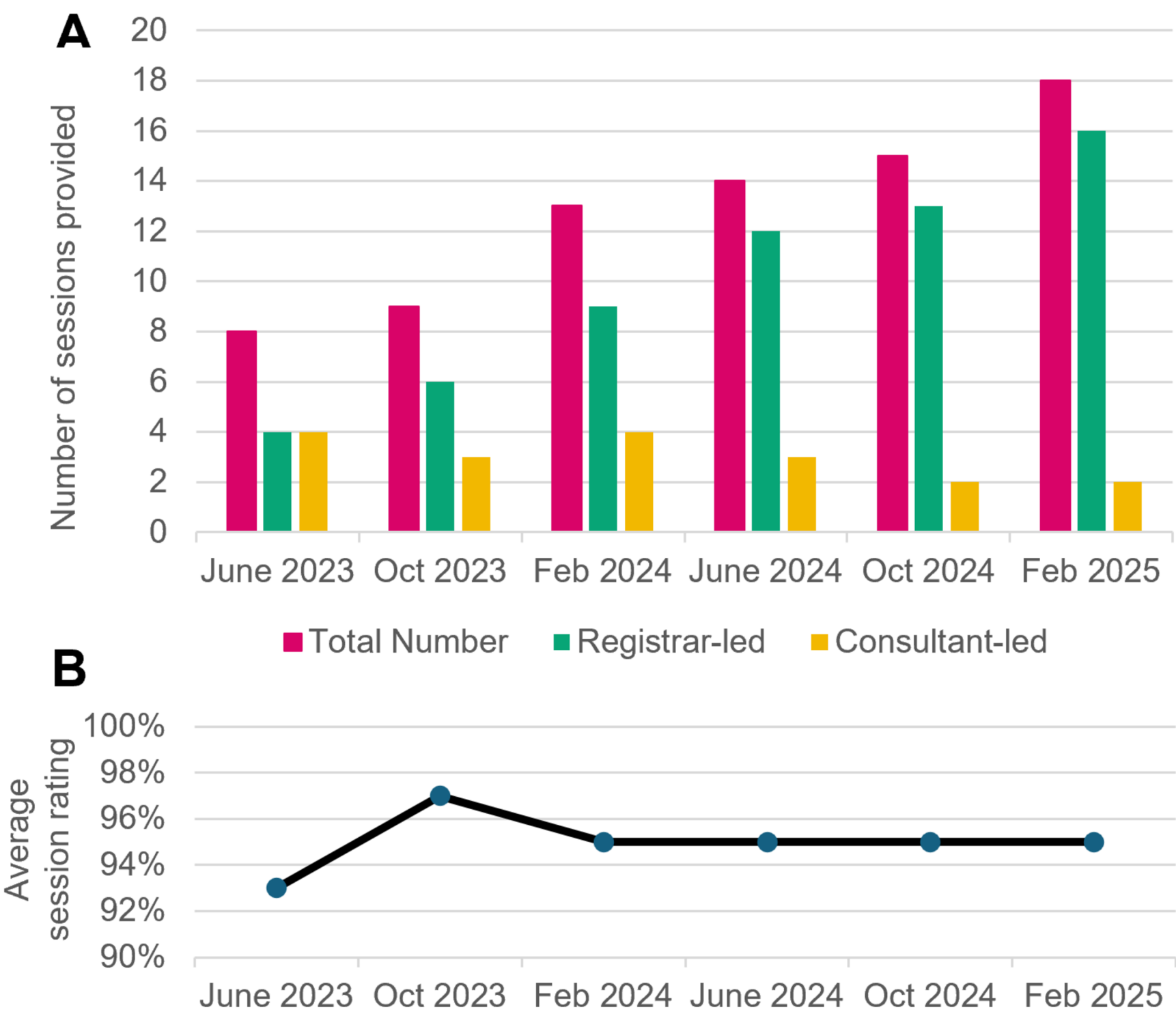


Figure 2. A) Number of teaching sessions provided per cohort. B) Average session rating per cohort.

“They were happy to go great extents to make us ready for the exams, even as much as organising face-to-face mock exam. **One would think it was a paid course, but this was entirely free of any charge** and yet done so well and in such a **friendly manner.**”

“Accessible and friendly teachers, lots of opportunity to practice and get real-time feedback. It was **really comprehensive, covering all the aspects of the exam.** I also liked how **interactive** the sessions were - got to do a lot of practice with feedback.”

“Online communication practice was really helpful, and teaching added to that knowledge. The **concept of mentorship was icing on the cake.**”

Figure 3. Examples of participant feedback about the PACER programme and mock exam

4 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- Our PACER programme has become established and highly valued within our region.
- The use of near-peer teachers and exam representatives has been a successful method of delivering valuable educational support and encouraging development of trainee teaching skills.
- Sustainability of the programme will rely on consistent allocation of regional exam representatives alongside support from the Heads of School.
- Future directions include cross-deanery collaboration and implementation of a formal mock exam programme.