

RCPCH podcast

Your wellbeing as health professionals 1 – engaging the whole team

Full transcript of podcast – released September 2022

Kirsten Olson

Hello and welcome to this Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health podcast. I'm Kirsten Olson and I work in our Membership, Policy & External Affairs Division. In the next two episodes we're taking a look at your wellbeing, as busy health professionals. At the College's vibrant annual conference in Liverpool in June, we spoke with several members who are making a huge impact on wellbeing in their own hospitals and Trusts.

In this episode, we explore how to engage the whole team, and really understand the needs of the people you work with. First we hear with Dr Ash Patel at the Birmingham Children's Hospital. If you're a member, you may very well be familiar with his regular baking column in our magazine, Milestones, or indeed his Great Paediatric Bake Offs, which have been broadcast from our YouTube channel since the pandemic, and made a physical appearance at the conference.

Next, we hear from Dr Susie Minson and Dr Benita Morrissey, both from the Royal London. They had just come from leading their popular workshop at the conference all about 'joy at work'. They remind us how we might create enduring resilience and happiness in our working lives, and bring along the whole multidisciplinary team.

In our next episode on wellbeing, you'll hear from two more members on what they, and other members, are doing with the College to help improve members' wellbeing – so look out for that on your favourite podcast player. Enjoy!

Kirsten Olson

And so if you can just introduce yourself and let us know why you're here.

Ash Patel

Thanks. So my name is Ash. I'm a paediatric nephrology GRID trainee, and I work in Birmingham, I work at Birmingham Children's Hospital. And I'm here today to talk to you about wellbeing, which is a passion of mine and something that I'm quite interested in. And I'm sure you know me from the Great Paediatric Bake Off and from Ash's baking school in the Milestones magazine.

Kirsten Olson

Yes, so we'll talk about that in a second. But first, we wanted to ask, what's your perfect Saturday morning, assuming you're not working?

Ash Patel

So unfortunately, I've lost the ability to have a lie in anymore. So I'm generally up quite early on a Saturday. And if you asked me about a year ago, I would never have said this answer because I was never able to ride a bike before. But during the lockdown, I learned how to ride a bike at 31 years old. And I now have the cycling bug. And I've bought my own bike. And now I spend a lot of my weekends having cycling trips with friends or colleagues into the countryside. And yeah, managing to cycle to work now. And yeah I can ride about, you know, up to 30,35 miles on a weekend, which is amazing, considering I was not able to ride a bike at all a year ago. So yeah, that's actually what I tend to do now on Saturdays.

Kirsten Olson

Ah, fantastic. Sounds great. So you mentioned that you're, you started the Great Paediatric Bake Off. For those of us who may not know, can you let us know a bit about it and how it works?

Ash Patel

Yeah, sure. So I think it all started with my passion of baking. And I've had that for quite a while and I had an Out of Programme experience where I was a simulation fellow, and I enjoy teaching immensely. And I, I made a pact to myself that I would actually make baked goods for every course that I delivered. And I just started it as a little bit of a hobby at that time. And I was quite good at it. And I learnt, I learnt various recipes and baked various goods and had good critical feedback from my simulation family. And then that just kind of grew more and more. And then I always enjoyed bringing in baked goods to work.

Ash Patel

For me, I love, you know, when it's so busy on the shop floor, or if you're doing a busy on call, you sometimes you barely get time to have a drink or have a, you know, a bite to eat or anything. And actually, sometimes you just want, you crave those sweet things. And I think the best gift anybody can give you is a homemade baked gift. Because I think it shows the passion and love that goes into it. And I really enjoy seeing other people eat my bakes. So I was doing that for work. And Aisling who, who's the editor for Milestones magazine, she obviously saw some of my tweets.

Kirsten Olson

Yes, so that's Aisling Beecher in our Member Services team.

Ash Patel

So she obviously saw some of my bakes that I put on Twitter. And somebody had asked for a recipe for it. And so she contacted me, and asked me to write a recipe down, which I did for the Milestones magazine. And that was a big hit. And then I said to her, I don't mind, I'm happy to do it as a sort of baking column, because there was a wellbeing section within the Milestones magazine already. So I contributed to that. And she was very much supportive of that.

And then we had a bit of an idea in that obviously, we've been through COVID. And this is our first face to face conference. But we've had some virtual conferences over the last few years. And so we had an idea of actually, why don't we do a virtual bake.

Ash Patel

And I put the idea to her and said, You know, I can teach some people how to bake, some College representatives or people well known within the College, because I felt that we didn't know them personally as much. We obviously know their titles, but actually don't know them as a person. And I think that's much more meaningful for people and for members to know them on sort of a face to face value. So I have an idea, we decided that...

Ash Patel

My friend Laura Kelly, she was the trainee committee chair at the time, so I approached her and said, Look, you've just taken on this role. be really good for members to know what you who you are and what you do, and what your role is going to be. And David Evans was also quite interested at that time. So we decided to a virtual Bake Off over Zoom. And we called it the Great Paediatric Bake Off in a sort of a little knockoff version of the, the actual Bake Off. And, yeah, we pre recorded it, and then we delivered it in the virtual conference. And from what Aisling told me, I think I had some of the highest views for any session in that conference. And it was a massive hit. And so we went from there, and then just carried on baking and making Bake Offs.

Kirsten Olson

Fantastic. And so you've been speaking with a number of people in those Bake Offs. Have you learned anything has anything surprised you as you've been speaking to people about wellbeing as you're, as you're baking together.

Ash Patel

So, I've learned a lot more about the College itself, as a member, and I've actually learned a lot more about the groups that we have within our College. And I've tried to start sort of learning about those groups more. And I think, as a member, I didn't know what a lot of their roles were, or what they were working towards. And actually, I really wanted a feel of what they were doing.

Ash Patel

So we've done some with the Milestones team, I've had a had a bake off with Camilla Kingdon, and Jonathan Darling, who took up the post. And I just learned a lot more about what who they are, first of all, as a person, but also about what their role was, and actually what they want to get out of their tenure and what they want to do to improve paediatric health or improve paediatric services or how to improve membership within the College. So I learned a lot about actually the role of the College and a lot about the people that are behind the scenes that a lot of people don't know about.

Ash Patel

There's some truly remarkable people in this College, and I'm very privileged to be able to bake with a lot of them. And during COVID, we weren't able to meet and actually, I met a lot of these people over Twitter first, and now I managing, was able to have a conversation with them. And it's it's built some relationships and friendships that I really didn't expect would happen. And I've made a lot more friends from this than I would have expected. So I think for me, it's it's given me a bit of education about the College, but also some lifelong friendships and colleagues for the future.

Kirsten Olson

Fantastic. So we check to see if we want to include this, but we're recording this at conference 2022, in Liverpool, and you of course, have brought your virtual Bake Offs to the physical space. So I think you've done one so far out of a few. So can you tell us how those are going, going so far?

Ash Patel

So it was quite daunting, actually, I must say. It was again, this was an idea that I just brought up. And I said I would love to do this in person actually after doing it virtually. And I really

didn't expect it to become a physical entity, shall we say? And the College have really supported it. And I think it's because people are quite obsessed with baking or very positive. Love it actually, I think our profession loves it and our College loves it. And it's a wellbeing activity that a lot of people can get behind. And there's a lot of paediatricians that bake.

Ash Patel

So yeah, so I bought it to real life. And we hired some equipment. And I have a baking station in the exhibition centre, which I never ever would have dreamed of. And I feel like I've been like on a roadshow or something. And it's going well, so far, I was a bit nervous this morning, before the first bake. But you know, like these, there's people on Twitter that I converse with and never met before who were so happy to bake with me because they wanted to, they wanted to meet me and I wanted to meet them. And they were so open to the idea. And it didn't I didn't need to convince them or anything. They were just on board already, which was lovely to see and hear. And so yeah, we've just done the chocolate chip shortbread which is very tasty. Yeah, they went down like a hit, and even the scraps and the slight burnt one that I didn't want to serve, there was a couple, they still got eaten as well. So so we're going to do some baking for the drinks reception and some baking tomorrow as well with a couple of other people.

Kirsten Olson

Fantastic. So finally, can you share any tips about how you would manage your own wellbeing at work, or perhaps how you would manage the wellbeing of your teammates around you.

Ash Patel

Yeah, so um, like I said, it's something that's really important to me. And as I've as I've become a more senior trainee, I realized how important it is to maintain your own wellbeing, but also the wellbeing of the staff. And I think COVID was a classic example of actually how important that was to look out for your colleagues. And actually, we need to look after ourselves. Because we're the workforce and without us, nothing's going to progress and we can't deliver a service.

Ash Patel

So it's something I'm more mindful of now on a day to day basis. And I, I like to check in with people, I want that time to not be doing medical work and actually having some non clinical chat. And I use baking as a way of doing that. So actually, an initiative that I brought up was Fat Fridays, so we would have a cake. You know, I started off the bakes. And then I said, everybody, you know, I think everybody can bake in this team, let's all try and do a Friday. So people would sign up and they would make a bake, we would try it. And I even made it a little bit competitive in that I gave some scores, but that brought out the best in people as well.

Ash Patel

So that's some of the things that we've done locally. And I've I've supported sort of wellbeing rest areas and, you know, facilities for doctors overnight. And I think, yeah, I think it's a day to day thing that we need to be consciously thinking about making sure that our team is taking breaks. And it doesn't have to be like workshops, or yoga sessions every day, or sort of psychological sessions over Zoom or anything like that. So I think it's just really simple things. And actually, it's really important, just talk to your team, because there's so there's so many little changes that you can make within your little department that will have a huge impact on other people and a huge impact on your team and make their working life easier. Because I think we're quite, we're all quite resilient. I think, actually. If we can make the working day a bit better. I think that's a positive for me.

Ash Patel

And so that's what I try and achieve and that's what I try and tell people if they're thinking about a wellbeing initiative, think about actually what the team really needs. What is really bugging them at the moment. Is it because there's no hot food on site today, or they couldn't get parking this morning or the ID badge is not working and they haven't gotten IT login. You know, there's really simple things that you can actually fix and make their day better.

Kirsten Olson

Oh, they sound like excellent tips. Thank you so much Ash for your time.

Ash Patel

Thank you

Kirsten Olson

Hello, this is Kirsten and I'm here at the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Conference in 2022. And I'm speaking with Dr **Susie Minson** and Dr **Benita Morrissey**. So welcome Susie and Benita. And first, I wonder if you can just tell me your role, and briefly why you're here at Conference?

Susie Minson

So I'm Susie, I am a consultant pediatrician at the Royal London hospital. And I worked less than full time. And I always love to come to the conference, I feel like it's such a nice opportunity to meet other colleagues, meet people that you don't get to see in your everyday working life. And also, the chance just to hear about really exciting advances and improvements in child health. And when you think about how you can apply that to your own practice.

Benita Morrissey

I'm Benita. I also work at the Royal London, I've got a joint appointment with Barts London medical school, so also teach and oversee the child health teaching there. And I'm here at the Royal College conference just for the day, we had the exciting opportunity to run a workshop earlier today. So I'm here particularly to do that, but also to connect with people and get energised and inspired by some of the things I've heard.

Kirsten Olson

Brilliant. Yes. And we'll talk more about joining work and wellbeing in a moment. Thought we'd kick off at first to ask what is your perfect Saturday morning?

Benita Morrissey

Great question. So I live in East London, I love running, I find it a fantastic way to just to get some space to, to process stuff, go to through stuff. So I would say probably a long run up the canals of East London, followed by brunch with some friends.

Susie Minson

I love Saturday mornings, I would say., So I'm super early bird, I always wake up really early. whatever day it is, but I do love that time at the weekend when you're the first person up in the house and you just have a little bit of time just to be yourself. And I think that's super precious. So I sometimes like to do something outside as well, I have been known to run and have bumped into Benita before, but also sometimes just a bike ride or even a swim. And then I also love it when I get home if there's a chance to just have a more chilled morning with my children. And we might all sit around and even just like watch cartoons or make pancakes or something that you couldn't do on a working or school day. That's really lovely.

Kirsten Olson

Lovely. So wanted to ask why is wellbeing for paediatricians such an important topic to discuss and why is it important now?

Susie Minson

I mean, I think I think it's always important. And I think there's sort of different themes, aren't there? There's sort of things that are about for us as individuals and maybe how we feel about our work and our lives and recognising that actually working in healthcare is a long, a long slog in many ways. And it's sort of very much a marathon and not a sprint and trying to really think about how you can create, like, enduring resilience and happiness in your working life that will allow you to sort of continue with that. But I suppose also, maybe there's something more about, you know, recognising that wellbeing isn't just a nice thing that goes with with work. But that also has implications in terms of patient outcomes and things.

Benita Morrissey

Yeah, I mean, I think it's always been important wellbeing I think now it's particularly important coming out of COVID. I think there's an increased focus on it, and also recognition that as a workforce. I think Seb said it very well earlier. So there's an epidemic of burnout.

Kirsten Olson

Seb Gray

Benita Morrissey

Yeah, not just amongst doctors, but also amongst nursing staff, amongst healthcare assistants. And it kind of impacts on kind of people at all levels. So I think it's really important that we look after, and our workforce can not only survive, but can also thrive. But I think it's also as Susie says incredibly important for the children and families that we provide care for. There's evidence that a kind of happy, engaged workforce, there's better outcomes for children and young people, they're more satisfied with care. There's less errors, there's improved kind of retention for staff. And, yeah, so kind of across the board, I think it's really, really important. And I think we're delighted that there's such an increased kind of focus on it now, at all levels, which is really fantastic.

Kirsten Olson

I suppose when thinking about implementing wellbeing programmes in in one's Trust, at work, how do you find out what's actually going to really work? What's going to stick with the people that you work with and the structures that you're working in?

Benita Morrissey

Yeah, I think that's a fantastic question. I think when we started looking at how we work across a quite a large children's hospital to improve wellbeing, we found it a bit overwhelming. We recognised there was such a diversity of what is important to staff, so many different staff groups, and we didn't really know where to start. And we actually found that IHI joy in work framework really helpful.

Susie Minson

Yeah, absolutely. I guess I think exactly as you say, there's often it can be quite overwhelming. And I also think there's often you often have maybe ideas of things that you think might be the answer, but you don't really know. And we were very conscious when we started that, sometimes, we both had experience of wellbeing initiatives that have been quite sort of top down and just introduced, but maybe then, you know, hadn't always had the success that had been intended, partly because people didn't really feel that it was relevant to them, or that it was meaningful. So we were really keen to sort of, to start by finding out what did

really matter to people and having a framework around that. So because we knew that whatever we we did, we wanted it to have positive impact. So yeah, I think that the framework around thinking about how to ask those questions, and what to measure is really powerful.

Benita Morrissey

So yeah, we started with quite a big consultation across our hospital. And we tried to kind of particularly target some of the harder to reach group, so cleaners, healthcare assistants, medical secretaries, people that would wouldn't necessarily think that these things were for them. And we just ask them three questions, what makes a good day for you? What gets in the way of it? And what do you think we should work on?

And we used free food as an incentive to draw them along. And we tried to kind of use different ways of collecting data. So we use post it notes, we did focus groups, we just spent time really kind of listening and helping people to feel heard. And then when we got all that feedback, which we probably got from over 100 people actually, then we kind of looked at it kind of using a kind of qualitative framework to try and pull out key themes of what was most important to our staff.

Kirsten Olson

Great. And what what were the themes that were coming out when you when you got those responses back? And were any that surprised you?

Susie Minson

I mean, it was, it was really nice, it's one thing we had really wanted to recognise from the beginning was that it would be different things for different people. And that was sort of part part of the process. And I suppose one thing we really found, didn't we, was that if we even just that process of asking people and having that sort of conversation and making it clear that we really cared what people felt, I think was powerful in itself. And people felt that we really wanted to listen. So that was really good.

Susie Minson

But then there were some really key themes that emerge from, you know, we can't fix all of them at once. But I mean some of them were people really wanted to feel appreciated and valued in their work. People really wanted to work in a sort of positive and supportive environment with, you know, in a team that they felt, recognised them. Kindness was a really common theme that came up again and again.

And then, you know, there were to be honest, some things which felt a bit more daunting to try and tackle such as lots of the responses were around IT and sort of logistical foolish things

that is quite challenging. But you know, equally, I think, completely valid, and that I can see how the frustrations around those things can really impact on your, your experience at work. And sort of resources around places that people take their breaks was also another really key theme. So things like whether you've got a microwave, it sounds small, but like if you've got a microwave to heat your lunch up, or somewhere nice to sit for for half an hour really made a big difference to people. So yeah, we had people who were really generous in their, in their sort of in their sharing with us things that I felt people really reflected on what would make a difference. So yeah, we were able to kind of collate quite a few few things. But then of course, we were, it was quite daunting, wasn't it to know what to do with with all this information?

Kirsten Olson 08:19

Can you talk anything about how you how you went about implementing some of the initiatives kind of after you captured that feedback?

Benita Morrissey

Yeah, so I think key for us was recruiting a diverse and enthusiastic team. And I think that's probably one of the things that helps with the success of it. So we kind of went around the wards and chatted some or our senior nurses and asked them who they thought would be good. We also kind of chatted to our managers about who had a little bit of capacity to be involved in this. So we had a team of kind of doctors, kind of all level of kind of nursing staff, and we later brought in kind of allied health professionals as well. And I think we all just met together as a team, and we just brainstormed ideas.

Benita Morrissey

We aim to kind of start small, and if stuff worked to kind of roll out, but also not to be afraid to fail. And to kind of accept that not everything we do is gonna work and some things will just flop and that's totally okay. And I think we also recognise that some of what we were trying to create was real cultural change, particularly around cultures of kind of positivity, kindness, kind of valuing and appreciating people, and that will take a little bit longer to kind of develop and acquire .

Kirsten Olson

Can you give some examples of some initiatives that you put forward in your Trust and how how those worked?

Susie Minson

I think one thing that was really clear to us was that, you know, we wouldn't be able to just do one thing that was going to be the solution for everyone, because we recognize that everyone's different and different things will work for different people, too, we, we very much wanted to make the solutions and the initiatives owned by the people that were going to be

working there and owned by the team. So we had some things that were sort of aimed at the whole Children's Hospital, the whole department, and then some other initiatives that were a bit more local, and just for small groups of people that would be more meaningful for them.

Susie Minson

So maybe we can give you an example of each. So for the whole hospital, something that we did that was super popular was just a sort of every couple of months having a wellbeing lunch, which was a shared lunch for everybody. So it brought everybody together. And we really made the effort to go around and encourage everyone to come and not just the doctors and nurses, but like the admin staff and the housekeepers and our porter and really try and make them as inclusive as possible. But they were also then an opportunity to talk about wellbeing and then keep it on everybody's agenda, but also to kind of have a two way sharing conversation. So we used it as a chance to celebrate good work and to create positivity, and really try to make people feel valued. And I feel like that was a really nice whole hospital initiative that promoted wellbeing and team building.

Benita Morrissey

Another example of a kind of a slightly more local initiative is our we had a couple of practice development nurses on our team. And one of the areas they recognized needed improvement was around student nurses that were transitioning into being kind of newly qualified nurses. And what had happened previously is that they were kind of in a big system and felt a bit lost and their voices weren't heard. So they created a specific kind of preceptorship programme for them, which included a kind of wellbeing element where they kind of really supported them as individuals and supported them in that transition. And they even did things kind of a year on. They sort of went round and took them all kind of thank you presents and cards and wrote kind of personalised notes about how far they'd kind of come on in the year. And they looked at actually our retention rate actually, since they made those changes and encouraging me they found that it improved from kind of 72% to 89%, which is a huge improvement in terms of like staffing and also really addresses one of those other issues that everyone thought was really important which was having the staff to be able to deliver kind of high quality care.

Benita Morrissey 02:25

Fantastic, thanks..

Kirsten Olson 09:33

And were there any particular challenges that you've found, as you mentioned that, of course, welcoming failure is sometimes part of part of change, but anything that you found particularly tricky to do?

Susie Minson 09:50

feel like there's lots of things that we found, you know, that we've learned along the way that were challenging and I think one of the things that's really become clear, we've done this over. There's lots of different things we've done, but it's over quite a long is a long time, isn't it probably like three or four years now. And one thing that has really become clear is that there is a sort of need for constant momentum in this and then kind of keeping up momentum and encouragement and really needing to have those local champions. So I think it is quite, it is quite resource intensive in that, in that sense.

Susie Minson 10:18

And there's maybe also been something about recognising that, obviously, wellbeing is something that we feel is important for everyone. But when you're doing this work, you know, there are times when perhaps people need a bit more support than then you know, your your intervention is maybe able to give, and we recognise we don't necessarily have the resources and the skills to offer the psychological support that some people might need, I think really having a clear framework of escalation and signposting for those those individuals has been really helpful. Because you don't want to feel that you're not offering, you know, able to offer someone, something helpful.

Susie Minson

And then another thing we were just talking about in our workshop, actually, is that one of the things that's both a challenge, but also maybe a positive in paediatrics, is because our junior, our junior staff and our nurses that people rotate around a lot, don't they? So, you know, we might have someone join our team for six months or a year, and they might get really involved in one of these initiatives, but then they will rotate somewhere else. And then that's the challenge, but also that as a kind of institution is that they use sort of lost that momentum and that skill. But on the other hand, they might share that initiative with a new trust that they're going to, and that might create momentum beyond just our hospital. So it's sort of a good thing, but also maybe a challenge.

Kirsten Olson

And it strikes me that, of course, any health professional or a cleaner, or anybody else working in, in a hospital environment, may very well be a patient themselves. Are there any kind of things to consider around that?

Benita Morrissey

Yeah, I guess. Yeah, I think probably seeing it from the other side, as a patient, you realise just how important some of these things these things are. So I think it brings, I think we have professionals that have had experience with our site, it brings kind of new insights. And I think you realise just things like just those little bits of kindness. And that bits of time that people take to be supportive to communicate well, to make you feel heard, actually make a huge kind of impact in difference. And I think, as staff, if we're modeling and doing that to each other, it then kind of supports and encourages our staff to have the kind of emotional capacity to be able to do that with patients and children, young people and families, which makes a kind of huge difference to them.

Kirsten Olson

I guess, finally, can you are there any sort of quick tips that you would offer other other trusts, other paediatricians thinking about kind of how to how to approach their own workplaces?

Susie Minson

I would, I would say that, you know, one of the things that I think I've really taken away from this is that, you know, small things can make a really big difference. And you don't have to do everything all at once. I think sometimes it can feel a bit overwhelming, especially when, you know, faced with a sort of catalogue of things that people are struggling with, and an overwhelming sense of things that you need to improve, it doesn't need to happen at once. And actually, for me, I think that even just starting and showing any willingness and enthusiasm to improve things actually goes a really long way.

Susie Minson

And the other thing, which I know is sort of often an issue is that we don't always have access to huge amount of funding, that's sort of been something that's come up a few times, and again, you know, the Royal London where we work isn't, you know, again, somewhere that's sort of hugely, you know, abundant in resources anymore than anywhere else is. It's also very deprived population. But actually, we found a lot of the things that we've done that were the most successful with, we're free or very inexpensive. So I feel like funding should doesn't need to be a barrier. Yeah. And also that we were, we were super lucky to have both a really supportive management and senior leadership who really promoted and encouraged us. And the other thing I think made a huge difference was probably having a really engaged multidisciplinary team with the local champions.

Benita Morrissey

I think that'll probably be on one of my top tips is that it come back to you said, feel very overwhelming, kind of the issue of well being across paediatrics, particularly when you take an MDT approach. And actually, I think starting by, even if what you start with is just grabbing a team of people that are kind of a multidisciplinary team of people that are passionate

about it makes a huge difference. And I think starting just by listening and asking, and just trying to work out what is important to your, to your staff.

Benita Morrissey 14:26

But I think and I think as Susie says it is it is a little things that make a huge difference. So sometimes you feel like if I can't address the printing and IT, I won't get started. But actually just some of the sort of simple initiatives actually do make a massive difference. If you haven't got learning from excellence, that's a really fantastic way to start. I think that's probably one of our most successful initiatives that's been kind of taken and rolled, rolled out across the whole site into other sites, and is a great way of just starting and kind of recognising and appreciating people and kind of creating a culture of kindness and kind of paying it forward.

Kirsten Olson

Fantastic oh that's it's already inspiring thank you so much for Benita and Susie, and you've been listening to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Thank you!

