

Mentorship and buddying schemes

Buddies

Having a 'buddy' at work can make a huge difference to the speed with which new recruits manage to settle into a new organisation. Just knowing that somebody is there to listen and is genuinely interested in helping can make staff feel very supported. A buddy should be a peer working at the same level, if this is possible. Their function is to befriend the new recruit and help them with practical day-to-day issues that they may be embarrassed to keep asking about.

Ways in which 'buddying' systems work are as follows:

- *gain agreement of a well-established member of staff to act as a buddy and explain what is involved*
- *use the buddy to introduce the new employee to the extended practice team*
- *create a system whereby the buddy has to make contact with the new employee – eg twice a day during the first week, once daily for the next 2 weeks, twice weekly for the next 4 weeks, monthly for 6 months*
- *ask the buddy to report back to the practice manager in order to ensure this activity occurs.*

Mentors

Having a mentor at work is essential to ease new employees into the practice through a structured and educative process. The mentor should ideally be another general practice nurse (GPN), at a senior level. The role of the mentor is to guide and educate the new employee and to assess their competence – although this may also be shared by partners in the practice. A mentor relationship, although very supportive and friendly, is more formal than that with a buddy.

Ways in which mentorship schemes can be set up are as follows:

- *approach a senior GPN to gain agreement to act in this role, explaining the responsibilities*
- *create appointment spaces for mentoring activity – this will need to be at least once a week for the first few months, but may need to be more frequent if the new employee is new to working in general practice*
- *ask the mentor to make contact with the primary care trust lead for GPNs to identify the role that they will be taking. This will avoid any duplication of effort and can lead to complementary ways of working*
- *arrange for the mentor and new employee to work together as much as possible within the first few weeks.*

Use a structured document to signify the mentor's observation of practice and show achievement of competences.