

Supporting Doctors' Wellbeing in the Emergency Department through a Buddy Scheme

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Key points

Lack of support was identified as a recurring issue amongst junior doctors in the Emergency Department at BHRUT. Implementing a 'Buddy scheme' where FY2 doctors were buddied with RCEM higher trainees improved the average wellbeing scores of Emergency Department junior doctors by **13.7%** and the proportion reporting low wellbeing fell from **40% to 25%**.

Introduction Patient safety depends on doctors' wellbeing ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾, however 45% of doctors reported low wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic ⁽³⁾, with doctors working in the Emergency Department (ED) experiencing higher levels of burnout ⁽⁴⁾. Peer support mentoring to improve wellbeing is encouraged by the BMA and the Royal College of Emergency Medicine ^(4,5). This project aimed to improve doctors' wellbeing and hence patient safety.

Method

Week 1

- FY2 ED doctors completed Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale ⁽⁶⁾
- Pre-intervention focus group
- Peer support framework provided

Weeks 2-9

- Allocation of FY2/RCEM Higher Trainee buddies
- Weekly contact encouraged

Week 10

- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale ⁽⁶⁾ recompleted by FY2 doctors
- Feedback collected

Results

8 FY2 Emergency Department doctors participated.

Focus group pre buddy scheme:

Inadequate senior support
(7 mentions)

Work related exhaustion
(5 mentions)

would like a dedicated senior
Exhausting shifts
Variable
unaware who's senior
anxiety inducing
exhausting
tired
senior reviews
no recognition
lack of support
unsure who is senior
unsure who can help
amazing trainee registrars
unapproachable
Couldnt find a senior

Focus group post buddy scheme:

GREAT initiative

SUPPORTIVE registrars

Someone to turn to for **SUPPORT**

SUPPORTIVE BUDDIES

FANTASTIC

Someone to **LISTEN TO MY CONCERNS**

GOOD scheme

really **HELPFUL**

REALLY GOOD IDEA

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale:

14 Item Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale ⁽⁶⁾ scores:

Low wellbeing <43

Moderate wellbeing 43-60

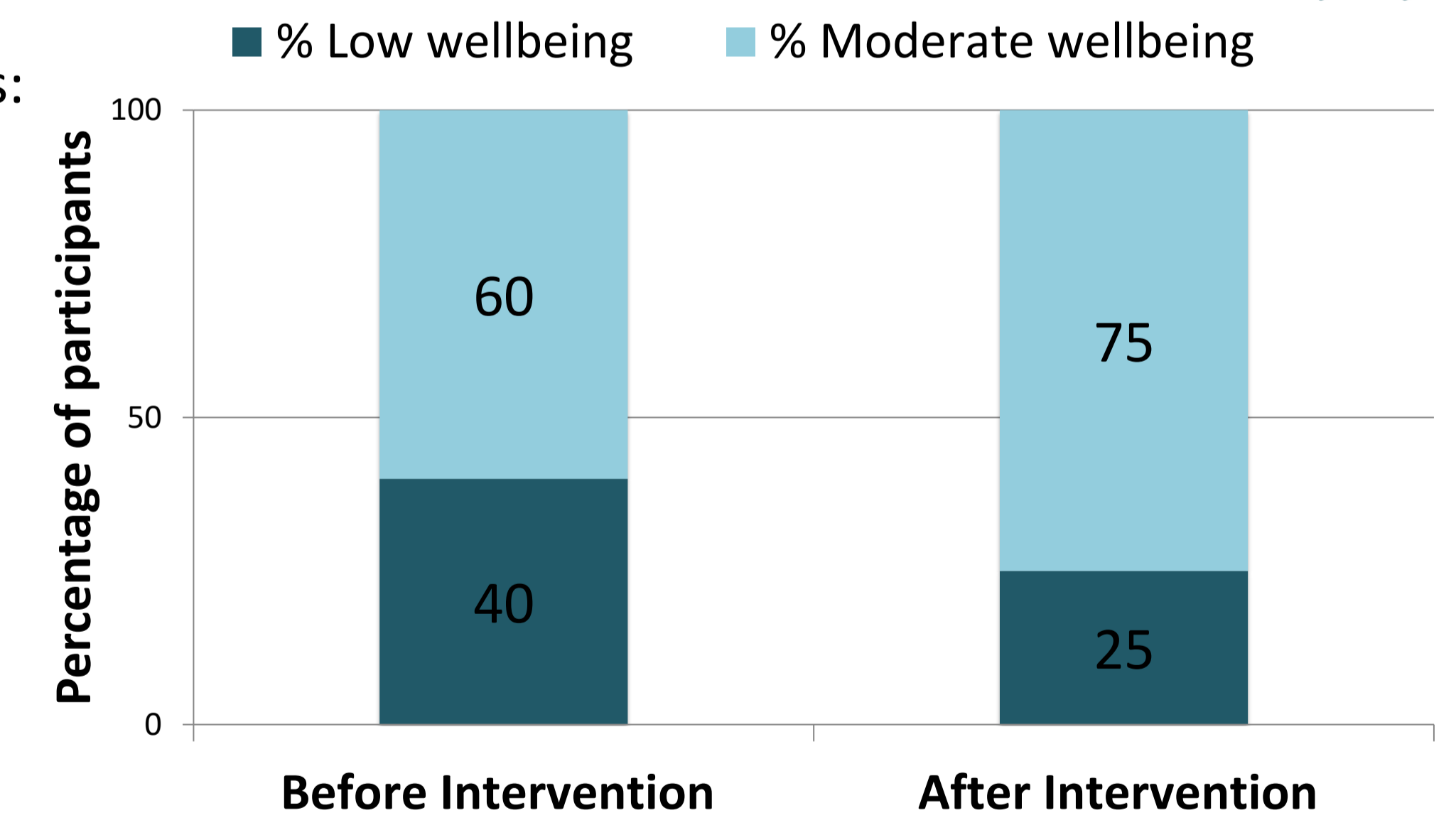
High wellbeing score >60

Before intervention:

- Mean wellbeing score 42

After intervention:

- Mean wellbeing score 47.8



Conclusion The buddy scheme saw an improvement in junior doctor's wellbeing, with many positive comments. These results may be more marked than usual, as the project occurred during the second wave of the pandemic when conditions were very tough. However the challenge of how to survive and thrive during busy and tiring ED shifts remains, regardless of the pandemic. The buddy scheme will continue for the next rotation of FY2 doctors, with the aim to ensure good wellbeing amongst doctors and improve patient safety. We hope this scheme can expand across all departments at BHRUT.