

Co-Creating a Wellbeing Initiative for Clinical Year Medical Students

A collaborative approach to supporting students during clinical placements



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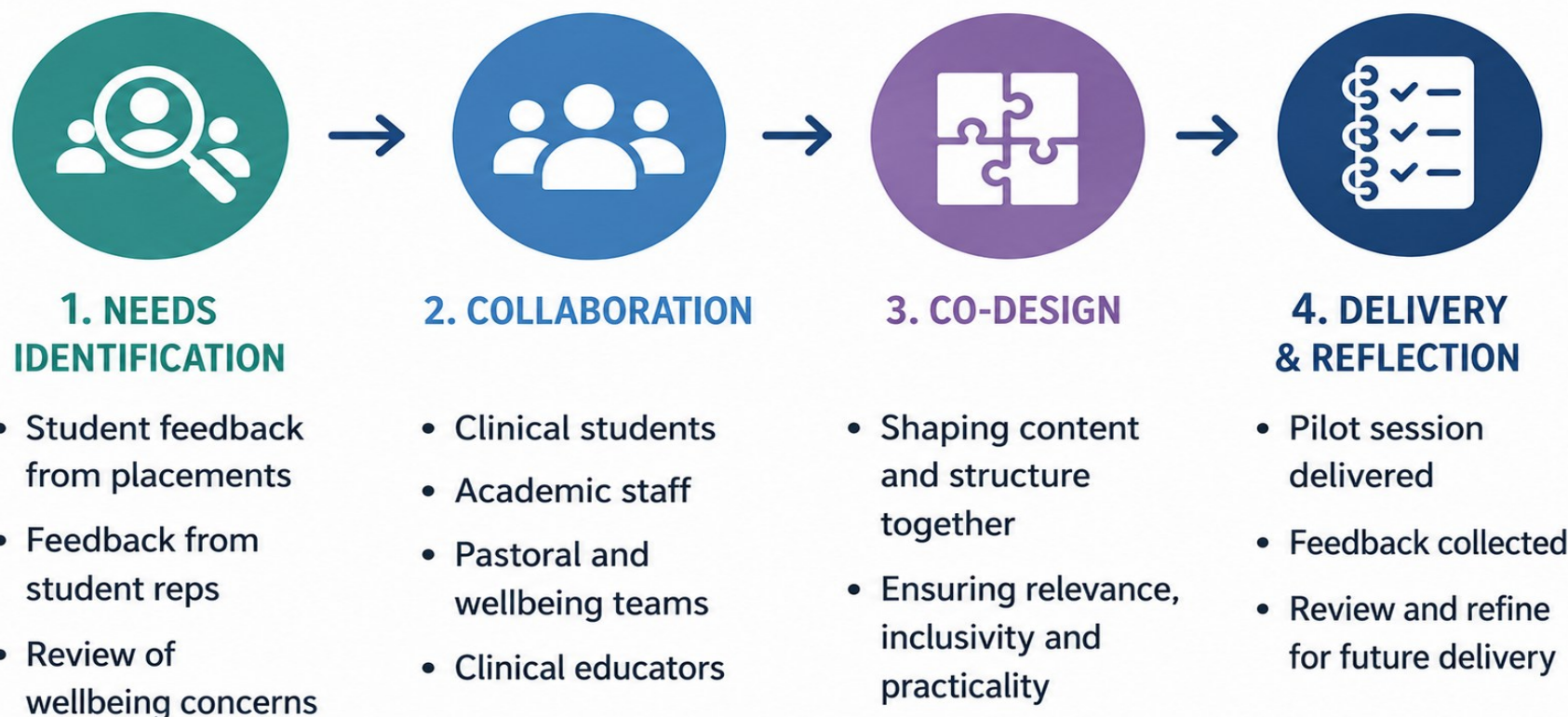
Background

- Clinical placements are a rewarding and demanding experience for medical students. Students face challenges including workload, assessments and professional identity development.
- Medical student wellbeing is a growing concern across the UK, with isolation, stress, and barriers to accessing support reported during clinical training (Hawsawi et al., 2024; Sheldon et al., 2024).
- Students at Edinburgh Medical School identified additional challenges during remote placements, particularly reduced contact with established peer networks and support systems.
- Peer-led, co-created initiatives have been shown to enhance engagement and better address student needs.
- In response, students and staff co-created a wellbeing initiative to support clinical year (years 4, 5 and 6) medical students.

Aim

To co-create a wellbeing initiative that supports clinical year medical students and to develop a sustainable toolkit for future delivery.

Co-Creation Process



Session Components

1 SUPPORT SERVICES & RESOURCES  - Overview of university support services - Signposting to wellbeing and pastoral resources - How to access support during placements - Recognising when support may be needed	2 INSIGHTS FROM EXPERIENCED DOCTORS  - Doctors shared challenges faced during training and beyond - Overcoming setbacks and adversity - Normalising difficulties in a medical career	3 STUDENT PANEL  - Senior students shared experiences, tips and strategies - Practical advice for success and wellbeing - Interactive Q and A	4 PEER SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES  - Students highlighted peer support opportunities on placements - Peer support networks, in person and online - Encourage help seeking from clinical educators or university support staff	5 LIFESTYLE MEDICINE  - Sleep - Physical activity - Nutrition - Stress management - Social connection - Minimising harmful substances
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Impact

- Sharing vulnerability from senior staff aimed to promote psychological safety and create a more open, supportive learning environment.
- Senior year clinical students (years 5 and 6) reported increased confidence in sharing their own emotional vulnerabilities.
- The initiative enhanced connection and peer support across year groups.
- Students were encouraged to reflect on common challenges experienced during clinical training and identify proactive strategies to manage them.
- Increased awareness of available wellbeing and support resources.
- Strengthened relationships between students, clinicians, and support staff.
- Encouraged ongoing conversations around resilience, wellbeing, and help-seeking within medical training.

Next Steps

- Development of a wellbeing toolkit to support delivery of sessions in future academic years.
- Adapt wellbeing session delivery to meet cohort needs, using student feedback and key toolkit resources.
- Evaluate longer-term impact on student wellbeing, engagement and support seeking behaviours.
- Continue collaborative co-design between students and staff.

References

Hawsawi A.A, Nixon N, Stewart E, *et al.* Exploring access to support services for medical students: recommendations for enhancing wellbeing support. *BMC Medical Education*. 2024;24:671.

Sheldon E, Ezaydi N, Desoysa L, *et al.* Barriers to help-seeking, accessing and providing mental health support for medical students: a mixed methods study using the candidacy framework. *BMC Health Services Research*. 2024;24:738.