New Graduate Physiotherapy Public-Private Partnership

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Context

• Recruiting to Allied Health positions in rural areas can be challenging
• The Bega Valley is a small rural coastal community 400km from Sydney
• Traditionally recruiting to physiotherapy vacancies has been because people come to the area
How the partnership model started

• Sapphire Coast Physiotherapy (SCP) had a vacancy and were looking for a new graduate
• Training two new graduates is much preferred for reasons of efficiency and peer support
• There was not enough work for two graduates
How the model started (cont)

- Bega Valley Health Services (BVHS) Physiotherapy Department had longstanding vacant hours
- Recruiting to a part-time position in a rural area is often more luck than good management
- Little likelihood of recruiting a new graduate
A partnership was born!

- SCP approached BVHS about a joint recruitment
- The vision: two new graduate positions
- Shared education
- Informal agreement with decision making by consensus
Challenges and risks

• NSW Health e-recruit offers little flexibility for targeted advertising
• Merit based selection policy
• Timeframes to attract and secure new graduates
• A risk for all parties – how the model went reflected on all
The final model

- Shared recruitment – Public systems with SCP directors as job specialist and independent on panel
- Two new graduates working part-time in each sector
- Shared education model with intensive tutorials over first six months
- Two graduates commenced in January 2013
Evaluation framework

• Formal research methodology (qualitative using Appreciative Inquiry framework)

• Focus groups held:
  – New and recent graduates
  – Public sector managers
  – Private sector managers

• Insights into partnership after 11 months in roles
A variety of experience

• a broader education and experience
• a greater insight into the patient continuum of care
• a range of mentoring support
• allowed experience of different working cultures
• inform future career choices
Successful recruiting

• attracted quality applicants to difficult-to-fill positions
• number and quality of applicants exceeding expectations

‘repeatedly when we came to checking with the referees we were told “this is one of my top graduates, this is one of my top students” with applicant after applicant’
Overcame social isolation

- recruiting to more than one position
- a larger pool of work contacts across the sectors
- Rural environment lends to community engagement
Relied on flexibility

• Management flexibility was required
• Prioritise education
• Allow for rostering to suit the needs of both sectors
• Flexibility from graduates working across multiple worksites
Enhanced networking

• enhanced networking between sectors
• created a community of physiotherapists
• breaking down the “us and them” barriers between the public and private sectors
Strengthening the model

The PPP model would be strengthened by:

- funding support for the model to allow both sectors to dedicate time to training and education
- developing strategies for easing the transition into the PPP model
- management of industrial matters such as explicit recruitment, specific position descriptions and set-term contracts
The future of the model

• Now over 12 months in to the model
• Expanded into student placements
• Part of the future for both sectors
• Viable option for other regions and professions
Questions