Using emotional intelligence to develop medical appraiser skills

Background
Once a year, GPs have to undergo a formal appraisal to support their professional development. This appraisal helps them to improve their performance and to identify areas where further development might be necessary. These yearly appraisals also enable GPs to gather evidence for the re-validation of their licence to practice medicine which the General Medical Council mandates they do every five years. This is a high-stakes environment for all concerned and there is a clear need for doctors have the competence and confidence to become appraisers.

Work Psychology Group was approached by the Kent Surrey and Sussex (KSS) Deanery to work with them to design, implement and evaluate a medical appraiser development centre for appraisers in general practice. There was no process in place previously to help them to develop these skills. These workshops give GP appraisers the opportunity to understand what is required, the impact they have on other people and the ability to set clear development plans for the appraisee.

Action Plan
The first stage was to carry out a job analysis in order to develop a competency model for effective appraiser performance.

The second stage was to design and implement a process to support appraisers in developing the competencies identified by the job analysis. This included psychometric feedback to help appraisers develop self-awareness and interpersonal awareness through the concept of emotional intelligence. Bespoke simulation, written and reflection exercises with trained actors and observers were also used at the one-day Appraisal Development Centre (ADC) workshop.

Over 100 GP appraisers have been trained at the KSS Deanery through the ADC. The ADCs provide appraisers with opportunity to reflect upon their current level of competency and to identify their own developmental needs and to use the concept of emotional intelligence to increase self-awareness and facilitate development.

Follow-up workshops were also developed specifically for leaders.

In order to ensure buy-in, leading GP appraisers were trained to use these tools which allowed the deanery to own and run the process themselves.

“...I was amazed at the quality (of this course)... I am a GP trainer and have been to loads of GP trainer days, this is the best training course I’ve ever been on”
– Course participant

Results & Outcomes
Validation work with both appraisers and their appraisees has provided evidence of successful transfer of learning from workshop to workplace. Appraisers report increased confidence in running effective appraisals, awareness of their impact on appraisees and strengthened skills to constructively challenge. Appraisees report increased satisfaction with their appraisal and rate the skills of their appraiser more highly. As a result of this work, four other postgraduate medical deaneries have asked Work Psychology Group to develop workshops on emotional intelligence for their staff.