

KSS Acute Hospitals in Sussex Junior Doctors' Balint/Reflective Practice Group Pilot Project

Dear KSS Trainee,

Signing up to join the Junior Doctors' Balint/Reflective Practice Group Pilot Project

Introduction to the pilot project

We have had requests from junior doctors in the Sussex Acute Trusts, stemming from their experience during the Covid-19 period, for Balint Groups to be started in the acute setting, so we are hoping to pilot this in the next few weeks. Please sign up (details below) if you would like to be part of this.

We have a limit to numbers that we can accept into the first pilot groups. Please apply early if you are keen to join. Once we have allocated the places, we will need to open a waiting list. We would let trainees on the waiting list know if and when a space becomes available.

What is a Balint/reflective/case discussion group, and where does the idea come from?

Any junior doctors who have spent time working in a mental health Trust are likely to have been invited to join a Balint Group, or a reflective practice or case discussion group. Balint Groups also run in many medical schools, and in some acute Trusts around the country.

Balint Groups were started by Psychoanalysts Michael and Enid Balint in the 1950s as groups where GPs met regularly with their Balint Leader, to think together about their experiences as a doctor, to consider the doctor/patient relationship, and to understand more about experiences that had stayed with them for whatever reason - be that an experience that they found perturbing, confusing, disturbing, or that left them with feelings that they wanted to understand more.

Why now?

It seems pertinent that working through the Covid-19 pandemic many healthcare workers are likely to have experienced situations that they would like some space to think more about, to gain the perspective of their peers, as well as their Balint Leader, who can think with them about the dynamics contributing to the case they are bringing.

Further information about Balint Groups and what happens in a Balint Group

For more information, and an introduction to what happens in a Balint group, please see the Balint Society's website: <https://balint.co.uk/> <https://balint.co.uk/about/introduction/>

Who will lead these groups?

The groups will be led by senior NHS Psychotherapists, who as a group, as well as having trainings as Psychotherapists, also have clinical backgrounds in medicine, nursing and psychology. The group leaders are experienced in facilitating NHS Balint and/or Staff reflective practice groups.

Chair: Peter Molyneux

Chief Executive: Samantha Allen

Head office: Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Swandean, Arundel Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN13 3EP

www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk

A teaching trust of Brighton and Sussex Medical School

Are Balint Groups therapy groups?

Balint Groups are not therapy groups - they give participants space to stop and think, and we as group leaders may use some principles coming out of our psychotherapy training to help the group to think through an experience described in the group, but this is a workplace-focused thinking space. We can speak to group members separately if they are interested in the idea of therapy, and how to access this.

When and how will these groups run?

We aim for the groups to run weekly. We will do this in two 'terms' - the Autumn and Spring terms. The groups will run over a virtual platform, so doctors can join as long as they can access a computer or phone where they can join via the link.

Balint Groups need a consistent membership as the members of the group, and the group leader, get to know each other, and that allows the group to think together about the cases that members bring. We realise that this could be a challenge with some of the rotas in acute hospitals, but we will do what we can to try to make this possible. We may be able to hold a group on two different days in the week, and ask that group members join one of the two groups each week according to what their rota that week will allow. If group members can attend the same group each week, we ask that they do this. If the two groups are held by two different leaders, the two leaders will work together to link the two groups up. Members need to attend as consistently as possible.

We are keen to encourage any trainees who are curious about what a reflective space could offer them to get in touch, and to come along and try the groups. Even if the Balint model isn't what you think you are looking for, we encourage you to come along and find out what the groups are like.

Ground rules for the group

For the groups to run well and safely, there are a few ground rules that we ask all group members to observe:

1. The Balint Group is a confidential space. Group members do not discuss the content of the session with people outside the group, nor with each other outside the group (the only exception is the group leaders who will meet together as a team, but will retain the confidentiality of the groups within their team).
2. As group members will be joining the Balint Group remotely, they need to guarantee to the group that they are in a confidential space, where the group cannot be overheard. (Headphones can be helpful here if a doctor has no option but to join from a shared room).
3. Group members attend as consistently as possible.
4. If a group member cannot attend a session for any reason, they send their apologies to the group (via spnt.sussexbalint@nhs.net). This allows the whole group to remain present in the group's mind, with all its members accounted for.

What we need from you to take part:

We will also need to know something about you, so that we can plan the groups.

These groups will be offered as part of your wider Medical Education, so we need to know about the Medical Education structure around you. This is why we ask who your supervising Consultant is, and your Director of Medical Education and Medical Education Manager. These groups are not part of any assessment process for your Medical Education, but do give you a professional development opportunity.

If an issue is raised that indicates additional personal support would be beneficial, we can signpost you to that. As in any professional context, we all have a duty to maintain confidentiality wherever possible, but there have to be limits to confidentiality; if a risk to self or others is perceived, we would aim to speak about this in the group, but the Balint Group Leader will have a duty to take this outside the group in exceptional circumstances if an urgent or important safeguarding issue arose. We would always aim to speak to you first if we had any concerns. We ask for your work context and supervisors, to be able to contact them if we need to.

We have also asked you to write a few lines about why you want to be part of a Balint Group, so we get to hear a little about you and what makes you interested to join us.

If you would like to be part of this pilot project, please complete the section below and e-mail it to spnt.sussexbalint@nhs.net by Friday 18th September. We will get back to you to let you know the times of the groups in your Trust, the group leaders for your Trust, and with a link to let you join online. We will contact your Consultant or Educational Supervisor and Medical Education Manger to let them know that you are taking part in the pilot. We will copy you into that correspondence.

You are welcome to e-mail us via spnt.sussexbalint@nhs.net if you have any questions about the project, or about joining the project.

Sophie Atwood
Consultant Psychiatrist in Medical Psychotherapy
Psychotherapy Tutor
Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

(and on behalf of the other Leads for the KSS Acute Hospitals in Sussex Junior Doctors' Balint/Reflective Practice Group Pilot Project - Anthony Ang, Christine Daniel, Alison Roy and Brian Solts)

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Application to join the Project

Name			
Hospital			
Ward/Team			
Training Grade <i>e.g. FY1, GPST1, CT1 etc</i>		Telephone number (mobile):	
Work e-mail address			
Home e-mail address *			
Consultant name and e-mail			
Educational Supervisor name and e-mail			
Medical Education Manager name and e-mail			

**We can e-mail the link to your home email if you can't access your work e-mail from home*

Rota pattern - please let us know what your rota pattern is, and what days and times each week would be more possible for you to join a group:
Please let us know briefly why you want to join the Balint Group?

I would like to join the Balint Project. I have read and understood the information sheet, and agree to observe the Balint Group ground rules.

Signed (can be typed):	
Date:	

Please return to: spnt.sussexbalint@nhs.net