Faculty development - the Wessex Way

BACKGROUND
Post-graduate medical education in England is run under the auspices of 14 post-graduate Deanseries headed by a post-graduate Dean. Each deanery covers a geographical area in which there are several acute hospitals and numerous community health facilities encompassing the whole range of health care including psychiatry, general practice and long-standing chronic conditions. Doctors may be undertaking specialist training in any of these establishments and faculty is drawn from a wide range of educators including Heads of School, Programme Directors and Directors of Medical Education in hospitals. Other stakeholders include the Royal Colleges who develop specialty training curricula as well as setting examinations, and the General Medical Council (GMC) who approve the curricula and award final certificates of completion of training (CCT). Faculty require more than the ability to teach, but also need an awareness of process, both regionally and nationally, political awareness, and an aptitude for collaborative working and diplomacy across several groups and institutions.

METHODOLOGY
This paper follows on from a previous paper written in 1999 which employed semi-structured interviews and a consultative workshop to evaluate the characteristics of clinical units that were highly acclaimed by trainees concerning the quality of their educational environment. The key findings of that paper, written over a decade ago, were that such units embody three characteristics: the people feel part of a community, there is a sense of collegiality and there is a commitment to criticality. Over the ensuing years these principles have been maintained and embodied at the annual forum. This current paper uses a qualitative approach to assess and evaluate the forum, using direct feedback questionnaires, focus groups, observation and individual discussions among educators.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES
The forum consists of a mixture of didactic lectures from invited speakers, interactive workshops with feedback from groups, social events, a synthesis by a faculty member and a final summing up from the dean. The evidence is that educators value:

- Developing personal values alongside teamwork
- Cross-fertilisation of ideas in an informal setting
- Reflection away from the workplace
- Challenging received wisdom

There is a strong sense of the three characteristics enumerated above, namely community, collegiality and criticality, in the multitude of functions that the deanery as a body undertakes. These include: quality assurance of courses and teaching, recruitment of trainees, professional support for junior doctors in difficulty and leadership development for trainees and faculty, amongst others. The ethos is to foster nurturing environments for work and learning whether these are in the community or hospital setting. The diverse faculty engaged in such activities recognise that their own needs are met by the Haven conference which itself fosters that spirit of community of practice and collegiality without becoming a cozy introspective event. In other words there is continuous challenge in a supportive environment. Such a milieu has been described as one which, “takes place through our engagement in actions and interactions, but it embeds this engagement in culture and history”. In these strained financial times however, the deanery itself is threatened as an entity. Our view is that education and faculty development are even more important when funds are limited.

SUMMARY
Wessex deanery provides a community of practice which is exemplified through the annual forum at the Haven, where faculty meet to discuss, to develop and to share educational ideas. The spirit of community, collegiality and criticality continues to thrive. To sacrifice this at the current altar of financial constraint would be to threaten the very essence of Wessex Deanery.

Feedback Quotes
“Very fast paced agenda. Lots to take in. Very useful.”
“Excellent conference as always. Well done team for organising. I hope it does not disappear in future years. More of the same”. 
“I very much enjoyed the challenging couple of days and so many considerations for the future.

Thank you.”
“Great Atmosphere - Don’t lose the camaraderie”

Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, Medical Director of National Health Service, England

“Very useful to see the bigger picture - locally & nationally. Thought provoking, informative, supportive”

“Very fast paced agenda. Lots to take in. Very useful”

“I very much enjoyed the challenging couple of days and so many considerations for the future.

Thank you.”

“Great Atmosphere - Don’t lose the camaraderie”

Professor Malcolm Lewis, Chair of the Continued Practice, Revalidation and Registration Board of the GMC

Acknowledgements
- Faculty at the Haven, King of Wessex from 871 to 899
- Dr Penelope Gordon (Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust), Dr Paula Hunt (Wessex Deanery), Dr Sarah Beaney (Wessex Deanery),
- Dr Antonia Calogeras (Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust), Dr Colin Coles (Winchester University),
- Dr Rosie Lusznat (Wessex Deanery), Dr Alexandra Gilbert (Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust), Mr James Gilbert (Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust),
- Dr Vicky Osgood (Wessex Deanery), Dr Malcolm Lewis, Chair of the Continued Practice, Revalidation and Registration Board of the GMC

[4]ing the GMC.

Sense of Community
- of belonging within the unit, finding identity within it, and striving for cohesion

Culture of Collegiality
- a shared vision that is known, understood and owned by all, such that senior members treat more junior members or trainees as colleagues

Commitment to Criticality
- the critical reconstruction of practice of those within the community.