

#Mondaymotivation: Dr Devin Gray (Class of 2002)



Alumna Devin Gray qualified as a GP in 2017 and is passionate about making a difference to the UK healthcare system. In 2015, she became a member of the Care Quality Commission, and has worked on various projects including one to improve safeguarding children in England.

What did you do after leaving Putney?

I was very privileged to study Psychology with Physiology at Oxford University, an opportunity that Putney High undoubtedly played a pivotal role in creating. It fuelled a passion for learning and science which developed into a decision to study medicine in my second year at Oxford. I completed my degree and applied for postgraduate medicine at St George's University of London.

How did you know medicine was the right path for you?

Applying for my postgraduate course felt like a huge leap of faith but I knew as soon as I started training that medicine was the right choice for me. It became clear very quickly that I was a generalist at heart. I love the holistic nature of General Practice,

and enjoy the variety of seeing a 5 day old baby one minute, and a 105 year old the next. In 2017, I officially finished my GP training (as I went on secondment and then maternity leave, so I had to finish the last few weeks' worth).

What have you found challenging about working in the UK healthcare system?

Health and social care in the UK is in crisis. With every year of my training, and then as a qualified doctor, I have seen pressures build and resources plummet. I used to believe I only had to *be* the change I wanted to see around me. But the more I engaged with the challenges facing quality, equitable and sustainable healthcare, the more I realised that that wasn't enough. I feel an enormous sense of responsibility to be involved, and be part of the solution.

What did you choose to do next?

My sense of responsibility led me to apply for the competitive National Medical Director's Clinical Fellow Scheme in 2015, which was established to support and develop doctors in training to be the medical leaders of the future. Decisions about how health and social care are delivered are being increasingly made in the community, so I believe GPs are in a position to lead in addressing the challenges of unprecedented demand and dwindling resources. My application was successful and I was awarded a secondment with the healthcare regulator in England, Care Quality Commission (CQC), and spent a year working for the Chief Inspector of General Practice, Professor Steve Field.

What did you do as part of the CQC?

My primary project was leading CQC's national review of safeguarding children in England, but I also developed skills in project management, negotiation, leadership, writing, public speaking, health policy and advanced facilitation and communication. I have since returned to General Practice, but the year inspired me to keep one foot outside clinical practice; to continue to understand and influence what, where and how health services are delivered.

With a lot of focus currently on the gender gap what would be your opinion on the 'gap/imbalance' in medicine?

I've never felt my gender to be a barrier to what I have wanted to achieve - probably something that Putney High instilled from early on - and also because I believe I have been lucky. But the "Confidence Gap" between men and women is well-documented and I, like many of my (often female) peers, have frequently felt like a fraud, or have suffered from so-called Imposter Syndrome. Perhaps not believing we are good enough drives us to continue to improve ourselves, and look for the next challenge. Perhaps for some, it does hold us back.

What advice would you give to Putney pupils and alumnae?

One of the main things I learned from a year in leadership is that none of the most successful healthcare leaders I met had had a plan. They said "yes" to opportunities, they pursued their passions, even though they didn't know when they started where their journey would end up. Whatever you believe you are capable of achieving, if you're thinking about taking a leap - put yourself in the running. Don't be afraid to ask for help and certainly don't worry too much about the Grand Plan. Just go for it.