

A VIRTUAL ERA: ADAPTING AND HOSTING A REGIONAL CONFERENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Background

The Yorkshire and Humber School of Paediatrics hosts a trainee led annual conference. The conference is well established within the region with attendance from trainees and consultants working across its 17 acute trusts. The location of the conference changes within the region every year to encourage attendance from around the region. In 2019 the organising committee added family friendly facilities with live streaming within the venue to help trainees with young children to access the event. The conference consists of plenaries and workshops by national and regional speakers and is an opportunity for trainees to showcase their work. The 2020 conference was hosted virtually due to the pandemic.

Methods

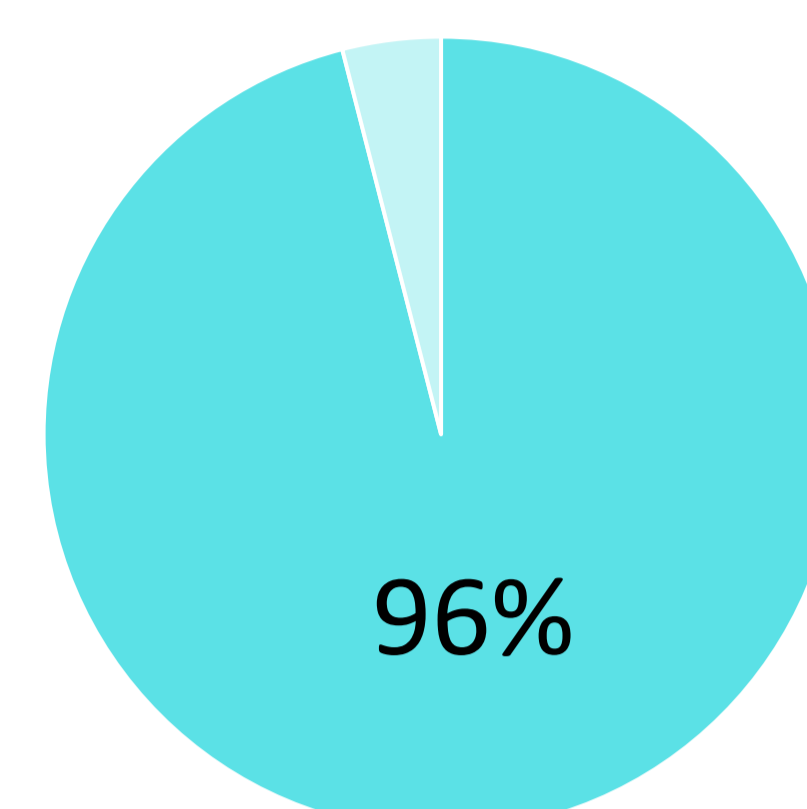
The co-hosts led a committee of 27 trainees in designing, organising and running the conference. The trainees were assigned to subcommittees with delegated responsibilities including advertising, abstracts, posters, workshops, medical students, PAFTAs and conference pack.

Preparations for the conference, which was held in November, began in January 2020. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a change from the normal routine and developing a new way of delivering the conference. Committee meetings and the conference were held virtually via Zoom.

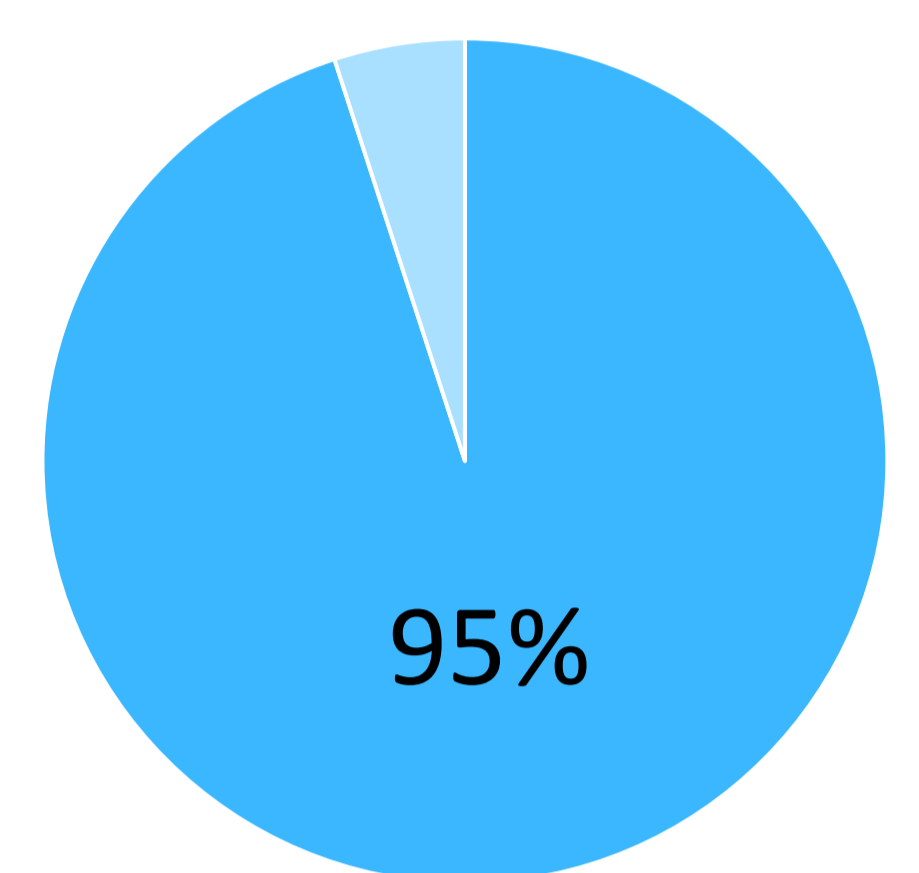
An IT professional and a trainee experienced in virtual education were “Zoom Champions” advising on potential pitfalls, helping with practice sessions for the committee and assisting with technical difficulties.

The Conference

- Attended by 165 delegates
- Three plenary speakers
- Four oral presentations and 42 virtual posters
- A choice of six workshops using breakout rooms
- Local Paediatric Awards For Training Achievements (PAFTA) presentations
- Awards for poster & oral presentations



Agreed live streaming would be useful at future face to face events



Would attend this event if it were virtual in the future

“Really great conference! Worked well with being online, would be good to consider live streaming some of the talks in future years...then people can drop in for parts of the conference even if the rota hasn't let them have the whole day off.”

“Kudos to all the organising committee members for adapting seamlessly to the 'new normal' and working wonderfully as a team. Well done all”

“Very useful to have live streaming option. It meant I could attend whilst at home with new baby on maternity leave!”

THE 11TH ANNUAL YORKSHIRE & HUMBER SCHOOL PAEDIATRICS MEETING

“Future Vision of Paediatrics”



Conclusions

Virtual events have usurped face-to-face education in 2020, but perhaps this isn't a bad thing. Adapting to novel ways of training prevented another educational event being lost. Accessibility to the event was improved by not limiting delegates or speakers by travel, rota commitments and carer responsibilities. Whilst technical difficulties are often inevitable, we provided a free, COVID-safe, educational event for the region's paediatricians.

