

Aimhigher...

SOUTH EAST



Breaking down barriers to work experience within Health & Social Care

Introduction

The issue of work experience within Health and Social care settings is a difficult one. It is not uncommon to hear stories of potential Healthcare students struggling to find some experience in order to support their application to study.

Various reasons are given including confidentiality, Health & Safety, supervision, and distress or emotional stress. However, I believe that the issues raised need to be addressed in order to open up opportunities for potential trainees and employees to obtain experience. This will contribute directly to the much needed increase in applicants for professions allied to medicine to meet service requirements in the coming decade.



Mary Somerville

As the new vocational diploma courses are rolled out over the next few years, the demands and expectations of students to obtain work experience can only increase. There are many innovative programmes which have identified the difficulties and possible barriers and developed creative solutions.

The purpose of this booklet is to raise the profile of this important issue within health and care settings and to share some examples of work that is being done to increase provision of opportunities for work experience.

There are numerous examples of good practice of placing students in non-clinical areas, shadowing staff and enabling them to join volunteer services. However, we all know there are many missed opportunities for encouraging people to access that vital experience which could enable them to make the right career choices. I hope you find this stimulating reading and that it prompts some debate about increased opportunities for potential staff.

Mary Somerville

Regional Healthcare Strand Manager, Aimhigher South East



Work experience: A guide for employers

This DFES publication provides practical advice and guidance to employers on the organisation of work experience. It includes information on their legal responsibilities, insurance and health and safety issues of work experience. It is available free to order or download on www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications.
(Reference DFES-1471-2005)

Work Experience in the NHS – a view from NHS Employers

NHS Careers is managed by NHS Employers, the employers' organisation for the NHS in England, giving employers an independent voice on workforce matters. As the employers' organisation for the NHS in England, NHS Employers has the four key roles of representing, supporting and negotiating on behalf of employers, and promoting the NHS as an employer. Our aim is to make the NHS an employer of excellence.

Given concerns over health and safety, the possibility of upsetting events being witnessed and the concerns over patient confidentiality and dignity, work experience placements in the NHS have been limited. However, where work placement schemes have been introduced in the NHS, these have proved to be extremely successful, overcoming areas of concern and providing an excellent recruitment tool across the entire range of careers in the NHS, clinical and non-clinical.



Foluke Ajayi

NHS Employers is currently developing a knowledge base specifically around NHS Careers where all those involved are able to share information and exchange ideas on promoting the NHS as an employer to the public. We have some excellent examples around work experience, including one trust that have developed a simulated clinical centre actually managed by clinicians. The knowledge base is being currently developed and will be available shortly on the NHS Employers website www.nhsemployers.org

'Work Experience, Building the future of the team' is one of the suite of literature available from NHS Careers 0845 60 60 655 or via www.nhscareers.nhs.uk. It provides guidelines for managers in the successful delivery of work experience schemes in the NHS. It has been drawn up using knowledge gained by NHS trusts who have already delivered successful work experience and it is compliant with 'Work Experience: A guide for employers' detailed on page 2 of this booklet and Managing Health and safety on Work Experience – A Guide for Organisers' published by the Health and Safety Executive.

Foluke Ajayi

Head of NHS Careers
NHS Employers

Case Study 1: Work Experience with the dietetics department at the Royal Sussex County Hospital.

I completed a one day placement as I wanted to find out about being a dietician. I was introduced to a dietician who specialised in Weight Management and Healthy Living who gave me an introduction to dietetics. She emphasised that a degree in nutrition would not be the same as a degree in dietetics and that if I wanted to be a dietician in the NHS I would have to do a degree in dietetics. This is information that I had not previously known.

I was then introduced to a community dietician who spoke to me about dietetics in the community. She also specialises in treating the elderly. My next appointment was with a dietician specialising in renal patients. She showed me around the Renal Unit of Brighton and Sussex Hospital. I found this very interesting as it showed exactly how the dietitians were linked to the hospital. She arranged for me to go round the wards and see some kidney dialysis machines and explained to me their importance in ensuring the levels of water, salt and other chemicals in the body were kept at correct levels. She also spoke to me about how she became a specialist in the renal section of dietetics.



Stephanie Jones

My last appointment of the day was with the first dietician at a Weight Management and Healthy Living group. As members arrived they were weighed and their height taken which I helped with. Members of the group sat around a large table and the dietician explained ways in which they could keep their weight down emphasising portion size, certain ways of cooking food, and which foods to replace with healthier alternatives.

Overall I found my work experience very interesting I learnt a lot about dietitians and their work. The team also printed out some information for me from the British Dietetics Association website about career prospects and entry requirements to universities which did the course. They also gave me some other web addresses which I have found very useful. I have decided, as a result of the day, that I definitely do want to become a dietician rather than a nutritionist. I am currently studying for A levels and have applied for a place at several universities.

Stephanie Jones

Year 13 (17 years old at time of placement)

Work Experience in Medway

Staff in Medway NHS Trust are planning to improve the opportunities for students to attend work experience placements. There was awareness that they were not meeting the demands of local students who were interested in careers in Healthcare. The team developed a student workbook which contains guidance notes on aspects such as health and safety, confidentiality and data protection. The idea is to form direct links with the teachers and the Trust. The benefits of this will be to simplify and standardise the processes and to link experience to the curriculum.

Once students have applied using the Trust's work experience application form, they are invited for an informal visit to the department. It is currently being piloted by students from Year 11 & 12, with a view to extending the opportunity to younger students in the future. The workbook contains a letter from the Chief Executive, induction information, notes, evaluation forms, and a quiz.

The Medway 
NHS Trust

Further details can be obtained from the Recruitment team at Medway Hospital on 01634 833966.

Case Study 2: Work experience changed my outlook on life

My problem is I just don't get on with people, and as a result of this I have not been in full time schooling since Year 9. I have been excluded from 2 schools and the third school I didn't even bother attending.

I became involved with the KVTP programme when my mum and dad were called into school to try to find some way of getting me some work experience.

KVTP suggested the Thanet Day Centre, I didn't really know what this was about but because I would be able to go horse riding while I was there, I decided to give it a go.

When I arrived at the day centre for my first taster day, I thought it was a bit overwhelming seeing all of the physically and mentally disabled people – it was a bit scary. I sent a text to KVTP to say that this just wasn't for me.



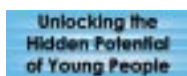
Zoe Morgan

Anyway, the next week I gave it another try and this time I managed to go for 2 days, and I found that I was starting to like being there. I was able to make people laugh and it wasn't so overwhelming and scary.

Now I come 5 days a week and I just want to be able to help where I can. My supervisor encouraged me to get more involved, and I was put in a wheelchair all day to see how it felt just being in a wheelchair. Now when I talk to people I go down to their level.

I have now got my manual handling certificate, I have also applied to college for the NVQ Level 2 in Health & Social Care as I intend to make care my career.

For further information about KTVP, contact Maureen.Robinson06@kent.gov.uk



Addressing Work Experience Issues at Southampton University Hospitals Trust

Our aim for work experience students is to help them develop their skills, confidence, awareness and understanding of the world of work. We aim to support them to reach an informed decision and prepare them for their career pathway, and subsequently to become the workforce of tomorrow. Last year, a number of barriers to work placements were identified, and staff at SUHT have endeavoured to overcome these with a great deal of success. For example:

- Nepotism – if a member of staff introduces a student known to them for a work experience programme, it is then expected that they can take more students to ensure equal opportunities.
- Increasing staff workload – Staff have been very positive about taking students even though there are many constraints on their time and resources. The flexible programme suggested to them of having a student with a different member of staff per day has been well received. For example, on a ward, students have a day with a ward clerk, a day with the Housekeeper, one day with a Healthcare assistant, one with the NVQ 3 who generally mentors them and one day the student has to negotiate themselves. This programme takes the pressure off any one member of staff and succeeds in ensuring the student sees how the team work together to ensure the patient journey is positive.

We have delivered one week placements in a variety of areas such as Learning Media, Operating Department Technicians, IT, HR, and Maintenance, and also group visits involving sessions with Clinical skills, Medical Physics, Trauma and Orthopaedics, Post

and Distribution. Other students had tours of Physiotherapy, Cyber centre, Elderly Care, Discharge lounge, and Switchboard, Security, Cashiers and Path lab.

Students with a full curriculum and no flexibility for a block placement have been encouraged to gain their experience via the voluntary route. They undertake twenty hours of training with one of two mature permanent volunteers who monitor and supervise them which has proved very successful. When confident with their role, the students are assigned to their own area. This has also proved successful.

In addition, staff benefit by having more volunteers without having to train or closely supervise them. Consistency of training ensures policies and procedures are met while students are proactive in establishing rapport with patients and staff. These trained volunteers often increase their hours volunteering during holidays, which helps with holiday shortages.

The main cost of this flexible placement is to the voluntary services office. The students are with us for between six and eighteen months before they move onto university or further education, therefore it can be quite labour intensive with recruitment and induction etc.

As a result of these developments, 200% more students have now been placed than in 2003. In addition, there have been tours for teachers and careers advisors to introduce them to a wider range of careers within Southampton University Hospitals Trust.

In conclusion it is recognised that work experience and engaging with schools and colleges is part of a long-term recruitment strategy.

Kim Sutton

Voluntary Services & Work
Experience Coordinator
Southampton University Hospitals Trust

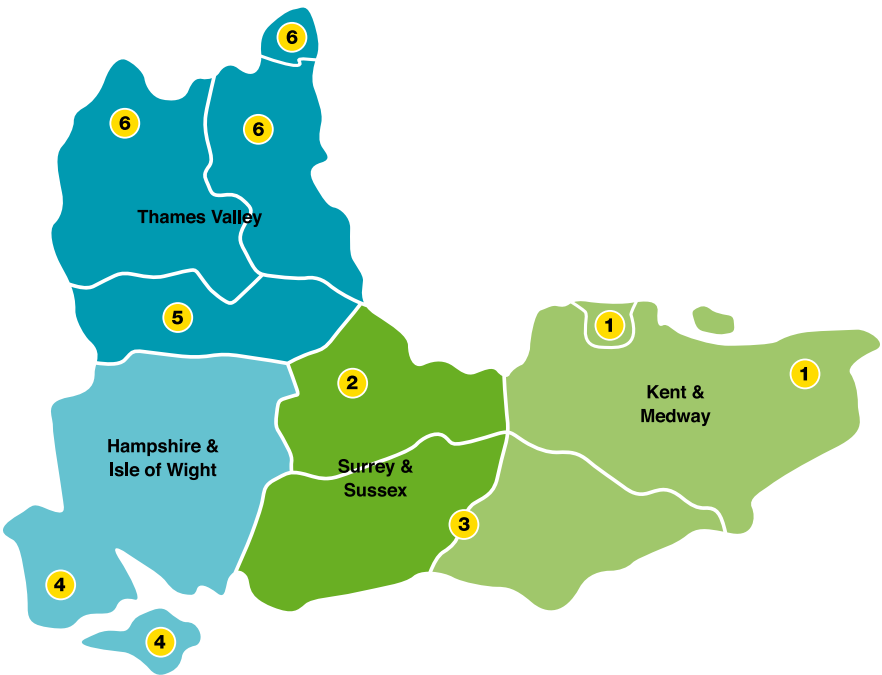
Southampton 
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Organisation

In the South East, Aimhigher is working closely with the Strategic Health Authorities within the region. There is a regional management group comprising representatives from each of the four area management groups shown below.



**Lead Strategic Health Authorities & Related Aimhigher Healthcare
Strand Area Management Groups**

South East Coast	South Central
Kent and Medway	Hampshire and Isle of Wight
Surrey and Sussex	Thames Valley

Aimhigher Area Partnerships

1 Kent and Medway	4 Hampshire and Isle of Wight
2 Surrey	5 Berkshire
3 Sussex	6 Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (MKOB)