

Frequently asked questions for pre-registration students on supernumerary placement with community teams in primary or integrated care during the COVID-19 period

Introduction

This frequently asked questions guidance has been developed with Board partners to support student nurses and midwives in supernumerary placement within community or integrated care teams. It provides clarification on some key questions that have been raised and links to further resources which may support students when on placement during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful to NHS Boards who have shared their resources. As well as national guidance that is available and signposted in this document please also refer to any applicable local guidance when on practice placement.

Q1. During this COVID-19 period are there any Nursing and Midwifery (NMC) regulatory changes that I should be aware of?

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NMC developed a set of emergency standards for nursing and midwifery education. They are phasing out the majority of these emergency standards on 30 September 2020, but some will be retained as recovery standards. The Recovery programme standards are available at:

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/education-standards/recovery-programme-standards.pdf>

The Recovery programme standards state that placement providers and universities in *partnership*, “*Ensure placement allocations take account of current, relevant public health guidelines with due regard to the health and wellbeing of individual students. Institutions and their practice learning partners will need to continue to work with their students to find appropriate placements, ensuring appropriate risk assessments are carried out.*” As a student you will have completed a COVID-19 Occupational Risk Assessment in line with the ‘[Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Students’ Return to Supernumerary Practice Learning Experiences – applying the COVID-19 Occupational Risk Assessment Guidance](#)’ before commencing this placement.

The recovery programme standards also detail that “*All students will receive support, supervision and assessments in line with the Standards for student supervision and assessment (SSSA, 2018).* The SSSA can be accessed at:

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards-for-education-and-training/standards-for-student-supervision-and-assessment/>

Q2. How can I maintain social distancing when I require to travel with my practice supervisor or other registered health and social care practitioner in a car to provide care?

The aim of social distancing measures is to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Up to date information can be found on the [NHS Inform](#) website and the [Health Protection Scotland](#) website. It is clear that there are real challenges in delivering health and care

services in the community settings while simultaneously adhering to social distancing guidance. We all, as health and care professionals, have to reach informed, practical and reasonable decisions.

In line with national guidance, individuals should follow general infection prevention and control measures, including practicing good hand hygiene, follow social distancing advice (i.e. maintaining 2m social distancing) wherever possible and use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when delivering care.

Where maintaining 2m social distancing in a car with someone is difficult, alternative travel arrangements should be made if at all possible, to allow social distancing to be maintained: Your practice supervisor may:

- Consider travel in larger vehicles where possible or use vehicles with cab screens, if available.
- Ask you to consider using your own car, you will require to have the appropriate insurance cover in line with the local travel policy
- Explore access to local pool cars, subject to availability
- Consider the geographical distribution of planned visits and where possible consider if these could be carried out on foot or by bike.

Recognising that making alternative travel arrangements will not always be possible. On occasions when you are travelling with your practice supervisor/another practitioner in their vehicle the following principles should be applied:

- Try and share with the same people each time
- Keep your distance and take care entering and exiting the vehicle
- Sit as far apart as possible in the vehicle, avoiding face-to-face
- Maintain good ventilation by keeping the car windows open
- Wear a face-covering, unless you are exempt
- Limit the number of passengers

The following general infection prevention and control measures should always be followed:

- Hand hygiene - use handwashing facilities or, IF NOT available, alcohol-based hand rub before and after journeys
- Catch coughs and sneezes in tissues or cover mouth and nose with sleeve or elbow (not hands), dispose of the tissue into a bin and wash hands immediately
- Clean vehicles between different drivers or passengers as appropriate and before entering and after leaving the vehicle, in particular cleaning the door handles and other areas that people touch.

Advice on travelling in a vehicle with others is available at:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/transport-transition-plan/advice-on-how-to-travel-safely/#section-63888> Further information on work related travel is

available at is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/pages/operational-guide-and-checklist/#traveltowork>

Q3. Will I be able to have a delegated caseload?

Yes, this should be possible. As a student you should work within the scope of your practice under direct and indirect supervision of the registered health and social care professional. Having your own caseload would be agreed with you on an individual basis and will be dependent on your previous experience, level of proficiency and confidence. There should be synergy with your practice assessment documentation which details the proficiencies and specific learning outcomes you require to achieve while on placement. These will inform discussions with your practice supervisor and practice assessor regarding your role and responsibilities if delegated a caseload and should be discussed at your formative and summative assessment points.

How you contribute to the daily workload will be agreed locally and you may be delegated a small caseload as well as contributing to other practitioners' caseloads e.g. being the second healthcare professional on double visits.

Q4. If I am delegated a caseload there may be times when I have to work by myself without close or direct supervision while in the community, is there any guidance I should follow?

Yes your placement area will have a lone workers' policy which will detail responsibilities in relation to lone working. Ensure you access and read this policy on arrival at your primary or integrated care placement.

Q5. What are the main changes to service delivery during this COVID-19 period?

To reduce the transmission of COVID-19 community teams are carrying out essential visits only. You will gain more understanding of what these essential visits are from your practice supervisor/practice assessor. Health information and advice may also be provided using telehealth (e.g. phone or video calls). Telehealth may be new to you, so you may want to discuss further with your practice supervisor/practice assessor. Further information on 'essential visits' can be accessed at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-nursing-and-community-health-staff-guidance/>

Q6. I accompanied my practice supervisor on a home visit but on arrival only my practice supervisor was granted access. Why did this happen?

This scenario is not unique to COVID-19. Individuals can refuse entry of any health professional to their home, but this situation may arise more often as individuals are feeling more anxious about the amount of people visiting their homes and the potential spread of COVID-19 at this time. It may be helpful to discuss this potential issue with your practice supervisor at the beginning of each shift and if appropriate contact can be made beforehand with the individuals on the caseload alerting them to your presence. This would allow individuals to discuss how they feel about a student visiting and give your

practice supervisor the opportunity to reassure about the infection control measures that you both adhere to when conducting home visits therefore allowing individuals to make an informed choice.

Q7. What other COVID-19 specific guidance is available for me when working in the community setting?

Health Protection Scotland continues to publish a collection of resources that give information and advice on Coronavirus (COVID-19). This includes guidance relating to a number of health and care settings and learning resources. As this pandemic is a rapidly evolving response practitioners must ensure they visit the website regularly to ensure they are accessing the most current guidance at <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>

COVID-19 guidance for primary care can be accessed through this link:

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-primary-care/>

COVID19 guidance for social, community and residential settings can be accessed through this link:

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-social-or-community-care-and-residential-settings/>

COVID-19 Information and guidance for care home settings can be accessed through this link: <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-care-home-settings/>

National Clinical Guidance for Nursing and AHP Community Health Staff during COVID-19 Pandemic can be accessed through this link:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-nursing-and-community-health-staff-guidance/>

COVID-19 specific publications from the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates available at <https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): supplementary national child protection guidance available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-supplementary-national-child-protection-guidance/>

Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and pregnancy available at:

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/>

National guidance for NHS Scotland workforce staff and managers on Coronavirus is available at <https://www.staffgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/guidance/>

N.B. As more information becomes available regarding COVID-19 guidance changes according to best available evidence. For the most up-to-date information you should regularly revisit the Health Protection Scotland website at:

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/>