Guiding Principles for Virtual/Digitally Enhanced Practice Placement Experiences for Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions Students

This document was developed by a short life working group, with representation from education, practice placement providers and NHS Education for Scotland (NES) on behalf of the National Strategic Group for Practice Learning and Allied Health Professions Practice-Based Learning Stakeholder Group.

Final Version 11 09 2020

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to support practitioners to be able to provide high quality practice learning environments and experiences for students using digital platforms. Students should also find it a useful resource when undertaking virtual/digitally enhanced placements. As service provision evolves and there is increasing use of digital technologies to support and deliver safe, effective, and timely person-centred care there is a need to ensure that students are exposed to and able to work in this way. In addition, during this COVID-19 pandemic period this way of working assists in reducing, where appropriate, footfall into practice settings, and people's homes and can assist in reducing the risk of virus transmission.

What is a virtual/digitally enhanced placement?

A virtual/digitally enhanced placement is one in which the student is able to use digital platforms to engage with patients, practitioners, or their named supervisor in the practice setting and academic staff. These placements may take a variety of formats: they may be observational, where the student accesses a virtual consultation between a practitioner and a patient to observe the interaction and intervention. Alternatively, the placement may consist of the student undertaking a virtual consultation with a patient via a digital platform such as Near Me with or without a registered practitioner being present digitally throughout the consultation, depending on the stage of student learning. It may also consist of students collaborating on shared practice-based projects or facilitating group sessions.

1. Preparation for virtual/digitally enhanced placement.

- Prior to commencement of any virtual/digitally enhanced placement there must be an agreement by the placement provider that the placement can go ahead and that support for such a placement has been agreed with local eHealth teams, in consultation with the student's university provider.
- NHS Health Boards and other placement providers will have specific guidance about the use of placement provider equipment for virtual consultations. This will be clarified prior to the placement commencing.
- Students require to be orientated to, understand, and always follow the placement provider's organisational information security protocols regarding patient confidentiality. The document embedded below provides an example of IT access and equipment requirements guidance developed within one health board[1] in Scotland.

Virtual Placement
Equipment and Acce

- Virtual/digitally enhanced placements and consultations should be treated in the same way as any placement and the same rules of professionalism apply, any breech

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[1] Thanks, are extended to NHS Lanarkshire for sharing this example of good practice.

will be managed by the university in line with their non-academic misconduct/ fitness to practice policies in line with the nursing, midwifery[2] and allied health professions[3] regulatory bodies' guidance.

- Patient confidentiality is paramount. All possible steps to reduce any risks to patient confidentiality should be taken. A remote consultation must be treated as any other consultation in which sensitive or confidential information is safeguarded at all times and professional body and Caldicott Principles[4] are adhered to.

2. Operational/systems considerations.

- **If** a student uses their own devices to carry out remote consultations and communicate with colleagues for placement purposes, all reasonable steps to minimise risk should be taken:
  - Check that the device meets IT security requirements of the placement provider
  - Set a strong password
  - Use approved secure channels to communicate e.g. tools/apps that use encryption
  - Do not store personal/ confidential patient information on the device
  - Check that the internet access is secure (e.g. use a Virtual Private Network, **do not use public Wi-Fi**) and use security features.
- Ensure the browser is up-to-date by allowing updates to install. Some digital platforms have preferred browsers e.g. Near Me prefers Chrome and Safari. Sufficient band width equivalent to that needed to watch a YouTube clip is required.
- Where possible, use Wi-Fi due to the amount of data that can be required for virtual interactions.
- Frequently check equipment e.g. microphone and audio prior to each session to avoid issues interrupting the consultation. Where possible establish a telephone number for the patient to call if they run into connection issues (see also Near Me checklist[5] in embedded document below).

PDF

Near Me checklist
(NHS Lanarkshire).pd

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[2] Nursing and Midwifery Council (2020) *The Code- professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates*. Available at: https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/
[3] Health and Care Professions (2020) *Guidance on conduct and ethics for students*. Available at: https://www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/guidance/guidance-on-conduct-and-ethics-for-students/
[4] The UK Caldicott Guardian Council. *A manual for Caldicott guardians*. Available at: https://www.ukcgc.uk/manual/principles
[5] Thanks are extended to NHS Lanarkshire for sharing this example of good practice and NHS Highland who were involved in the development of this checklist.

3. Undertaking a virtual placement/consultation.

Before

- Any virtual consultation or discussion with a patient and/or supervisor must be conducted in a closed, private, well-lit area with a neutral background where it cannot be overheard.
- Steps should be taken to ensure the ergonomics associated with the equipment being used are enacted correctly in line with local policies, and display screen and environment assessments.
- All reasonable steps to ensure privacy should also be taken, such as:
  - Close and put a notice on the door;
  - Make any other people in the building aware that video consultations are underway that must not be disturbed;
  - Headphones should be worn to ensure further privacy and confidentiality;
  - Not answering a call during a video consultation;
  - Positioning the camera in a way that does not allow others to identify the location of the student (e.g. at a window showing city landmarks) or enables visibility of any patient information or details.

During

- Ensure students minimise the amount of information they share about themselves digitally and ensure they only use professional access e.g. University e-mail or NHS e-mail if provided specifically for student purposes.

After

- Following virtual consultations, whether as an observer or actively participating in the consultation/ intervention it is good practice for the student to debrief with their supervisor and discuss key elements of the consultation – in terms of what went well, what would have been better if, and what to do for next time. Where there is distress or anxiety from either party seek additional local support and guidance.
- For more information on setting up or conducting a Near Me consultation please see: TURAS learn : remote consulting and interviewing: https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/28943/coronavirus-covid-19/remote-consulting-and-recruitment

4. Governance.

Record keeping

- Virtual consultations must be recorded in the same way that any other consultation/ clinical activity would normally be recorded. Note this may vary between placement providers and services e.g. Midwifery where the patient may hold their own notes, and this would be recorded on the IT system Badgernet.
- Any information must be transferred to the appropriate clinical record as directed by the student's supervisor as soon as practically possible.

- Any notes that are made either virtually or on paper must be deleted or destroyed by shredding immediately following the session. No information must be held on personal computers.
- Digital recycling bins ought to be emptied if information is deleted.
- The 'display name' and 'user name' should be treated in the same way as any other information held about a patient that could identify them- these should be stored securely and must not be disclosed to anyone whom does not have the right or need for the information.

Consent

- Whilst a patient joining a Near Me session is considered as implying consent; the patient must give additional consent to conducting the consultation with other people present. It should be documented if consent has been given either in writing or verbally.
- If a student is leading the consultation, the patient must also give consent to undertaking the consultation with a student (as with any face to face consultation) or provide consent to a student being able to see or hear the consultation if it is undertaken by the supervisor or another healthcare professional being observed.

Professional Standards

- Code and professional standards should be adhered to and guidance from the relevant regulatory body followed e.g. HCPC, NMC, GMC etc.
- Students should understand and adhere to the placement provider policies and guidance.
- Students should be informed of the relevant processes should they wish to raise any concerns regarding their virtual/digitally enhanced placement[6]

Useful resources:

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, *Codes of Members' Professional Values and Behaviours*. Available at:
https://www.csp.org.uk/system/files/publication_files/000529_Code%20of%20Members%20Professional%20Values%20and%20Behaviours%202019.pdf

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, *Covid-19: Guide for Rapid Implementation of Remote Physiotherapy Delivery.* Available at: https://www.csp.org.uk/publications/covid-19-guide-rapid-implementation-remote-consultations

Royal college of Occupational Therapist, *Digital Occupational Therapy.* Available at: https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/occupational-therapy-topics/digital-first-occupational-therapy

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[6] The process for AHP students is outlined in the Allied Health Professions Practice Based Learning Agreement and for nursing and mIdwifery students in the document 'Raising concerns in practice'. Available at: https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/nursing-and-midwifery/practice-education/publications-and-resources.aspx

Medispot, *Handbook for video consultations.* Available at:
https://gpexcellencegm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Handbook_for_video_consultations_2nd_Edition.pdf