

Frequently asked questions and answers for community and integrated care Team Leaders providing preregistration nursing and midwifery student placements during the COVID-19 period

Introduction

This frequently asked questions guidance has been developed with Board partners to support those team leaders who have supernumerary students on community or integrated care practice placements. 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 local guidance applicable within your practice learning environments.

Q1. I am concerned that there are not the same learning opportunities for students due to the change in our service delivery model in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

Even during this crisis students on community and integrated care practice placements are still expected to experience and develop the full range of learning and proficiencies as detailed within their practice assessment document. The current situation is a real opportunity for the students to experience how services respond and deliver care during a pandemic emergency.

In order to increase the learning opportunities available, it may helpful to consider other alternative or innovative approaches such as virtual placements. 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. 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. Guidance around virtual placements for nursing, midwifery and allied health professions students can be found here:

<http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/media/CLT/ResourceUploads/4100402/9d18bb79-63ec-4757-be7b-e1b28b42ffb5.pdf>

Q2. Within my area we have care home residents. Are care home visits appropriate for students at this time?

Yes, where a registered professional deems this to be appropriate the student could be delegated visits or a caseload within a care home setting to manage. This would be agreed on an individual basis and will be dependent on the student's previous experience, level of proficiency, confidence and the learning outcomes and proficiencies contained within the practice assessment documentation that the student requires to achieve. If visiting a nursing or residential home, please ensure the student is familiar with the HPS COVID-19 information and guidance for social, community care and residential settings available at

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

Q3. What if an individual expresses a concern about a student accompanying the community nurse/midwife on a home visit? How should I manage this situation?

This scenario is not unique to the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals can refuse entry of any health or care 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 team and agree a strategy to manage the situation. For example, where appropriate your team members may want to contact individuals and alert them to the potential prospect of students visiting with their practice supervisors and reassure individuals about the infection control measures undertaken by all staff when conducting home visits.

Q4. How can social distancing be maintained when staff are required to travel with a student or any other 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](#) (HPS) 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:

- Consider travel in larger vehicles where possible or use vehicles with cab screens, if available.
- Ask the student/2nd health and social care professional to consider using their own car, reminding them they require 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 your team members are travelling with another student/2nd health and social care professional advise them to:

- Limit the number of passengers
- Try and share with the same people each time

- Keep their distance and take care entering and exiting the vehicle
- Sit as far apart from other passengers as possible in the vehicle, avoiding face-to-face
- Maintain good ventilation by keeping the car windows open
- Wear a face-covering, unless they are exempt

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

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

Q5. I am concerned about how social distancing can be maintained within the office environment. What can I do?

This is a relevant concern and requires your team to work more flexibly and may result in changes to usual working practices or shift patterns to support the observance of social distancing measures. Some modifications to consider could be the introduction of a rota that details when staff can access the office, therefore limiting numbers. Explore the use of technology to support virtual handovers and meetings.

Q7. What COVID-19 community setting specific guidance can I refer staff and students to?

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/>