

## **Reflections on hosting a student placement**

Hosting a student placement is always rewarding but hosting a community paediatric placement during a pandemic meant adapting to a range of different challenges. Our year 4 student was with us for three days a week from September to November 2020 and joined us in offering virtual and face to face appointments to children aged 2 to 16. She was a great asset to the team.

### **Benefits of having a student**

Our student was keen to develop her skills and quickly managed several cases with support, which was a welcome help with a large caseload. She had a very positive impact on the lives of the children she worked with. We continue to use the resources she created, and we valued her ideas for fun games and approaches. Exploring new resources and findings from her studies helped us to reflect further on and develop our practice.

### **Therapist learning**

Therapists were able to develop their supervision skills e.g. their abilities to explain the rationale behind clinical decisions and support the student to self-reflect on sessions.

### **Challenges**

It was very difficult to give the student a plan for what the days would look like in advance due to the increased need for working flexibly during the pandemic.

It was a challenge balancing supporting the student with a range of other demands such as managing large caseloads of children with a high level of need. This meant that we couldn't always offer support in the most ideal way for the student. For example, we found it less effective providing feedback via virtual conversations and felt this would have been easier if we had been able to meet face-to-face more frequently.

At times, the student needed support to be realistic about what onward referrals were appropriate at what points in a child and family's journey. We supported her to feel comfortable with the learning process, reflecting on what she'd done well and what she would do differently next time.

### **Advice for students going on placement**

- Remember that every placement is different.
- Be flexible - children are unpredictable!
- Consider in advance what you want to get out of the placement e.g. small targets you want to achieve or develop.
- It's OK to make mistakes - it is how we learn.
- Your Clinical Educators don't expect you to know everything - you are on placement to further develop your knowledge and skills.
- Be mindful that progress can take time for some children – celebrate successes with parents/ supporting adults.
- Learn to write simply and summarise – notes and reports need to be understood by everyone. Think about the important messages you want to record and share with the child's team.
- Be open to all feedback. Your clinical educator's role is to support you and help you to grow as a therapist.



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