

Work Experience: Advice and Comments by Fiona Laing – Garstang Medical Practice

Our Experience at Garstang

Having 6th formers has been a great way to encourage all staff to be involved in teaching and realise how much they know and can pass on. It has given some nurses the confidence to progress to be involved in medical student teaching.

We have had some great feedback to the whole team from the 6th formers – passing on their thanks and my own to everyone is great for morale!

Confidentiality

We ask them to read the Deanery guidelines (as found in the Deanery 'Guide for the Practice') and to sign saying they have read and understood them and know that any breach of confidentiality would result in their placement being stopped.

We will only take 6th formers who live at least 10 miles away from Garstang and we ask about any local connections/friends/relatives etc. who may be registered with us.

We tell them that any problems will be reported to the school tutors (i.e. the teachers writing on their University application). This also re-enforces the message!

During the Placement

At the beginning of the placement I explain to the student that much of what I see in a surgery might not be very appropriate for them to see because it often involves complex medical problems. I therefore only have 6th formers sitting in on one of my surgeries in the week and I try and make sure that no inappropriate patients are booked into this.

For the rest of the week I arrange for them to have sessions with different health care professionals and practice staff. This includes-

- Office and reception staff – learning about why patients phone in, what they ask about, making appointments etc.
- Nurse Practitioners – students see lots of minor/acute problems
- Practice Nurses – in chronic disease clinics and treatment room work
- District nurses – usually take them out for a morning
- Community Matron – usually go to see patients at home
- Midwife – sit in on a routine clinic
- Health Care Assistant – often one of the students favorite sessions because they get to assist the HCA

We take them out on home visits with different GPs depending on the suitability of the case.

Before allocating a placement, I discuss the proposed timetable with all those members of staff who would be having a session with the student. All staff that has had a 6th former 'sit in' has been happy to have them again so it's now an easy job to plan placements (I do reciprocate and have nursing students etc. when asked to by District Nurses and Community Matrons).

Our Deputy Manager 'looks after' the 6th former for the week i.e. they go to her with any problems and she ensures they know where they are going each day. I try to see them briefly each day to check everything is going okay and discuss what they have seen and what they are doing next.

The 6th formers usually want to come in school holidays so it's important to ensure enough practice staff are around and not off on holiday.

I would not want to overload the staff so I feel three or four 6th formers per year are enough for a practice.

Recording / Learning Experience

I ask them to fill in an evaluation sheet about each session. It asks about what they saw, what they learned, their ideas on the patient experience, how team work is involved, what else they would like to learn about etc.

I explain that these forms will help them reflect on their work experience and most importantly for 6th formers give them things to discuss and reflect on at University interviews when they are asked about work experience. I keep a copy of the completed form to act as feedback for me. They also complete a form asking about their overall experience at the practice.
