

## **Work Experience for pre-Medical School Students.**

The College strongly supports Psychiatrists and organisations that offer students in year 11 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) / S4 (Scotland) or above the opportunity for work experience in psychiatry. Students considering a career in medicine are encouraged as part of their preparation for an application to undertake voluntary work and work experience in areas relevant to medicine. Hence there is significant demand for work experience placements.

Many employers have considerable experience of offering work experience to potential medical students, and the experience has been found to give a sensible insight into Psychiatrists' day-to-day work. For those students who eventually follow a different career, there has been the opportunity to experience work in a mental health setting which will act to inform them of mental health issues and enthuse them about the value of this work. Those who do go onto a career in medicine, whether or not they choose a career in psychiatry, will have had a positive experience of mental health services at an early stage of their career development.

The College strongly believes that access to psychiatry work experience should be open to all.

We recommend you refer to NHS England's work on [work experience](#), with particular reference to the [toolkits](#) for organisations wishing to offer work experience, including the [toolkit for secondary care providers](#). This provides useful guidance on all aspects of preparing, delivering and evaluating a work experience placement.

In addition to the guidance in the above toolkit the following factors specific to psychiatry should be considered:

### **Recruitment, Induction and ongoing monitoring**

When recruiting students to undertake work experience, it is important to use a fair, inclusive and open method to select students. It is also important to be aware of potential sensitivities of these students. For example, if students are likely to hear about topics such as self-harm, suicide, homicide and assault this should be highlighted in the recruitment process so that the student themselves, their teachers, parents or guardians are aware. In light of this, we recommend that work experience is only offered to those in year 11 / S4 or above and students under the age of 16 are not invited onto wards.

If possible, the school should be consulted in the selection process to ensure suitable students are selected.

As part of the induction, and throughout the placement, supervisors should check in with the student and signpost to sources of support if needed.

### **Content**

Organisations that have had work experience students have implemented a range of options including-

- i) Sitting in outpatient clinics.
- ii) Shadowing ward-based doctors.
- iii) Visits in community with community staff.
- iv) Attachments to liaison psychiatry teams.
- v) Meeting with carers.
- vi) Observing multidisciplinary team meetings
- vii) Shadowing Mental Health Act Assessments
- viii) Interested students may shadow in Tribunals

Work experience students have reported that almost all activities they have undertaken have been positive. What is particularly valued by students is individuals that take a personal interest in the student and have the time to explain and discuss what they are doing.

**Patient / Carer Issues**

All patients and carers must be able to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish a work experience student to witness the care received. Many are happy to support work experience placements and indeed value the opportunity for influencing young would-be doctors. When asked, many patients and carers are happy to have separate (appropriately supervised) discussions with work experience students about their experience of mental health services.

**Indemnity**

We recommend advice is sought from relevant local teams to ensure appropriate indemnity arrangements are made.