

# Practice Based Learning Case Study: A flexible approach to placements

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Below is a case study from Lincolnshire Community Health Services which details how they used the example of a one day a week podiatry model and built new relationships across regional boundaries as part of their approach to practice based learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic was an opportunity for us to review our approach to student placements overall. Many of our placement educators were providing feedback that due to pandemic and workloads, having students would be difficult or changes to services would mean students didn't get hands on experience.

We challenged this and have forged relationships with new universities and have looked at different practice based learning models. By doing so, we have identified opportunities for students to complete their practice hours and learning outcomes.

## One day a week

We're privileged to have a Podiatrist in our Clinical Practice Education Team, their professional knowledge and understanding enabled us to look at how podiatry placements are delivered. Our podiatry students work differently to most other placements, in that they are on placement one day per week. Some of our other professional teams are prevented from taking students because they cannot facilitate them on a full-time basis, however, having a student in one day a week isn't as difficult to accommodate. We have used the podiatry model to highlight, within our service, that it is possible for students to complete their hours and learning outcomes, even when they only come to us one day a week.

## Placements across regional boundaries

We have built working relationships with new education providers; it has brought a whole new cohort of students to Lincolnshire. We are extending our reach to education providers outside or on the edges of our region to bring in more students for expansion.

We have been able to match students more effectively, their placement requirements have shifted; many want to be closer to home and are more flexible. Universities have also been more flexible with their offer to students.

Going forward we are going to continue to think about the number of higher education institutions (HEIs) we work with as COVID has made us really do a deep dive and we have gone a lot wider. Although working with a larger number of HEIs can be difficult to manage, we have a far greater number of students now than we ever had previously because of it and moving forward we are going to keep the relationships strong to ensure a flow of students, and potential to fulfil vacancies.

We been able to place double the number of student Speech and Language Therapists this year by opening up the opportunities to more universities.

As part of placement expansion we also brought laptops in for supporting remote learning for students, this has allowed us to continue to provide services which have switched to virtual platforms. This has enabled students and educators to work remotely reducing the risk of virus spread.

We also aim to allocate students to a practitioner based on their case load fit, to ensure student have a valuable and positive experience.

Having new student placements has allowed for greater knowledge sharing, a lot of our Podiatrists are highly skilled and have not been able to share their skills or their learning, so this is an opportunity for them to promote the profession and help to leave a legacy for the next generation of Podiatrists. It has also enabled the students who live closer to Lincolnshire to attend a placement near to home and we have had some students say that this was one of the reasons why they wanted to come to Lincolnshire.

## **What do you wish you'd known before you embarked on this work?**

For us as a Clinical Practice Education Team it has been quite a steep learning curve. We have always focussed on the larger professions, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Physiotherapy, but not on the smaller ones that we didn't really understand as well. We have learnt so much about how placements are delivered, and we have been able to challenge how we can do placements differently.

## **If you could give one piece of advice to a trust/educator/student considering Practice Based Learning what would it be?**

Reach out to others from wider afield. It has been useful to look further outside of our region for ideas on how we can improve our placements. Prior to the pandemic the Clinical Practice Educator team linked in with Devon and although we are miles apart, we are similar geographically. It was good to share ideas about how they have done things differently, so looking further does make a difference.

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### **Links**

[1] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work>

[2] <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/>

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/>

[4] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/news-blogs-events>

[5] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about>

[6] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/covid-19>