Placement Guidance

NHS based courses

Disability and Learner Support

Version 3.1 November 2014 – Julia Holt

Introduction

This guidance provides practical advice to academics and placement mentors. Students may also find this resource helpful to give them an idea of what support might be available on placement. Included are examples of reasonable adjustments when on placement to ensure that disabled students have equal opportunity to benefit from their work based clinical placements. Students on courses such as Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work are required to meet standards set by their professional body. Reasonable adjustments can help students to develop strategies which can also be taken into working life.

The Equality Act (2010) prevents discrimination because of disability. The Act covers conditions such as hearing and visual impairments, Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) & mental health difficulties; long term health conditions such as diabetes, HIV, M.S, epilepsy and cancer.

The Equality Act places a duty on public authorities such as the University of Salford as an Education Provider and NHS trusts to promote equal opportunity and eliminate discrimination.

Where possible an inclusive approach should be taken and reasonable adjustments made both at the University of Salford in an academic setting and a NHS trust for a placement.

This guidance includes information on:

- Benefits of disclosure on placement
- Pre-placement discussions
- Specific guidance for supporting students with a range of disabilities
- Monitoring and Disabled Student Allowance

Encouraging students to disclose their disability whilst on Placement

Disclosure of a disability is a matter of personal choice and it is important the student considers valid reasons for and against disclosure, however if the academic or placement staff are not aware of the student's disability then the appropriate reasonable adjustments cannot be made.

Students are sometimes reluctant to disclose their disability due to concerns about discrimination but should be reassured that the Equality Act (2010) makes provision for reasonable adjustments for disabled students in both the workplace and educational settings.

Advantages of Disclosure:

- Early disclosure facilitates pre-placement planning, will alert the placement staff to the student's impending arrival and will enable the student to discuss with them the impact of their disability and how best the student can be supported on placement.
- Reasonable adjustments can be made which will allow the student to reach their full potential and help to achieve the learning outcomes of the course.
- Disclosure should allow the student to concentrate on work in hand
- Disclosure helps Trusts consider the health and safety of patients as well as the student
- Taking responsibility for disclosure and managing their condition demonstrates developing professionalism

It is recommended that:

- ➢ The student discloses as early as possible to the course and placement, this could be the initial meeting with their mentor
- ➢ The student discusses recommendations at a pre-placement meeting to clarify any adjustments

What if a student chooses not to disclose?

- ➢ The student may think that their difficulties do not affect them on placement; discussion with a placement mentor may highlight useful available support
- ➢ It can become difficult to challenge discrimination or claim non- provision of support later on if the student chooses not to disclose.

Pre-Placement Discussion

At the time of meeting with a student requiring a Student Support Plan (SSP) the Disability Adviser will encourage the student to disclose when on placement.

It would also be recommended that the student meets with their programme leader or placement mentor to discuss reasonable adjustments.

Students will usually want to know:

- ➢ Whether disclosure to the programme leader will mean that information is automatically passed to placement teams
- ➢ Whether they have the option to **not** inform placement and what the consequences of not doing this are

Students who disclose to Disability & Learner Support but do not wish their placements to know will be referred back to Student Occupational Health for review.

A pre-placement proforma can be completed by a programme leader or placement mentor to help document Reasonable Adjustments. Please see page 5 for an example of a pre-placement proforma.

Things to include on the proforma
- ➢ Nature of disability
- ➢ What reasonable adjustments can be made on placement
- ➢ How adjustments will be funded (this may be through Disabled Student Allowance)
- ➢ What action will be taken if adjustments are not provided or the recommended adjustments cannot be made on the particular placement.
- ➢ Who is to be informed of the student's disability at the placement
- ➢ Systems for maintaining communication between the Practice Educator Facilitator (PEF) and University Staff

A pre-placement visit is encouraged for students who have difficulties relating to travel, mobility and orientation to new environments. During this visit students will also be able to meet with supervising staff. Disability Advisers encourage the student to arrange a pre-placement visit independently if this is not usual practice. The pre-placement meeting gives both parties clear expectations and helps reduce student anxiety from the outset.

Example of a pre-placement proforma

Students Name: Roll Number: Programme:	University of **Salford** MANCHESTER Placement 1
Start date	
End date	
Type of placement	
Placement site/organisation	
Comments/reasonable adjustment	
Staff signature	
Student signature	
Review Date	

Making adjustments

This section is for:

- ➢ Academic staff who are involved in preparing students for placements
- ➢ Students with a disability and on a placement element of the course
- ➢ Clinical Educators/placement mentors

If any adjustments are required in a placement setting, students should speak to their programme leader or placement mentor, who can consult with Disability and Learner Support if required. In most cases students are aware of what support they may require when on placement.

Examples of types of adjustments that may need to be considered:

- ➢ Are working patterns flexible enough to enable students with different difficulties to fully participate whilst still considering the needs of the placement?
- ➢ Presentation of written material - is everything paper based or is your department using an electronic record system, electronic formats are generally more accessible/adaptable to individual needs.
- ➢ Can accessible software be used for students with a Visual Impairment for example?
- ➢ Extra time to read or write patient notes
- ➢ On-going support for students who may require it through visits or phone calls.

The next section will discuss adjustments for specific types of disabilities

Supporting Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia

Not all students with a SpLD have the same difficulties; academic difficulties will be detailed in the students support plan and can include:

➢ Slow reading and writing/slow processing of verbal information
➢ Difficulties with organisation and following instruction
➢ Re-reading for comprehension
➢ Short term memory and concentration difficulties
➢ Hard to read/illegible handwriting
➢ Difficulties with the manipulation of numbers

Suggested strategies for mentors

➢ Ensure all written information is clearly laid out; use a clear font such as Arial, size 12. Some students may have a coloured overlay or tinted lenses to help reduce visual stress when reading from white paper. Cream/pastel coloured paper can also help reduce this
➢ Extra time to complete reading and writing tasks, if a large amount of background reading is required the placement mentor/ clinical educator should identify essential material
➢ The student should be encouraged to develop a personal glossary, this could be for example, a small address book where information can be kept in alphabetic order and used quickly when on a ward
➢ Where possible accept a degree of untidy writing as long as the meaning is clear, however NMC guidelines emphasise the requirement for legible handwriting
➢ Provide examples of good previously written records to help student develop good practice in written work
➢ If errors happen, explain to the student how the task can be completed more effectively next time, clear guidelines help with the student's planning and structure.

- Encourage the student to keep a diary to help with time keeping and forward planning
- Consider flexible working patterns where, for example, a student can write notes up at intervals during the day, such as breaking tasks into am and pm rather than expecting them all at the end of the day/shift
- Where possible let the student complete notes on a computer where they can check spelling and grammar
- Allow students to carry crib notes or a check list to aid learning procedures
- Where possible allow student to record key points during patient assessment in line with confidentiality procedure (e.g. Deleting all recorded content at the end of each working day and obtaining consent from the patient and permission from the relevant lead manager in the Trust)
- Be willing to repeat instructions, you can also encourage the student to repeat them to ensure understanding
- Provide templates for letters and forms
- Weekly catch up or review sessions

Suggested strategies for students

- Use an electronic dictionary/medical dictionary/thesaurus to help check terminology and spelling
- Take brief notes when performing patient assessments to help with both concentration and short term memory. Please ensure these are suitably anonymised to protect confidentiality.
- Develop your own glossary, this could be, for example, a small address book where information can be kept in alphabetic order and used quickly when in clinical practice
- Use a coloured overlay (if appropriate). Due to Infection Control this will need to be wiped down with the appropriate antibacterial medium between patients or discarded after use if barrier nursing is in place
- Ensure that you are familiar with different forms and documents used, you could ask your mentor if you can take blank copies home to familiarise yourself with their layout

➤ Develop effective checking procedure with your study coach; this may include techniques for proofreading

➤ Ask for clarification if you are unsure of any instructions or terminology

Visual Impairment (VI)

Visually impaired students may need specific adjustments in several areas to enable them to complete their placement. A pre-placement meeting is highly recommended to discuss reasonable adjustments in regards to providing information, technology, and orientation and working hours.

Placement location, timing and travel

Students with visual impairments should be able to easily access placement by using public transport. It is advised that VI students practise the travel route before placement starts if they are not familiar with the area of the placement.

Sometimes public transport is not suitable and the student may be recommended taxi support through Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) for trips between home and placement, please refer the student to the Disability and Learner Support team if this is required.

Some VI students can see well when light levels are good, however, they can experience 'night blindness' in low light levels. If the student is on placement over winter working hours it may be discussed so the student can avoid travelling in darker hours. If travel during dark hours is unavoidable a discussion with the student may be required and adjustments such as taxi transport can be recommended through DSA.

Access to written information

Ensure that information received before and during placement is provided in the student's preferred format, this could be in enlarged text, in Braille, on a Digital Voice Recorder or an electronic copy.

Deaf or Hearing Impaired (HI)

Deaf or hard of hearing students can communicate in a number of different ways depending on the level of their hearing impairment or chosen mode of communication. Students who are Deaf may use a combination of British Sign Language (BSL), lip-read and/or use hearing aids. Students who are Hard of Hearing may use lip-reading, hearing aids, written word or use Sign Supported English (SSE) to aid communication.

Methods to help facilitate students' learning

- ➢ Provision of Qualified Interpreters, Lip speakers or note takers should be offered and encouraged.
- ➢ Use of a loop system for hearing aid users.
- ➢ Everyone within the placement to be Deaf aware.
- ➢ In the absence of an interpreter or lip speaker;
    - o Ensure you have eye contact before speaking
    - o Regional accents, facial hair, items around your mouth e.g. pens can prevent lip-reading.
    - o Don't have a light source behind you.
    - o Talk at your normal pace and rhythm, shouting, or talking slowly alters the lip pattern as this clip demonstrates - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xT3e0HySKY&feature=endscreen&NR=1
    - o Always face the student even if answering someone else.
    - o Clarify the student is following the information by checking understanding.
    - o Try alternative modes of communication if barrier to communication e.g. writing down, gesture, demonstration.
    - o Keep distractions and outside noise to a minimum
    - o Give plenty of rest breaks (every 20 min) as reading lips is exhausting work – where possible.

- o New terminology or words the student has never seen before they will not process therefore alternative methods to be facilitated in collaboration with the student.

Practical sessions

- ➢ Ensure that the student receives either the theory or the practical first but not both at the same time.
- ➢ Agree a system /sign that you need them to stop.
- ➢ It is useful to be aware of rooms in a hospital which may have a hearing loop fitted or a portable loop system.

Mental Health Difficulties

Mental Health difficulties can include conditions such as Anxiety, Depression, Bipolar Affective Disorder, Eating Disorders, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Schizoaffective disorder

Mental Health difficulties can fluctuate, some days the student may not experience any difficulty and other days they may be unable to complete day to day tasks. This can make supporting the student challenging.

It is helpful to offer the opportunity for the student to have a pre-placement meeting so that they can discuss any concerns and specific needs before their placement begins. If issues arise after the placement has started it may be useful to arrange a meeting between the student and the placement mentor in a quiet environment to discuss the main issue(s) and possible solutions.

Methods to help facilitate student learning

- ➢ Discuss flexible working patterns (where applicable)
- ➢ Where possible provide a quiet area for the student to write up patient notes.
- ➢ Allow for extra time where appropriate/necessary to facilitate learning
- ➢ Offer practical advice and reassurance
- ➢ Listen to student concerns and follow up with a meeting at a later date

> ➢ Be sensitive to the student needs – they may need to attend appointments such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help them manage their condition

If it becomes obvious that the student is having increased mental health difficulties recommend the student seeks support from the appropriate services. This could be Disability and Learner Support, Wellbeing in Student Life (details at the back of the guide), the student's programme leader, personal tutor, Practice Education Facilitator (PEF) or their GP.

Medical Conditions

Students with a range of medical conditions may require reasonable adjustments for example, Crohn's disease, Diabetes, Arthritis, Epilepsy, ME, Migraines and Chronic Fatigue and exposure prone procedures e.g. HIV. Recommendations are often individual to the student as requirements will differ even between students with the same condition. Reasonable adjustments should be agreed with the student prior to placement starting.

Suggested strategies

> ➢ Flexible working patterns (where possible)
> ➢ Regular working patterns and set breaks to allow for regular food intake
> ➢ Local placement if possible, to reduce travel time
> ➢ Enabling the student to be responsible for their own safety and that of patients and colleagues

Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities are wide ranging and adjustments can depend on individual requirement. They can include Back Conditions, Cystic Fibrosis, Fibromyalgia and Hypermobility Syndrome. Adjustments should be discussed prior to placement commencement.

Suggested strategies

- Availability of disabled parking spaces
- Accessible access to the workplace and premises which can include ramps and lifts
- Discussion around management including possible use of a personal assistant
- Availability of specialist equipment
- A lockable storage space for student on the placement
- Personal escape plan and information on refuge points in case of fire or evacuation

Monitoring

After reasonable adjustments have been discussed with the student and have been implemented, it is important that they are monitored on a regular basis. It may be that the adjustments are not working for the student and need to be reviewed. Sometimes adjustments are only needed for a short period of time. For example a student with a visual impairment who initially needed a support worker to facilitate mobility around a new environment may find this is no longer needed when they become familiar with the environment. Review is also important to help monitor the students' academic performance to ensure they meet the stages of clinical competence.

After reasonable adjustments have been made the student must still meet the practice learning outcomes and requirement of hours in practice of their programme of study. Disabled students are not exempt from meeting academic

or clinical requirements and under no circumstances must professional standards or health and safety be compromised.

Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)

Students with a physical disability, a mental health difficulty or a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia may be eligible for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

DSA helps to pay for any extra costs students may incur in attending their course, as a direct result of their disability. This can include non-medical helper support such as a study coach and note-taker support, equipment and specialist software to assist during the course and travel costs incurred because of disability to help with travel to and from University and placements.

Students are eligible to apply for DSA through the NHS Bursary Scheme online BOSS account if they have been accepted onto an eligible preregistration healthcare course and the course leads to professional registration as an allied health professional, nurse, midwife, doctor or dentist. Seconded NHS students and UG Social Work students are able to apply to Student Finance England. PG Social work students apply for a Social Work Bursary. Students will not be eligible for DSA if they are an EU student in receipt of an EU fees only bursary.

Useful contact details

Students can contact their Programme Leader or Practice Education Facilitator with any questions regarding support whilst on placement.

Disability and Learner Support
Student Life
University House
University of Salford
M5 4WT

Tel: 0161 295 9000
Email: disability@salford.ac.uk
Website: http://www.advice.salford.ac.uk/disability

Wellbeing Service (including Counselling)
Student Life
University House
University of Salford
M5 4WT

Tel: 0161 295 7008
Email: wellbeing@salford.ac.uk
Website: http://www.advice.salford.ac.uk/wellbeing

References and Resources

Guidelines on Supporting Students with
Mental Health Difficulties - Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

http://www.cdd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Mental-Health-Guidelines_revisions-121011_web.pdf

Into Physiotherapy Welcoming and Supporting Disabled Students
http://www.mmu.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/disability/into-physiotherapy.pdf

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) – Guidance
Supporting disabled physiotherapy students on clinical placement (2004).
http://beta.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/csp-guidance-supporting-disabled-physiotherapy-students-on-clinical-placement/r/a11G000000182RYIAY

The Equality Act 2010 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

University of Southampton, School of Health Sciences, Supporting dyslexic students
http://www.southampton.ac.uk/edusupport/ldc/docs/Supporting%20students%20with%20dyslexia%20in%20practice%202nd%20edition.pdf

RCN toolkit
https://www.rcn.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/78677/002797.pdf