

A photograph of a hospital hallway with a person in blue scrubs and a surgical cap walking away from the camera. The hallway has white walls, blue accents, and a polished floor. Another person in scrubs is visible in the distance.

BTEC work placements

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In this presentation



Context of BTEC student programme



How it supported our wards during COVID



The challenges/ opportunities



The future role of students in our workforce

Employing local health and care students as surge care assistants | Sharon Probets and Dinah Ofosu-Asante

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Sharon Probets, head of learning, and Dinah Ofosu-Asante, lead nurse for healthcare support at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, developed a talent pipeline from college to trust through a new surge care assistant role that allowed local health and care students to get practical experience and support the pandemic response.



Before the pandemic, we wanted to use our volunteering programme to give health and care students at our local further education colleges access to hands-on work experience in an acute setting. In west London, less than a third of BTEC health and care students actually go on to work in the health or care sector, which is a huge loss of talent for us.

The second COVID-19 surge put a lot of pressure on our ward staffing, as a significant number of healthcare professionals were deployed to critical care. Wards told us they needed people who could carry out basic tasks such as changing bed linen, helping patients to eat and drink, helping patients to sit or stand and assisting with personal care.

Surge care assistant roles

To meet this need, we worked with our local colleges, West London College and HCUC (Harrow College and Uxbridge College) to develop the surge care assistant role.



As part of the Trust's covid surge response, non-clinical staff were deployed as ward support officers to free up clinical staff to focus on patient care



Ward support officers undertook a range of non-clinical tasks; ward runner, stock control, talking to patients and helping them stay in touch with family and friends. Wards told us they needed more hands-on support



The surge care assistant role was designed to provide wards with that additional hands-on support. This was provided by year two students completing health & care BTEC level 3

Classroom training

One day session covered

- Tasks and activities
- Typical ward orientation
- PPE
- Typical equipment
- Buzzers
- Communication, including introductions and phone calls
- Confidentiality
- De-escalation techniques
- Food hygiene
- Infection control: CV19 precautions and hand hygiene
- Practical sessions: personal care, mouth care, skin care, bed transfers

Online learning completed during onboarding

- Health, safety and welfare
- Conflict resolution
- Infection prevention and control
- Information governance
- Moving and handling
- Fire safety
- Safeguarding adults & children
- Privacy & dignity
- Fluids and nutrition
- Equality & diversity
- Duty of care

Selection criteria

Aged 18+

Studying at level 3 minimum and in final year

Enhanced DBS – via college

Right to work in the UK

Health clearance

Functional requirements form completed and forwarded to OH for review

Covid health risk assessment

Role of a surge care assistant

Admin tasks

- Checking, tidying and replenishing stock and supplies e.g. soap, sanitiser, gloves, equipment, pharmacy
- If housekeeper not available, maintain linen stocks
- Running errands, collecting and delivering equipment, stock, medicines
- Answering the phone and taking messages

Patient facing tasks

- Talking to patients, particularly those who don't have regular family/friends contacts
- Supporting ward host serve and collect meal trays to bedside and keeping water jugs topped-up and available
- Supporting patients to contact relatives and friends via phone or tablet
- Updating patient name board, checking patient IDs and next of kin detail
- Assisting patients to sit up in bed or move from bed to chair/chair to bed
- Assisting patients to eat and drink – cutting up food, opening packs and cartons
- Prepping bed bays ready to receive newly admitted/transferred patients

Additional clinical tasks (undertaken after training)*

- Patient observations and recording
- ECG's
- Blood glucose monitoring
- Observing and recording fluid and food intake
- Assisting with specialling

*These additional tasks assigned at the discretion of the ward manager

Choosing a healthcare career

This experience has helped me decide that I want to continue my path in healthcare as I enjoy helping people and improving their health

It has made me want to go into nursing and I would love to carry on working on that ward

This experience has given me an understanding of how essential healthcare workers are and the seriousness of the job. It has shown me how rewarding working in this environment can be and has become something I want to pursue in the future

Patients told me they could see me working in this type of environment because I'm a kind and patient person. This comment has opened my eyes and I can see myself working in healthcare

This experience has given me an insight to the NHS. I've found it challenging and interesting which are the two things I look for in a career

I am certain I want to study adult nursing now. Hopefully when I finish the course I will come back to the cardiology ward I was working on because it really interests me and the staff here are lovely and want to help me learn all the time

It helped me realise that I need to be dedicated and really interested in healthcare to be able to build a career. This has been a good experience for me as before I wasn't sure if healthcare was for me

I definitely know that this is where I want to be. If there was any hesitation, it has gone

It has confirmed I would like to return to hospital medicine and build a career back in the NHS

Actions to ensure programme is sustainable

Clear job description for the role

More communication with wards prior to the placements

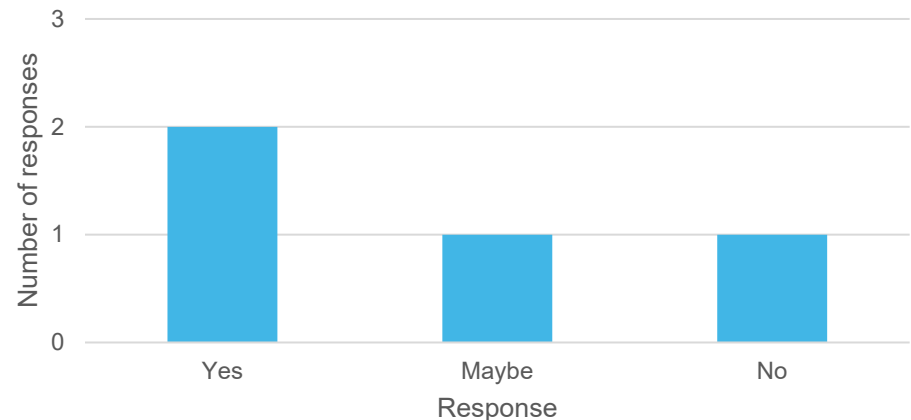
Provide more training for SCAs before they join the ward – how to introduce themselves “my name is..” and be proactive

Manage expectations and tension between students waiting to be given tasks and staff expecting them to ask for more tasks

Would you support this as a BAU placement programme?



Would you employ a surge care assistant as a HCA?



Learning and recommendations

Learning

Clear communication with ward managers/lead nurses: purpose of the role and how to best utilise

More emphasis on practical training to meet ward needs: observations, 1-1 care, ECGs in addition to current content

Clear role profile to ensure staff and students understand the requirements, tasks and expectations

Recommendations

Adapt the programme and continue two week unpaid working placements

Three blocks of two weeks offered in November, March/April and June to increase capacity

Develop relationship with colleges to create recruitment pipeline of health & care students in to support worker roles or nursing apprenticeships

Future plans

T Level/BTEC Health
Level 3
Year 2

Up to 12 students
'best of the best'

Students selected by
their college

1 student per ward
2 week placement

Three sessions
per year

November

March/April

May/June

Hands-on activity
as a HCSW

Ward manager
decide specific
tasks

Experienced
HCSW to
supervise/mentor

Talent
pipeline

HCSW
posts on
completion
of course