

Live Virtual Placements – University of Cumbria



Richard Ward - Principal Lecturer, Centre of Excellence in Paramedic Practice, University of Cumbria

Introduction & Aim

Introduction: The role of the paramedic is diversifying, and universities need to respond by developing curriculums that support paramedic graduates to meet future workforce needs. Placements are key to our students developing the necessary competencies to become qualified paramedics and the pressure is on universities to offer a wide range of placements to reflect professional diversification [1]. In addition, Health and Care Professions Council’s new standards of proficiency acknowledge that paramedics of the future are likely to consult patients in the virtual world [2].

As universities strive to meet this demand, they are often faced with placement capacity issues. Rising student numbers, staff retention issues and competition for placements from other healthcare students can make it extremely challenging to secure placements, especially in desirable areas such as primary care.

Aim: To implement a primary care live virtual placement experience into our level 5 curriculum to diversify learner experience.

Methods

Project Design: Funding from Health Education England was obtained to pilot a series of live virtual placement experiences between April and June 2023. On each day learners from our paramedic degree apprenticeship programme, in a classroom on our Lancaster campus, virtually attended a live clinic in a primary care setting based at Ship Street Surgery, Modality Mid Sussex. The clinic was rigged with various cameras and microphones, with real patients consenting to being filmed.

The experience comprised of 5 patients, with the lead clinician providing a brief to the learners before each patient arrived for their consultation. Afterwards, the clinician would complete their clinical documentation before engaging in a two-way conversation with our learners and academic staff via Microsoft teams. Following the clinic, our apprentices had the opportunity to consolidate their learning via case study driven seminars which linked to the mornings experience.

Experiences



Impact

"Very **engaging** and good to see healthcare from an **alternative perspective**"

"I got to see and **understand a GP's perspective** on a range of complaints. Which gave me a **greater insight** into their triage process, working diagnosis and plan of care"

"**Interesting** to see some **referrals that I didn't expect** especially regarding AAAs"

"I found the placement really **interesting**, especially the range of **patient diversity**. It was **engaging** throughout and gave me a great insight into GP practice. Really **enjoyed** today and would advise to **include more types** like this in the future. Thank you."

"**Brilliant placement** as this has never previously been available. **Opportunity to discuss consultation in depth and ask questions.**"

References

1 – College of Paramedics [Internet]. 2019 [Cited 2023 Oct 13]. Available from: https://collegeofparamedics.co.uk/COP/ProfessionalDevelopment/Paramedic_Curriculum_Guidance.aspx

2 - Health and Care Professions Council [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2023 Oct 12]. Available from: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/standards/standards-of-proficiency/reviewing/paramedics---new-standards.pdf>

Corresponding authors contact details:
Richard.Ward@Cumbria.ac.uk
[@RichardWard_UoC](https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/people/richard-ward)

Contributing authors: Antony Freeman, Tom Davidson, David Brown, Charles Everard, Alex Martin-Verdinos and Catherine O'Leary.

