Student work experience scheme

Background  Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust (KCHFT) is in the early stages of developing home grown or ‘own account’ research. Undergraduate psychology students are ideal candidates to provide much needed research resources, such as their time and skills, to enable clinicians to take their ideas forward.

Objective  To pilot an undergraduate student work experience scheme to provide research support to KCHFT.

Process
- About a year of background work
- Success came with the University of Kent’s established Work Experience Scheme
- Attracted seven applications and interviewed four students
- Interviews took place and students recruited in November 2016
- Scheme started 6 February 2017
- Students work four hours per week, mostly from home or university
- Research facilitator/health psychologist provides joint supervision meetings every three weeks.

Examples of work
- Literature reviews: End-of-life conversations in learning disabilities; chronic pain in forensic settings; frequent service users and auditory discrimination and speech production
- Developing interview topic guide
- Meetings with clinical teams, individual clinicians and academics to progress research ideas
- Potential for:
  - work place shadowing
  - staff interviews
  - data analysis.

Outcomes for the student
- Insight into NHS services and the working life of health professionals
- Improved research skills, detailing the processes and outcomes of professional literature reviews
- Improved writing skills and knowledge in topic areas, taking meeting notes and developing interview questions
- Understanding the complexities of health research and the ways to support it
- Developing communication skills in a professional environment, using NHS.net accounts for email correspondence.

Outcomes for KCHFT and the NHS
- Submitted research application to an internal University of Kent fund
- Potential publication/voice piece
- A dedicated resource for KCHFT research projects
- Independent working with minimal supervision or training required
- Allows projects to happen – without such support they may well not have
- Allows multi-disciplinary working, bringing different perspectives and different skills set.

Conclusion
- The scheme has benefited the students, KCHFT and individual clinicians.
- It has been a valuable resource to the Research and Development Team in supporting clinicians to develop their research/evaluation ideas.
- Promotes NHS trusts as a future place to work to students, attracting high calibre and experienced individuals.
- Enhances relations with local higher education institutions, which leads to a potential increase in research activities.
- More work is needed to implement this as a rolling scheme and to recruit the students earlier in the academic term, for example October to November.

Authors: Julie Hedayioglu, Elizabeth Hunt and Laura Naysmith
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust and the University of Kent.