NHS
Health Education England

AHP guide to continuing practice learning while self-isolating

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Definitions

Self-isolating

An individual does not leave their home because they have, might have, or be at a high risk from COVID-19.

Practice learning

Practice learning takes place during placements which involve a range of learning opportunities for student development. Students apply and consolidate their learning, bringing together academic theory, workplace practice to develop skills and competences needed to register. Practice learning is supervised and structured to enable progress towards learning outcomes and usually involves assessment of the learner.

Introduction

This guide is for educators and students who need to self-isolate and are therefore unable to attend in-person practice learning.

It should be used to prepare and support educators, practice learning providers and students to continue their practice learning, to achieve learning outcomes and enhance professional skills and employability.

The ideas may form an entire practice learning opportunity or may be used where a period of self-isolation is required during a placement.

Background

It is vital that AHP students can continue their learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to be able to graduate and enter the workforce as planned. It is likely that some students may have to self-isolate during some or all or their learning, putting their learning on hold.

New solutions and been developed to enable students to continue their practice learning off-site during self-isolation, provided the student is not unwell or off sick.

This guide contains suggestions that have been tried and tested by AHP teams across the country.

Activities for self-isolating students

Practice learning is not limited to clinical practice. An AHP student needs to develop a wide range of skills to register and work. The following ideas cover education, research and leadership.

Clinical practice

Contribute to the service remotely
Start with shadowing and progress to contributing, contribute to virtual huddles with staff or leading online consultations with patients.

Case study work
Develop intervention/treatment plans for a patient seen on placement. Draft anonymised notes, referral letters, discharge plans etc. Research the condition, present evidence for clinical reasoning. Map out the AHP role across the full pathway (eg: home-A&E-surgical, ward-rehab, access to digital elements, unit-home).

Clinical formulation
Use theoretical models of practice to gain a deeper understanding of a patient/service user's needs and make sense of the theoretical concepts learned at university, digital security and safeguarding.

Practice practical skills at home
Assess own home environment, measure for equipment, practice a specific technique or intervention on a family member/housemate.

Seek out other opportunities in the organisation
Shadow the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALs) or complaints team to support them on an investigation.

The NHS website provides further information on PALs and how to locate your local team.

Education

Develop a new resource
Ideas may include creating an information
pack or glossary of terms used for future students
on the placement.

Others have created a fatigue management guide for service users or
evidence-based social media content.

Enhance access to digital care
Provide digital literacy help to patients connecting to online consultations for the first time.

Teach the team
Research and develop a teaching session to deliver in-person or online such as clinical
safety linking in with the Informatics Team's Safety Officer.

Host a journal club
Plan and chair an online journal or podcast club for the team or peers.

Harness peer-learning
Connect with other students to role-play a case study, plan/record intervention, discuss
reasoning.

Create digital guides
How to use online/digital tools for facilitating learning (eg. Miro; MindNode; OneNote;
Google software).

Research

Service evaluation
How do patients feel about remote consultations etc? What are patient/service user experiences of digital tools? How are we using digital tools to meet patient/carers needs and goals?

Find the evidence
Review and summarise relevant guidelines or literature to support practice.

Exploring experiences of the team
What are the attitudes, knowledge and skills of practice educators around aspects of digital learning?
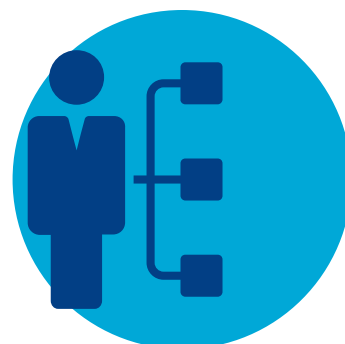
Scoping digital capability in the team
What is the current level of digital capabilities/maturity in the context of practice learning? For example, the HEE digital capability framework, AHP Digital Maturity work, AHP framework from the Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (CAHPO).

Leadership / Management

Complete a project for the service
Ideas could include developing a framework of the necessary skills and knowledge for delivery of effective 'digital learning/care delivery' (eg: Technology enhanced learning (TEL), simulation etc) or reporting on the challenges/enablers in making leadership placements available.

Develop leadership skills
Complete relevant e-learning packages, for example via e-Learning For Healhcare (e-LfH) website or NHS Improvement, Edward Jenner Programme on the NHS Leadership Academy website, online modules on Quality Improvement (QI).

Learn from a leader
Shadow a leader or manager to experience their role and work to develop a range to solutions to a management issue.

Complete some Quality Improvement (QI) work
Learn about QI methodology and address a complex problem within the organisation to improve care and patient outcomes.

Hints and tips

Tips for students

- Work with other students as a pair or group to support each other, harness creativity and feel part of the team

- Arrange regular check-ins / huddles with your supervisor to keep on track and feel connected

- Methodically review how these activities will meet your placement learning outcomes. This will help you identify gaps and consider ways of achieving all your learning outcomes

- Use the support around you - your university link tutor, the team you are on placement with, your fellow students, digital platforms and networks.

Tips for practice settings

- Scope out project ideas that would benefit your service and improve your patient/ service users care. Set out aims, stakeholders/key contacts, timescales and outputs so students know what is expected

- A pair or group of students working together can achieve far more than a lone student. Enable them to work together, support each other and use their creativity in shaping a project

- Go beyond the traditional end of placement presentation – focus on a project that will make an impact of patient care or the team

- Students will learn lots from a 'pandemic' placement, so any experience can meet the learning outcomes

- Continue regular online check-ins with their supervisor and team.

Tips for universities and education providers

- Work with regional or local Practice Placement Facilitators to share specific examples of activities that could be adapted for self-isolating students

- AHP teams will be grateful for support in redesigning practice learning away from traditional models. Introduce teams to others who have experience in such activities

- Work with regional and local AHP Leaders to show how students can be part of theworkforce even when they are self-isolating

Some useful webinars/ resources:

Below are some useful webinars/resources that we have used across the system to date.

- HEE Allied Health Professions webinars

- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy – What makes a great placement

- Royal College of Occupational Therapists – Delivering student practice placements - alternative models

- AHP Guide for Technology Enabled Care Services practice learning, which can be found on our Practice Learning resources page