

## Supporting the COVID-19 response: Guidance regarding healthcare science education and training

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020

### Introduction

The National School of Healthcare Science in HEE is aware of the multiple concerns around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and we appreciate this will also have an effect on healthcare science education and training.

We wish to emphasise the importance of following current guidance and advice from Public Health England which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

As evidenced by developments over the last few days, it is likely that our NHS will have to manage increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases. There is a shared understanding that if COVID-19 becomes a significant epidemic in the UK, clinical services will be stretched and that this will be aggravated by staff shortages due to sickness, imposed isolation and caring responsibilities. The National School of Healthcare Science has been continuously considering and updating contingency arrangements for healthcare science education and training processes during this emergent phase of the COVID-19 outbreak and we will continue to monitor and advise as required over the coming days and weeks.

Our current expectation is that there will be increasing requirements for healthcare science trainees and trainers to support NHS Healthcare providers in managing the care of acutely ill patients. This may result in disruption or cancellation of training activities and trainees being directed to alternative tasks and / or locations to support the COVID-19 response. This could mean trainees in non-acute areas being asked to support urgent and unplanned care in appropriate ways, but may also include providing support to teams in other disciplines.

Flexible working by healthcare professionals, including healthcare scientists in training, to support patient and population needs in a significant outbreak will be essential, but it will be imperative that this is considered in the context of patient and trainee safety. Learning opportunities from providing support to address the COVID-19 response are significant, but it is recognised that there could be an impact on anticipated learning and trainee progression given that trainees may fail to meet some of their curriculum requirements. However, the National School of Healthcare Science are determined to ensure the longer-term needs of healthcare scientists in training are not compromised.

### Guidance principles for all trainees

- Trainees must not be asked to undertake any activity beyond their level of competence and must be advised they should seek senior workplace guidance if that arises.
- Trainees deployed to a different specialty or clinical area must have appropriate induction and be informed of who they are reporting to, and who is providing supervision with details of how to contact them.

- Arrangements for redeployed trainees should be reviewed weekly to ensure that trainees are adequately supervised in the host environment / specialty, and that they continue to work within the limits of their competence appropriate to their stage of training.
- Where training is interrupted or learning outcomes are not achieved due to a major incident response, these issues will be taken into account and progression and completion requirements of training programmes adapted accordingly.
- Recruitment to the STP and HSST programmes for the proposed 2020 start will continue although the selection processes are being amended given the demands upon applicants and interviewers of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

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Professor Berne Ferry  
Head of The National School of Healthcare Science

Handwritten signature of Sheona MacLeod in black ink.

Professor Sheona MacLeod  
Deputy Medical Director for Education Reform  
Health Education England