

Advice from past students

All Placements:

- Read the placement profile and website before you start
- Keep up with your weekly reflections - they really help to make sense of things and don't have to be particularly long to be beneficial.
- To have an open mind and not assume
- Use supervision effectively - you will experience challenging behaviour which may be a new experience for you
- Discuss any initial fears about placement setting prior to starting
- Be confident and know that there are staff there to support you
- Don't hesitate to ask for help if you are in doubt
- Do not be afraid to try things
- Show your initiative - never sit around and do nothing!
- Create checklist of things to do on placement
- In the first week of placement, devise a timetable or rough plan of things you need to achieve by the end of each week so your learning objectives have been completed. Otherwise, you rush in the last week to complete all learning objectives.
- Ask lots of questions.
- Spend some time adjusting to the placement, the staff, and the patients, and allow them time to adjust to you.
- Continually reflect on your thoughts and feelings, and be aware how this can impact your behaviour; this does not have to be done formally, but can be spoken informally to your supervisor, it is really, really beneficial to your practice.
- Read the literature around what you have experienced in placement. This is very useful in connecting theory to practice
- Show interest towards the patients but also to the staff, as this will enhance learning.
- Make sure to shadow other colleagues so you get an idea of what everyone's role is within the team
- Arrange visits to other places - the Recovery College is a great resource that offer free courses. If you are interested in other areas on Site (e.g. Eating Disorders, Elderly acute), then try to arrange visits to other wards. A visit to the Community Mental Health Team was good for me to see a different OT role (Care Co-ordinator) and to see how the care continues for some patients out in the community.
- Always be honest
- Make time early to consider additional learning opportunities available in the Trust and book them at the earliest convenience. Time spent on placement can be relatively short and very busy and this will ensure that you make time for these additional opportunities
- Utilise the student seminars to think deeply about the topics being discussed as this is a great opportunity to broaden your understanding of practice. Feel liberated in the realisation that you can ask questions within this group, no matter how silly they feel.
- Although the individual client contact is important, take time to consider the wider context that you are practicing within (i.e. the service, economic climate and the implications to practice). Discussing these issues with clinicians during your placement provides you with a rich opportunity to develop insight into these issues.
- Don't be too nervous, you're not expected to know everything and patients and staff appreciate you are in the process of learning.
- Take time to unwind after a day of work. Placements are tiring and emotionally draining at times especially as patients often have very traumatic and disturbing lives. Sometimes just taking a walk into town after work or chatting with a friend helps to lift you up again after a difficult day.
- Be kind to yourself and try to have one day off a week where you don't do anything related to your placement so you can feel recharged and ready for the next week.
- Enjoy it!

Inpatient Placements:

- Try and get involved as much as possible by interacting with the patients and the team, familiarising yourself with the ward and procedures really helps to understand the Mental Health setting and the OT role.
- Use initiative and help to prepare/set up the room for group activities which helps to start the group on time.
- Undertake a nursing shift - To understand more about the nursing and HCA roles, the patient's routines in the morning/evening, and a chance to spend time with the patients aside from OT activities.

- Speak to the ward pharmacist - To get a better understanding on medication and side effects (especially when thinking about how medication could affect an individual's occupational performance).

Community Mental Health Team Placements:

- Read up on generic working and care-coordinator role.
- Read up on anti-psychotic medication and side effects.

Deaf Services Placements:

- Try to learn as much basic sign language as you can as you will definitely need it to build relationships with staff and clients.
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Forensic Placements:

- Go with an open mind and do not judge patients and their offending background
- Don't under estimate how important risk is