

STATEMENT OF EXPECTATION

Medical Student Volunteers in the NHS

In the current public health crisis, medical students are keen to help their colleagues working in the NHS. The NHS is in the best position to decide what it needs locally and medical schools will do all they can to support this. The following Statement of Expectation, developed by the Medical Schools Council with input from HEE and the GMC, contains guidelines for NHS Trusts, GP practices, medical schools and medical students relating to medical student volunteering.

This document refers to volunteering roles suitable for medical students with some clinical experience, in roles that utilise their knowledge and skills above and beyond those that may be offered by non medical student volunteers. It refers to paid, structured part-time work that students may volunteer to undertake.

This is different from the general national call for unpaid volunteers to assist the NHS; medical students (particularly in the early years of their course) may wish to contribute in that way, in which case they would be subject to the same procedures as standard volunteers. It is important for these students also to recognise their responsibility in item 1 in the summary below and to liaise with, and get permission from, their medical school.

Summary

1. Medical students' first responsibility is to their continuing education. They must not jeopardise their readiness to qualify in the future by taking on too many additional responsibilities.
2. Volunteer medical students in structured part-time work which uses their clinical experience must be placed in structured clinical roles, should be paid and must receive written Terms and Conditions.
3. NHS employers should be supportive to these student volunteers and must not permit them to undertake tasks beyond their competence.
4. NHS employers must ensure that these volunteers have appropriate induction, training and supervision in their volunteer role, including training in the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where necessary.
5. Medical schools will endeavour to maintain lists of all students volunteering in the NHS and will develop support systems and networks for them.
6. Medical Schools should write to their students to explain that if they wish to take paid roles as volunteers that utilise their knowledge and skills above and beyond those that may be offered by non medical student volunteers they need:
 - a) the endorsement of their medical school
 - b) to follow the guidance below
 - c) to keep in close contact with their medical school so that support can be provided
 - d) to ensure that they keep up to date with online learning requirements

Broad Principles

Indemnity/Insurance

- Medical students volunteering for/with NHS Trusts will be covered by Crown Indemnity. Volunteers must not work beyond their competence.
- Students volunteering for/with GP practices should be covered by CNSGP, which provides protection against the financial consequences of clinical negligence claims. The CNSGP covers volunteers if they are providing care or treatment, which is connected to the provision of primary medical services. Other forms of volunteering are not covered by the scheme. Students and GPs should refer to the [Scope of Scheme](#) document to ensure the work being done is covered by CNSGP.
- Both the MDU and MPS have said that they will cover students working as volunteers in the NHS. If students are enrolled in a different personal indemnity scheme they should check with their provider to see if they are covered. Both providers advise that students should only carry out activities that fall within the level of their competency. Student members of either provider do not need to contact MDU or MPS before practising, but should contact their provider as and when they need to request medico-legal support as a result of undertaking a volunteering role.
- The Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland (MDDUS) is [waiving membership fees](#) for students starting their Foundation Year 1 post early. Foundation Year 1 doctors will now be able to add 'Coronavirus support' to their membership, free-of-charge, providing them with a range of support to supplement their state indemnity. While students volunteering will be covered by the relevant NHS indemnity scheme, MDDUS is offering access to advice and support through free student membership.

Who can volunteer?

- Volunteering is optional and will not negatively affect students who do not wish to take part.
- Student volunteers should be placed based on competencies – non-clinical years students should not be put in clinical environments.
- Students should be able to leave volunteering roles should they wish. If this is the case, they should provide an agreed period of notice to allow Trusts to rearrange shifts.

Terminology

- There should be clear terminology that defines a medical student volunteer and differentiates them from other professionals such as HCAs (unless the student is formally qualified to work as an HCA) or recently graduated doctors.

Status

- All student volunteers must first request permission and approval from their parent medical school. No Trust should accept a student volunteer who does not have this evidence of approval.

Location

- Students who wish to volunteer should be encouraged to assist one of their local medical school Trusts, GP practices or community health settings as they will have more experience in these environments. It is STRONGLY PREFERRED that students volunteer close to their medical school (as this makes organisation and support

much easier). Students can access non-medical volunteering opportunities on the [MSC website](#).

Hours

- Student volunteer hours should be restricted to a maximum per week and per day. This will often be governed by their university regulations, which must be complied with. Student volunteer night shifts should be avoided.
- Students should negotiate their hours of volunteering bearing in mind their principle responsibility towards their continuing education.
- National rules around rest periods and breaks should be made clear to volunteers.
- All volunteering roles should be time limited, with the length made clear in advance.

Induction and training

- Students must have an appropriate formal induction by the host organisation and be informed about the person to whom they will be reporting and who is providing supervision. Details should be provided of how to contact these people
- Medical schools should work with Trusts and GP practices to help them provide training materials where possible.

Risk assessment

- Host organisations should complete a general risk assessment that has been shared with schools in advance.
- As far as possible in the current healthcare environment, students should not be put at clinical risk.
- Students should be provided, where appropriate to local policy, with PPE and full training in its use.

Student wellbeing

- Medical schools should keep lists of student volunteers and their locations.
- Students should be aware of key contacts who are responsible for their wellbeing – this includes within the host organisation and their medical school.
- Shifts must be recorded as with any employee and there should be clear instructions on arrangements for self-isolation/sickness absence.
- There should be a clear process for raising concerns, with identified key contacts.
- Students should be included in daily briefings where possible to ensure they feel a part of the team. Where possible, a separate briefing for volunteers should also be held.
- Where possible, students should not continuously change roles and departments. If this is required then they should be provided with adequate support such as setting up volunteers with 'buddies'.
- Medical students volunteering in the NHS should try to ensure that they have food and other domestic supplies at home and someone to talk to after their shift in the NHS.

Communication

- There must be a contact system between host organisations and medical schools to discuss student volunteers in their organisation.

Duties

- Students should never be asked to undertake any activity beyond their level of competence. This should be made clear to all volunteers and they should be able to seek senior guidance should anything be unclear.

Sources of support and advice

1. WHO advice - [Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak](#). This offers guidance for different population groups relating to their psychosocial needs.
2. [Sustaining Wellbeing](#) – advice from the Intensive Care Society on managing the needs of staff at different phases.
3. [BMA Wellbeing service](#) – 0330 123 1245 – available 24/7 access to confidential counsellor/peer support for any doctor/medical student and available to their families.
4. [How to stop your anxiety from spiralling out of control](#).
5. [Advice from MIND](#) regarding personal wellbeing to deal with anxiety and isolation.
6. [MDU indemnity information](#) for medical student volunteers.
7. [Non-medical volunteering opportunities](#).