Frequently asked questions and answers for those supervising and assessing preregistration nursing and midwifery students in community teams in primary and integrated care during the COVID-19 period

Introduction
This frequently asked questions guidance has been developed with Board partners to support those supervising and assessing pre-registration nursing and midwifery students in community or integrated care placements. We are grateful to NHS Boards who have shared their resources. As well as national guidance that is available and signposted in this document please also refer to any local guidance. Please read this document in conjunction with the ‘Frequently asked questions for mentors, sign off mentors and practice teachers with regards to supervision and assessment during the COVID-19 crisis’ at: https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/nursing-and-midwifery/practice-education/covid-19-supervision-and-assessment.aspx

Q1. I have heard that the students are coming to work as HCSWs in the community?
No, but they will work within a band 3 or 4 job descriptions specifically developed for paid student placement purposes. Their student status is retained, and they will continue learning as a student nurse or midwife. You should continue to provide direction, guidance, support, supervision (direct or indirect) and assess the student in practice.

Supernumerary status has been removed during this emergency period and programme structures are changing to allow students, who choose to, to opt in and spend more time in practice to help support the workforce and be rostered as part of the team. Students in this non supernumerary role will be paid for the contribution they will make within the workforce. Depending on the stage the students are at on their programme they will be remunerated either at a band 3 or band 4 level of pay. There will be no 1st year students out in practice during the COVID-19 emergency. Those 1st year students who already have bank contracts as clinical support workers can continue to work in that capacity in the same way as prior to COVID-19.

Q2. What can non supernumerary students do in practice?
The students will work within a band 3 or 4 job description specifically developed for paid student placement purposes. These descriptors clearly state that a student continues learning as a student nurse or midwife with the support and under direct and indirect supervision provided by a Registered Nurse/Midwife/Registered health and social care professional. Your role and responsibilities remain the same in terms of providing direct and indirect supervision.

Students should continue to be supported and supervised to work within their skills and capabilities. The COVID-19 emergency response has the potential to offer students unique learning opportunities as part of the workforce in community teams in primary and integrated care. The Ongoing Achievement Record (OAR) details the essential skills clusters, proficiencies and specific learning outcomes while regulatory and local policy determines those skills inappropriate for a student to undertake e.g. their role in
administration of medicines remains the same.

Q3. Will students be able to have their own delegated caseload?
Yes, this should be possible. Students should work within the scope of their practice under direct and indirect supervision by the registered nurse. This would be agreed on an individual basis and will be dependent on the student’s previous experience, level of proficiency, confidence and the learning outcomes, essential skills cluster and proficiencies contained within the OAR that the student requires to achieve. The NMC emergency programme standards indicate that a framework should be used to aid clinical decision making when delegating to non-supernumerary paid students who have opted to work in the practice learning environment. The framework being used in Scotland can be accessed at: https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-discipline/nursing-and-midwifery/practice-education/covid-19-supervision-and-assessment.aspx

Some individuals may be feeling more anxious about having different professionals visiting them due to the possible infection risk. It would be advisable to forewarn individuals about any change of personnel who may be visiting them.

Q4. Within my current caseload I have care home residents. Are care home visits appropriate for students at this time?
Yes, where you as a registered professional deem this to be appropriate the student could be delegated visits or a caseload to manage in line with the advice provided in Q3. If visiting a nursing or residential home, please ensure the student is familiar with the HPS COVID-19 - information and guidance for social or community care and residential settings available at https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-social-or-community-care-and-residential-settings/.

Q5. An individual has expressed a concern about a student accompanying me on a home visit. How should I manage this situation?
This scenario is not unique to the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals can refuse entry of any health or care professional to their home, but this situation may arise more often as individuals are feeling more anxious about the amount of people visiting their homes and the potential spread of COVID-19 at this time. It may be helpful to discuss this potential issue with your student at the beginning of each shift and, if you feel it is appropriate, contact can be made beforehand with the individuals you and the student intend to visit to alert them to the student’s presence. This would allow the individual to discuss how they feel about a student visiting and give you, as the mentor, the opportunity to reassure them about the infection control measures that both you and the student will adhere to when conducting home visits. Therefore, allowing them to make an informed choice.

Q6. How can I maintain social distancing when I require to travel with a student or other practitioners in a car to provide care?
The aim of social distancing measures is to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Up to date information can be found on the NHS Inform website and the Health Protection Scotland (HPS) website. It is clear that there are real challenges in delivering health and
care services in the community settings while simultaneously adhering to social distancing guidance. We all, as health and care professionals, have to reach informed, practical and reasonable decisions.

In line with national guidance, individuals should follow general infection prevention and control measures, including practicing good hand hygiene, follow social distancing advice (i.e. maintaining 2m social distancing) wherever possible and use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when delivering care. Where maintaining 2m social distancing in a car with someone is difficult, alternative travel arrangements should be made if at all possible, to allow social distancing to be maintained.

Recognising that making alternative travel arrangements will not always be possible, where practitioners are sharing a car, then consideration should be given to how social distancing can be applied within the vehicle, where possible. If you can adhere to social distancing whilst travelling, then do so. Where this is not possible and you are travelling with another practitioner/student, limit the number of passengers and space out as much as possible. Again, the following general infection prevention and control measures should always be followed:

- **Hand hygiene** - use handwashing facilities or, IF NOT available, alcohol based hand rub before and after journeys
- **Catch coughs and sneezes** in tissues or cover mouth and nose with sleeve or elbow (not hands), dispose of the tissue into a bin and wash hands immediately
- **Practice social distancing**. For example, sit approx. 2 metres (6 feet) from other passengers, travel in larger vehicles where possible or use vehicles with cab screens, if available.
- **Clean vehicles** between different drivers or passengers as appropriate and clean the car before entering and after leaving the vehicle.

In addition:

- Ask the student/health and social care professional to consider using their own car, reminding them they require the appropriate insurance cover in line with the local travel policy
- Explore access to local pool cars, subject to availability, for students and other staff members
- Consider the geographical distribution of planned visits and where possible consider if these could be carried out on foot.

**Q7. How can we maintain social distancing in the office?**

The current situation requires health and care practitioners to work flexibly and may require changes to usual working practices or shift patterns to support the observance of social distancing measures. As a team consider any modifications that could be made to ensure not all staff require to access the office at the same time. Consider how technology
could be utilised to reduce the need to work in the office.

**Q8. Can students use their own car for travel while on paid placement with a community team?**
Yes, if this is approved it should be possible. Students will be an employee and as such will be subject to the terms and conditions of the contract of employment and will be covered by your local travel policy. This will include entitlement to travel expenses for any journeys made in the performance of their duties. Travel expenses are claimed via normal employee processes and not via the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS). As an employee a student may be able to access and use pool cars if available and dependant on local policy.

**Q9. What COVID-19 community setting specific guidance can I refer students to?**
Health Protection Scotland continues to publish a collection of resources that give information and advice on Coronavirus (COVID-19). This includes guidance relating to a number of health and care settings and learning resources. As this pandemic is a rapidly evolving response practitioners must ensure they visit the website regularly to ensure they are accessing the most current guidance at [https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/](https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/)

COVID19 guidance specific for primary care can be accessed through this link: [https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-primary-care/](https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-primary-care/)


COVID-19 specific publications from the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates available at [https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/](https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/)


National guidance for NHS Scotland workforce staff and managers on Coronavirus is available at https://www.staffgovernance.scot.nhs.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/guidance/