

International year of the nurse 2020

Student nurse case study

**Samantha Stratton,
Abbey Medical Practice, Lincoln**

Name: Samantha Stratton

Nurse mentor: Lisa Freeman

Practice: Abbey Medical Practice,
Lincoln

Training Hub: Lincolnshire Training Hub

Placement: Year 3 management placement for student nurses.



Sam was due to graduate from Lincoln University in September 2019 but then went on maternity leave. She had completed her academic studies but was short of her management placement.

Sam started her 18-week management placement in January 2020 at Abbey Medical Practice in Lincoln, organised through Lincoln University and Lincolnshire Training Hub. This placement has been maintained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Samantha Stratton and Lisa Freeman, Director of Nursing at Lincolnshire Training Hub tell us more.

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Sam's story:

What were your first impressions of your placement in general practice?

Having had a previous placement in the community, I thought that this placement would be similar. However, I couldn't believe how much you are involved in and the variety of the role. At the start, I was a little overwhelmed, thinking I would never get my head around SystmOne [software which stores Electronic Health Records] and the huge diversity in the role.

What do you enjoy best about your general practice placement?

The amount of support and supervision. Although the start was overwhelming, I gained increased knowledge through time spent shadowing my supervisor in clinics. I really wanted to be worthwhile and an asset to the team in practice, so slowly became fully independent. Knowing that I have help on hand in the next room and can message at any time has really made the transition an enjoyable one.

What concerns did you have when COVID-19 started?

I was terrified that I would be unable to carry on, having waited for so long to get this placement organised with my maternity leave. I know it was not an easy undertaking for Lisa to maintain the placement, and lots of meetings took place with the university. I was relieved that I could continue to put the skills I had learnt into practice.

What did changes in general practice due to COVID-19 add to your placement?

I was relieved that I could be of assistance to the practice and our patients in continuing my placement during the COVID-19 situation. I think I feared the COVID-19 situation less, due to being involved in the surgery and getting all the communications from our CCG, practice manager and nurse lead in practice. I felt really well informed.

I was also grateful to experience the change in general practice, living through a situation which no one had experienced before. Being part of the implementation of specific rooms for treatments, phone consultations and a 'red room', having a separate entrance and exit all added a new dimension to my learning.

The personal protective equipment (PPE) situation, starting with a mask and increasing every time I came back into work was so different in practice than you expect. Until you are changing a dressing on a patient with full PPE on, working through the communication barrier, it is hard to realise the new challenges. I feel that I am more flexible now having learnt the new ways of working through COVID-19 and better prepared for the 'new normal'.

Can you think of specific challenges with continuing your placement during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The variety in conditions I have seen has decreased, understandably, compared with before the COVID-19 pandemic. The reviews with patients are not happening in person, which means fewer patients through the door. Also, my supervisor in practice and I had planned insight visits at other general practices, which has not been possible.

What are the keys to success of this placement?

My supervisor put in so much work to ensure that I could stay on placement. I've had lots of supervision and added support from the practice.

Lisa's story:

Lisa Freeman is the Director of Nursing at Lincolnshire Training Hub. Lisa was also Sam's supervisor in practice and leads the team of 4 nursing staff. Lisa is a Clinical Lead Nurse, Advanced Nurse Practitioner MSc NMP RN.

What were the challenges in practice in maintaining a student placement during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Initially the university was understandably wary of continuing student placements, as all student placements were stopped across the county. Sam was a unique case, as she was outside the existing cohort placements due to her maternity leave. After careful consideration and risk assessment in collaboration with the partners, practice manager and university, it was decided that the placement could continue. Initial updates to the university to ensure student safety were at the forefront of our planning.

What added benefits has this learner had, having had this continuation of the placement?

They're experiencing the challenges of working in a pandemic. Also, as we have had considerably fewer patients through the door, this has enabled increased discussion and reflection on learning in practice.

What additionally had to be put in place in practice or at university with this learner?

We increased reporting to the university. It was necessary to risk assess the practice to ensure safe working practices including social distancing and ensuring cascade of important points from daily briefings, such as infection control procedures.

What is your overall conclusion to this placement during COVID-19?

Sam is a fantastic learner and exemplary in showcasing a successful placement during the pandemic. As Sam is eager to pursue a career in general practice, by being able to host this placement we can support this transition. Sam has applied for a position and has an interview at a local practice. I believe that she will be an asset to general practice in Lincolnshire and without this placement she may be less prepared.

I believe we have showcased collaborative working with the university to maintain enriched and successful placements even during a pandemic to enhance the learners' future career.

What are the keys to success of this placement?

Sam's flexibility, depending on the demands of the surgery, has been key. The staff has also been flexible, allowing Sam to successfully complete all learning outcomes. We've also looked at innovative ways to be able to complete competencies and episodes of care safely.

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