

Policy for the involvement of Students' in formal observation and engagement duties in inpatient Mental Health Care settings.

As part of inpatient clinical placement mental health students may be asked to undertake formal observation and engagement duties, which involves checking on the whereabouts and wellbeing of patients who are deemed to be at a higher level of risk and/or vulnerability in the clinical area. Engagement and observation with service users provides an opportunity for students to assess and respond to individual needs to support recovery and maintain safety.

Students may participate in these duties once they have been inducted into the process and organisational policy as long as this is in line with their placement learning objectives and, that they and their mentor, are satisfied that they are competent to carry out these duties.

Students' supernumerary status must always be taken into account when they are delegated formal observation and engagement.

- Students may carry out general and intermittent observations in line with organisational policy when they and their mentor (and the nurse in charge of the shift) deem them to be competent and this is in line with their plan of learning;
- For higher levels of observation and engagement (continuous and within eyesight) students may carry these out where this is in line with a plan of learning, where they and the mentor are satisfied that the student is adequately prepared and is competent i.e. is conversant with the policy, the individual's care plan, legal status and the nature of the risk/reasons for the required level of engagement;
- Students must not carry out observations for longer than a maximum of two hours per shift and receive adequate breaks;
- Students must not be involved in physically carrying out restraint (including where they have received this training via a different role) they may however participate in supporting activities relating to restraint, for example preparing medication for administration and supporting other patients in the unit.