

# Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector

**Assignment Title:** Action Research

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**Work based placements are a key focal point of  
Employability Training today - How valuable are they  
to our students; how much do they affect their  
chances of finding work?**

**An Action Research Project by  
Hannah Newman**

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## Appendix: Copy of Survey Questions

**Edited Version (April 2015)**

## Introduction

For the past two years I have been delivering a pre-employment training programme.

*"The courses aim to give young people aged 16 to 25 who are work ready, but do not have vocational skills, a mixture of practical training and experience that will enable them to get a job. It also provides them with the opportunity to meet potential employers"*

The programme is designed to be a short (5 week) intensive vocational course aimed, to develop young people's sector specific awareness and give them an opportunity to experience and learn about the workplace.

One of the fundamental parts of the programme is the opportunity for students to take part in a 'real life' work based placement within a hospital or healthcare setting. Ideally this takes place immediately following two weeks of classroom sessions and allows students the opportunity to explore their chosen area of work in preparation for when they apply to vacancies. The course is intentionally short, so it is vital that students complete all aspects of the programme in the time allotted.

When recruiting for the programme one of the aspects that is highlighted to prospective learners is the opportunity to take part in a work placement as this is believed to be one of the key attractions of the programme.

Recently I have noted that placements have become harder to set up and deliver within the given timeframe due to internal department and organisational process changes and I am concerned that the delays and difficulties we are encountering may be affecting our student's prospects of finding work.

I believe that placements play a valuable role in the success of young people finding work in today's difficult job market and delays in providing them have a detrimental effect on the learners progress as well as a knock on effect on my teaching schedule.

However before implementing my ideas of how to address this concern I want to explore

- How valuable they are to the learners
- What impact do they have in helping a learner to secure work after the programme i.e. is there a correlation between an individual completing a placement and getting a job
- Does the timing of placements effect their usefulness and impact

I have decided to use the Action Research model for my investigation.

*Carr and Kemmis (1986) describe action research as being about:*

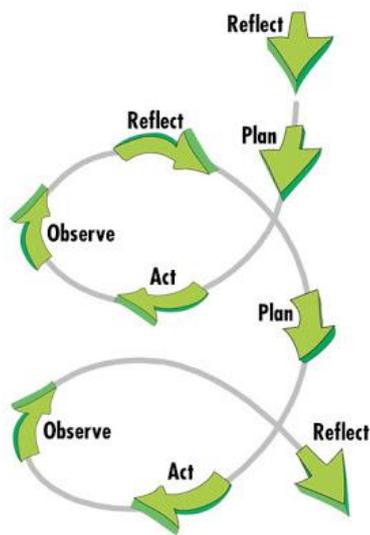
- *the improvement of practice;*
- *the improvement of the understanding of practice;*
- *the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place.*

*They state*

*"It can be argued that three conditions are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for action research to be said to exist: firstly, a project takes as its subject-matter a social practice, regarding it as a form of strategic action susceptible of improvement; secondly, the project proceeds through a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, with each of these activities being systematically and self-critically implemented and interrelated; thirdly, the project involves those responsible for the practice in each of the moments of the activity, widening participation in the project gradually to include others affected by the practice, and maintaining collaborative control of the process." (Carr and Kemis.1986)*

In summary I see Action Research as a model of investigation through which I can review and observe what is happening in my classroom, teaching practices and the wider professional practices around me. It allows me to observe activities, processes and reactions. Through it, I can plan a course of action, collate data, analyse what I am doing, observe the impact of my actions the people around me and implement changes if I identify concerns. I can then reflect on the results to see if the changes improve the situation and if necessary start the process again.

It is a continuous cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting that enables us to identify areas for improvement and then facilitate change.



During my research I aim to

**Reflect** - identifying why so much emphasis has been put on work based placements ; how we currently facilitate placements as part of the programme; what processes are in place that we need to adhere to and the current effectiveness of placement facilitation.

**Plan** – establish where we are now in line with programme expectations by reviewing and collecting data (quantitative) about students from 2 cohort's approximately 20 students in total, identifying who have completed a placement and who has secured work since completing the programme. I also plan to question and gather data (qualitative) via a structured interview (telephone or in person) from a selection of students in this pool to identify how valuable they found their placements to be and what if any concerns they encountered.

**Act** – by using the information I collect, collating the responses so that I can see if there are any improvements to be made to the processes we conduct, if there are any issues to be addressed and if so, formulate an action plan to make improvements and meet the needs of the PROGRAMME contract, the learners and those involved in course delivery.

**Observe** – (where possible in the timeframe) how the implementation of any changes I make impact on the outcomes and draw my conclusions for future action.

As action research focuses on practice rather than theory I felt that this approach to researching my topic can be related much more directly to what I do. The issue I want to explore is quite unique and not something that can be addressed via one or another theorists approach. Action research is adaptable to an individual's circumstance and

therefore gives the practitioner (me) a clear framework in which to help me reach solutions and put into practice changes that enable better experiences for the learners.

It is not a pre-determined problem solving method, but rather a process through which one can research and collect data then make decisions based on the findings.



## Methodology

When deciding on how to conduct my Action Research I have to consider a number of factors.

### **What information do I plan to use for my research?**

Initially I considered collecting information (statistics on course completion, placement participation and job outcomes) using all the students I have encountered over the last 12 months. However, on reflection, I have decided that, whilst this may give me a broader and possibly less biased result, it is too ambitious, considering the timeframe I have set.

I have therefore decided to review only the last 2 cohorts for my general statistics on

- Course completion
- Placement participation
- Job outcomes

I will collate and record the result in a spreadsheet and produce some graphs to illustrate the outcomes in a visual format.

I also plan to interview/survey a selection of these students and record their answers via the survey itself (getting them to write down their answers by answering the questions) I will then further explore their comments via discussion.

### **Will I use Qualitative or Quantitative data?**

There are pro's and con's for using either.

*"Quantitative research is based on numerical analysis and statistics. Quantitative research can be used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and other defined variables...Quantitative research is also used to uncover patterns or correlations...Qualitative research focuses on things you can qualify in words or pictures, instead of numbers"*

*"The pros for quantitative methods are that it is much quicker and cost-effective to execute. Quantitative analysis allows researchers to test specific hypotheses, and its*

*statistical nature allows for generalization. The cons for quantitative research are that you don't get specific details that you might be able to achieve with qualitative (ex. "It tastes like metal.")*

*The pros for qualitative research are that it is great for exploratory purposes. There's a depth and richness of information not possible with quantitative data alone. The downside to qualitative research is that moderators may be more prone to accusations of bias and personal subjectivity" (Research Optimus,2013)*

I believe for the purpose of my research quantitative data will be the best form to use for analysing who has completed the programme and gone onto secure employment. I plan to collect this data from our client database. From this I hope to identify any correlation between the two factors.

I will use qualitative data to review and research the impact of work placements. Using a structured interview / survey format I plan to ask the students a selection of questions relating to their experiences of the work placement and record my findings using a narrative approach. Through this I aim to identify themes and trends of how students feel about the opportunity of having a placement and how they feel it benefitted them.

### ***What ethical/professional considerations must I take into account?***

I am fully aware of the data protection Act and the additional requirements within the NHS regarding patient/client confidentiality. Therefore when conducting my research I will be mindful of ensuring anonymity is maintained. When I conduct my surveys and interviews I will have to consider how I ask my questions and do my best not to influence any answers via the tone I use or how I phrase the question. I will reassure each student that their opinions and comments will be treated confidentially and that whatever they say will be received in a positive and constructive way with the intent of enabling improvements to be made wherever needed.

### ***How long do I want to spend doing this research?***

Whilst it might prove interesting to study students views and perceptions over a long period of time, the practicalities of doing this could outweigh the possible benefits and logistically be too complicated. I therefore I have limited myself to 4-6 weeks. The aim

being to consider and put together the themes I want to explore, read the literature available on the topic of placements in the workplace and organise how I am going to collect the information I need to explore and evaluate my hypothesis.

I then plan to create the questions for my structured interview/survey and collate the statistical data I need for my Quantitative research. I have planned to set aside a day to call / or meet with the students I want to question or get to complete the survey.

Once all this is complete I hope to have all the information I need to make my conclusions and plan proposals.

## Literature Review

Before embarking on my own research I wanted to get an understanding of what the feeling was towards work based placements from the point of view of the employers/training facilitators or government bodies. I wanted to review what elements of a work based placement they regarded to be of significance and how they perceived work placements helped young people to get employment.

Working on the hypothesis that it was likely that students would recognise the benefits of placements and see them as a valuable activity I wanted to review what organisations and establishments had to say and gain a better understanding of why so much emphasis was being put into the provision of work placements; and also identify information against which I could compare the views of my students once my research was complete.

I read a number of articles which included the following.

*According to Big Choice.com 'With many employers increasingly looking for experience as well as academic achievement in candidates for their positions, work placements have an increasing importance in gaining a good job. Undertaking a work placement can offer plenty of real benefits for progressing into your chosen career... Regardless of how much you think you have learned about your chosen career from your studies you will learn so much information and acquire so many skills from a work placement.'* (The BIGchoice.com 2015)

The department of Work and Pensions published a leaflet promoting work based placements stating *'For some young people a lack of understanding of the working world is a significant barrier to finding and sustaining employment. Jobcentre Plus wants to work with you to offer young jobseekers the opportunity to overcome this barrier through work experience placements. For those who lack experience, the chance to undertake real work and adjust to the routines and habits of working life can significantly improve their employment prospects'* (DWP,2012)

*The Chartered Institute comment that "Work experience is an important way for young people to gain insight into the working world. Time spent with an employer can broaden young people's knowledge of industries and sectors, helps inform and shape their career decisions, and offers a way in which to explore the workplace in a risk-free environment....Offering work experience opportunities to young people enables*

*employers to access a wider range of talents, benefit from the unique skills and insights young people bring, and provide opportunities for existing staff to supervise and mentor a young person, helping to develop their management and other professional and personal skills.” (CIPD: 2015)*

*According to the Prince's Trust ‘ work experience opportunities are needed more than ever, as they prepare the young person for the workplace, help them to gain employability skills and are a potential route to a permanent job... A work experience placement provides an opportunity for young people to experience working life and become better prepared for the job market. It enables them to:*

- learn and use a range of transferable skills, personal qualities and competencies which will contribute towards employability*
- Work alongside adults as part of a team*
- become more confident in their abilities*
- relate their experience and skills to the workplace*
- make more informed choices about their futures.*

*(Prince's Trust 2012)*

Having reviewed a selection of articles regarding work placements I discovered that a lot of similar ideas and themes of why they are promoted and believed to be so beneficial fall into line with my own beliefs. They also support a lot of the reasoning behind why my organisation facilitates and supports work based placements as part of their training initiatives. i.e. development of transferable skills; assisting learners to adjust to working routines; confidence building; informed career planning.

When students first come to us they often have a 'feeling' that the NHS may be able to offer a them an interesting and rewarding career however when asked why, they find it difficult to explain. Their perceptions and ideas of what is on offer, how they will fit in and where they can apply themselves is, in my belief, something a work placement can clarify for them.

My Action Research will hopefully go some way to substantiate this belief and clarify what it is students find of value and if indeed their expectations and perceptions of placements are as positive as we hope.

## **Data Collection**

Initially I collected quantitative data to find out how many students completed a programme then went on to participate in placements and secure work. This was initially from a sample of two cohorts (approximately 30 students). However, the data was more easily accessible than I had anticipated, therefore this was extended to a total of 9 cohorts (121 students).

I used data from our client database, my own teaching records for each cohort and accessed information provided to me by our delivery partner. I then collated the information into one spreadsheet and used the numerical data to create my comparison charts.

All student names and identifiable information was removed when creating the charts.

Using the spreadsheet I created charts to show:

- **How many students completed the programme,**
- **How many students completed a work based placement**
- **How many students secured a job outcome**
- **The maximum / minimum and average number of weeks students waited for their placement**
- **A comparison of work placements vs job outcome**

As well as collecting and reviewing quantitative data from client records, I also collected quantitative and qualitative data via a survey. I invited 20 students to participate in the survey, via a 1-2-1 session with me, however, only 12 out of the 20 attended.

The quantitative data from the survey was charted to show the trend of answers that the students gave; whilst the qualitative data I collected via the survey and during discussion, was used to add more depth and understanding to why they answered in their chosen ways.

The qualitative data collected from the survey was used to research and evaluate

- **How valuable placements are to students**
- **Whether or not timing is an issue for them**
- **What they feel they gain from completing a placement**
- **Why placements should be included as part of the programme**

The logic behind my decision to use qualitative data was because I felt that some information would not be identified via the quantitative data. How students 'feel' about a particular issue tends to be more subjective and less scientific – not quantifiable with numbers. I hoped that it would provide another dimension to my research results and help in planning my next steps.

A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 1.

When considering the survey questions I focused mainly on placements and having conducted the survey, certain questions proved more valuable than others<sup>1</sup>

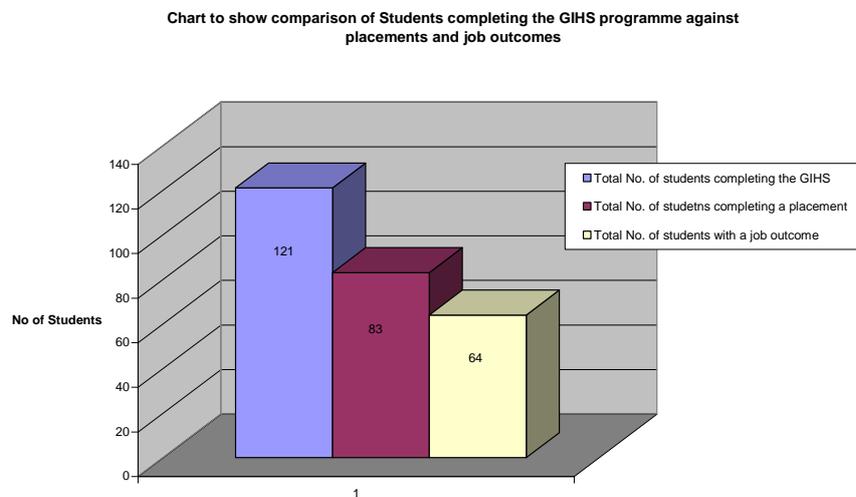
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<sup>1</sup> When constructing the survey I had initially planned to ask a broader range of students – however I finally selected a pool of students who had completed the programme in full – consequently QU 3 was no longer valid to ask.

## The Results

Here are the results of my **quantitative data** provided via the various database files on record.

Chart 1



We can see from Chart 1, that 121 students, across 9 cohorts, took part in the programme. 64 students out of the 121, went on to get a job<sup>2</sup> and 83 completed a work placement as part of the programme schedule.

Chart 2

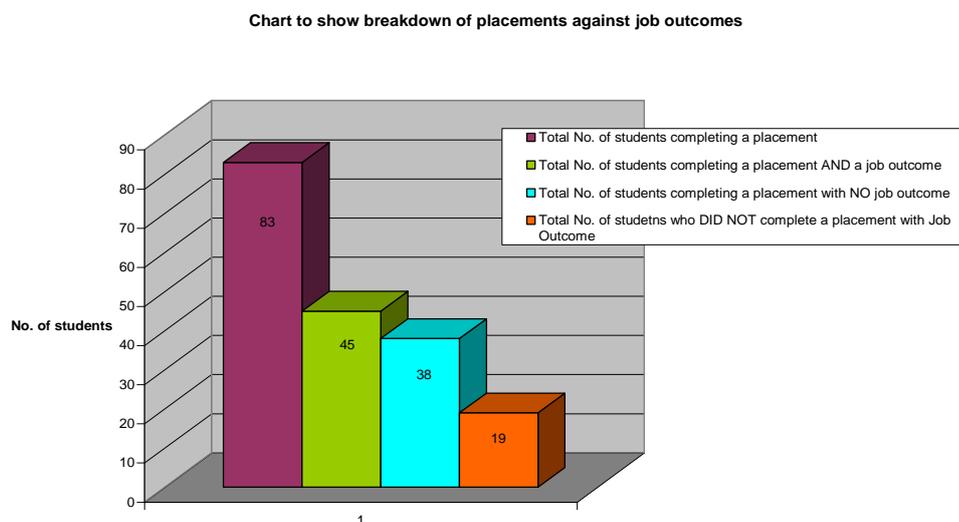


Chart 2 shows the breakdown of placements against job outcomes. We can see from this data that 83 students completed a placement as part of the programme. 45 out of the 83 completed the placement and went on to get a job outcome. 38 completed a placement but failed to get a job outcome<sup>3</sup> and 19 students achieved a job outcome but had not completed a placement whilst on the programme.

<sup>2</sup> Timescales have not been taken into account and job outcomes could have been achieved immediately following the programme or at any time to date. This applies to all data related to job outcomes unless stated otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> Data correct as of 24/03/2015

Chart 3

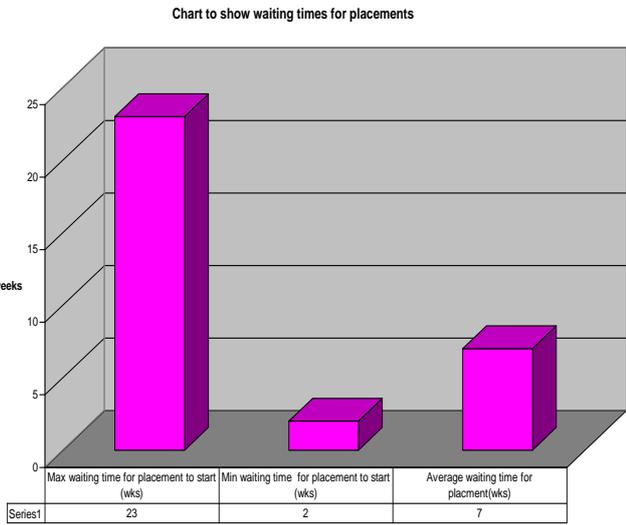


Chart 3 highlights the maximum, minimum and average waiting time the 121 students experienced, from the start of programme to the start of placement. From this we can see that there is a large disparity between potential start dates. For placement.

Chart 4

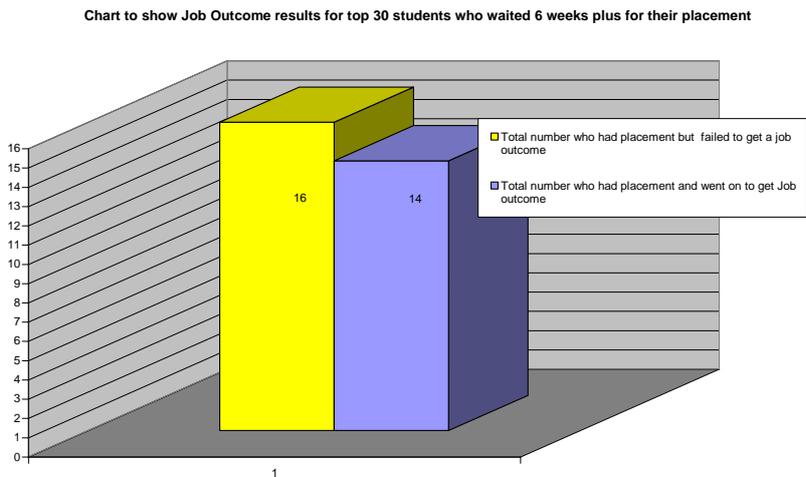
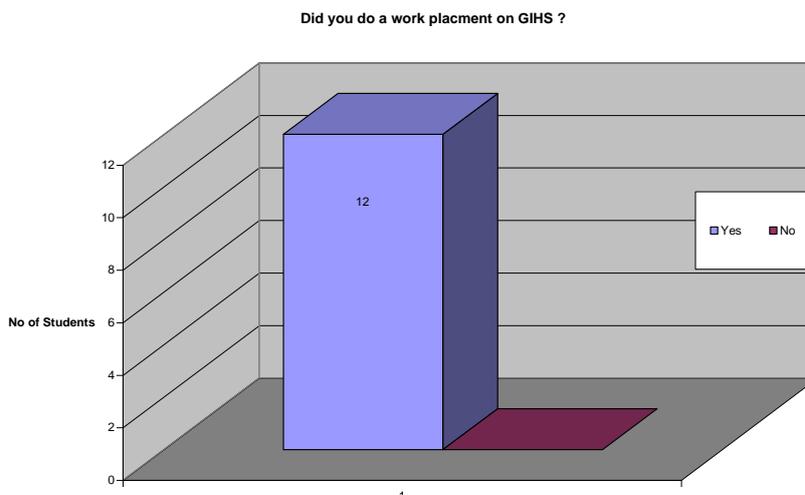


Chart 4 shows the data found when reviewing 30 students who waited 6 weeks or longer to start their placement. It shows how many students from this pool went on to get a job outcome and how many failed to get a job.

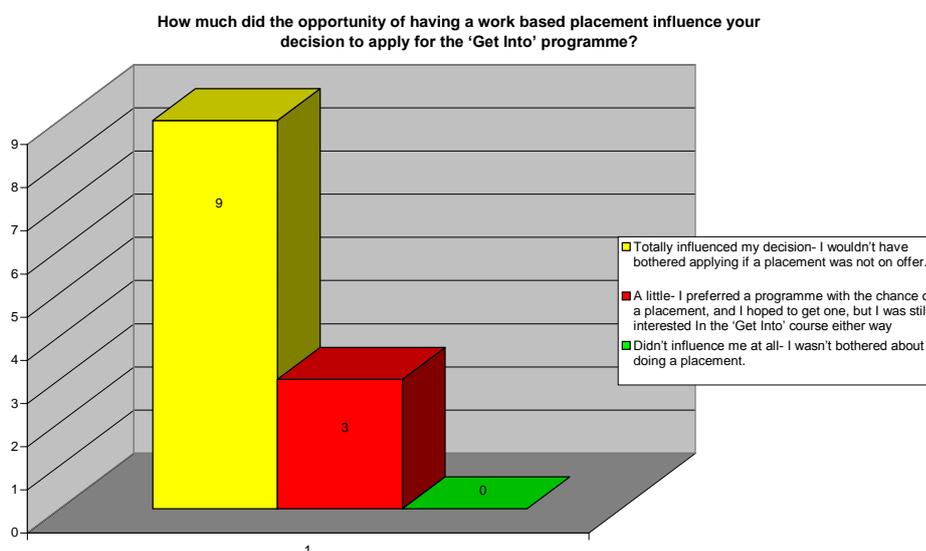
The next set of charts have been produced using **quantitative data** provided by the survey of 12 students.<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1 for a full copy of the survey that was conducted.

QU 2



Out of the 10 questions on the survey only question 3 was not asked. This was due to the fact that all students completing the survey, as shown in QU2 chart, had completed a placement, rendering the question null and void.

QU 1

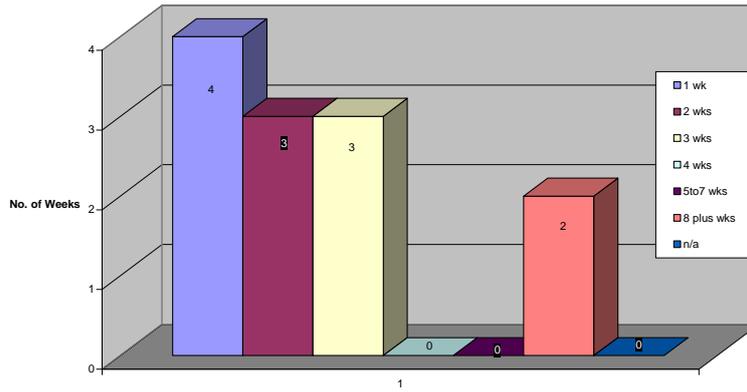


Qu 1 results show that 9 out of the 12 students asked; confirmed that they were influenced to apply for the programme because there was a placement offered. The remaining 3 students agreed they were a little influenced, but would have still been interested even if there was not a placement.

<sup>4</sup> Various students from the last three cohorts were used to conduct this survey  
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QU 4

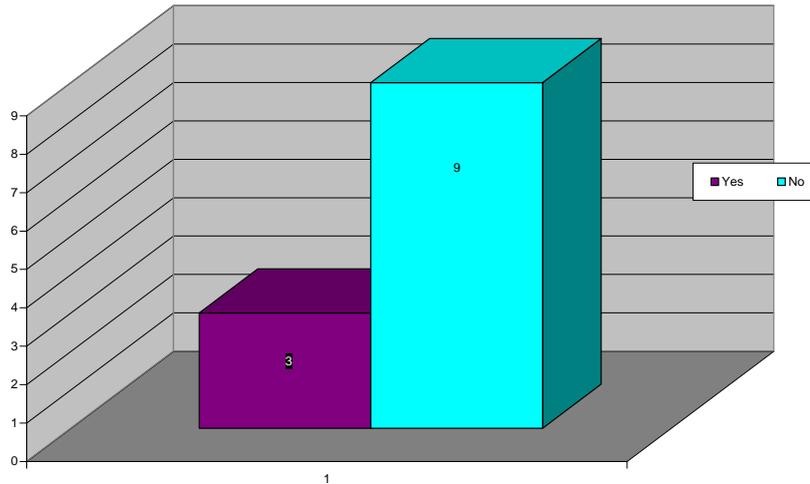
If you completed a work based placement OR were offered one (even if you didn't do it), how many weeks, after you finished the classroom sessions, did you have to wait before your placement started /would have started?



Qu4 chart shows how many weeks, students had to wait before they were able to go on their placement. From this selection we can see that 4 students from those surveyed were only waiting 1 week; 3 waited 2 weeks; 3 waited 3 weeks and 2 waited 8 weeks or more. When checked the two students waiting 8+ weeks had a difference of opinion as to whether the gap between class time and placement mattered.

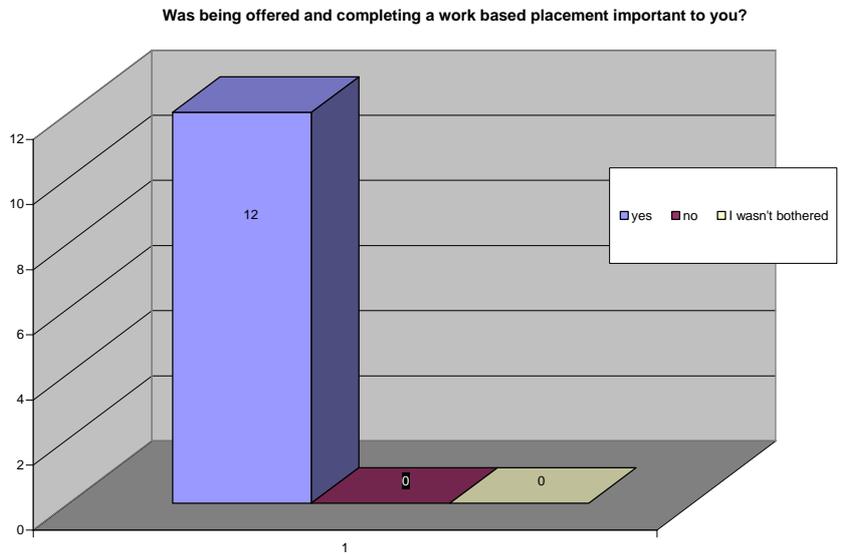
QU 5

Do you think it matters if there is a gap between the classroom sessions and the work placement?



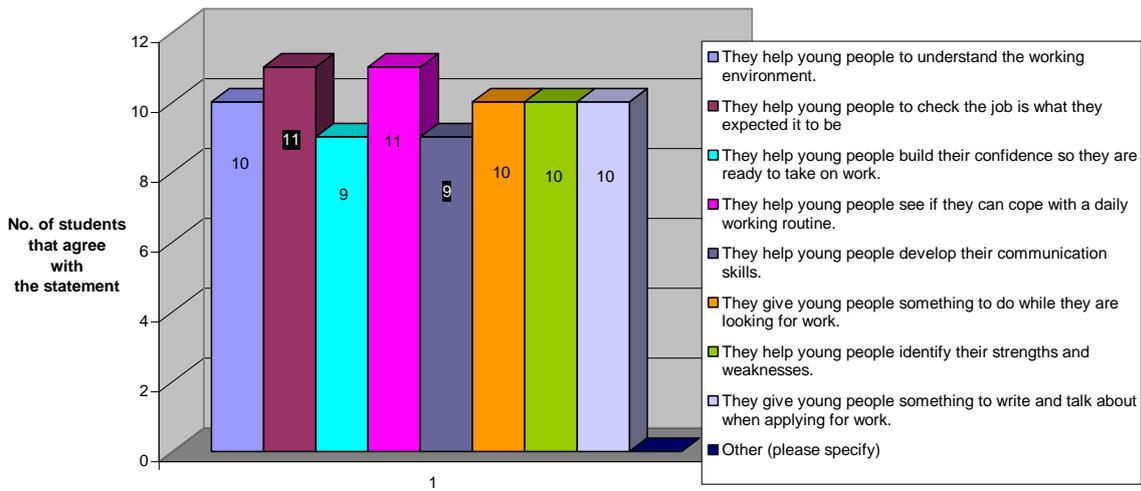
Qu5 chart shows that 9 out of the 12 students felt that a gap between finishing the classroom sessions and doing their placement did not matter. Only 3 said it did.

QU 7



QU7 chart shows that overwhelmingly all 12 students surveyed, consider the placement important.

**Thinking about work based placements; which of the following statements do you agree with? (Tick as many as you agree with). If you can think of any more statements, add them in the 'other' box below.**



Qu 8 chart shows the responses from the 12 surveyed students and demonstrates a high proportion agree with the statements relating to the benefits they perceive to gain from completing a placement.

Here are the results of the **qualitative data**, collected from the survey and discussions with the students at the time of the survey being completed.

Once the student had answered the survey, I reviewed their answers with them and probed a little further, with the following results. The answers below are representative of the majority of the students who I discussed the answers with.

### **Qu1 asked**

“How much did the opportunity of having a work based placement influence your decision to apply for the programme?”. Students had a choice of three answers which were

- Totally influenced my decision- I wouldn't have bothered applying if a placement was not on offer.
- A little- I preferred a programme with the chance of a placement, and I hoped to get one, but I was still interested in the 'Get Into' course either way
- Didn't influence me at all- I wasn't bothered about doing a placement.

I asked students why they had chosen their preferred answer:

- “Because it offered the placement, I thought I'll be able to get references”
- “I've done other similar courses before and they didn't have placements so I thought this would be better”
- “I've been applying for work but have no experience, this was going to give me work experience”
- “I thought doing a work placement would be interesting and I could get into the hospital to see what the nurses do and see if I liked it”
- “I wasn't too bothered either way about the placement when I enrolled, it sounded good though”

### **Qu5 asked**

“Do you think it matters if there is a gap between the classroom sessions and the work placement?” Students had a choice of two answers which were Yes or No.

I asked students why they had chosen their preferred answer:

- “Yes, because if you have to wait too long you will lose interest”

- “Yes, because you may not get the opportunity if it takes too long to get it organised”
- “Yes, because you may go off topic and may not want to do it anymore and be bored of waiting”
- “No, I just wanted a placement and felt lucky to have one”
- “No, as long as it is guaranteed, it doesn't matter because you are taught about the skills required to apply and being a good employee”
- “No, because at the end of the day if you get a chance, why not, it's not like you didn't do it all”
- “No, it gives you time to prepare”
- “No, because you know can't do it until your cleared”

### **Qu7 asked**

“Was being offered and completing a work placement important to you?”

All students answered yes and with questioning expanded further, saying :

- “The placement gave me the opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills and will help me in real life situations”
- “Being a young person, it can seem like education is just a means to an end. Having completed a work placement I've gained experience and set up a foundation to see what I need to do in order to do the job and apply for work”
- “Because it teaches young people what the job is really about and I now have some experience when applying for work”
- “A placement is valuable because it is an insight of the working world and a hands-on experience. From doing this placement students I have learned more about the place I want to work in”
- “Doing a placement was really important to me, being a single mum I wanted to see if I could cope with working and being a parent”
- “It was important because I wanted to get some work experience so that I could mention it in my applications and I wanted to see if I could get up in the mornings”

### **Qu 9 asked**

“ In your own words, please say why work placements should be included as part of the get into programme?”

The answers given were

- "To gain experience and it looks good on a CV"
- "Without the placement I wouldn't be able to apply what I have learned. The placement makes it more real"
- "It makes it more appealing"
- "It's hands on experience and helps you to understand about the job you want to go into"
- "Helps realise goals and is motivation to work hard towards the goals"
- "It gives you an insight into what the real job would be"
- "It allows you to use your transferable skills as when doing a job, you have proof of the skills you have"
- "It shows you what a real job is like and you get the experience so that you this job is for you"
- "It's very important to further improve your skills, getting to put all those skills into practice"
- "It's a great experience"

#### **Qu10 asked**

"What three things would you say are the most important for young people when doing a work placement?"

The answers given were then expanded via discussion

- Respect – both ways you to staff, staff to you
- Be approachable - smile and be friendly
- Listen – follow instructions and write them down if necessary
- Commitment - there's not point if you don't want to do it
- Enthusiasm – be interested and show people that you want to help
- Motivation – think about what you want to achieve
- Opportunities to improve confidence – staff must give you a chance to have a go and build your confidence to do it alone
- Punctuality – this is important to make a good impression
- The chance to work outside the box – getting a chance to see what happens in a real life working department and what you may have to do that isn't the normal tasks
- Flexibility – be willing to go the extra mile, not take lunch etc

- The chance to put theory into practice - to have a go at doing the things we've learned about in the classroom
- Developing skills – having a go at doing things and using equipment
- An open mind – learning to cope with all sorts of people and situations, not judging
- Attendance – making the most of the opportunity and not missing any days because you're too tired or something
- Smile – fitting in and making people like you
- Good work ethic – following the rules
- Ask questions – not being afraid to ask if you are not sure

## Results analysis

From the quantitative data I have collected I can see that a satisfactory number of students participated in the programme over the last 9 cohorts.

The aim at the start of each recruitment campaign is to recruit and retain 15 students per cohort. From the evidence presented in Chart 1, I can see that we achieved 121 out of a potential 135 places which I consider to be an acceptable result considering the student profile that we are working with which can be a little unpredictable.

Although I have not collated the data for this, I know that 15 students per cohort were offered places on the programme and for a variety of reasons a handful failed to attend from the start and the rest dropped off the programme within the first few days.

On checking student records comments such as

“problems with Childcare arrangements”

“decided the programme was not for me”

“got a job”

are given as reasons for non attendance or withdrawal.

### **Is there a correlation between an individual completing a placement and getting a job?**

The quantitative data demonstrates that in some cases students completing a placement have gone on to secure employment. However the evidence is not conclusive.

Chart 2 demonstrates that 54% of our students undertaking a work based placement went on to secure employment following the programme. This is slightly higher than our target of 40% which is pleasing and reassuring. However, we also see from Chart 2 that 46% of those completing the programme failed to get employment despite having completed a work based placement. This highlights that there are likely to be more factors to consider here and that placement in itself, does not equal 'will get a job'.

Chart 2 also highlights that there are 19 students, 15% of the students that completed the programme, that did not complete a work based placement, yet went on to secure a job outcome following the programme. Therefore no correlation can be assumed.

### **Does the timing of placements affect their usefulness and impact?**

Chart 3, which uses the quantitative data I have collected, depicts the span of timescales that students can wait before being able to go on placement. We can see from the results that students can wait as little as 2 weeks and up to (so far) as much as 23 weeks. However as we can see in Chart 4; using a sample of 30 students from the pool of 83 that completed a placement, even though they had waited 6 weeks or more to start their placement, the difference between the job outcome result was negligible. Therefore despite 'feeling' that time would make a difference, there is no evidence to suggest it does.

Furthermore the qualitative data I collected, via the survey, on this subject indicates that students are not concerned about the waiting time as long as they are confident it will happen.

### **How valuable are placements to the students?**

The qualitative data as shown in the chart for Question 7 of the survey shows overwhelmingly that students value being offered and completing a placement. 100% of those surveyed answered 'yes' to the question 'Was being offered and completing a work based placement, important to you?'

75% agreed that the opportunity of having a placement on this programme influenced their decision to join it.

75% or more of those surveyed also agreed with the majority of the statements regarding the perceived benefits of doing a placement, inferring that this is why they see placements as valuable asset to the programme.

## Conclusions

The reason for carrying out this research was to establish, how we are doing in relation to the partner agreement regarding facilitation of the programme and the placements; to find out how valuable placements are to the students and what impact, if any, placements have on helping them to secure work.

I have been able to conclude via the **quantitative data** that we are satisfying the recruitment levels for the programme contract and that retention on the programme is being sustained to a satisfactory level. However, waiting times for placements are still going beyond the initial agreement timescales.

Through my research I have also concluded that, without reservation, students believe placements are a valuable asset to the programme participants. The vast majority of students join the programme because of the opportunity to do a placement and they agree that doing a placement offers multiple benefits relating to confidence building, identifying skills, learning about the job and the working environment etc.

As for 'how much do they affect their chances of finding work?' My research, from a quantitative data point of view, has been inconclusive. It would appear that whilst completing a placement has resulted in a significant number of students securing work; there is insufficient evidence to conclude that it is the placement alone that has caused this result.

What I have discovered during my research is that it is virtually impossible to state that students will secure work purely because they have completed a placement.

Students come to us with a plethora of differences; different learning capabilities, motivation levels, needs, desires, support networks and goals. There are infinite variables to be taken into account when trying to establish what we can do to make the most of the training opportunities we can provide.

However the **qualitative data** that I have gathered has provided me with evidence that the placements go a long way to developing a young person's perspective of the working world, builds their confidence and motivates them towards getting work. Therefore I can conclude that completing a placement will not result in a negative effect on their chances of finding work.

## Action

Since completing my research I have already taken steps to address some of my concerns regarding placement waiting times.

Citing the evidence I have gathered I put forward a proposal to change the current way we work when setting up a cohort.

My organisation, being part of a large NHS Trust is obliged to carry out Disclosure and Barring Services checks on all students going on placement within the hospital. These checks can take weeks to be processed, hence delaying a student from going out on placement.

Through my research I established that in most cases this does not have a detrimental affect on the student themselves, which is good, however it does have an effect on my own working practices. With cohorts being run every few months, any delays mean that I have to continue tracking existing students alongside new students. This is very time consuming and non productive. There was enough evidence within my research to suggest that doing a work placement is a valuable activity for the students so the sooner they can do this the better.

Consequently with the agreement of my management and the delivery partner I have now modified our recruitment and selection process bringing forward the initial taster day during which students are selected and their details processed. This ensures that we have longer to complete the checks before the programme itself gets underway. I hope that this will result in students being placement ready by the end of the two week classroom sessions.

I also have proposed that during the time between selection and the start of the programme students are invited in for an interim session, so that they do not disengage before the programme starts. This has been agreed.

## Reflection / next steps

What have I learned from doing Action Research and what would I do differently next time?

I feel that my strength in carrying out this research has been my attention to detail when collecting and collating the quantitative data.

Additionally I feel that my approach to doing action research, i.e. having an open mind and willingness to accept and go with my findings in order to make improvements to my own practices, has enabled me to get the best out of my research results.

I feel I could have made improvements regarding the timescales I set myself to do the research. Action research is time consuming and you need to be focused on it. Giving yourself enough time to consider what information you need or want to review, how to gather it, what methods to use for data collection and review etc all need careful consideration. I feel that whilst I have managed to produce a satisfactory action research report there is room for development and next time I carry out some research I plan to be more prepared.

I feel the area I am mostly weak in is qualitative data collection. Putting together the survey I felt I had planned to ask the right people and was asking the right questions. On reflection I feel this could have been done better. I therefore plan to do more research on how to do surveys, collect qualitative data and evaluate it so that in the future I can use it more effectively.

Carrying out Action Research was a new experience for me and I enjoyed reviewing the quantitative data - in some cases with surprising results. i.e the fact that the majority of students did not think the gap between class sessions and placement mattered as long as they knew it would go ahead- wasn't what I was expecting to find.

As a result of carrying out this Action Research project I plan to continue reviewing this type of data more regularly so that from time to time I can check my 'gut feeling' against factual data and decide if any modification and improvements need to be put into place.

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## APPENDIX 1

### WORK PLACEMENTS – A short Survey      Surname:

*Please circle or write you answers as instructed.*

#### 1. How much did the opportunity of having a work based placement influence your decision to apply for the 'Get Into' programme?

- Totally influenced my decision - I wouldn't have bothered applying if a placement was not on offer
- A little - I preferred a programme with the chance of a placement, and I hoped to get one, but I was still interested in the 'Get Into' course either way
- Didn't influence me at all - I wasn't bothered about doing a placement

#### 2. Did you do a work based placement during the Get Into programme?

- Yes
- No

#### 3. If you answered NO to Qu2, what was the reason why it didn't take place ?

- I changed my mind and didn't want one
- It took too long to organise it and I lost interest in doing it
- It took too long to organise it and I found a job before it happened
- There wasn't one in an area I was interested in
- I was not cleared to proceed
- I don't know why
- Not applicable - I completed a placement
- Other (please specify)

**4. If you completed a work based placement OR were offered one (even if you didn't do it), how many weeks, after you finished the classroom sessions, did you have to wait before your placement started / would have started ?**

- 1 week
- 2 weeks
- 3 weeks
- 4 weeks
- 5-7 weeks
- 8+ weeks
- Not applicable to me

**5. Do you think it matters if there is a gap between the classroom sessions and the work placement?**

- Yes
- No

**6. please say why...**

**7. Was being offered and completing a work based placement important to you?**

- Yes
- No
- I wasn't bothered either way

**8. Thinking about work based placements; which of the following statements do you agree with? (tick as many as you agree with) If you can think of any more, add them in the 'other' box below .**

- They help young people to understand the working environment
- They help young people to check the job is what they expected it to be
- They help young people build their confidence so they are ready to take on work
- They help young people see if they can cope with a daily working routine
- They help young people develop their communication skills
- They give young people something to do while they are looking for work
- They help young people identify their strengths and weaknesses
- They give young people something to write and talk about when applying for work
- Other (please specify)

**9. In your own words please say why work placements should be included as part of the Get Into Programme**

**10. What three things would you say are the most important for young people when doing a work placement?**

**1.**

**2.**

**3.**