



Work experience for applying to medical school A UCL Horizons advice sheet

Things to bear in mind when looking for medical school work experience

Work experience in hospitals (and some hospices) can be VERY difficult to get. Some hospitals run formal work experience programmes – these are competitive and have an application process like any job would.

Some hospitals do not host work experience for young people at all. Some hospitals run long-term volunteering programmes (different to shorter term work experience placements) –these might not be open to people under 16, or to people under 18.

All hospitals and medical organisations need to protect the confidentiality and dignity of their patients. This means that the activities that work experience students can do are limited – for example, you shouldn't expect that you will be observing operations or private patient consultations. You might be doing simple admin work, making tea and chatting to patients on wards, or just observing in the background. This is still a beneficial learning experience.

You might need to do a CRB (criminal records bureau) clearance form if you are given a placement volunteering with children, elderly or vulnerable people. The staff from the scheme will advise you what to do. You will need to get your parent and / teacher to sign your application for work experience.

REMEMBER: medical schools know how difficult it is to get relevant experience in a hospital, so you **are not** disadvantaged if you can't get a hospital placement. However, **it is essential** that you get other types of work experience in caring environments to show you have developed relevant skills: communication, punctuality, team work, empathy, ability to cope with upsetting situations.

Getting a work experience placement

- **Plan far ahead** – most hospitals and hospices want at least 6 months lead in
- **Check the organisation's website** very carefully to see if they have a work experience or a volunteering programme that you are eligible for before you approach them. Don't waste time applying for things you aren't eligible for – i.e. if they say we are full for volunteers now, or we only give places to people in our borough, then listen to them!
- If they don't have anything listed for work experience or volunteering, or if it isn't clear if they take volunteers under 16 years old, then contact them to find out if they have opportunities.
- **Send an email with a good cover letter and a CV**, follow up with a phone call within a few days if you don't get a response.
- **Don't be surprised if they say no** or don't even respond to your queries: they are very busy and will have lots of requests for work experience. Keep going – apply to as many places as possible and try not to get disheartened
- Contact people directly and take responsibility – **don't get mum or dad to phone up for you**. This makes you appear immature and unconfident.

- **Have a clear well-presented CV and a well written cover letter that is tailored to each specific placement.** Make sure someone checks it (a teacher, parent, Connexions advisor) before you send it out
- **Give correct contact details** – a mobile number and email address – so they can contact you.
- **Have a sensible email address** like firstname.lastname@yahoo – nothing silly like lilmizzbubblez@hotmail.com !
- For competitive work experience programmes you might need to attend an interview. Prepare for this carefully.

Work experience and volunteering programmes in London hospitals

This section is based on internet research conducted in September 2011 – it may not be up to date when you read this.

North West London Hospitals offer volunteering placements and occasional work experience days

<http://www.nwlh.nhs.uk/jobs/work-experience/>

http://www.nwlh.nhs.uk/about_us/index.cfm/section/Volunteering/id/47/type/A/parent/19

Barts and the Royal London Hospital offer work experience placements for Years 10 - 13

<http://www.bartsandthelondon.nhs.uk/work-for-us/work-experience-placements-and-attachments/work-experience-placements-for-school-students-years-10-13/>

Great Ormond Street Childrens Hospital have a volunteers programme for over 18s

<http://www.gosh.org/gen/get-involved/volunteer/volunteer-vacancies/>

North Middlesex Hospital run a 14 years plus work experience programme, but only for people who live in Enfield or Haringey

<http://www.northmid.nhs.uk/workingforus/default.aspx?id=106&sid=22>

West Middlesex Hospital offer work experience, but only for people who live in Houslow Richmond or Ealing

<http://www.west-middlesex-hospital.nhs.uk/working-for-us/work-experience/>

Homerton Hospital offer work experience placements

<http://www.homerton.nhs.uk/working-for-us/work-experience/how-to-apply-for-work-experience/>

Kings College Hospital offer work experience, they give priority to people who live or go to school in Lambeth or Southwark

<http://www.kch.nhs.uk/workinghere/work-experience>

Kings College also takes volunteers who are over 16 years old

<http://www.kch.nhs.uk/about/be-a-part-of-kings/volunteering>

Guys hospital offers work experience – only for people who go to school in Lambeth or Southwark

<http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/working/types/workexperience/work-experience.aspx#eligible>

Other work experience and volunteering opportunities for young people

GP surgeries

GP surgeries can be a great source of work experience. You can approach your family GP and explain that you want to apply for medicine and are looking for work experience opportunities. They may be able to help you or refer you on to a colleague. You can also try dropping in to the reception with a CV and cover letter and asking if they can host any work experience placements.

Hospices and nursing homes for elderly people

Hospices are care homes that look after people with long-term or terminal illnesses. They need volunteers but they might not always take on volunteers under 18 years old. Here are two hospices in London that use volunteers: you could contact them to see if they will take on young people.

<http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/en-gb/nurses-hospices/our-hospices/hampstead/support-us1/>

http://www.stjohnshospice.org.uk/volunteering_main_the_benefits_for_you.php

Nursing homes or residential care homes for the elderly are also great places to approach for work experience.

Charities

You should also look up different medical charities to look for volunteering or work experience for young people. The St Johns Ambulance and the Red Cross both run excellent youth programmes focused on first aid provision.

<http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/young-people/cadets.aspx>

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/Get-involved/Volunteer/Volunteering-for-young-people>

The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is another great programme to have on your CV

<http://www.dofe.org>

Directories of volunteering placements

You can use these websites to search for current volunteering opportunities for young people in your local area.

<http://www.do-it.org.uk/wanttovolunteer/aboutvolunteering/volunteeringforunder16s>

<http://vinspired.com>

<http://timebank.org.uk/>

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