Volunteers in Research Programme

COVID 19 Student Volunteers & Administration Team

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Aim -

• To coordinate and place students from medical schools into NHS research settings across the West Midlands.
• As healthcare staff were deployed to front line care, the programme was designed to deploy student volunteers directly into established research settings, aimed to encourage students to volunteer as an additional workforce to deliver NIHR Portfolio studies.
“Coronavirus death toll for West Midlands soars to more than 100”

The number of coronavirus patients who have died in the West Midlands is now in triple figures

28 MAR 2020 ‘Birmingham Live’ https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/

“A hospital trust has become the first in England to have recorded more than 300 deaths of patients with Covid-19”

University Hospitals Birmingham, which incorporates four hospitals and is the biggest trust in England, has reported 306 deaths since the outbreak began.

8 APRIL 2020 ‘Birmingham Live’ https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/
Aim

• To provide additional workforce to deliver NIHR Portfolio Studies
• To reach as many students across all medical schools throughout the West Midlands region
• To promote opportunities for student volunteers to work with existing research staff in established active research settings
• For students to advance their research knowledge, skills and development
• Project to run initially over a twelve-week period

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Plan & Process

Recruitment → Registration → Preliminary checks → Training → Placement

Students response to Invitation Letter

Preparing for placement

Student details added to database

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Student Volunteer Role

- Volunteers aligned to a ‘Clinical Trials Assistant’ level: role included data collection, sample processing and data entry
- Expected to familiarise themselves with relevant Covid-19 study protocol
- Complete any further study-specific training at site
- Comply with confidentiality agreements
- Volunteers not paid for hours/days at site, however travel expenses were organised through RWT & CRN West Midlands
- Recommendation for Students to volunteer maximum 15 hours per week

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## Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits to Volunteers</th>
<th>Benefits for research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity for students from medical schools to help and make a difference to healthcare</td>
<td>• Freeing up CRN WM research funded staff deployed to front-line services</td>
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<td>• Chance for students to experience clinical research in practice</td>
<td>• Extra support for the development of evidence-based research, working towards an effective response to the threat of COVID-19</td>
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<td>• Professional and personal development</td>
<td>• Urgent public health research studies were set up in record breaking time</td>
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<td>• To support colleagues to deliver essential research during pandemic</td>
<td>• Important research continued for future Covid-19 treatment</td>
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<td>• Opportunity to engage with new skills, knowledge, gaining real world experience</td>
<td>• Raise awareness of CRN profile</td>
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Measures

- Over 200 Students from Medical Schools responded
- Quick feedback from partner organisations – cost effectiveness resource in Research & Development units at NHS Trust sites
- Students completed Good Clinical Practice (GCP) training prior to placement
- Location of students important on allocating to NHS Trusts across West Midlands

Overall Student Response

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Measures

- Timesheets enabled volunteers to be compensated for travel expenses, and the recording of hours worked by site and time period.

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Resources & team

- Dedicated administration team to support volunteers to placement
- Generic inbox: crnwm-covid-19-student-volunteers@nihr.ac.uk
Resources & Outputs

- Resources: expenses to cover volunteers’ travel
- Outputs: publications, social media, blog, report, webinar and presentations
- The model is being rolled out nationally by Local Clinical Research Networks using resources shared by CRN WM
Benefit to Student Volunteers

- Opportunity to help and make a difference
- Chance to experience clinical research practice
- Professional and personal development
- Support colleagues to deliver essential research during pandemic

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Student Learning

“How much is required to set up a clinical trial; protocol, PIS, training staff, facilities…”
1st year undergrad

“How much involvement doctors can have with a study even if they are not on the research team”
4th year undergrad

“How quickly a trial has been set up during the pandemic compared to normal”
1st year postgrad

“Who is involved in a clinical trial”
1st year undergrad

“The number of people it takes to run a big study successfully”
4th year undergrad

“How exciting it can be to see a trial from conception to results”
1st year postgrad

Case study: Our experience as COVID19 Medical Student Volunteers
https://local.nihr.ac.uk/case-studies/our-experience-as-covid19-medical-student-volunteers/24991

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Learning

• Support to date has been inspirational and critical to enable delivery of UPH research
• What we learn from this programme could impact on future research engagement opportunities with Trusts, Universities and Medical Schools
• NIHR has established a national response and requested that all regions set this up
• Further work could provide an insight into the barriers and enablers to volunteering
• Future challenges will include vaccine study delivery and restarting non-COVID research

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Questions

For all enquiries please email crnwm-covid-19-student-volunteers@nihr.ac.uk
Follow us on twitter via NIHR CRN West Midlands@CRN_WMid

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