

All Rise! The University of Derby

Dr Kate Cuthbert, Fran Fuller, Kevin Bampton, Tony Wragg and Wendy Lowe

Winners of the Creating an Interprofessional Workforce programme
John Horder Award for Innovation



Using a staffed “mock” court room at the University of Derby, social work and radiography students had the first-hand experience of providing expert witness testimony. Acting as their solicitor, law students were responsible for collecting statements prior to the court hearing and 'coaching' their client (i.e. the social work and radiography students) through the court room procedures. Cross examination took place, during which students experienced the potential impact of their professional duty. After the event all students engaged in a full debrief discussing the procedures and psychology of the court. Feedback from the students emphasised the need for this type of learning and students felt more prepared for this type of duty when they qualify.

The Interprofessional Activity

Social work and radiography students were allocated a legal representative (a law student). Student received the following outline before the allocated court date:

You will be contacted by a solicitor and required to make a statement for your court appearance.

A newly qualified residential social worker attends hospital with elderly resident after a fall in the care home. An x-ray is taken and in conversation, the radiographer suggests to the social worker there is a broken bone. The doctor however gives the all clear and the elderly woman returns to the care home with no further action. The elderly woman returns to the hospital a week later after complaining of pain. Upon examination an old fracture is detected.

Relatives are suing the care home for negligence but the care home's response is calling the witness to ascertain whether the educational providers are delivering appropriate training.

Your court appearance will take place on.....

Students were expected to meet on the day of the case prior to their appearance. Each student pairing was allocated a 10 minute court appearance. The staffing of the court room was undertaken by academics wearing robes to aid the simulation and adherence to court etiquette.

The following learning outcomes were identified

1. For students to experience the court room process;
2. To enable students to work in an interprofessional context;
3. For students to acknowledge and have some experience of how to prepare a statement for Court.

The social work and radiography students were expected to relate the experience to the training they had received about the care of vulnerable adults.

Approximately two weeks before the court date law students contacted social work and radiography students to draft a statement. The law student, acting as examiner in chief, would then use the statement to refer to in the court process.

Was it interprofessional?

The interprofessional nature of this learning opportunity was maintained throughout. The delivery team was interprofessional, reflecting the interprofessional student groups of **law, radiography and social work**. The delivery team, after experiencing it themselves, thought carefully about how to achieve the necessary *“Learning from, with and about”*.

Learning from - During the activity the students gained hands-on experience and knowledge about their relative roles within a “real-life” practice setting. For example, the cross-examination required students to clarify their roles in relation to each other (within the court room set-up at the University there is an observation gallery where students observed the proceedings). This outcome was also emphasised in the events leading up to the court case. There was an obligation for the solicitors to gain statements from their professional clients. Critically, the learning from was very much student-led, in that it was their interpretations of role and placement experience which led this discussion. The exchange of knowledge between the professions was considerable. The law students were able to offer information about the court proceedings whereas the social work and radiography students helped the law students understand patient care.

Learning with –There was a strong emphasis on all students experiencing this together. The group debrief was a time where the students left their professional roles and discussed shared issues such as their feelings about the psychology of entering a court room for the first time. Interestingly the law students do not have very much experience working with a client.

Learning about - The case continued over three days and at any one time there was a mix of the professional groups. Not only was there emphasis on the students engaging in the formal activity but we also stressed the importance of the professional partnerships developing informally. As such we set up a “waiting room” where clients and their briefs would meet and prepare for their appearance in court. During their time together the students also began to appreciate the level of training each professional had to undertake and the worlds in which each other would be working in when qualified.