

Let's talk about...

Observations: You came, you saw....now what?

Getting the most out of observation experiences

Securing a role as a Hospital Play Specialist (HPS) is exciting, nerve wracking and involves a huge learning curve. One aspect of orientation into this role, and a key component of the HPS Registration process, are professional practice observations. The opportunity to observe a colleague introduce their role, support a child/young person and family through a procedure, or work collaboratively with others in the multidisciplinary team (MDT) can be a great learning experience


Ideas to get more out of observation opportunities

Planning

- Getting the most out of observation activities means taking a little time to plan and consider the learning objectives– individuals are often time pressured and if the follow up is a corridor conversation, only a brief check in, learning that can come from this experience will be limited.
- For planning and executing an observation check the guidance notes within the Registration Handbook Appendix C (Procedural accompaniment) and Appendix D (Record of Professional Practice observation). The HPSRC Assessment Sheets may also be helpful in your planning.
- Before making an observation briefly discuss your learning objectives with those being observed, the child, young person, family and members of the MDT.
- Take into the observation a note of what your learning objectives are, make notes during the observation, not only on what is being observed, but those thoughts on changes/ further information you may seek later, or questions to ask with experienced colleagues.

For the observer as a developing HPS consider the following:

- **Debrief** – think about how the experience was for you....how was it for the child/ young person and the family? The other health professionals? What common knowledge was evident in the team?
- Deal with the immediate emotional responses...and be aware...if it has been a difficult or extended intervention the experienced HPS may need some space to process this themselves before they are ready to discuss it with you.
- **Process** – take some time to think about what you observed, what stood out, what aspects of practice did you admire, what resonated with you? Did anything not sit well? What aligns with your current knowledge and understanding? What was new learning?
- **Discuss** – ideally this would be with the individual HPS that you observed – but you could also use supervisors or mentors. Think about the things you have been processing about the experience, look for the *why* behind the decision making of the HPS, ask them about their decisions and their experience? Can you start to identify some of the competencies and strengths of practice observed in the intervention? What was the most important point of decision making, adapting interventions or assessment for the experienced HPS?
- **Reflect** – as you evolve professionally how has this experience impacted on you; has it challenged your thoughts about your role as a HPS, your practice? Are there aspects of this way of working that you would like to build into your own practice? Things that you learned that you would seek to avoid? Think



about your own practice, and then broaden your consideration to the experience of your colleague, the MDT and importantly the impact of the HPS on the child/young person and family.

- Think about the way that the child/young person, family and professionals were impacted by the physical space, consider possible adaptations to an individual plan of care or perhaps the wider model of care. Often the process or timeline can make things easier or more difficult. For example, did they have an extended wait, have to move from room to room, see too few or too many people.

Constructing a written observation record for a Registration application

The HPSRC assessment process is looking for your ability to observe clinical practice, reflect on the competencies you have or require to provide psychological preparation and enhance a child/young person and family members ability to cope and master an event.

Developing HPS may find it helpful to construct a plan linked to the guidelines for where they will place specific information and learning. While this may take a little time at the beginning of documenting your thoughts, this process can make the written observation concise and more cohesive for those who will be assessing the clinical practice portfolio for Registration.

- **Planning** - plan how you will capture the above learning into the written observation record taking into account the Registration Handbook guidance notes.
- Paint a picture of your clinical thinking, not forgetting the discussions you had with colleagues.
- Consider doing a self- assessment / or discuss with your supervising HPS your draft written observation record using the HPSRC Assessment Records. You will get more from observations if you reassure them you are open to suggestions.

For the more experienced HPS or NZHPSReg being observed consider the following:

- **Debrief** – this is often a chance to quickly assess the level of understanding of the developing HPS and start to organize your thoughts about the experience.
- **Discuss** - Knowing you are being watched makes you conscious of the choices that you are making; having to explain your reasoning, to articulate your role and your process is a fantastic way to explore your own level of understanding and practice. It is often more difficult than people anticipate but a wonderful way to build confidence in your role and broaden clinical reasoning.
- **Reflect** – this is not just good practice for new HPS but a very good way to ensure your continued growth and maturity as a practitioner. There are many tools to support reflective practice if you find this difficult. In your role being observed you can ask reflective questions to support a developing level HPS in thinking about different aspects of their experience. As an experienced hospital play specialist, it is a very good way to broaden your practice and think outside of your own practice to consider the interaction of other team members, the physical structures and processes in place.