

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot: Final Report



Wessex Primary Care Training Hubs

Supporting the Development of Our Future Primary Care Workforce

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Introduction

The publication in January 2019 of the new GP contract [Investment and Evolution: A five year framework for GP contract reform to implement The NHS Long Term Plan](#) and [Fit for the Future: A Vision for General Practice](#) have brought a real focus on the need to develop a truly multi-professional workforce in Primary Care.

Wessex Primary Care Training Hubs are committed to helping the vision for Primary Care outlined in the new GP Contract to become a reality.

Primary Care is particularly suited to supporting the development of multi-professional students due to the wide range of learning opportunities and types of patient contact that take place in these clinical settings, and anecdotal evidence suggests that students who have undertaken placements within primary care are far more likely to consider a career in primary care on qualification.

Wessex Primary Care Training Hubs are delighted to have been able to work in partnership with the University of Portsmouth to deliver a pilot project offering 3rd year paramedic students the opportunity to undertake an elective placement in Primary Care.

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to briefly provide the background to this pilot and share the analysis of the feedback received from both the students and placement providers.

Background

Historically, the University of Portsmouth have allocated some 1st year paramedic students a one day taster placement in primary care as part of their community placement block.

The feedback from both students and providers about this one day placement had been mixed and as a result a number of primary care providers made the choice not to host paramedic students due to a perceived lack of engagement and/or mutual benefit.

Following discussion with the university and placement providers it was decided to temporarily cease offering the taster placement for 1st year paramedic students but investigate the opportunity to run a pilot offering a placement in primary care for paramedic students at the beginning of their 3rd year.

The rationale for this decision was that by the beginning of the 3rd year, the students would have completed in excess of 1000 hours in clinical placement with the vast majority these being spent in an operational capacity with South Central Ambulance Trust (SCAS). In addition to working with SCAS, students would have also spent a total of four weeks with both community and acute trusts working across a range of settings including: obstetrics; pathology; emergency department; intensive care; cardiac and respiratory care; older adults; mental health; theatres; rehabilitation and community nursing.

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

It was felt that this experience would better prepare the students for a primary care placement and be more beneficial for the placement providers. It was also agreed that this pilot would involve a three day placement and only be offered to students who had a genuine interest in primary care and/or were considering a potential career in primary care in the future.

A member of the primary care training hubs team visited the university and presented the opportunity to take part in this pilot to all the paramedic students at the end of their 2nd year, and as a result had seven students express an interest to take part in this pilot.

At the beginning of their 3rd year the same member of the primary care training hubs team returned to the university to meet with the students to provide an induction to primary care, discuss any worries or concerns the student had about their placements and answer any questions.

The students completed their placements during September, October and November 2019.

Feedback from Students

Following their placement, the University of Portsmouth asked the students to complete a feedback form which contained a selection of quantitative and qualitative questions and/or statements. The return rate from the students was 100%

Six statements required the students to answer with either

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

One question required the students to give a yes or no and provide some explanation for their answer.

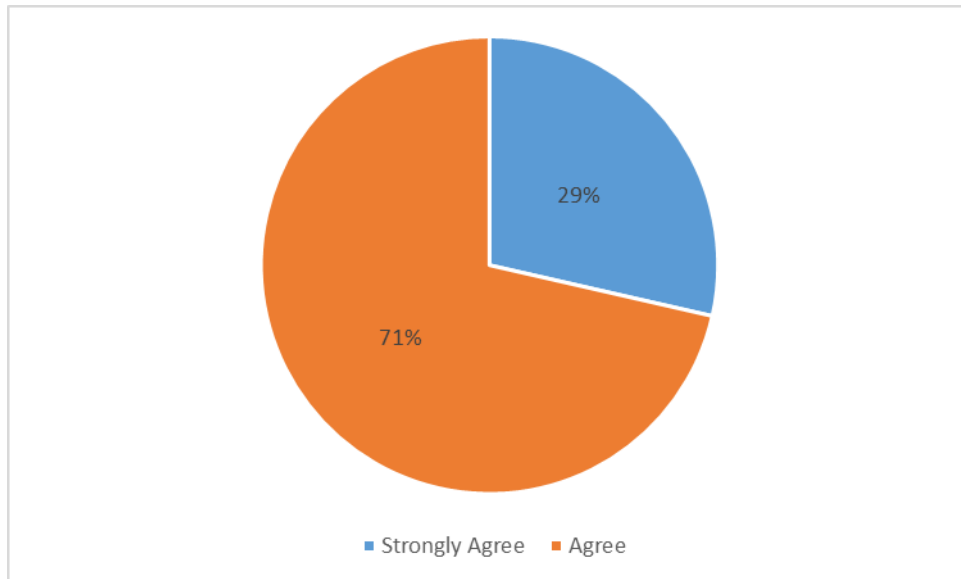
Two questions required the students to reflect on the strengths and most valuable aspects of their placement and where any improvements could be made.

The data and quotes presented on the following pages have been anonymised.

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Statement 1:

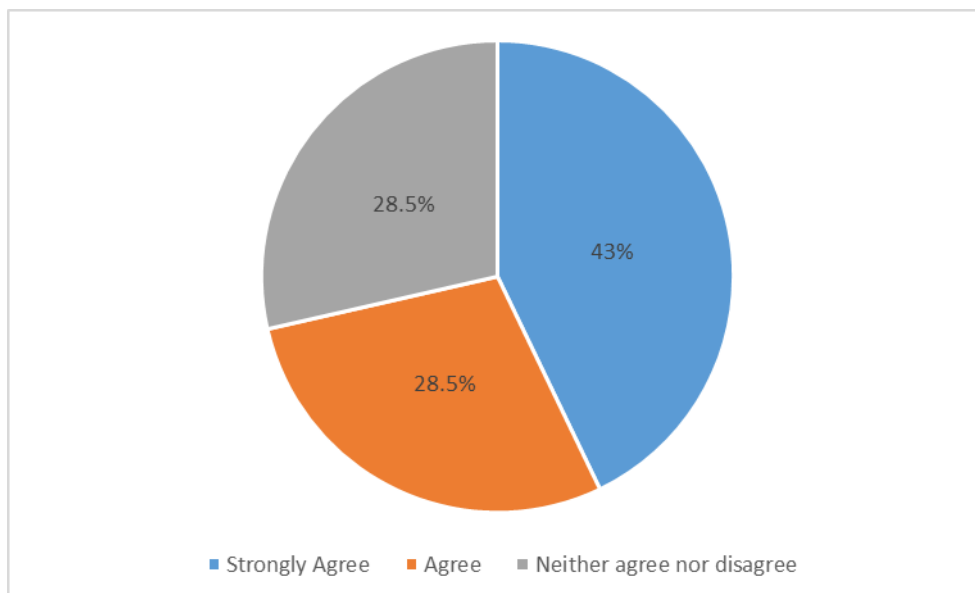
The quality of the university/education providers preparation pre-placement was excellent.



Two students (29%) strongly agreed and five students (71%) agreed that the pre-placement preparation was excellent.

Statement 2:

There was excellent pre-placement information from my placement area.

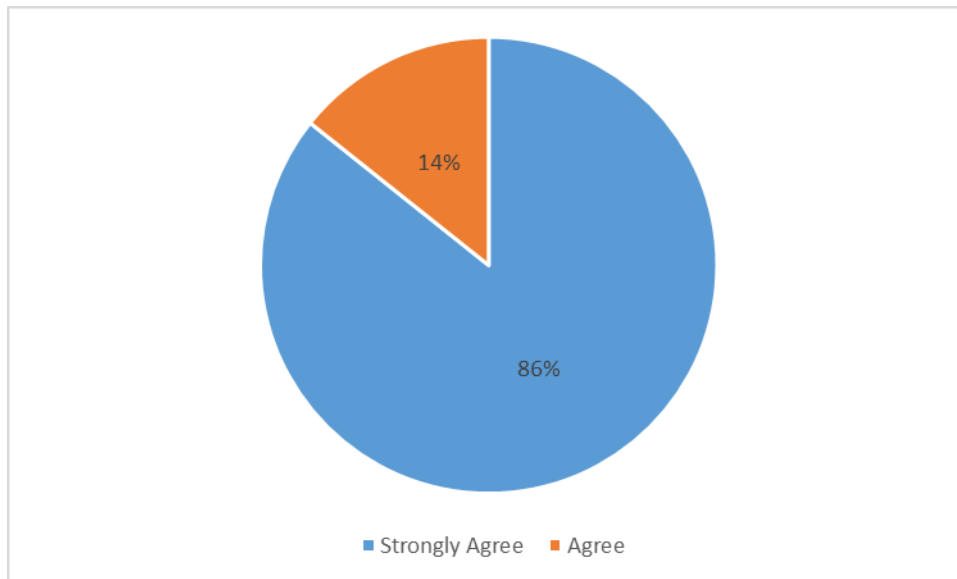


Three students (43%) strongly agreed, two students (28.5%), and two students (28.5%) neither agreed nor disagreed that there was excellent pre-placement information from the placement area.

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Statement 3:

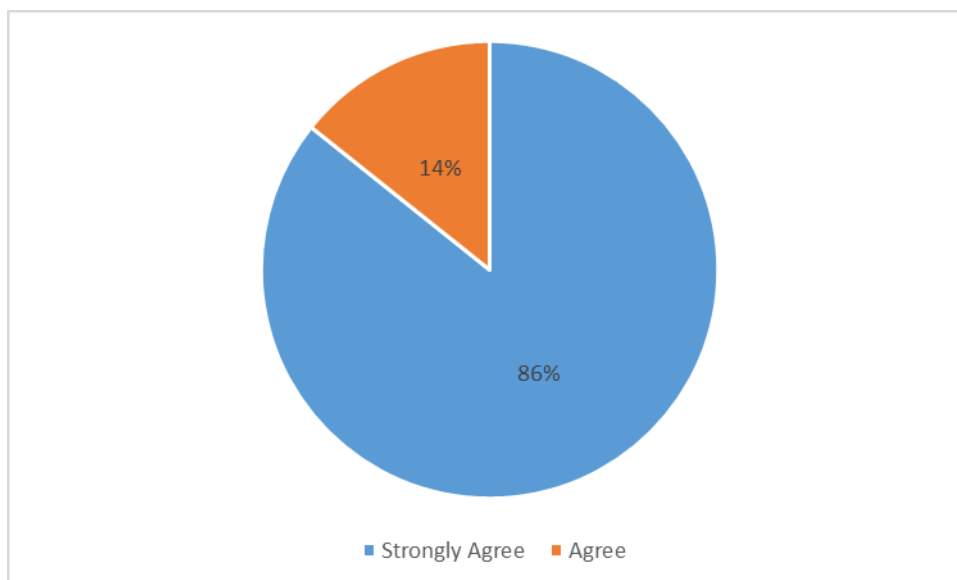
I had a nominated mentor who welcomed and supported me in this short placement.



Six students (86%) strongly agreed and one student (14%) agreed that they had a nominated mentor who welcomed and supported them during their placement.

Statement 4:

Overall, I was provided with a range of learning opportunities which were appropriate to my stage of training and allowed me to meet my learning outcomes.

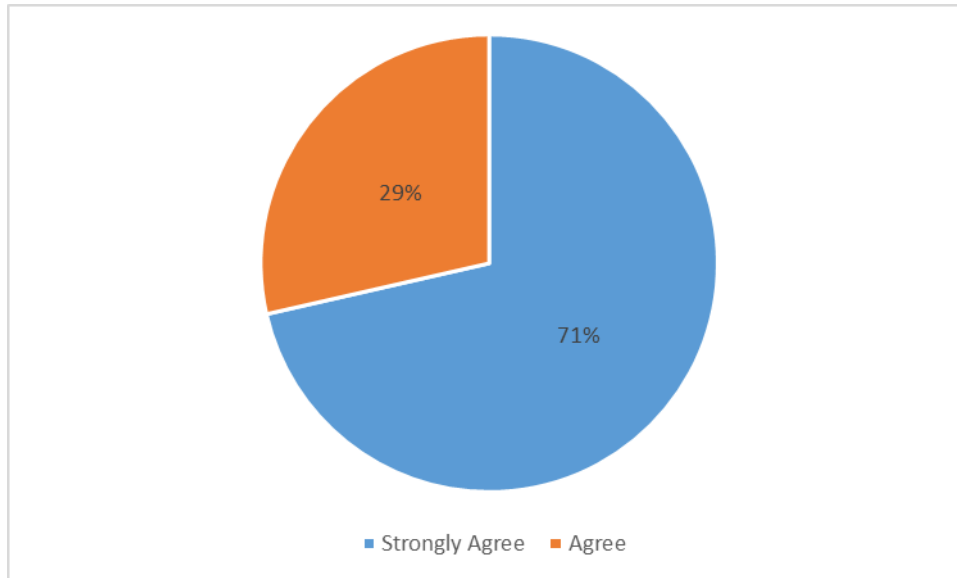


Six students (86%) strongly agreed and one student (14%) agreed that they were provided with a range of learning opportunities which were appropriate to their stage of training and allowed them to meet their learning outcomes.

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Statement 5:

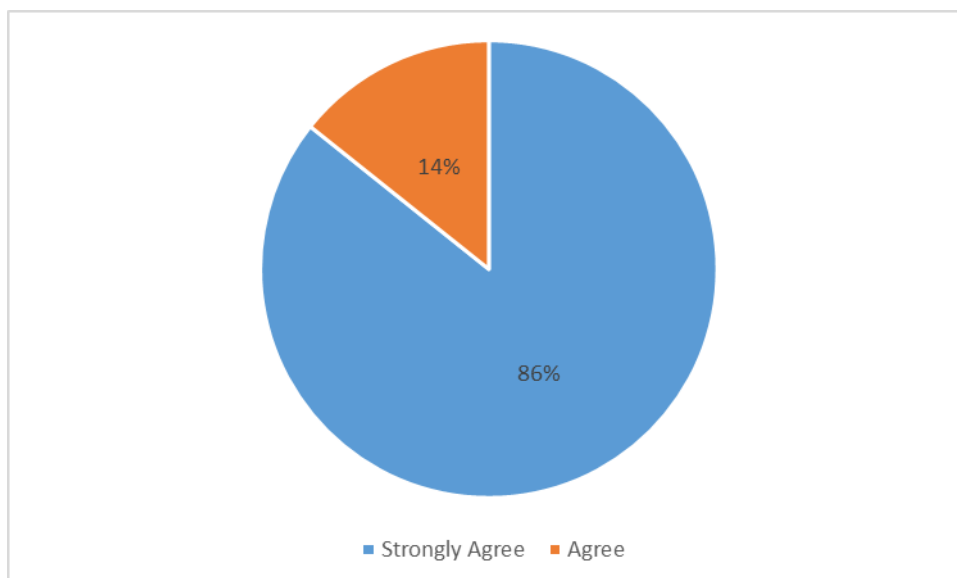
I had appropriate opportunities to observe/experience inter-professional and inter-agency working (to learn about the unique contribution to patients care made by all staff and from a range of professionals).



Five students (71%) strongly agreed and two students agreed that they had appropriate opportunities to observe/experience inter-professional and inter-agency working.

Statement 6:

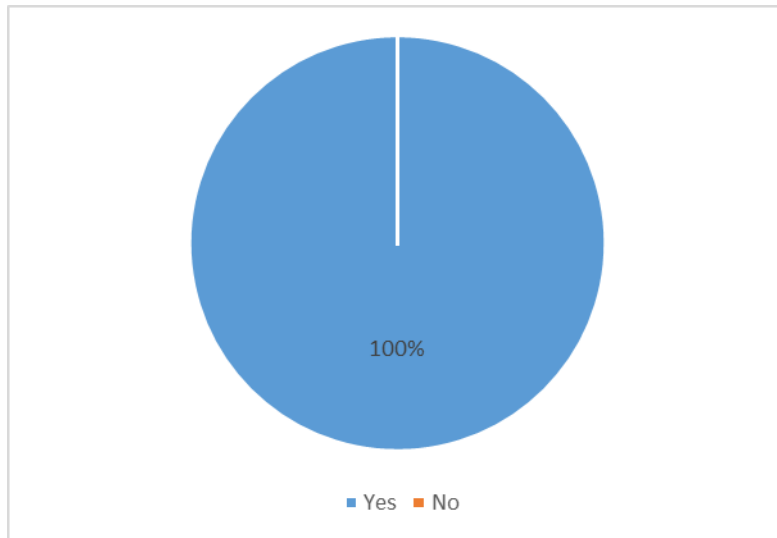
Overall, I am satisfied with my entire placement experience.



Six students (86%) strongly agreed and one student (14%) agreed that overall they were satisfied with their entire placement experience.

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Would you recommend this placement as a valuable learning experience?



All seven students (100%) stated that they would recommend their primary care placement as a valuable learning experience and examples of some of their feedback can be found below:

“Overall, I found this placement to be extremely valuable! Wanting to go into primary care in the future, this was a beneficial placement. All of the healthcare practitioners were welcoming, helpful and all more than happy to answer every question I asked them.”

“I was welcomed by all staff at the health centre and was particularly lucky to have been placed where a paramedic was already undertaking this role within the health centre. It gave me a really good opportunity to see how paramedics are being utilised within primary care and a good introduction into whether this would be something I would be interested in.”

“Having the opportunity to complete placement at a GP surgery was a great eye opener as I lacked knowledge on what GP’s did. Seeing how a GP works was useful for my practice because It will change how I communicate with GP’s when phoning them on placement and also gave me an idea of what a GP can do for the patient.”

What were the strengths/most valuable aspects of this placement?

All students provided very positive feedback in regard to this question. Some examples of their comments can be found below.

“Being able to sit in with a GP whilst he was having his appointments was valuable. It gave me an insight into their type of history taking, and the way they are with patients. Being able to listen to the surgeries calls and looking at the pathway they follow in order to prevent unnecessary appointments. Watching the nurse triage in the afternoon was interesting. Being able to listen to the calls and ask her the pathways she’s following to ensure the patient gets the right treatment was very valuable.”

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

“.....it is of particular value to see body system assessments used in a setting beyond urgent/emergency care. Typically in an ambulance setting we have more time with our patients than they do in a clinic, however the environments in which we see patients do not always lend themselves to a good clinical assessment. The GP setting allows students to see a systems assessment used in a time sensitive manner in a clinical setting, and by clinicians who have done additional training to interpret the results they find.”

“I personally found sitting in a COPD clinic the most useful as the nurse explained COPD very well and showed me the differences between inhalers and medications, something that can be useful when history taking with COPD patients. Every member of staff at the surgery was inviting and excited to have me there which is something I haven't really experienced in non-ambulance placements. I felt really welcomed at the practice.”

“I was able to see a variety of professions that work in the health centre. I was welcomed by all of them and was able to sit in on their clinics and see the diverse range of patients and compare them to what is seen in emergency care.”

In summary, if there was one area that you could suggest to improve the learner experience on this placement what would it be?

Again all seven students provided very positive feedback regarding this question and some of their comments can be find below

“More time, it may have been useful to spend time with the pharmacist and physiotherapist. But I would not want to sacrifice time with the paramedic, nurses or GPs in order to do this.”

“Even though my GP mentor gave me a timetable for where I would be working during the three days, I ended up mostly observing on the shifts. This is fine as it was a pilot placement so there was no real guideline or expectation from me or the surgery on what they wanted from me, but I know some students would feel the placement isn't worth it unless they're able to do some practical skills.”

“From speaking to staff at the surgery and with staff at the university, a large contributing factor to the GP placement being removed previously was that the students did not engage with the placement. This placement would be most beneficial to and would receive more engagement from 3rd year students. The rationale to this is that first year students are not yet fully familiar with an ambulance, with the body systems assessments or with the assorted pathways open to patients. Therefore, the GP setting is a foreign environment to them, possibly of little interest and so their engagement may be poor. If this placement was delayed until a student's third year however, they have already familiarised themselves with an ambulance, have been trained in patient assessment, and have gained more experience of referring a patient to see their GP. I believe these factors would likely enhance their want/ability to engage with such a placement and resonate with the student that it is a placement relevant to their chosen profession.”

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

The students also made some additional comments about their experience on their primary care placement and these have been shared below.

“Very caring practice, all want the best for the patient”

“The knowledge, competency and professionalism displayed by the staff I shadowed was excellent.”

“Clinical staff were providing care to a good level, other staff were friendly and helpful”

“All the staff at the practice showed kindness and compassion in their practice”

“Very friendly and open”

“Very professional and caring health centre that had a lot of clinics/different health care professionals for diverse patients”

“All staff were very knowledgeable and good teachers”

Feedback from Placement Providers

Wessex Primary Care Training Hubs produced a short questionnaire for placement providers regarding their experiences of this pilot. The providers were asked to respond to 11 questions relating to:-

- The communication before the placement
- The duration of the placement
- The placement providers view of the student
- General feedback on the pilot itself

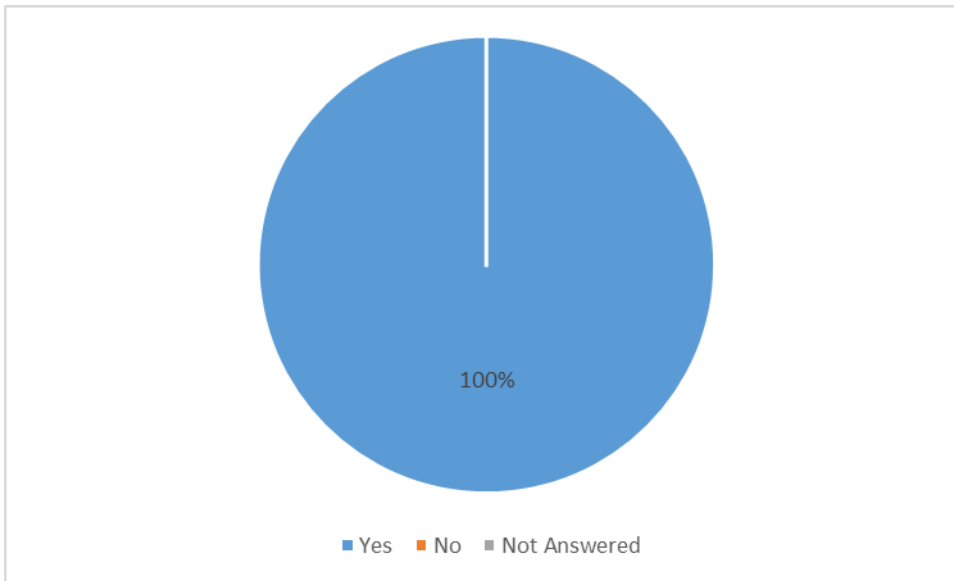
There was a 57% return rate from the placement providers and the data presented on the following pages is based on this 57% return rate.

The data and quotes presented on the following pages has been anonymised.

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Question 1:

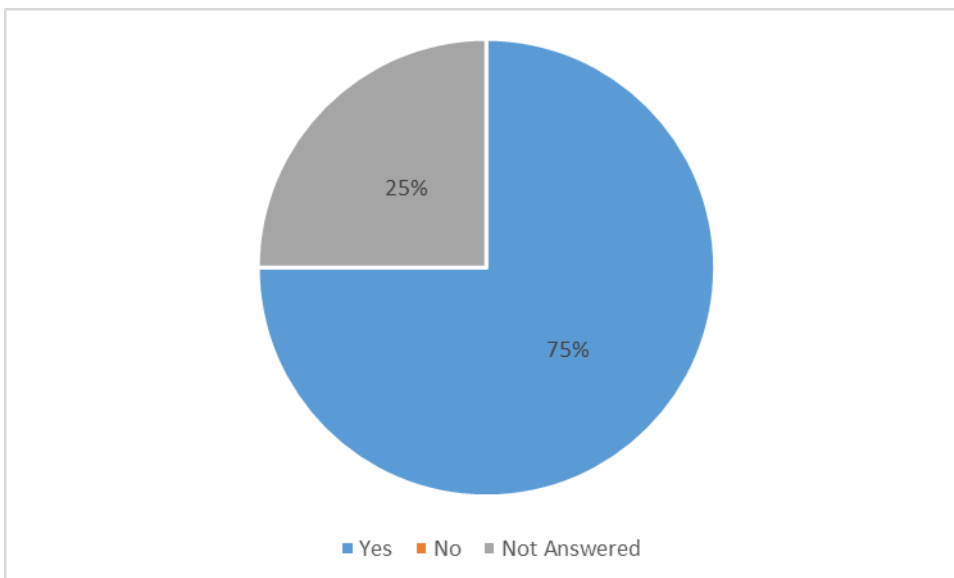
Did you feel there was enough communication before the placement?



The four placement providers who returned the questionnaire (100%) all felt there was enough communication before the placement commenced.

Question 2:

Was the pre-placement pack useful?

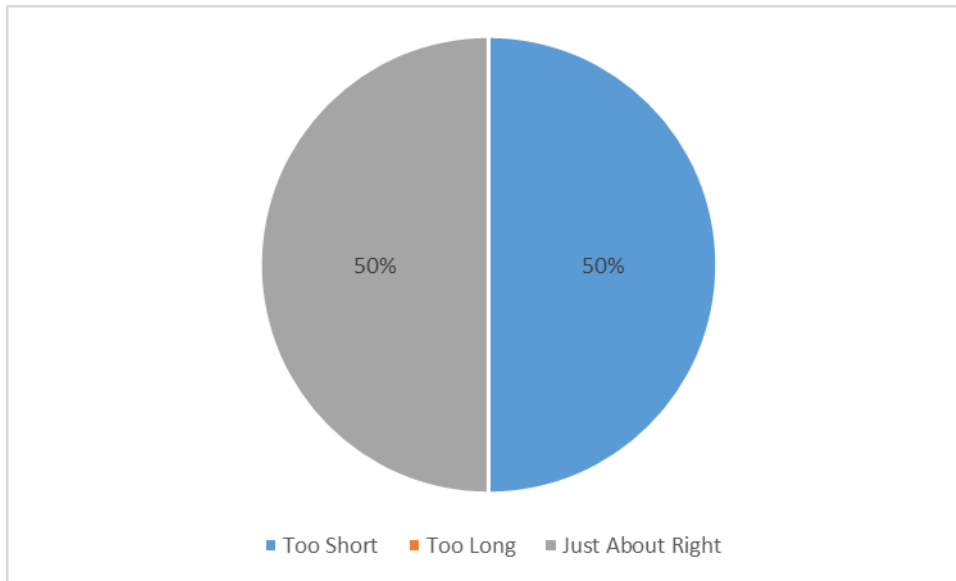


Three placement providers (75%) felt that the pre-placement information pack was useful. One placement provider (25%) did not answer this question.

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Question 3:

Was the placement duration too short, too long or just about right?



Two placement providers (50%) felt that the placement was a little too short and two placement providers (50%) felt the placement was just about right.

The comments received from the placement providers in relation to this question have been anonymised in bold and can be found below;

*“I think **the student** would have liked longer and from a practice point of view we could have probably accommodated another couple of days”*

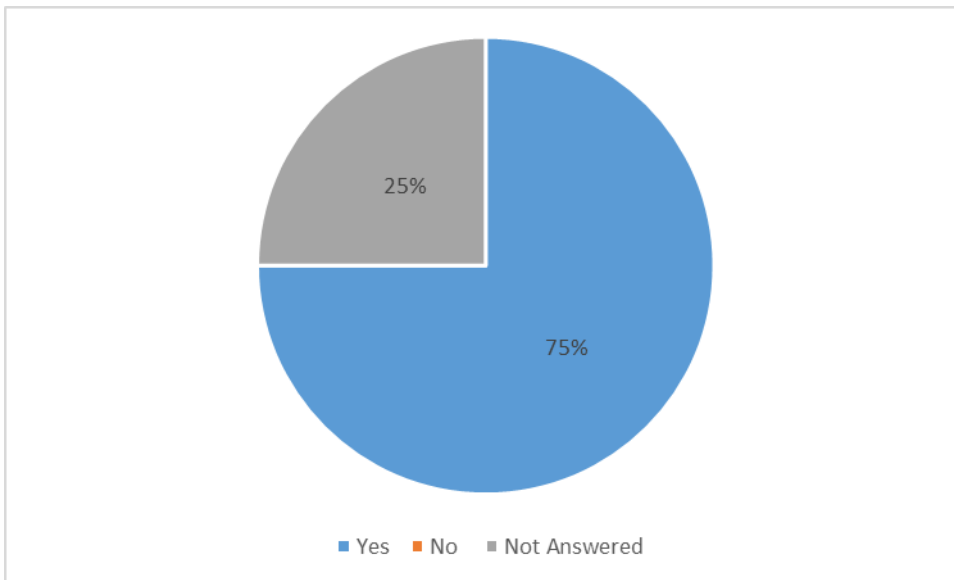
“Slightly short to see the whole of primary care and spend enough time with different members of staff. However, a good range of specialities were observed.”

“Okay for us, but the student view is more important”

Question 4:

Did you feel your student was engaged during their placement?

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report



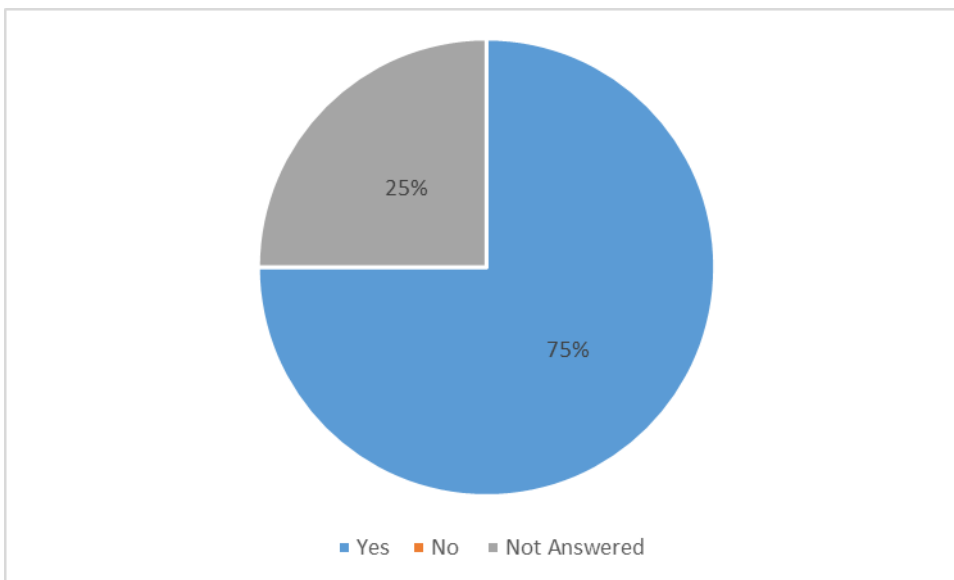
Three placement providers (75%) felt that the student was engaged during their placement and one placement provider did not answer this question.

The comments received relating to this question can be found below:

“Definitely- very eager/attentive; Very engaged”

Question 5:

Did your student behave in a professional manner?



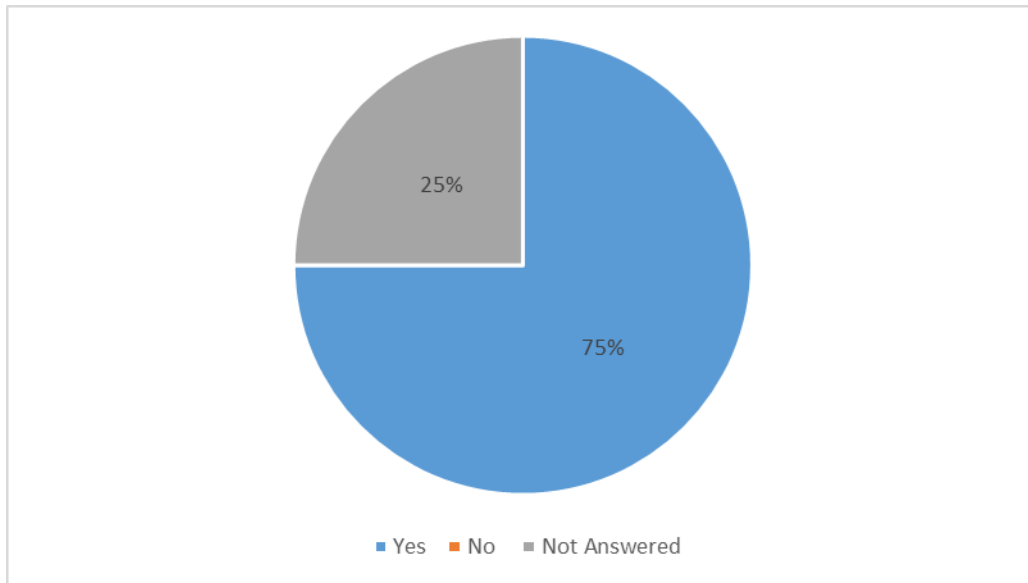
Three placement providers (75%) felt the student behaved in a professional manner and one placement provider (25%) did not answer this question. One placement provider included this additional comment:

*“At all times and smartly presented in **their** uniform which is reassuring when patients are involved”*

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Question 6:

Did you feel your student demonstrated good communication skills?

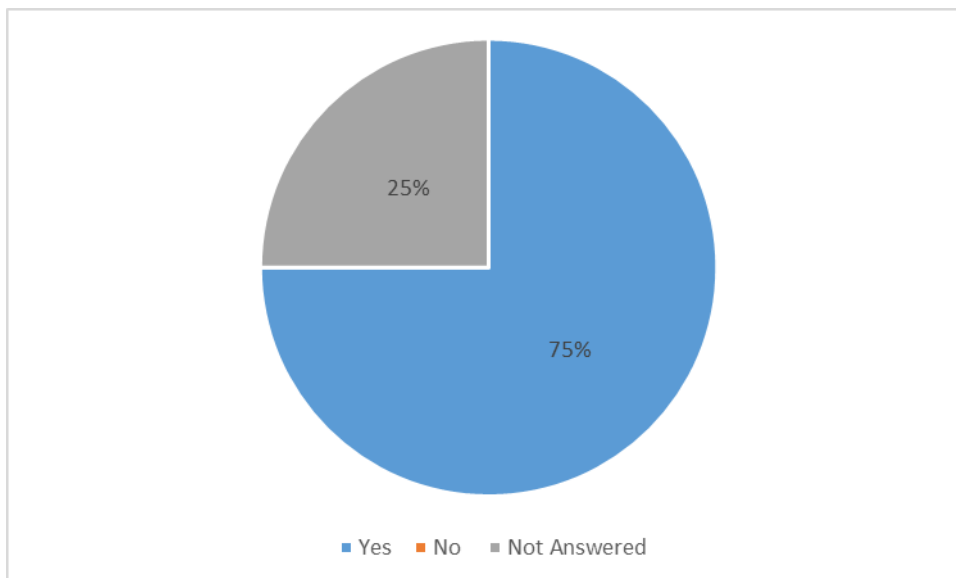


Three placement providers (75%) felt the student demonstrated good communication skills and one placement provider (25%) did not answer this question. One placement provider specifically mentioned that their student was:

“Very engaging on all levels”

Question 7:

Did you feel your student demonstrated a genuine willingness to learn?



Three placement providers (75%) felt their student demonstrated a genuine willingness to learn and one placement provider (25%) did not provide an answer to this question. One placement provider made the following additional comment:

*“**Our student** was very keen and I know **they** felt **they** learnt a massive amount whilst with us and gave **them** real insight”*

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Placement providers were also asked if they had any other comments to make about their students and these can be found below:

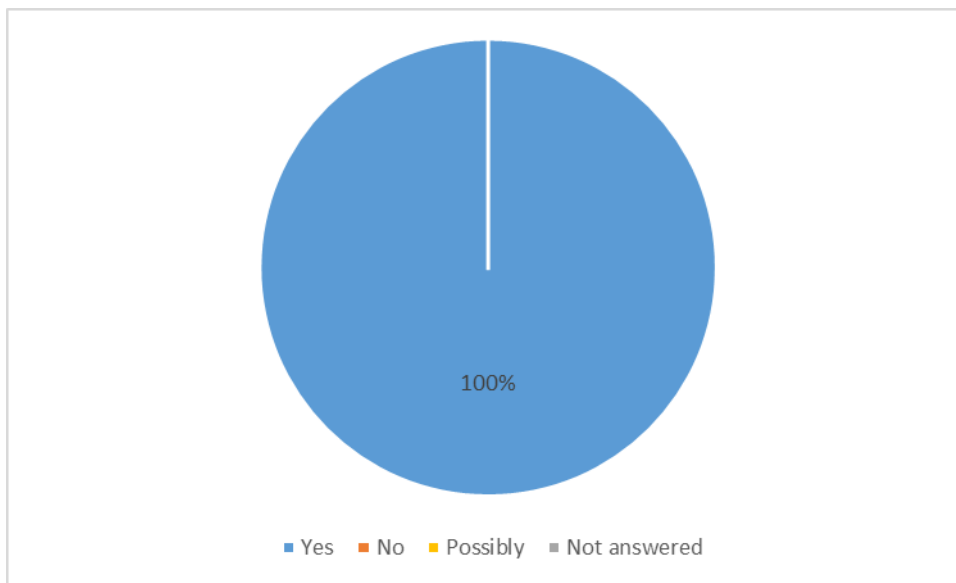
*“Really enjoyed having **our student** in the practice as interesting to understand the role and also valuable to receive feedback on us as a practice from a student perspective”*

*“**Our student** was lovely to have on placement; they fitted into the surgery well and was always eager to learn from those **he/she** was with. Very kind with patients and had clear knowledge and experience, I’m sure **the student** will make a great Paramedic.”*

*“Great student, very proactive, many sensible questions, enjoyed having **them** on placement.”*

Question 8:

Did you find taking part in the pilot was a useful experience?

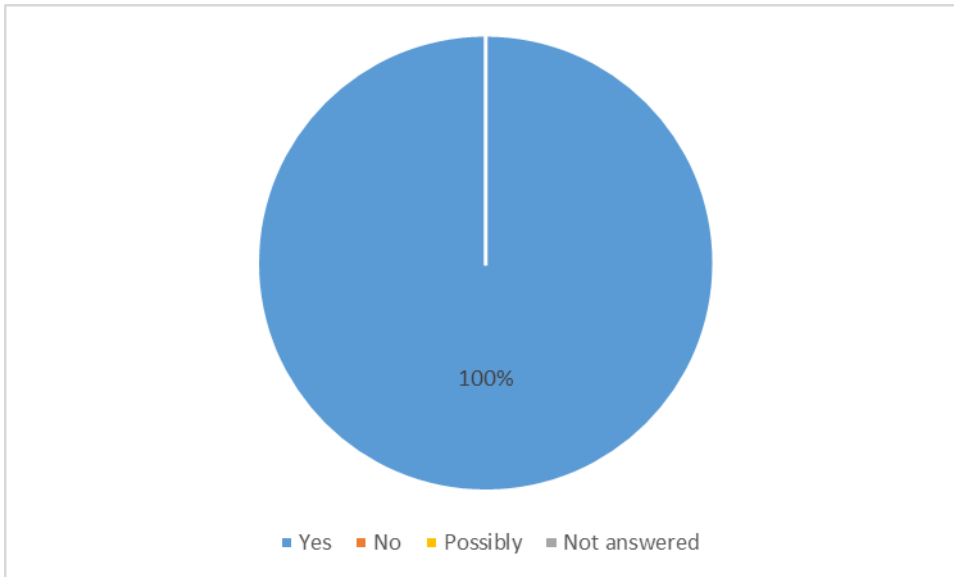


All four placement providers (100%) found taking part in the pilot was a useful experience.

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Question 9:

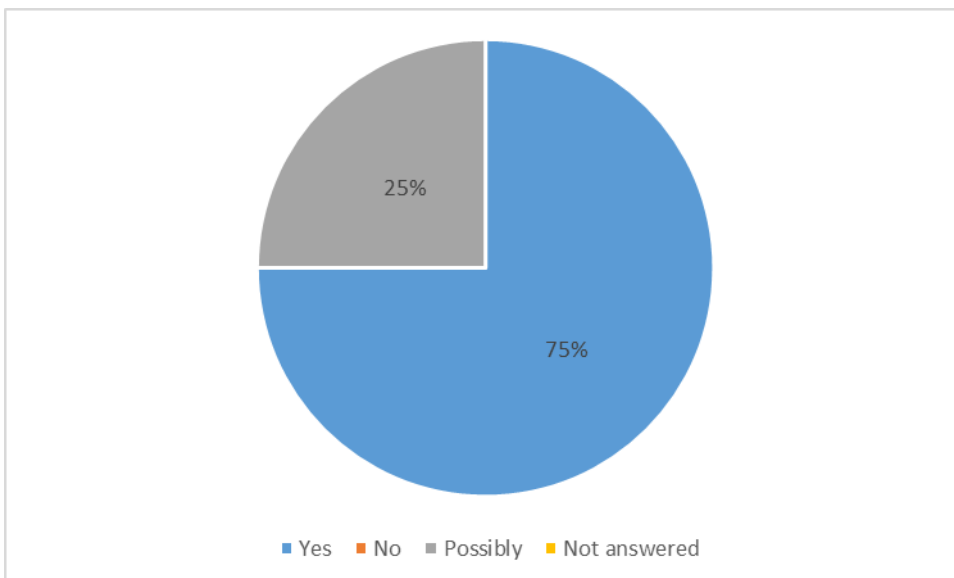
Would you be prepared to host a paramedic student again?



All four placement providers (100%) stated they would be prepared to host a paramedic student again.

Question 10:

Would you consider employing a paramedic in the future?

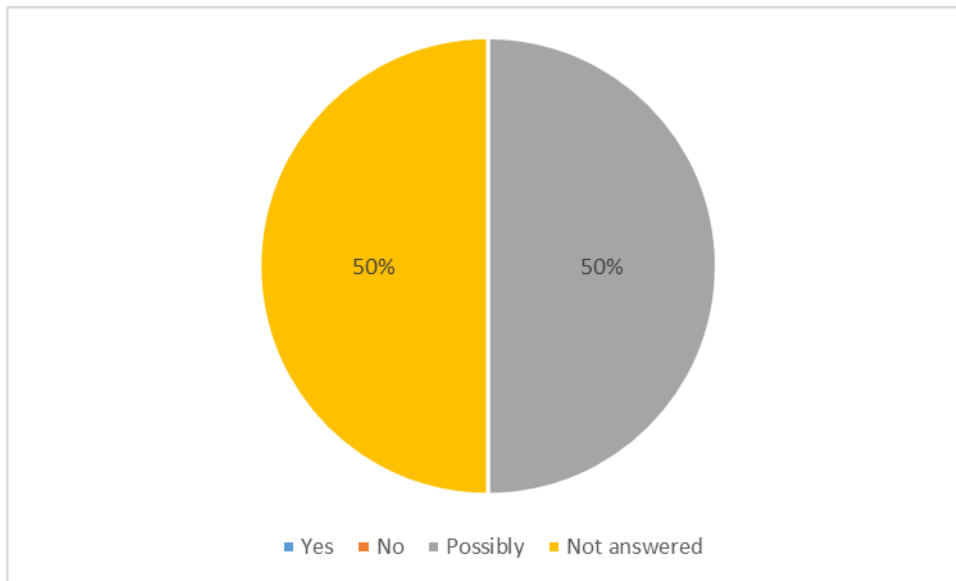


Three placement providers (75%) stated they would consider employing a paramedic in the future, and one placement provider (25%) stated they would possibly consider employing a paramedic in the future.

Student Paramedics in Primary Care Pilot – Final Report

Question 11:

Would you be prepared to take part in pilots hosting other student Allied Health Professionals?



Two placement providers (50%) stated they would possibly consider taking part in pilots hosting other student Allied Health Professionals and two placement providers (50%) did not answer this question.

Placement providers were also asked if they had any other comments, thoughts or feelings they wanted to share about the pilot. One placement provider chose to share the following comment:

“Just important to continue to attract the various roles into primary care and these pilots are a step towards more diverse integration; Very helpful for student wanting to learn more about primary care. It gives students a wide range of exposure to the variety of the job as it is very different from the ambulance service”

Summary and Recommendations.

The positive feedback provided by the students about this pilot demonstrates that the 3rd year paramedic students really enjoyed their placements in primary care and felt like they increased their knowledge and understanding as a result of this learning experience.

When combined with the positive feedback also received from the placement providers which demonstrates that they also enjoyed hosting the students and that mutual learning has also taken place, Wessex Primary Care Training Hubs would recommend that we work with the University of Portsmouth and our Primary Care placement providers to expand this pilot to provide this learning experience for all 3rd year paramedic students as part of their core curriculum.

Our Thanks

Wessex Primary Care Training Hubs would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the University of Portsmouth for the support they have provided with this pilot, the seven GP surgeries (listed in appendix 1) who provided such an excellent learning experience for the paramedic students and most importantly to Emma, Eve, Jessica, Kathleen, Verity, Dawn, and Alex, the seven 3rd year paramedic students from the University of Portsmouth who fully embraced this opportunity and enthusiastically entered into it with an open mind, a willingness to learn and demonstrated their professionalism throughout.

Andy Sharman

Primary Care Learning Environment Lead – Allied Health Professions & Physician Associates

Health Education England, working across Wessex


Southern House | Otterbourne | Winchester | Hants | SO21 2RU

T. 01962 718461

M. 07775 582902

E. andy.sharman2@hee.nhs.uk

W. Wessex Primary Care Training Hubs

 @ExmoorDipper

Appendices.

Appendix 1 – Primary care providers involved in the pilot.

Badgerswood and Forest Surgery, Headley/Bordon.

Highlands Practice, Fareham.

Sandown Health Centre, Isle of Wight.

Vine Medical Group, Waterlooville.

Salisbury Medical Practice, Salisbury.

Arnewood Practice, New Milton.

Homewell Curlew Practice, Havant.