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REACHING OUT TO SCHOOLS: A VOCATIONAL EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME FOR SCHOOL STUDENTSSusan Stocks *St Wilfrid's Hospice, Eastbourne, UK*

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Introduction Traditionally, the hospice has offered vocational placements to students over the age of 16 who are undergoing health and social care training at College or University. There had been many requests from schools for placements for the under 16's who have a 'work experience' week as part of their Year 10 studies.

Aim To work with local secondary schools to enable their students (aged 15) to participate in worthwhile and productive vocational experience within the hospice.

Method Students who choose vocational experience within the hospice are invited with their parents to discuss the work of the hospice, have a tour and discuss a programme for the week.

Following the meeting an information pack is sent to the student which includes objectives, the programme, and information around confidentiality.

A typical programme would include:

- ▶ Working on the In patient unit, and with Hospice @ Home
- ▶ Working in Day Therapy, attending breathing clinics and joining in activities, such as art therapy
- ▶ Observing the complementary therapists
- ▶ Meeting with a Counsellor and the Chaplain.

On day one there is an induction with a Mentor who the student will meet with each day to discuss their learning experience.

On completion of the placement, Evaluation forms are completed by the student and the organisation, and a Certificate of Attendance and Achievement issued.

Results Very positive feedback has been received from the schools, students and hospice staff and volunteers, with students showing an increased interest in volunteering.

Conclusion This new programme has:

- ▶ Raised the profile of the hospice within the local school community
- ▶ Led the hospice to reflect on the lower age limit for volunteering
- ▶ Enabled the hospice to make further links with schools in relation to the curriculum.