**Top tips for a successful community placement**

* **Start planning early**
  + Placements can take a long time to arrange, the sooner you start, the better.
  + Start by speaking to the people around you, including your trainer and other practice staff, such as the social prescribing link worker, they are very likely to know of organisations in your area.
  + It may be easier to make initial contact by phone as opposed to email as you are then able identify the correct person to be emailing/liaising with.
* **Think about what you’re looking to learn from your community placement** 
  + Community placements allow you to follow you interests – so do!
  + It is very helpful for organisations to have an idea what you’re looking to learn to guide your time there, for example ‘I’m looking to learn more about how your organisation supports people with housing problems’.
* **Don’t be disheartened if you don’t get an instant reply or the organisation says no**
  + If you don’t get a reply to your initial email, consider following up with a phone call or perhaps emailing another member of the organisation.
  + If you are struggling to get through or the organisation isn’t able to accommodate you, approach another organisation, it is worth having a couple of ‘back up’ ideas of organisations in case your first choice falls through.
* **Arrange a suitable time** 
  + When arranging a time to visit an organisation be realistic about when you will be able to arrive, take into account completing home visits, travelling to the organisation and parking etc. Organisations are giving up their time to host you and it is important to arrive on time.
  + If you’re struggling to find a time to attend that coincides with your personal study session, speak to your trainer and practice manager about whether it would be possible to move your sessions around.
* **Be interested and enthusiastic** 
  + Organisations are giving up their time to enable you to learn about their work and the community, it is important you are enthusiastic and engaged – and what’s more you’re far more likely to gain from the placements if you are.
  + It may be worth thinking of some questions you’d like to ask before you attend to get the conversation going.
* **Don’t do anything you’re not comfortable with, you’re not there to work**
  + You are attending in an observer role and are not there to work as a doctor. If an emergency occurs, you would act as you would in the community.
  + Of course, you can use your judgement about helping with tasks, for example distributing food at a food bank or serving tea and coffee.
* **Thank the organisation**
  + Thank the organisation for their time. Often such organisations are very busy and staffed by volunteers, it is very important to thank them for taking the time to host you.
* **Share what you’ve learned** 
  + Sharing with your ST1/2 colleagues at your VTS session will enable everyone to learn about the different types of organisations supporting patients.
  + Sharing with your practice colleagues will enable everyone in the practice to be more aware of the work of organisations working in the community.