

Telling it like it is! Nursing students exchanging knowledge and experience through stories about clinical practice.

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This project set out to explore how sharing stories of their experiences might help nursing students to feel better prepared for the emotional and interpersonal demands of clinical placement. During their degree, University of Edinburgh nursing students spend 2,300 hours in clinical practice, consolidating their theoretical knowledge and learning about nursing practice. This is hugely demanding for the students, and feedback suggests that they want to feel better prepared for the emotional and social sides of their time in practice. Over the course of their programme, nursing students also accumulate invaluable experiential knowledge about how to negotiate the role of nursing student, but often have little chance to share this with their more junior colleagues.

We requested £1260 to hold a one day story-making workshop for final year nursing students, and develop a dedicated website, accessible to all undergraduate nursing students. Our aim was to give students the opportunity to reflect on key moments in their development and experiment with different ways of making stories about these. We then intended to publish these stories on the website. This would give more junior students who are preparing to go on placement the opportunity to learn from the experiences of their peers.

The Story-making Workshop

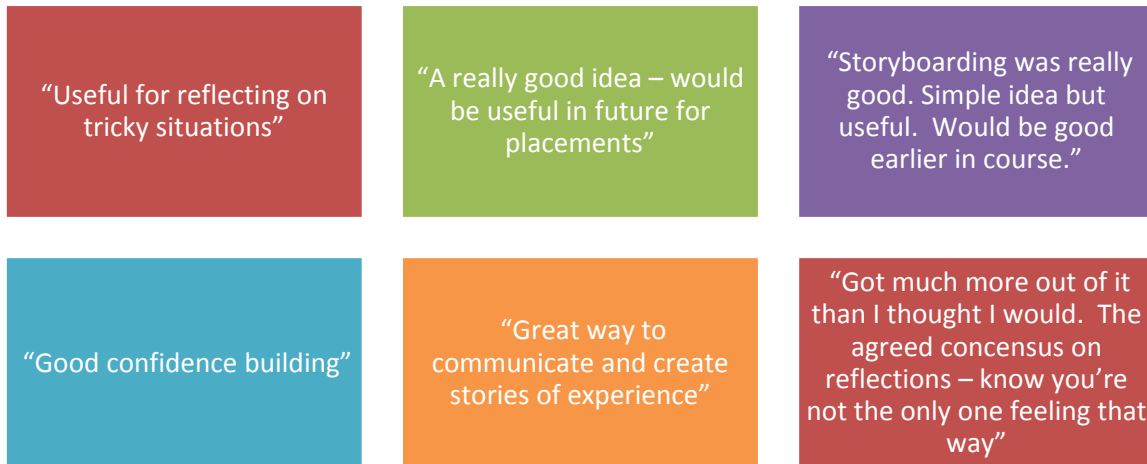
The workshop was held on 1st June 2016, and was facilitated by Dr Alette Willis, a facilitator from the Edinburgh Storytelling Centre. Six final year nursing students participated, and two of the project team also joined the workshop as participants. Alette took us through some warm-up exercises, and then we worked on short exercises to write down brief stories about placement experiences. We then developed these into more complex stories using a 'storyboarding' technique, and thinking about beginning, ending, character, plot, atmosphere and the message of the story. Throughout the day we shared our stories with different partners, telling them in different ways. We finished the day with a storytelling circle, in which we each shared the story we had been working on. This produced some powerful stories about being a nursing student, and also allowed us as a group to support each other, and give constructive feedback about the experiences shared. Alette then gave us feedback and advice on how we could further develop our stories to highlight the important meanings within them.

Student Feedback Session

Following our Story-making Workshop we held a feedback and discussion session with the workshop participants and other students on 8th June 2016. At this session we asked those who had attended the workshop to give feedback on their experiences, and we asked those who hadn't attended for their feedback on the project as a whole, and suggestions for taking the project forwards. This session proved to be an invaluable part of the project. A number

of students had been keen to attend the story-making workshop, but had been unable to do so because of the timing of the workshop (see below for further discussion about scheduling). The feedback session was therefore an opportunity to solicit ideas and feedback from these students.

Feedback from the workshop participants was very positive. They thought that it had been a useful developmental opportunity for them as individuals, and a chance to share their experiences with peers:



Several students who hadn't attended said that they would have liked to have done so, but couldn't because of the demands of placement:



Overall, the students were very positive about the idea behind the workshop and website, and had suggestions to make about how to develop the project further:

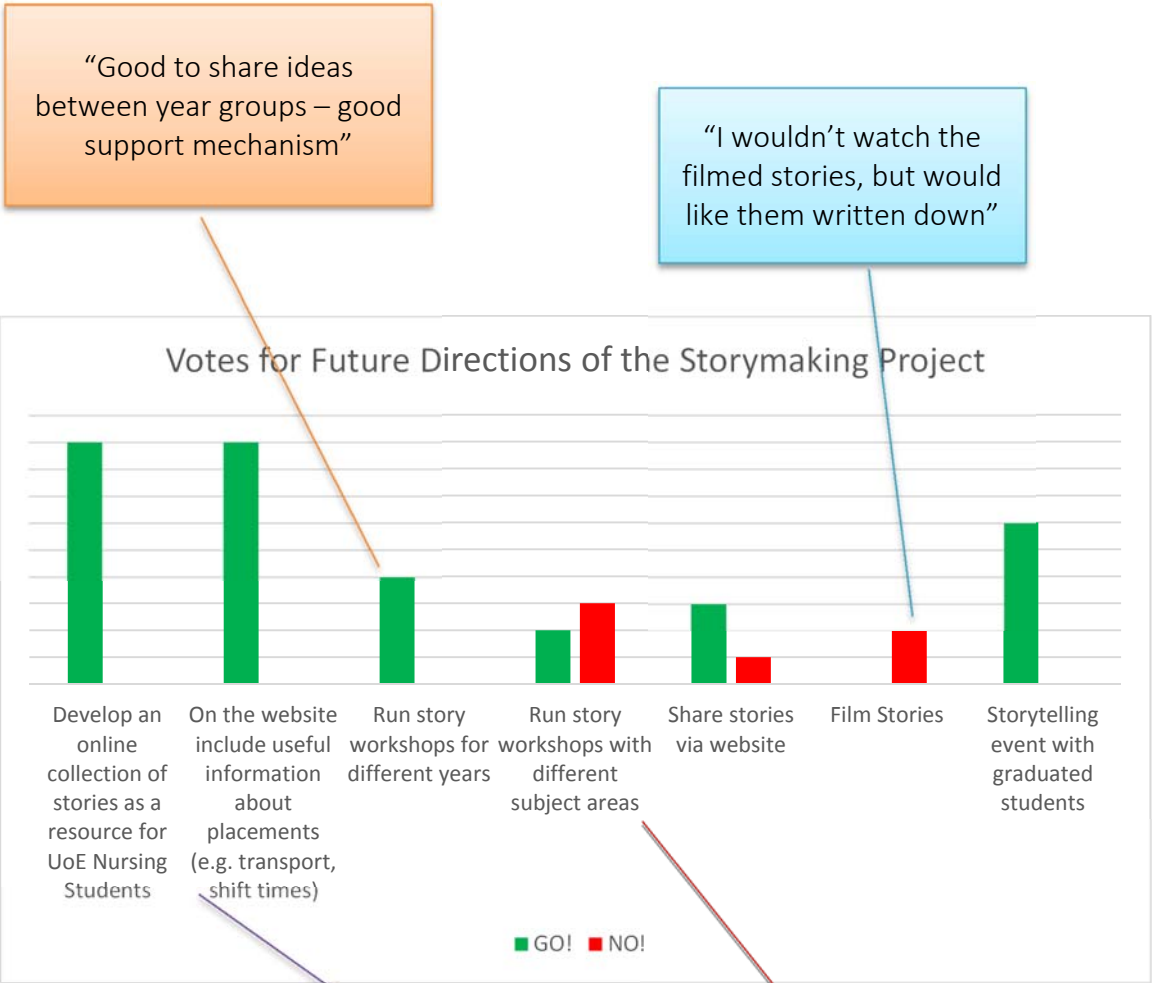
"Dramatization of stories?"

"Advertise more, more students would have been better"

"Advertise with student quotes to encourage other years"

"Mixed years could be interesting"

Using green and red stickers, we also asked students to vote on some of our ideas for ways to develop the project. The students also used post-its to comment on these ideas.



"Useful to prepare for placement in unknown specialities – to hear other students' stories"

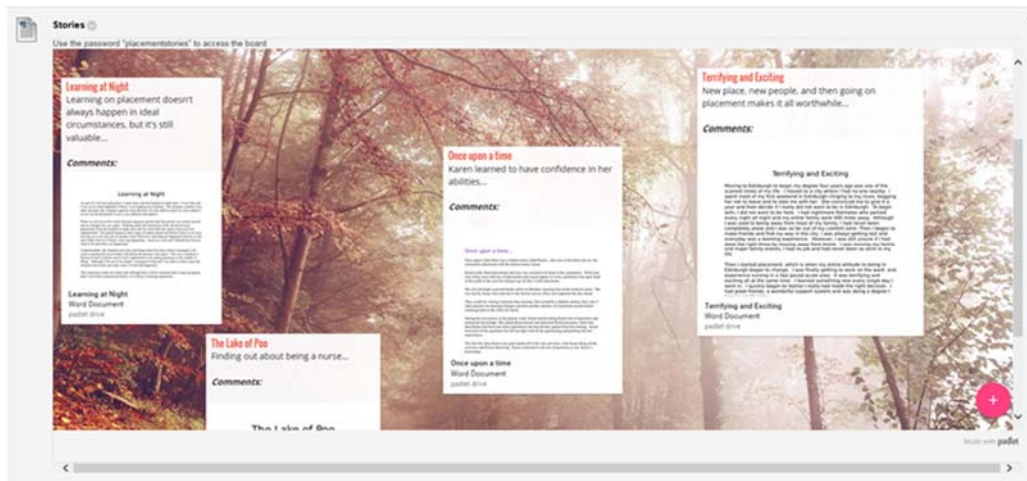
"The dedicated website would be great for sharing contacts for extra placements e.g. specialist services and teams, and for reflection on experiences in a 'safe' place where other contributors can learn from each other"

"Website with stories about the specific areas would be good and give an idea of how to prepare for specific placements"

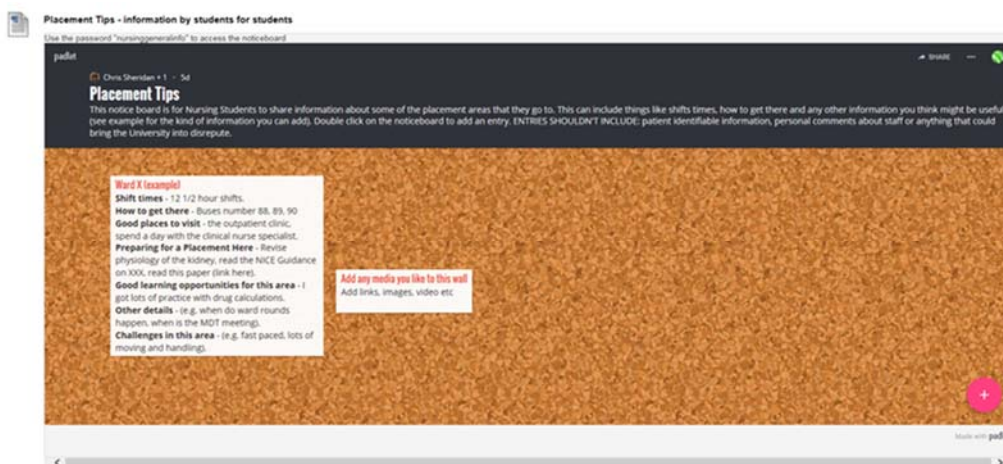
"[Workshops with different subject areas] could be good, but not for the full thing"

Website

Following the story-making workshop and our feedback session, we developed a private website for students on the University of Edinburgh undergraduate nursing programme. Using the platform of two Padlets, accessed through LEARN, we created one resource to host students' stories, and one to host information about placements (as this had been a very popular idea with the students). We advertised the new website to the undergraduate nursing students, and encouraged them to add content (supervised by the project lead). As the project progresses we hope that the website will become a valuable resource for students.



The Placement Stories Padlet



The Placement Tips Padlet

Challenges

We encountered two important challenges when running this project:

1. Scheduling of the workshop
2. Gathering the stories in / agreeing methods for sharing stories.

Encountering these challenges provided us with some valuable learning for ways in which we can develop the project in the future.

Scheduling of the Workshop

Our aim was to hold the workshop with final year nursing students, as we considered that these students have a store of knowledge and experience that is usually lost to the university when they graduate. However, this meant that we had to fit the workshop into the final weeks of their 4th year, alongside exams and placement times. Due to exam timings this proved very difficult, and we were forced to hold the workshop during the period when the students were on placement. This meant that a number of students who would have liked to attend the workshop were unable to do so, and we also had last minute drop-outs because of problems getting time away from placement.

Scheduling extra-curricular workshops is always going to be a problem within nursing studies because the nursing programme is very intensive, and students spend a lot of time –out-with the University on placement. Furthermore, holding workshops that include different years (as some students have suggested) is also extremely challenging from a timetabling perspective because different years are out on placement at different times. However we do believe that bringing different years together is well worth doing, and the timing of workshops is something that the project team will be working on as we develop the project further.

Gathering the Stories In / Agreeing Methods for Sharing Stories

As the workshop ended we had a discussion about how to use the stories we had created. The participants all felt that they needed more time to perfect their stories at home, and so it was agreed that they would work more on the stories at home and send the finished version to the project team. Unfortunately only two of the participants subsequently submitted their finished stories. The publication of the stories on the website was an entirely voluntary part of the project, and students were entitled to decide to keep their stories private, however the development of a story resource was an important aim of the project.

During the workshop the participants discussed feeling a lack of confidence about sharing their stories, although they liked the idea in principle. This is something the project team will work on when preparing future workshops. It will be important to discuss with students their feelings about sharing their stories, and how this can be done in a way that they feel comfortable with. One strategy may be to hold two, half-day workshops (rather than a single, whole-day workshop), in order to give students time to work on their stories in between the workshops, and then discuss ways of sharing them at the second workshop. Now that the website is live, students will also have the opportunity to share stories produced out-with workshops, and this will help to build up the resource.

At the feedback session there was support for the idea of holding a storytelling event with recent graduates, who would return to share their stories. This would require support for the graduates to develop storytelling skills, and we hope to secure funding to work on this in collaboration with the Edinburgh Storytelling Centre.

Outcomes and Taking the Project Forwards

The project has produced both short and long term outcomes:

- In the short-term, the workshop participants reported that this was a confidence building experience for them, and enabled them to reflect on their placement experiences and their learning in a new way.
- The workshop fostered a mutually supportive interaction about some of the experiences students had had on placement.
- Long-term outcomes of the project include the website, which acts as a resource and will continue to be developed as we take the project forwards.
- The learning we have gained from holding this first workshop will help us to maximise the success of the project in the future, and provide a platform for future funding applications. We also hope to develop collaborative working with other disciplines, and other universities. Funds identified include the Carnegie Collaborative Research Grant; and the PTAS regular grant scheme.
- A working group has been formed of students, project team members and other staff members to add content to the 'Placement Tips' padlet on placements in the Scottish Borders (students find this location particularly daunting).