

2.5 Visits to the UK organisation

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Targeted training visits for select staff from the Developing Country (DC) organisation to the UK can help provide new ideas, develop the partnership and motivate people.

In order for the visits to have a wider impact they need to be carefully planned and involve those who can adapt the ideas and systems they see in the UK to the local context in which they work.

This Chapter addresses issues for those planning and undertaking visits to the UK and covers issues relevant to both the UK and DC organisation.

Colour coding has been used throughout the Manual to highlight the sections which are most relevant to each:

-  green for the UK
-  and yellow for the Developing Country (DC) partner.

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When are visits to the UK a good idea?

“One of the most important things I learnt from my visit was that we could do better. The Link allowed us to see ourselves in a mirror, and gave us the opportunity to pick and adopt the structures, skills and procedures that are relevant to us.”

Hamidu Abdulai,
pharmacist, Tamale Hospital in Ghana.

Visits to the UK inevitably cost more due to higher living costs. Fewer individuals from the DC organisation benefit directly from training and therefore some Links question if this is the best use of resources.

Those individuals involved in exchange visits to the UK will only have a wider impact on their organisation if they are able to draw on the knowledge and experiences in the UK and adapt this to their work. If the right people are selected to be involved in the visits with well defined objectives they can have a significant impact and also strengthen the understanding and commitment between partners in the UK and the DC. It can also have a significant impact on morale and motivation of DC organisation staff, where there they may feel valued and supported in their work.

Visits to the UK are most appropriate when the Link is trying to develop new services which are not available locally or strengthen existing ones. Exposure to a UK health care environment can provide new ideas which can be adapted to the local context.

Visits to the UK should be signed off by the head of the DC partner organisation. Bear in mind the risk of losing staff to the brain drain if visits are not carefully justified and well planned.

DC REMINDER!

While in the UK it is useful to try and find any relevant conferences, professional bodies, etc which you may be interested in attending.



CASE STUDY

Training in the UK

Two senior mental health nurses from Zomba Mental Hospital in Malawi participated in a Link training visit to gain skills in non-pharmacological interventions in the UK. The active partnership between the Department of Health Sciences at University of York and the Zomba Mental Health Link enabled the nurses to enrol as guest students and attend a module on psychosocial interventions for patients with psychosis.

The nurses were able to access the taught component of the course, as well as the library, IT resources and tutorial support. The focus was on patient-centred and family approaches. The two Malawian nurses found that it was readily applicable to their work in Zomba. They also made a significant contribution to providing UK students with a wider cross-cultural perspective on their clinical work and environments.

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Who should be involved?

The initial planning stages of the Link (Chapter 2.2) will have identified priority areas which will be the focus of the Link. Visits to the UK might be the most appropriate way of addressing some of these areas. Sometimes the people involved in the visit to the UK will be obvious: there may be a limited number of people who do a particular job or are enthusiastic or motivated to take the work forward. When there are several potential candidates there will need to be an open recruitment process which will primarily be the responsibility of the DC organisation.

Some personal characteristics you may want to look out for are:

- Committed individuals - they have shown strong commitment to the organisation, the department and the patients/ students, have a life in the country and no strong aspirations to work/ live in the UK
- Problem solvers - they are able to see solutions to problems and overcome them rather than becoming disillusioned
- Enthusiastic and adaptable individuals

DC

REMEMBER!

Those involved in training visits to the UK should be selected on the basis of what they will be able to contribute on return to the organisation, not on personal ties or benefits. The head of the DC organisation should approve such visits personally.

Visit duration and time off

While visits from UK partners tend to be of around 2 weeks, many visits from DC partners to the UK tend to be for slightly longer periods (an average of 4 weeks but some have been up to 6 months). This is because those involved will need to adapt and absorb as much as possible from the learning opportunities available to them.

The visit duration will be determined by the activities to be carried out in the UK and the ability of DC staff to continue the work of the health workers who are away on training visits.



REMEMBER!

There is often an opportunity cost of external training for health workers. Will their gain in knowledge and subsequent improvements in practice be sufficient to justify the time spent away from the clinical setting?



CASE STUDY

Training in the UK

Sometimes the relevance of training in the UK is questioned. Only a few people can be involved from the DC organisation and they will be unlikely to be able to do any hands-on work. The context is also very different. Will there be any lasting impact back at the DC organisation? If the right people are chosen and receive the right type of exposure in the UK and support upon their return, the impact of the visit may be significant. This impact may not always be related to the direct objectives of the visit.

Elias Byaruhanga, a Psychiatric Clinical Officer from Uganda, says “What I noticed in the UK was how health care was centred on the patient. Everything about their condition, the treatment and their options was explained to them. Because of this they understood better and left feeling happier. I realised we didn’t do that in the same way, but it would be easy to change our practice. I now take time to explain things better to my patients and their carers as well as encouraging colleagues and students working with me to do the same. They get a better service now because of it.”

Dr Margaret Mungherera, Consultant Psychiatrist, Uganda, says “At the time I went to the UK with the Link through THET, I had just finished my training in Psychiatry. As there were no Forensic Psychiatrists in Uganda at the time, I was selected to go to the UK to do an eight week forensics placement. What I learned in the UK has helped me in my career and to improve the health services for mental health patients in Uganda. On my return I was given sole responsibility for designing the new forensic unit of Butabika Hospital in Kampala, for which I drew on my experiences from the UK. Butabika Hospital had no clinical psychologists or psychiatric social workers at the time I left for UK. I had heard and read about the multi-disciplinary care but I had never seen it practiced; I therefore only knew it in theory. In the UK I saw how this worked and was able to integrate it into our work. I saw the need to involve nurses in the Link to train them in modern skills of psychiatric nursing, and this is what we did. And later I worked with THET to develop a project for in-service training of nursing and other staff. I was also able to make a useful contribution to the Ministry of Health concept paper justifying the need for a Mental Health Act based on knowledge from the UK. My short experience in the UK helped me to bring about many changes in forensic psychiatric services in Uganda.”

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Preparation for the visit

Planning checklist for visits to the UK organisation

	DC DEVELOPING COUNTRY PARTNER	UK UK PARTNER
Planning for the visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish exact objectives for the visit. Discuss these with your partner. The UK organisation should develop a visit timetable. Inform all the relevant people, especially managers and directors, of the training visit. Get written agreement from the head of your organisation. Look into any relevant conferences or relevant short courses which could also be combined with the visit. 	
Before arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that you have all the required papers for release from your organisation, have arranged your visa and have a valid passport. Liaise with your UK partner for travel arrangements and who will meet you on arrival. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find suitable accommodation for the visitors. This may be in staff/ student accommodation or some Links have invited visitors to stay in staff homes. Hotels often tend to be too costly. Inform all relevant people.
On arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure you have enough money and at least two contact numbers and an address in case you can't find the person to meet you at the airport. Be aware of what arrangements have been made to collect you from the airport. If you need to use public transport get precise instructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arriving in the UK for the first time can be very daunting, especially at busy airports. Make sure that someone is there to meet your visitors, take them to their accommodation and make sure that they settle in. If the Link is providing visitors with per diem allowances, make sure that they are aware of this on arrival. Most Links have provided around £100 a week to cover food and other expenses, in addition to accommodation. Ensure that visitors receive an induction to your organisation, meet all the relevant people and have some social activities planned.
Learning and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take notes. These will be invaluable to jog your memory back at your place of work and for sharing your learning with colleagues. Ask as many questions as possible. Don't be shy, this is what the visit is for and it will also show your enthusiasm. Always be on time for meetings and other arrangements! Be ready to support your UK partners by meeting their colleagues and managers - you are an important advocate for the value of the Link! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review training with partners on a regular basis to ensure that it meets their expectations and make any amendments to plans if necessary.
Feedback on visit and future planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At end of visit the UK partner should, if possible, accompany the DC visitors to the airport and see them safely through to the departure lounge. Jointly plan the future and set your future targets. Take copies of any learning or training materials back with you. 	

Practical Information and Link induction Pack

Each Link should have its own Induction Pack which is updated on a regular basis and provides specific information to visitors. Once the Link is established the Induction Packs should provide all the information necessary to plan a visit. But for new Links and those developing Induction Packs, the following table has some useful advice:

DC	GENERAL INFORMATION	TIPS AND ADVICE FOR INDUCTION PACK
Context assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will need to have an understanding of the context in which your UK partner works in order to have an understanding of the operating environment at the organisation. Ask your UK partner for information. The BBC website is a good source of information on UK events www.bbc.co.uk Ask your UK partner to give you a contextual briefing on arrival. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give a summary of contextual information in the Induction pack, this should include a guide to the local area i.e. What are the demographics like, is it an urban or rural area? Are there any parts of the local area that have a high crime rate? Although the UK is a stable country, certain areas, in particular inner cities can have areas that are unsafe at night.
Risk assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to minimise risk ask your UK partner to provide an overview of security issues. THET's <i>Risk and Security Guidelines for THET staff and Links</i> give details of how to conduct a risk assessment. Ensure staff are aware of any risks in the environment they are entering, and know what measures to adopt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give an overview of risk assessment within the Induction Pack. Induction pack should list the most prevalent threats identified by the risk assessment along with measures to mitigate. Accurate risk assessment allows you to prepare for and mitigate against risks. This both reduces the likelihood of being exposed to a particular threat, as well as helping you to deal with it should the risk occur.
Passports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You need a valid passport with at least six months validity remaining to travel. If you do not already have one you will need to arrange this well in advance. You will also need a visa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are planning to travel apply for a passport as soon as possible.

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	GENERAL INFORMATION	TIPS AND ADVICE FOR INDUCTION PACK
Visas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will need a visa to enter the UK. Apply for this from your nearest British High Commission/ Embassy. Do this several months in advance of your visit as it can take a long time to process. Your flight will not be booked until your visa has been approved. Ask your UK partners and the Director of your hospital to write support letters. Securing a visitor's visa to the UK has become increasingly difficult. Make sure you submit all the required documents. 	<p>Ask your UK partners to write you a letter of invitation in order to support your visa application. In it they will need to state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons for the visit Who is funding it What the visit duration is State that this is part of an organisational Link <p>They should write it on headed paper from their organisation and send a copy to you and another copy directly to the High Commission/Embassy.</p>
Booking flights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree with your UK partners who will book and pay for the tickets. As many airlines now offer electronic tickets it is possible for the UK partner to book the flights. Try and avoid visits during the most expensive peak times. Find the cheapest airfares. Don't book the flight until the visa has been secured as if the visitor doesn't get this you may have wasted a flight. 	<p>If possible try to arrange your time of travel outside the popular holidays of Christmas and Easter. This will often mean cheaper flights and more people around. Prioritise also the warmer summer months as this will make the visit more enjoyable.</p> <p>Charity travel agent KeyTravel occasionally offers competitive flexible flights for charities with extra baggage allowance and date changes. Check with them to see how the rates compare.</p>
Health and safety	<p>Working with children will automatically need a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check first which often takes a long time.</p> <p>You may also require a hepatitis screen and occupational health check by the receiving hospital.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask your UK partner to inform people of any relevant checks they will need to undertake. Ensure that you have some money with you (at least £100) on arrival in case of an emergency.
Money	<p>The cost of Living in the UK will be substantially higher than in your home country. Be clear on who will provide the subsistence costs and make sure that visitors are clear how much they will receive in advance. The subsistence money provided should cover essentials while in the UK. Make it clear to participants that they will not be returning home with any additional money. This will be around £80-£150 a week in addition to accommodation costs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eating out in the UK is expensive. Ask your Link partners to show you where the local supermarkets are. Often staff canteens provide subsidised food. Provide visitors with an initial amount before travelling in case of emergency.

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	GENERAL INFORMATION	TIPS AND ADVICE FOR INDUCTION PACK
Baggage and what to take	<p>It is best to travel as lightly as possible as this will give you space to bring any equipment or books back with you. Most airlines only give 20 or 25kg baggage allowance plus 7-10kgs carry-on luggage and they will charge a lot of money if you go over the allowance. The UK may be much colder than your country, depending on the time of year. Make sure you take appropriate clothing. October to March tend to be the coldest months and expect it to rain at any time of year. Get advice from your UK partners on suitable clothing.</p> <p>Let people know what airline baggage allowances are for checked in and hand luggage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your UK partners if they are able to provide visitors with some warm clothing (e.g. coats/ jackets, gloves, boots) to avoid purchasing new items. • Travel light on the way out. • Do not exceed the airline baggage allowance on your return as excess baggage is charged at very high rates. • Weigh your bags before travelling. • If you have some spare room ask your UK Link partners if there are any books/ equipment that needs to be taken back to your home organisation.
Insurance	<p>The NHS will only cover the health care needs of non-EU patients in medical emergencies. Repatriation costs will not be covered. It is advisable to take out appropriate travel insurance which will cover you in case of a medical emergency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out about relevant travel insurance.
Communication	<p>If you have a mobile phone which is not tied to a particular network, it should be able to accept a UK SIM card. <i>Pay as You Go</i> sim cards are cheap, although calls overseas can be very expensive. See Chapter 2.3 which gives details of communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your UK Link partners where you can get a UK sim card from. • Share your number with both UK and colleagues and family back home. • Stay in email contact with staff at your home organisations to let them know how you are getting on.
Accommodation	<p>Check with your UK partner that they are arranging accommodation for you and what facilities you have access to.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out the address and telephone number of your accommodation before arriving so that you can find it in case of emergency.
In case of emergency	<p>Establish who you should contact in case of an emergency. Have the telephone numbers of at least two contacts with you at all times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UK emergency services (ambulances/ police/ firemen) can be contacted by dialling 999 on any phone.
Professional registration	<p>It is unlikely that you will be able to do any 'hands-on' work whilst in the UK as you need to go through a process of accreditation. Therefore much of your work will be limited to observation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will probably need to go through an occupational health check at the UK partner organisation. Ask them what this involves.

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Dos and Don'ts in the UK

WHILE IN THE UK DO...	WHILE IN THE UK DON'T...
Ask as many questions as you need to and gather as much information as possible. Remember this is a learning opportunity for you and the more enthusiastic you are, the more you will get out of it.	Don't forget your time-keeping - people in the UK tend to be very punctual. If you have a meeting try to arrive at least 5 minutes early for it. If you are half an hour late the meeting may be over and it won't reflect well on you.
Find out what relevant conferences or workshops are happening and see if you might be able to attend.	Don't travel without letting your UK partners know where you are going and give them the contact details .
Praise the Link and explain why it matters to you and your DC colleagues. You are an important ambassador for the Link.	

Follow-up after visits

Before the end of your visit to the UK, sit down with the colleagues you have been working with and review your visit. Reflect on some of the things that you have learnt and which you may want to do differently on return home. Develop a plan of action for your return to your home organisation, do this jointly with your partners. This will give you a joint vision, and give your UK partners an indication of how they can help to support you further. Your UK partners will learn from your insight.

The next steps are to:

- **Write a visit report** focussing on the key things you learnt during your time in the UK, think about how these are relevant and can be adapted to your home context. Share that report with your UK partners. Relate how your visit contributes towards the ongoing aims and objectives of the Link.
- **Meet with your managers to share what you learnt.** Are there any changes you think are worth implementing and why. How can these changes be managed?
- **Run a session** for colleagues to share your learning and get them involved in any changes you are planning.
- **Set objectives for change** which can be followed up with your UK partner on their next visit.
- **Suggest any further training** you think you or your colleagues may benefit from. Some of this may involve further training in your own country or neighbouring countries rather than further visits to the UK.
- **Update the Induction pack** for future colleagues who will be travelling to the UK.
- **Keep in regular contact** with your UK partners, ask them for advice and support when you are implementing changes.

DC

CASE STUDY

"I went on a Link visit to England to get exposure to community mental health care in the UK in order to improve mental health care delivery in Mbarara, Uganda. I was able to learn a lot as the services are well developed with good resources, adequate staffing levels and care is provided within a standardised delivery system. Most things are well organised, people are serious with time-keeping and very committed to work.

I would advise those undertaking a similar visit, to be aware that the working environment and delivery of services in the UK is quite different but one should be open minded, ready to learn and pick what is relevant and apply this to develop and improve services at home. While on the surface there is a higher standard of living and pay in the UK, one should endeavour to return and work to improve the situation at home."

Elias Byaruhanga,
Psychiatric Clinical officer,
Mbarara, Uganda



CHAPTER CHECKLIST

- ✓ Decide whether the objectives of the Link can be met with visits to the UK.
- ✓ Develop specific objectives for each visit that can only be met by visiting the UK.
- ✓ Ensure that the best people are involved in the visits. Ensure each one is signed off personally by the head of DC organisation, bearing in mind the risk of adding to the brain drain.
- ✓ Develop a visit schedule and tie this in with any conferences or other training opportunities.
- ✓ Use the visit to further strengthen relations between your two organisations, review how the partnership is developing and whether the MoU requires review.
- ✓ Plan and make travel arrangements well in advance.