This experience taught me the importance of sharing knowledge

A placement at a children’s institution in Romania showed student Tara Lally the value of learning from each other.

In my final year of learning disability nursing at Queen’s University Belfast, I travelled to Romania with a team of nursing students for our 4-week elective placement.

I had the opportunity to spend a week in four different areas: the county hospital, a hospital for babies with dystrophy, a hospice, and a child protection institution for children with learning disabilities.

In the children’s institution, I was able to make a difference to patient care. The staff discussed with us the similarities and differences between our cultures, and recognised the influence a national health service can have on the perception of society’s responsibility of care.

Before leaving for Romania, our group had held fundraising events at university, with the money raised going towards toys and clothing for the children at the institution, and a sensory room we created while we were there.

Although the children were pleased with these changes, we realised they were not sustainable in the long term, and the life of the items we provided was finite. We therefore decided it would be more effective and beneficial to share our knowledge by providing health education for the staff.

We used picture presentations to help increase their confidence in various areas of care, including management of epilepsy and seizures, first aid for choking, and moving and handling techniques for bed-bound patients. We also demonstrated these interventions to help overcome the communication barriers created by the language differences.

By educating the staff in this way, we epitomised the principles set out in the Nursing and Midwifery Council code; we prioritised the needs of the children in the institution, honed our own skills and helped develop the skills of the Romanian nurses.

Non-judgemental

This experience developed our professionalism as nursing students on the path to becoming registered nurses. Because we adopted a non-judgemental approach, the staff were able to trust us and the knowledge we shared, and we were able to learn from them.

This was an eye-opening and humbling experience. I learned that taking the time to share your knowledge with colleagues benefits everyone, particularly those in our care. I also realised the potential influence I have as a nursing student.

Although money and resources have to be considered in healthcare provision, this experience made me realise that taking the time to teach staff and adapt education to their needs can bring about long-term, fundamental change in the delivery of care.

I now take every opportunity to share my knowledge and experiences with others, and ask them to do the same so we can all learn from each other.

Tara Lally

is a third-year nursing student at Queen’s University Belfast.