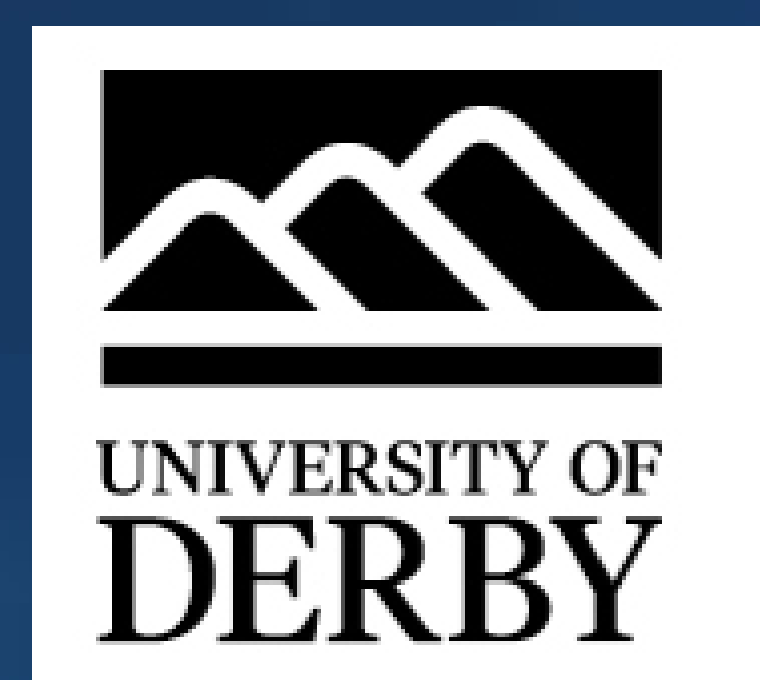


The Use of Normal Pregnant Volunteers in Ultrasound Education – First Insights of Student Experience



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Introduction

The shortage of sonographers is well documented with alternative approaches to sonographic education being explored.¹ Whilst different training models are being addressed, the focus has also remained on increasing training placement capacity. Ultrasound departments are increasingly dealing with demand pressures which impacts on the ability to provide quality placement opportunities for trainee sonographers. One particular area of increased demand has been around Obstetric third trimester scanning with Health Education England setting up an initiative to increase the number of obstetric sonographers performing third trimester growth scans. This is in response to the Saving Babies Lives care bundle.²

The use of normal volunteers is well established in ultrasound education with an established BMUS consent process in place to govern their use. Historically, this has been restricted to non-pregnant volunteers. The team at the University of Derby and University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust (UHDB) worked together to adapt the BMUS guidance on the use of normal volunteers to include normal pregnant volunteers in ultrasound education.

Current on campus learning

The University of Derby has a well-established postgraduate ultrasound training programme which actively uses simulation based activities within academic teaching. This includes the use of normal volunteers for teaching on the general medical ultrasound module and the use of an extensive simulation suite for practicing scanning skills using the Medaphor ultrasound simulators for TA and TV scanning which are used across all the clinical modules for scanning skills development.

The use of pregnant volunteers – development process

Work was conducted by the academic team at the University of Derby and the clinical team at UHDB to develop a revised recruitment and consent process for the use of normal pregnant volunteers in on campus teaching sessions. One of the key points of development included the need to develop a clear governance process for any complications which could potentially be encountered during the scanning of volunteers on the university campus. This included the ability to access 24 hour rapid referral processes back to the clinical team should any unexpected findings occur during the teaching session.

First experiences of using pregnant volunteers in teaching

Recruitment of volunteers was challenging. Whilst the team at UHDB were actively trying to recruit volunteers, only 2 patients came forward as wishing to attend the university campus to be scanned. Volunteers who did attend provided feedback on the session expressing that they found the recruitment process to be excellent and the quality of information provided before the session to be of a good quality allowing them to make a decision about attending. Both volunteers on the day found the experience of being scanned by the university academic and students to be positive with both volunteers expressing how enjoyable they found the experience of being scanned on the university site.

Student experience

Student feedback from the experience of scanning a pregnant volunteer on campus was overwhelmingly positive. Students commented that being able to scan in an environment that enabled discussion of scan technique and fetal anatomy was invaluable. Students found the ability to put theory into practice without any time constraints of the clinical setting to be really helpful in development and reinforcement of skills.

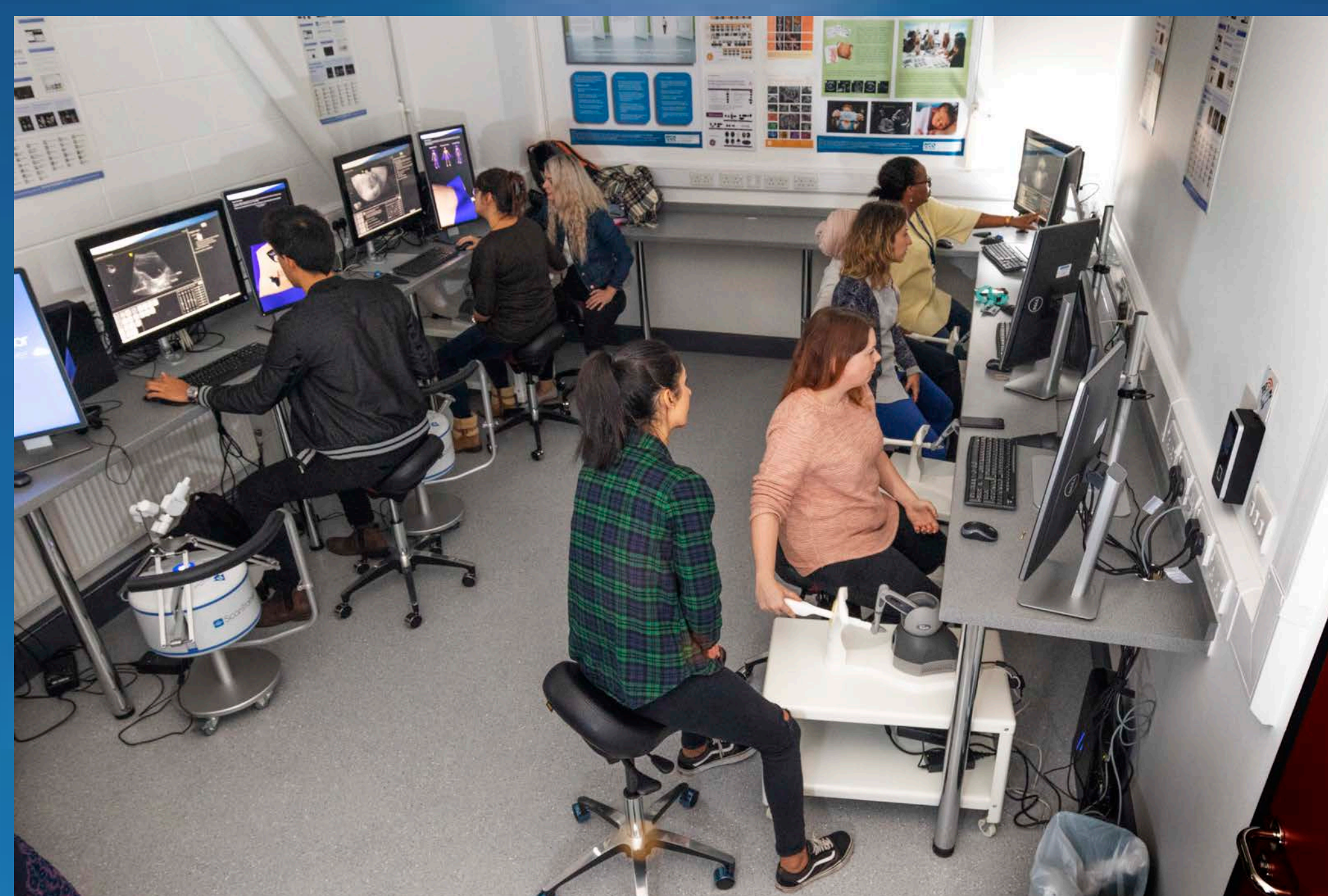


Figure 1: University of Derby Simulation Suite

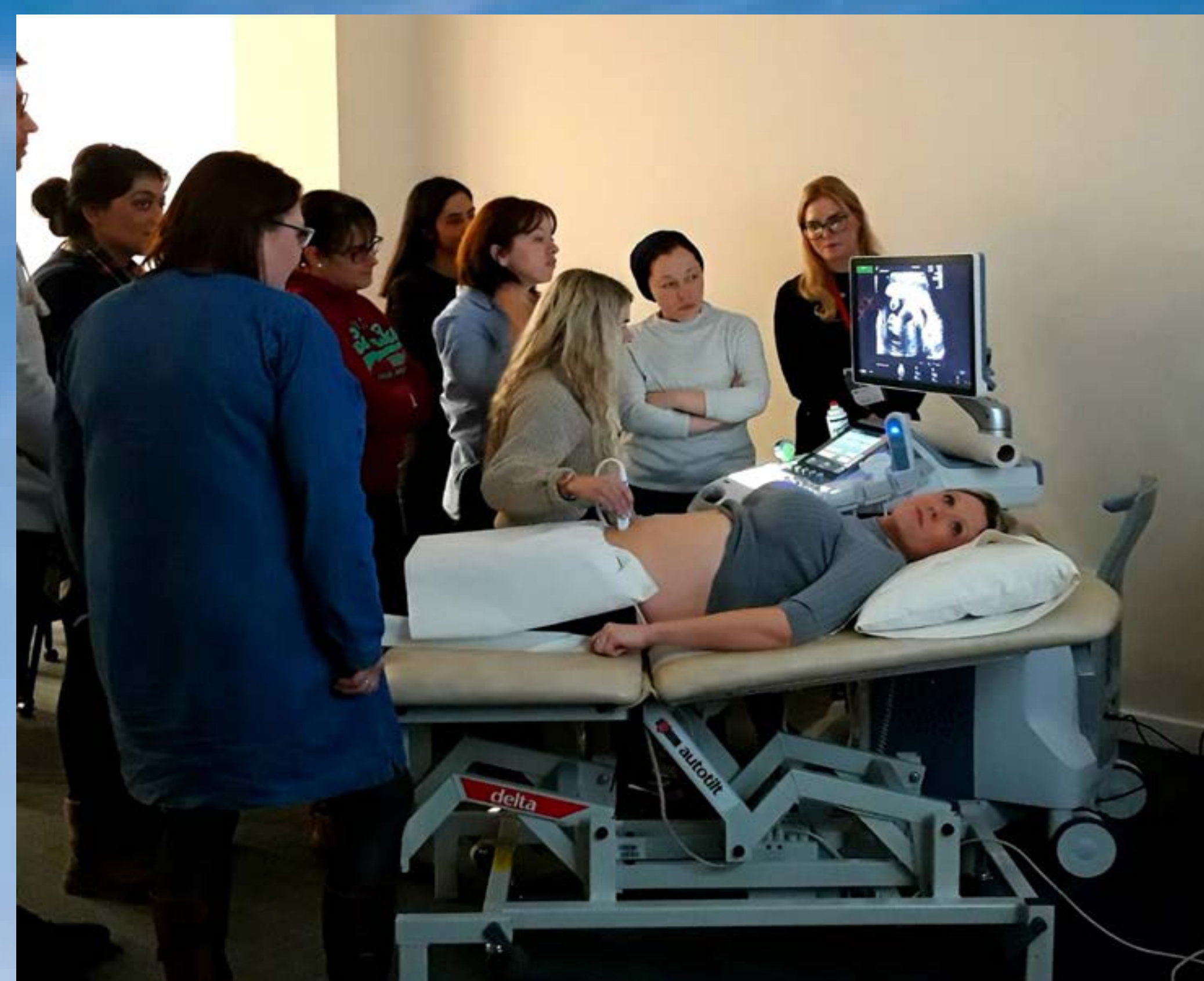


Figure 2: The first experience of using normal pregnant volunteer scanning

What next?

Following the successful first use of normal pregnant volunteers, development is underway to implement these sessions into further academic weeks teaching third trimester scanning. The academic team is actively exploring ideas around how this could be developed further to bring early learning skills out of the clinical setting to relieve pressure on clinical placement sites. Further development of this training potential will include providing masterclasses for different professional groups and potentially developing training packages on campus for clinical professionals.

References

1. Centre for Workforce Intelligence. 2017 Securing the future workforce supply. Sonographer workforce review. London, CFWI.
2. NHS England 2016 Saving Babies Lives A Care Bundle for reducing stillbirth. Leeds.