

PEDIATRIC HOSPICE IN LONDON, ENGLAND

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Summer 2018

LONDON, ENGLAND

I spent 4 weeks in London this summer in a placement at Richard House Pediatric Hospice in the east side of London. Richard House is located in Newham in far East London, which has a population of about 308,000 residents. Newham is one of the poorest boroughs of London and the resident population is 80% Muslim. The majority of the residents speak English as a second language, which can make receiving services more difficult in addition to living in an impoverished area.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Before heading to England, I took Debra Mattison's Death, Grief and Loss class. I noticed a lot of connections between this course and the work being done at Richard House. For example, in SW 617, we spoke a great deal about ambiguous losses and Worden's Tasks of Mourning. I found so many connections in the patients and families we were working with and these concepts from the course.

PLACEMENT INFO

This organization was started in late 2000, and has only grown bigger and more impactful since then. Richard House is one of the 6 pediatric hospices in the London city limits, which work together to serve children across the entire city. The organization offers many services including:

- Respite Care
- Music and Art Therapy
- Step Down Care
- Family and Sibling Activities
- Group Support
- End of Life Care
- Bereavement Support

LESSONS LEARNED/TAKEAWAYS

Healthcare - In the US, the cost of healthcare is a huge barrier for individuals, but since there is universal healthcare in the UK this isn't as big of an issue. Instead, I saw issues with immigration, transportation, wait times at hospitals and clinics, and the issue of moving kids out of the hospital too quickly to free up beds.

Immigration - Newham is one of the poorest boroughs in London. It is primarily made up of immigrants who were rehoused into the area through the city's public housing system. Many of the patients we were working with had immigrated to the UK from the Middle East in order to receive better care for their sick children.

Differences in social work field - We get a little bit of the stigma that social workers = foster care/CPS here, but I felt that was the overwhelming stigma in the UK. Despite speaking to many professionals who agreed that social workers should be in more places in the UK systems, they were not as visible as they seem to be here.

Loss & Grief - My time with the hospice allowed me to reflect about the losses that I have experienced and the losses that the clients I worked with experience through the illness of their child and other losses. I was able to reflect on how these losses affect my work and my future career.

SKILLS DEVELOPED

- **Self-Care** - I knew I was interested in working in this field, but despite mentally preparing myself for working with sick and dying children, it definitely takes its toll on you. Though my time in London was short,
- **Stepping out of my comfort zone** - I was nervous to start working with pediatric palliative care - there are high stakes and it's sad and overwhelming at times. By stepping out of my comfort zone, I found a passion in the work and hope to continue working with this population.

CAREER CONNECTIONS

I plan on moving to the UK following my graduation from the University of Michigan School of Social Work, and this experience has been an incredible opportunity for me to make great networking connections and see what my role as a social worker will look like in England.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the staff at Richard House, especially Libby Basson, for accommodating me during my stay. I would like to thank Debra Mattison for being my faculty sponsor throughout this process. I would also like to thank the Office of Global Activities at the SSW.

I blogged weekly about my experience at:
<https://socialworkinlondon.wordpress.com/>

