



St John Ambulance LINKS and beyond...

A portfolio to record your LINKS
achievements and pick up handy hints on
CVs, jobs and interviews

Introduction

This portfolio has been developed as a place to record all activities and achievements during your time with St John Ambulance LINKS. The following key areas are covered:

- Logging activities undertaken as an SJA member, ie. duties, core activities, training received and delivered
- Areas of responsibility: committee, training, duty roles
- How to use SJA activities in your CV and during interviews, eg. practical examples, profiles to explain.

Each area is covered separately, allowing you to complete those sections that are right for you.

I hope you find this portfolio beneficial, and if you have any comments or queries then please contact the National LINKS Team (NLT) at team@links.sja.org.uk

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Member details

Name: _____

County: _____

LINKS unit: _____

Other units: _____

Date of joining SJA: _____

Roles held

Give details of all roles held during your time at LINKS, including brief job descriptions

Role	Responsibilities	Dates held

Activities

This section allows you to document and file the various activities you have undertaken with St John Ambulance with a focus on the core competencies looked for by a employers, as well as some key areas looked for by healthcare professionals.

The section has been structured in such a way that each activity sheet has a list of core competencies/skills looked for by an employer, at the bottom. Once you have documented your activity, you then rank each competency from 1-5 (5 being high) to identify strengths and weaknesses. You can then file the activity sheet under the section of your highest competency rating. This process will allow you to see which areas you need to build and focus on.

Descriptions of the core competencies are detailed before the activity sheet, for your reference.

You may wish to show this section to a prospective employer as evidence of how your previous achievements relate to the core competencies they expect of a successful candidate.

Core skills

Communication

Communication is key to employers. Often graduate schemes will be focused on making an individual a future leader and therefore they must excel in communication skills to make an effective leader.

Individuals must be able to communicate with various types of people and match their communication style with the audience. You will have started to build up this skill during your time in St John Ambulance LINKS while dealing with patients or on committees.

Individuals must also be able to communicate tasks effectively. Doing this ensures the task is completed to the correct level and within the correct timescales. Leaders need to communicate tasks to their team and ensure they are completed as intended.

Finally, individuals must be able to deliver the 'tough love' message. It's easy to deliver praise but not so easy to deliver the opposite. This requires a lot of confidence and is often the hardest skill to master.

Core skills

Teamwork

Teamwork is essential in any organisation no matter what level you work at. To have a successful career you must be able to get on and work with others, whether you lead or work in a team.

Working successfully within a team shows that you are personable and can work with many different types of people, you have no doubt done while out on duty during your time with LINKS.

Core skills

Loyalty

Loyalty is important to employers, especially if you are applying to join a graduate scheme.

Employers will invest a large amount of time and money in you during a graduate scheme and they want to be reassured that you will be loyal enough to stay with them after you have finished the scheme. The fact that you have voluntarily given your time each week to help others is a great way to prove your sticking power.

Core skills

Motivation

Employers want to know your motivation for wanting to work for their company, so ensure you make it clear in an interview why you are so keen.

By volunteering with LINKS you have already shown that you are a highly motivated individual. Giving up your time to do something which isn't paid and helps others requires high motivation and passion - make sure your prospective employer is aware of this.

Core skills

Leadership

As previously stated, most graduate schemes look to recruit their future leaders. And for employers, being able to lead a team is a highly desirable skill.

Leading a team links with communication and teamwork and, if done well, can make you highly successful. So whether you were leading a duty or were the Chair of your committee, be sure to shout about it in your interview!

Core skills

Information technology

This may seem like a strange skill for employers to look for, but being able to use a computer is often a key professional skill.

Nearly every job will involve using a computer, and being able to use email effectively and word process quickly and efficiently is a useful skill to have. If you don't have these skills then you will need additional training and won't be able to walk straight into your job.

Finally, if you want a career in information technology, then these skills are essential as a starting point!

Core skills

Time management

Time management is an essential skill that employers will expect you to have. Evidence of good time management will demonstrate your ability to both manage a varied workload and to complete tasks in a timely fashion.

This competency also shows that you are able to attend meetings and appointments on time - the last thing people want is to have to wait for you to turn up!

The skill of time management is simple to grasp and easy to prove by arriving at your interview on time!

Core skills

Working under pressure

It is likely that at some point in your career you will be under pressure to deliver a task to a deadline or standard. The ability to deal with this pressure and to deliver results of a high standard on time is essential to a successful career.

It is likely that you will have encountered this during your university career, so think back to times when you have finished coursework under pressure, and apply the same approach to your working life.

As a St John Ambulance volunteer, you will often be under pressure to make quick decisions when treating a casualty. This experience of a pressured environment will allow you to build the skills to cope and to show your prospective employer that you won't crumble when the going gets tough.

Core skills

Other skills

There are likely to be other skills specific to your area of work and therefore there are blank boxes on each activity sheet to fill these in.

Remember the work you do with LINKS can only aid your success in demonstrating these skills.

Your activities

Activity (including date, location and details)

Communication		Teamwork	
Loyalty		Motivation	
Information tech.		Leading	
Time management		Work under pressure	
Patient centred care (medics)			

Training

This section allows you to record all of the training you have received during the time you have been a St John Ambulance member. This lets others to identify the level to which you have trained as well as the dedication you have. It also enables you to determine when certain qualifications need to be re-qualified.

This section can be used for formal and informal training received.

Some LINKS members have the ability to train other members informally during meeting nights as well as formally in professional qualifications needed to be a first aider and this section also allows for this to be recorded.

Remember that some skills gained through training may relate to the core competency section as well.

CV and interviews with the aid of SJA

When you come to write a CV or fill in an application form for a job it can be a daunting prospect. How do you find activities to fill in all those boxes on the application form to show where you have lead a team etc.

Well, with the aid of this portfolio you are one step forward - a lot of the activities you undertake with St John Ambulance directly relate to the core competencies employers look for, and with the aid of the activities section you have identified what you have done and where it fits in.

This section gives you top tips on CVs and interviews, as well as giving advice on how to explain what you do with St John Ambulance to someone who has never encountered the organisation before.

My CV

You could mention St John Ambulance LINKS in several places on your CV, so make sure you really focus on the areas where it has the most benefit, and don't put it everywhere.

Having a section headed Voluntary work is a good idea, as this focuses employers on the fact that you are prepared to give up your time, energy and learn something new for free. Not everyone will have this section so it sets you apart from the rest.

Skills/Interests/Hobbies is another section where LINKS naturally fits. Use this to emphasise core skills such as leadership, teamwork and personal development and achievement.

Use words and phrases such as::

- Excellent communication skills at all levels
- Motivated and able to lead a team
- Organised, reliable and trustworthy
- Adaptable and a good team player
- Confident
- Capable committee member.

CV hints and tips

A great place to source information is your university career service. They can offer advice and will go through your CV with you to ensure it's fit for purpose. Details of your career service can usually be found on your university website.

There are also many websites which can offer help and advice, some of which are listed on the Further help page.

Top tips

- Keep your CV to no more than two sides of A4
- Ensure it is precise and to the point
- Don't lie, keep to the facts
- Target it to your desired career area
- Keep your CV up to date.

Standard CV sections *(source: www.direct.gov.uk)*

- Personal and contact information
- Education and qualifications
- Work history
- Skills relevant to the job
- Interests
- References.

Giving an example

In application forms or interviews, you may be asked to give specific examples of situations where you have developed or used your skills and abilities. This can seem really daunting, especially if you don't have a lot of work experience, but here is an example of how you could show how your time in LINKS can help:

Give an example of how you resolved conflict within a team.

'During my time on the committee of LINKS we had to agree on the day of the new meeting night. This caused conflict as some of the committee wanted a Tuesday and others wanted a Thursday for various reasons. To resolve the conflict I went round the group asking for their preference and the reasons. By doing this it allowed everyone to know where people stood. In the end we were able to come to a compromise and picked Thursday but at a slightly later time which suited everyone. The committee went away happy and it set us up for a good year.'

Jargon buster

Just because you know the importance and meaning of terms like LINKS, PTA and ETA, this doesn't mean your future employer does. To them it's like another language! So to help you out here's how to put the words we use into everyday language so those interviewing you understand exactly what you do.

'I'm a member of LINKS'

I am a member of St John Ambulance LINKS, the student volunteering section of St John Ambulance, the nation's leading first aid charity.

'I'm a St John Ambulance LINKS Trainer'

I am a trainer for St John Ambulance, which means I have passed an assessment to train others in the necessary skills to qualify to be a first aider.

'I'm the Chair of my local LINKS unit'

As chair of my LINKS unit I manage a team of people who make up my committee. We make every decision regarding our unit and members to ensure they receive the correct training in an enjoyable environment. If any issues arise, it is my responsibility to resolve them in an appropriate way.

Interview hints and tips

Again, a great place to start is your university career service. There are also many websites which can offer help and advice - a simple internet search will throw loads up, but some are listed on the further help page.

Top tips

- Re-read your CV or application form beforehand to make sure you know what you wrote!
- Listen to the question asked fully and make sure your answer covers every part
- Do not stray from the question asked by the interviewer
- If you don't hear all of a question ask for it to be repeated
- First impressions count, so dress appropriately for the environment you will be working in
- If you have any questions about the job, ask them - this is your only chance to find out if the job is right for you
- Finally act natural and be yourself.

Self-review

This section is to review how you have done during the year, identify areas for improvement, and create an action plan to help you to do this in the next six months. This will also help you to answer employers that ask about your strengths and weaknesses.

You can set yourself an action plan which challenges you to complete new objectives before your next six monthly review. This can even be incorporated into the Amalfi Challenge to help you gain the award.

The best people to review with you are the Chair of your unit or your CSO LINKS, depending on your role, as they will have a good knowledge of how you work in different situations.

Once your action plan has been set you have the ability to get it signed off to ensure the self-review process continues with momentum. This will ensure that future employers know that you are constantly challenging yourself to improve.

Action plan

My action plan:

Competencies identified:

Reviewer's comments:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Member's comments:

Further help

Useful websites:

- www.direct.gov.uk (search for CV/interview)
- www.cvtips.com
- Your university career's website.

As well as the application pack (personal specification and job description), the website of the organisation to which you are applying will often detail how the interview will be carried out, key skills they look for etc.

If you have any feedback or questions about this pack, please send an email to team@links.sja.org.uk

Appendix 1:

Medic hints and tips

Start building your portfolio of these essential skills from early in your medical school career, it is easy to forget what you achieved unless you record it!

The following pages allow you to document those activities which have led to you demonstrating certain skills that you can refer to at a later date.

Include details of both clinical and non-clinical situations. Many of the questions explicitly state your answers should relate to non-clinical areas.

In addition to the rest of this LINKS portfolio, use the following pages to note down any specific LINKS activities, training, events or patients which demonstrate your achievements in key areas.

Don't underestimate your achievements, you may not think that, for example, running the radio communications for a LINKS event is particularly flash, but how many non-LINKS medical students will have done that?

Medic question examples

On first glance, application form questions can appear daunting and difficult. Try to break the question down and highlight which specific skills it is aiming at – then you can tailor your answer to these key areas.

Have a look at the following questions, all real examples from the 2009 application forms, and think how your LINKS

achievements and experiences could be used to answer them.

Draw on all your experiences including:

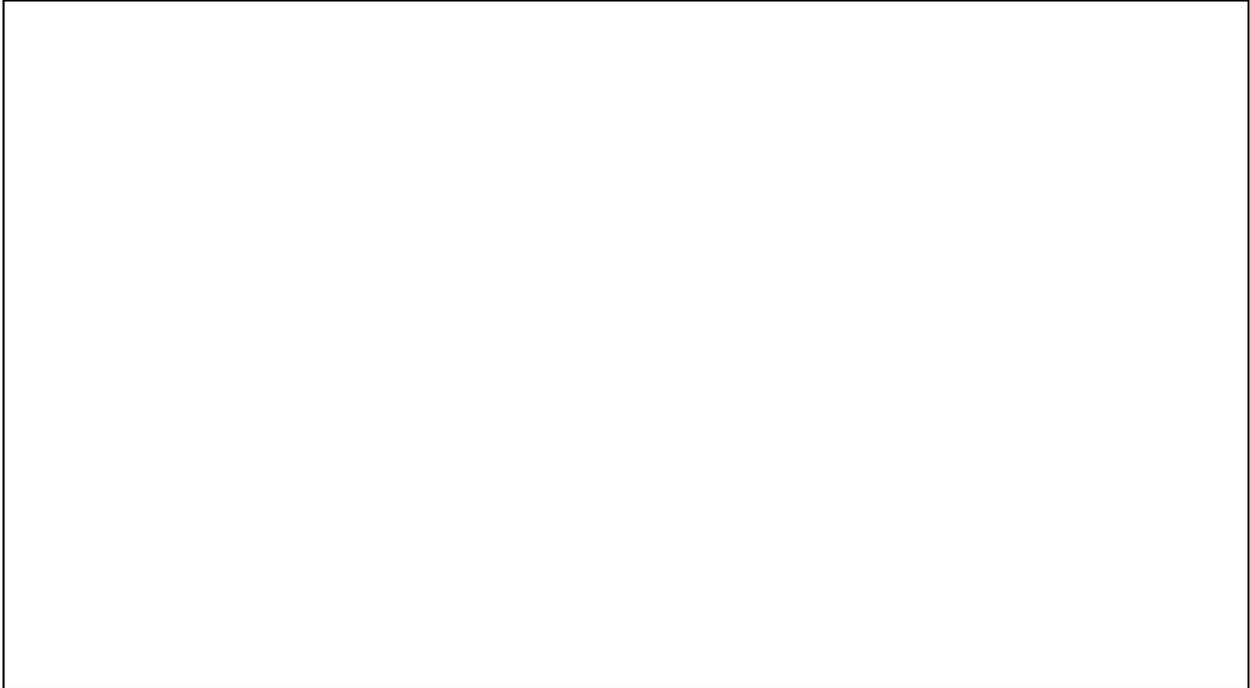
- Running training nights
- Providing first aid cover
- Radio communications
- Training received
- Working with other healthcare professionals
- Youth work
- Leading units and people
- Resolving conflicts
- Interacting with patients.

Questions

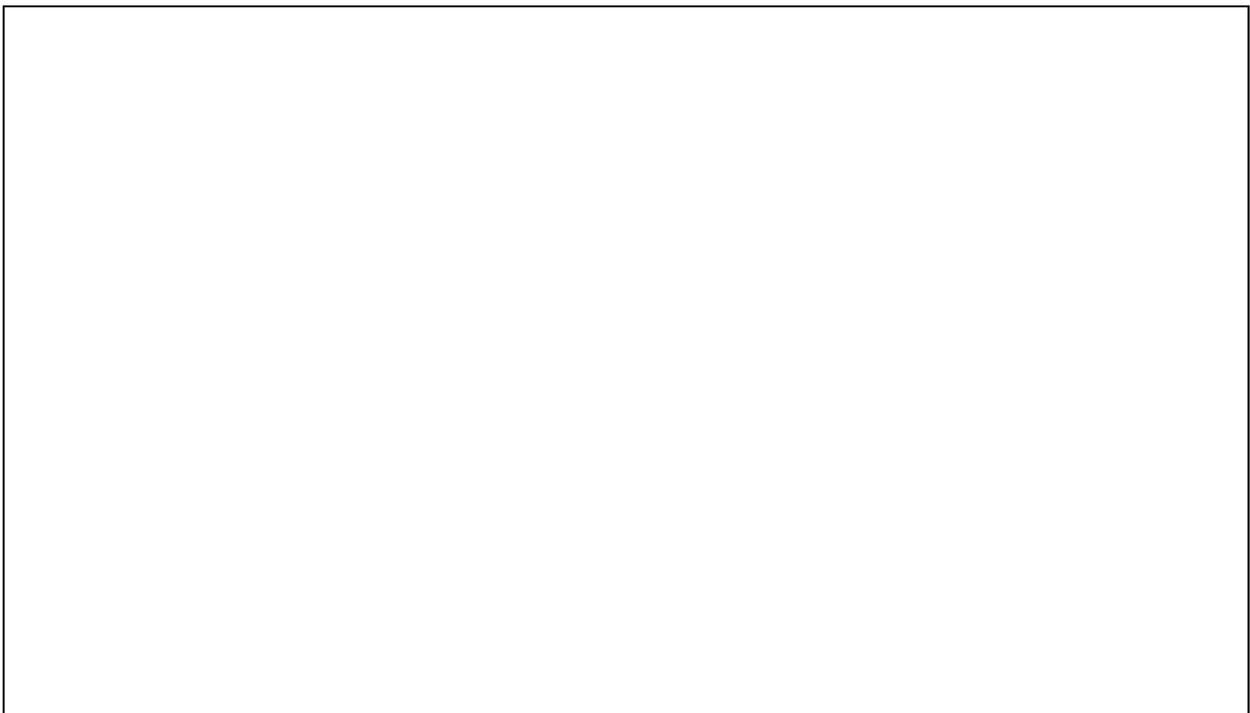
1. Describe a situation, not necessarily clinical, where you personally felt challenged and under pressure. Describe how you responded. What did you learn from this experience and how will this benefit you as a foundation doctor?



2. Describe one of your non-academic achievements. Explain clearly why this was an achievement for you. What did you learn from this achievement and how will this influence your approach to patient care?



3. Describe one example, not necessarily clinical, that has increased your understanding of team working. Describe your role and how you contributed to the team. What have you learned and how will you apply this to working with colleagues as a foundation doctor?



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