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Online portfolio

1. Introduction

This portfolio provides a critical synthesis of my learning across four interconnected module units—Brand You, It Is a Small World, Opportunity Knocks, and The Pursuit of Happiness—and assesses how each unit enhanced my employability in the health and social care sector. These units helped me build a clearer professional identity, understand how important social and professional networks are, find and evaluate job opportunities, and realise how important wellbeing is for maintaining good practice. This is in line with the employability model, which says that personal growth, self-awareness, and job-specific skills are all important for future professional success (Lorraine and Sewell, 2007). The portfolio features critical reflections supported by academic literature and evidence of my online participation, demonstrating my development in knowledge, confidence, and self-awareness, which prepares me for future success in the health and social care field.

2. Task 1: Reflection on Unit 1 – Brand You

Unit 1, Brand You, emphasized the significance of actively developing my personal brand in my future health and social care career. Initially, I viewed "branding" as solely applicable to businesses or celebrities. However, the lectures and activities revealed that my personal brand is conveyed daily through my values, actions, and online presence, which is crucial in a profession where trust, communication, and professionalism are essential.

The first important idea that was looked at was personal brand identity. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) says that personal branding is the process of intentionally showing off your strengths, values, and professional traits to make a consistent and trustworthy impression. I figured out what kind of health and social care professional I want to be by doing self-reflection activities on Moodle. These include being empathetic, responsible, and able to communicate well. For instance, in a group discussion task, I showed empathy by listening carefully to a classmate who was unsure about what to do with their career and giving them comfort

based on my own experiences. Linking my traits to known standards, like the NHS values of compassion and respect, helped me better understand what I want my personal brand to stand for (NHS England, 2022). The second important idea was to figure out what my strengths and values are. The National Careers Service says that people who know their strengths and skills are more confident and better prepared to move up in their careers (National Careers Service, 2025). I learnt that teamwork, adaptability, and active listening are important skills for person-centred environments through this activity. For instance, I showed that I could adapt when my group switched roles at the last minute for a Moodle task. I took on a leadership role to make sure the work got done on time. Recognizing a need for improvement in assertiveness, the author acknowledges difficulty in expressing needs or disagreements due to fear of conflict. This challenge has led to taking on excessive work in group settings, resulting in a decrease in self-confidence. Consequently, the author has set a growth goal to enhance assertiveness through practice and feedback.

Digital presence and online professionalism were two other important things I learnt. The National Protective Security Authority (NPSA) says that digital footprints can have a significant impact on how employers judge someone (NPSA, 2023). Before this unit, I had not thought about how old posts, incorrect information on my profile, or an incomplete LinkedIn account could hurt my chances of getting a job. At first, I had trouble because I did not know how to professionally present myself online without feeling fake. To enhance my online identity, I revamped my LinkedIn profile by updating my profile picture, rewriting my headline to reflect my interest in health and social care, adding a summary of my values and career goals, and including relevant coursework and volunteer work. These modifications improved the consistency and positivity of my online presence, aligning with my personal brand.

Week 2 Forum -> Self-Awareness
by Kristela Sechou Or Shehu - Thursday, 23 October 2025, 11:39 AM

Why Self-Awareness Is Important:

1. **Improves communication and relationships:**
   When professionals are aware of their tone, body language, and reactions, they can communicate more effectively and build trust with service users, families, and colleagues.
2. **Enhances empathy and understanding:**
   Self-aware practitioners can better understand and respect others' feelings and perspectives, which leads to more person-centred and compassionate care.
3. **Promotes professional growth:**
   Reflecting on one's actions and performance helps identify areas for improvement, encouraging continuous learning and development.
4. **Supports emotional regulation:**
   Working in health and social care can be emotionally demanding. Self-awareness helps professionals manage stress and avoid letting emotions like frustration or sadness affect their work.
5. **Prevents bias and ensures fairness:**
   By recognising their own values and beliefs, professionals can avoid allowing personal opinions to influence the way they treat service users, ensuring equality and respect for all.

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Week 6 Forum -> Why Communication Matters in Health and Social Care
by Kristela Sechou Or Shehu - Friday, 21 November 2025, 12:08 PM

Good communication is one of the most powerful tools in the health and social care sector. Whether supporting patients, families, or colleagues, clear communication helps build trust and improves the quality of care. Many challenges in this field—such as misunderstandings, delays, or emotional stress—can be reduced when professionals communicate openly and respectfully.In today's diverse communities, it is also important to adapt communication to different cultures, ages, and needs. This includes using simple language, active listening, and being patient. Strong communication not only improves teamwork but also ensures that service users feel heard, valued, and safe.In the end, effective communication is not just a skill—it's a key part of delivering compassionate and person-centred care.

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3.Task 2: Reflection on Unit 2 – It is a Small World

Unit 2, "It's a Small World," explores the increasing interconnectedness of health and social care systems and the necessity for professionals to collaborate across cultural, national, and organizational boundaries. The insights from lectures and online activities shifted the author's perspective on globalization from a focus on trade and economics to recognizing its impact on the healthcare workforce, professional values, and service delivery. It highlighted the significance of cultural diversity, global mobility, and international collaboration in the everyday work of health and social care professionals.

The initial concept examined was globalisation in health and social care. The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that globalisation makes it possible for healthcare workers, knowledge, and services to move across borders, which changes the way health systems work around the world (WHO, 2010). I learnt about problems like international recruitment, not having enough workers, and how migration affects the NHS through the online tasks. This made me realise that health and social care professionals of the future need to be flexible, aware of other cultures, and able to work in environments that are affected by the world.

Cultural competence and diversity awareness were the second most important ideas. Health Education England says that culturally competent care makes communication better, cuts down on inequalities, and makes person-centred practice stronger (Health Education England, 2021). Thinking about this unit helped me understand how important it is to recognise and respect the different beliefs, languages, and experiences that service users bring to care settings. One real-life example of this happened when I worked with a classmate who did not speak English as their first language on a group project. I changed how I talked by speaking more slowly and making sure everyone understood, which made it easier for us to work together. This experience gave me more faith in my ability to help people from diverse cultures than my own. The concept of cultural humility emphasizes lifelong self-reflection and openness, contrasting with cultural competence, which focuses on knowledge of other cultures. It underscores the importance of continuous learning from others, acknowledging the limitations of one's cultural understanding.

The third critical point was that countries should work together to solve global health problems. The NHS Confederation says that global health partnerships let countries share what they know, trade current ideas, and make their care systems better (NHS Confederation, 2020). I thought about how global problems like pandemics, an ageing population, and health inequalities need cooperation between countries while talking about them in online forums. This helped me understand that health and social care workers need to know about more than just the needs of their own area. They also need to know about global trends that affect how things are done in the UK. Globalization presents challenges, such as communication difficulties among speakers of different languages and the unfairness experienced by low-income countries losing skilled workers to wealthier nations. Working with diverse cultures necessitates ongoing sensitivity, moral awareness, and flexibility.

Week 5 Forum -> What a "Serendipity Mindset" Means
by Kristela Sechou Or Shehu - Friday, 21 November 2025, 11:49 AM

A "serendipity mindset" is the attitude and approach of recognising unexpected opportunities and turning them into positive outcomes. Rather than relying only on careful planning or waiting for things to happen by chance, it means being open-minded, curious, and ready to act when something unplanned arises. It's about seeing a chance encounter, a surprising piece of information, or an unexpected event, and asking: "What possibility could this lead to?"

With a serendipity mindset, you cultivate certain habits: staying alert to what's around you, being willing to try new things, embracing uncertainty, and making connections between ideas or people that initially seem unrelated. The key point is that you don't regard surprises as just noise or setbacks — you view them as potential gateways to new paths.

In short: it's "smart luck" — creating your own favourable chances and being ready to make the most of them, rather than purely waiting for good luck to come your way.

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Week 6 Forum -> How Someone Can Open Doors for Job Opportunities
by Kristela Sechou Or Shehu - Friday, 21 November 2025, 12:00 PM

Opening doors for job opportunities often starts with being proactive and creating your own chances. One of the most effective ways is by building a strong network. Connecting with professionals, attending workshops, volunteering, or joining online groups can help you meet people who may guide you toward job openings. Employers often prefer candidates who show enthusiasm and initiative, so staying engaged and visible is important.

Another way is by improving your skills and gaining experience. Taking short courses, completing training, or doing work placements helps you build confidence and makes your CV stronger. Updating your CV and LinkedIn profile regularly also helps you present yourself professionally. Finally, staying positive, open-minded, and willing to learn can lead to unexpected opportunities. Sometimes opportunities appear when you least expect them — as long as you stay prepared.

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4.Reflection on Unit 3: Opportunity Knocks

Unit 3, Opportunity Knocks, emphasized the importance of recognizing and seizing opportunities for growth in health and social care. Initially, the focus was primarily on job openings, but through lectures and online tasks, a broader understanding emerged. Opportunities also encompass training, reflective learning, volunteering, networking, and skill development. This realization highlighted the necessity of proactive career building rather than passively waiting for opportunities.

One important idea that was looked at was figuring out what basic skills the health and social care workforce needs. The Skills for Health Core Skills Training Framework lists important skills and behaviours, such as communication, infection control, safeguarding, and confidentiality (Skills for Health, 2022). Thinking about this framework helped me see what I am already good at, like being empathetic, working well with others, and communicating. It also helped me see what I need to work on, like getting better at using technology and being surer of my decisions. Learning about these requirements helped me see how important these skills are for giving safe, effective, and person-centred care.

Another important topic was looking into career paths in the field. UCAS gives detailed information about jobs in health, social care, and childcare, such as the skills needed, the duties of the job, and the chances for advancement (UCAS, 2025a). I learnt more about jobs like health support worker, care coordinator, and community health

assistant through the activities in the unit. When I compared these options to my strengths, I saw that my patience and strong people skills are a good fit for jobs that involve working directly with clients. I have already taken one step towards these roles by taking an online safeguarding workshop through my course's Moodle resources. This helped me build on what I already knew and made me feel more confident about future roles. By the end of the next school term, I will complete an accredited online course in digital literacy and upload the certificate to my LinkedIn profile, turning vague plans into measurable steps for improvement.

A third important idea was learning about the roles of public health and professional networks. The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) says that networking, mentorship, and getting involved in the community can all help people get into training and advance their careers (RSPH, 2021). I learnt from this unit that networking does not have to happen at formal events. It can also happen in course forums, LinkedIn groups, while volunteering, or just by interacting with other people in my learning environment. I made a slight change to my LinkedIn headline to show that I am interested in health and social care, and I connected with classmates from my course to show that I am starting to build my professional network. The Planned Happenstance Theory emphasizes the importance of being open to unexpected opportunities and actively creating favourable "chance events" in one’s career. This perspective highlights how minor actions, such as participating in forums or reading additional articles, can lead to unforeseen possibilities. However, the author acknowledges challenges like confidence issues and time management obstacles when pursuing new experiences. To address these challenges, they intend to dedicate one hour weekly to career development activities and gradually build confidence through small, manageable steps like engaging in tutorials and casual discussions.

Week 7 Forum -> Positive Self-Talk for Each Limiting Belief
by Kristela Sechou Or Shehu - Friday, 21 November 2025, 12:14 PM

- *"I am not smart enough"* → "I am capable of learning and improving every day."
- *"Other people's needs are more important than mine"* → "My needs matter too, and taking care of myself helps me support others better."
- *"I don't have enough time"* → "I can prioritise what's important and use my time effectively."
- *"I can't do that because..."* → "I can try, and I can always learn or ask for help if I need to."
- *"I will look silly if..."* → "Trying new things shows courage, and making mistakes is part of learning."
- *"I don't have the money..."* → "I can plan, save, and look for affordable options or opportunities."
- *"I'm too old"* → "It's never too late to learn something new or start a new goal."
- *"I don't have enough experience/qualifications"* → "Experience comes with practice, and qualifications can be achieved step-by-step."
- *"Someone else can probably do this better than me"* → "I bring my own strengths and unique abilities to this task."

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Week 7 Forum -> Reflection on My Quiz Results
by Kristela Sechou Or Shehu - Friday, 21 November 2025, 12:13 PM

After completing the quiz on limiting beliefs, I recognised several patterns in my thinking that might be holding me back. The questions focused on how I view my abilities, how I handle criticism, and how open I am to new opportunities. Looking back, I realise I often hesitate when given a chance outside my comfort zone and doubt whether I deserve success.

One key insight for me is that these limiting beliefs don't define my future—they simply point to areas I can work on. I now feel motivated to challenge thoughts like "I'm not ready" or "I will fail," and instead replace them with "What can I learn?" and "I'm capable of growth."

In health and social care, overcoming these beliefs is especially important because the role often demands confidence, adaptability, and strong interpersonal skills. By shifting my mindset, I can better support others, take on new responsibilities, and grow in the profession.

I will use this quiz result as a starting point: I plan to identify one specific belief, write it down, and actively replace it with a positive statement each day for the next week. I'll reflect again afterward to see how I feel and how my behaviour changes.

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5.Reflection on Unit 4: The Pursuit of Happiness

Unit 4, The Pursuit of Happiness, stressed how important mental health, resilience, and well-being are in health and social care, both personally and professionally. Before this unit, I thought of wellbeing mostly as something that only affected one person. But the module's activities and supporting literature showed that well-being is an important part of safe, ethical, and long-term care (NHS England, 2021). This made me realise that I need to put my own mental and emotional health first to give compassionate, consistent, and effective care.

One of the main topics was health, safety, and support systems at work. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) says that easy-to-use mental and emotional health support services, like counselling, peer support programs, and wellbeing hubs, are important for keeping staff healthy and preventing burnout (RCN, 2023). As I thought about this, I realised that a supportive workplace is important and that as a future professional, I have a duty to push for wellness programs for both me and my coworkers. This reflection highlights the importance of recognizing early signs of stress, as experienced during a challenging school period when balancing deadlines and

personal responsibilities. It underscores how quickly burnout can occur and emphasizes the need for effective coping strategies.

Another important idea was how to handle stress and be strong. Health Education England (HEE) says that resilience is a set of skills that can be learnt, such as how to deal with stress, be assertive, and adapt to new situations (HEE, 2021). I discovered specific stress triggers, like tight deadlines and fear of making mistakes, through reflective exercises. I also started to produce ways to make myself more resilient. I plan to use practical tools like journaling to deal with my feelings, time-blocking to make my workload more manageable, and reflective logs to keep track of my health. I also want to use supervision in my future practice settings because it gives me structured emotional support and guidance.

The unit also talked about mental health and self-care as part of being a skilled professional. NHS UK (2024) advocates for evidence-based approaches, including consistent physical activity, fostering social connections, engaging in mindfulness practices, and identifying early indicators of emotional distress. Learning about these strategies helped me make a self-care plan that will help me stay healthy during tough times, especially since many health and social care jobs require a lot of emotional work. In this unit, the focus on emotional intelligence (EI) highlighted its significance in recognizing and responding to feelings, particularly during a group activity where a classmate felt overwhelmed. The experience underscored the value of empathy and trust in helping others. Additionally, it emphasized that wellbeing should not solely be an individual responsibility; organizations must also ensure healthy workplaces through supportive management and adequate resources. Acknowledging both personal and organizational roles in wellbeing will inform future perspectives on workplace culture.

Week 4 Forum -> Why Networking Is Important in Health and Social Care
by Kristela Sechou Or Shehu - Friday, 21 November 2025, 11:24 AM

I think increasing networking in health and social care is important because it helps professionals share knowledge, improve communication, and work better together to support service users. When different agencies and practitioners connect, it becomes easier to coordinate care, solve problems, and learn from each other's experience. Networking also helps build trust and strengthens partnerships, which is essential when working with vulnerable individuals and families.There are many ways to increase networking. For example, attending training sessions, workshops, and professional events can help you meet new people in the field. Using online platforms, joining professional groups, and taking part in team meetings or multi-agency discussions can also create opportunities to connect. Even simple things like asking questions, sharing ideas, and collaborating with colleagues can help build strong networking skills over time.

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Week 3 Forum -> Networking Map and Reflection – Sheela's Case Study
by Kristela Sechou Or Shehu - Friday, 24 October 2025, 12:24 PM

- Background:
  - Sheela is a new graduate with a Master's in Public Health.
  - She has six years of experience working in the NHS Gynaecology ward in Tower Hamlets.
  - During her work, she noticed that many women were reluctant to breastfeed and preferred top feeds.
  - She is interested in researching women's perceptions of breastfeeding but does not know where to start.
- Networking Map – Who Sheela Can Connect With:
  - Academic contacts: University supervisors, public health lecturers, and research ethics committee members for guidance on research design and approval.
  - Healthcare professionals: Midwives, health visitors, and lactation consultants for insights into breastfeeding support and challenges.
  - Community networks: Local mother-and-baby groups, breastfeeding support charities (e.g., La Leche League) for real-life experiences and perspectives.
  - Policy and research organisations: Public Health England, NHS Health Promotion teams, NICE, or WHO breastfeeding initiatives for data and policy direction.
  - Professional associations: Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH), UK Public Health Register (UKPHR), and ResearchGate for professional development and collaboration.
  - Peers and alumni: Fellow MPH graduates and former NHS colleagues for shared learning and emotional support.
- Reflection:
  - Sheela's case shows how vital networking is for new researchers moving from clinical work into academic research.
  - Building connections can help her gain mentorship, access reliable data, and improve her confidence in conducting research.
  - Networking across academia, healthcare, and community sectors will give her a broader understanding of breastfeeding perceptions.
  - Effective networking is not just about advancing one's career—it's about collaboration, learning, and sharing expertise.
  - Through active engagement, Sheela can transform uncertainty into opportunity and make meaningful contributions to women's health research.

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6.Conclusion

This module has significantly enhanced my understanding of building a sustainable career in health and social care. Through the exploration of my personal values, professional identity, and the importance of wellbeing, I recognize that effective practice extends beyond technical skills to include reflection, adaptability, and personal growth. The integration of theory and practical resources has equipped me to advance my career. I plan to enhance my employability by seeking volunteer opportunities, improving my LinkedIn profile, and pursuing CPD courses in digital literacy and communication, aiming to contribute to person-centred care and develop as a resilient health and social care professional.

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