

Recruitment, Training and Support of Social Work Practice Educators

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the recruitment, training and support available to social work practice educators within Children and Young People's Services.

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1. The value of practice education

Children and Young People's Services recognises the critical role of practice educators in developing the social work workforce of the future.

In his review of social work education Professor Croisdale Appleby stated "It is the quality of the placement and the supervision received that is most frequently cited both by students and recently qualified social workers as key in the initial formation of their own professional practice" (from Re-visioning social work education: an independent review, 2014)

By providing high quality placement experiences in a statutory environment, we can best prepare students for post qualification practice in a Local Authority.

Social work students also contribute to the work of the Children and Young People's Services by carrying out a range of activities, and by helping to keep practice educators, and the teams they are placed in, up-to-date with developing theories and evidence-based practice.

2. Commitment to the provision of practice placements

Children and Young People's Services is committed to providing placements that support the qualifying social work programmes of our partner Universities and Colleges. These are:

- Durham University
- Step Up to Social Work Programme
- New College Durham
- University of Northumbria
- Open University
- University of Sunderland
- Teesside University
- Think Ahead
- Front Line programme

3. Commitment to maintain and increase capacity for social work student placements

Children and Young People's Services aims to maintain, and where possible, increase capacity to support social work placements. To enable us to meet this objective we:

- Invest in qualifications to enable social workers to become practice educators.
- Support the continuing professional development of existing practice educators.
- Reward those involved in the support of student placements with payments of:
 - £10 per placement day to on-site practice educators.
 - £7 per placement day to off-site practice educators.
 - £3 per placement day to on-site practice supervisors.
- Invest in resources to support students and practice educators.

4. The role of the on-site practice educator

Children and Young People's Services is committed to providing the vast majority of placements through on-site practice educators. This is recognised as the most valuable learning experience for social work students.

The on-site practice educator will:

- Meet with the prospective student before the start of the placement to discuss learning opportunities

- Prepare the team, office, induction programme and service users for the arrival of the student.
- Support the student to access the induction checklist
- Agree training opportunities, which could support the learning and development needs of the student. Students are entitled to access training from the Service, Corporate and ICT learning and development programmes.
- Ensure the student is aware of the [Research Approval process](#)
- Meet with the student and University representative to draw up the practice learning agreement and for any other placement related meetings.
- Provide daily caseload management supervision and support, in addition to allocated time for supervision sessions.
- Provide the student with appropriate work and learning opportunities.
- Share skills and knowledge to support the student to undertake social work tasks, including how legislation and theory underpin practice.
- Directly observe the student in practice.
- Give the student regular and clear feedback on progress.
- Assess the student's competence to practice.
- Work with the student to prepare progress and assessment reports in line with the standards of the University the student is attending. Ensure reports are completed to a high standard and are submitted on time.
- Alert both the student and relevant learning and development officer and University tutor to any areas which give cause for concern, and in particular, if there are concerns which may mean that the student will not pass the placement.
- Contact the relevant learning and development officer and University tutor immediately if there is a need to end the placement.

5. The role of the off-site practice educator

A small number of placements are provided by a combination of off-site practice educator and on-site practice supervisor. These can increase placement capacity by allowing teams to support a student where there an on-site practice educator is not available.

The off-site practice educator will:

- Meet with the prospective student and practice supervisor before the start of the placement to discuss learning opportunities
- Support the student to access the induction checklist
- Together with the on-site practice supervisor, organise the student induction into the agency

- Agree training opportunities which could support the learning and development needs of the student. Students are entitled to access training from the Service, corporate and ICT learning and development programmes.
- Ensure the student is aware of the [Research Approval process](#)
- Meet with the student and practice supervisor and University representative to draw up the practice learning agreement. Maintain contact with the Practice Supervisor throughout the placement ensuring a flow of communication in relation to the students.
- Allocate time for supervision sessions.
- Share skills and knowledge to support the student to undertake social work tasks, including how legislation and theory underpin practice.
- Directly observe the student in practice.
- Give the student regular and clear feedback on progress.
- Assess the student's competence to practice.
- Work with the student to prepare progress and assessment reports in line with the standards of the University the student is attending. Ensure reports are completed to a high standard and are submitted on time.
- Alert both the student and relevant learning and development officer and University tutor to any areas which give cause for concern, and in particular, if there are concerns which may mean that the student will not pass the placement.
- Contact the relevant learning and development officer, practice supervisor and University tutor immediately if there is a need to end the placement.

6. The role of the on-site practice supervisor

A small number of placements are provided by a combination of off-site practice educators and on-site link workers. These can increase placement capacity by allowing teams to support a student where there an on-site practice educator is not available.

The on-site practice supervisor will:

- Meet with the prospective student and off-site practice educator before the start of the placement to ensure the placement is appropriate.
- Prepare the team, office, and service users for the arrival of the student.
- Together with the off-site practice educator, organise the student induction into the agency.
- Support the student to access the induction checklist
- Meet with the student, off-site practice educator and University representative to draw up the practice learning agreement.

- Maintain contact with the Practice Supervisor throughout the placement ensuring a flow of communication in relation to the students.
- Provide daily caseload management supervision and support, in addition to allocated time for supervision sessions.
- Provide the student with appropriate work and learning opportunities.
- Share skills and knowledge to support the student to undertake social work tasks, including how legislation and theory underpin practice.
- Give the student regular and clear feedback on progress.
- Alert both the student and the off-site practice educator to any areas which give cause for concern, and in particular, if there are concerns which may mean that the student will not pass the placement.
- Contact the off-site practice educator and relevant learning and development officer and University tutor immediately if there is a need to end the placement.

7. The practice educator professional standards

The practice educator professional standards (PEPS) outline requirements for practice educators of social work students across England.

Under the standards, all practice educators must:

- Be registered social workers with at least 2 years' social work experience.
- Be able to meet the capabilities within the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) as an experienced social worker.
- Be appropriately qualified.
 - Stage 1 practice educators are able to supervise, teach and assess social work degree students up to but **not including** the final assessment prior to qualification.
 - Stage 2 practice educators are able to supervise, teach and assess social work degree students including the final placement. All off-site practice educators must have achieved a stage 2 practice educator qualification.
- Have continued to regularly practice as a practice educator (have had direct responsibility for at least one student in the last two years or had relevant experience in practice education).

8. Access to practice educator qualifications

The Children and Young People's Service Learning and Development Plan supports continued investment in practice educator qualifications.

Applications to undertake practice educator training are encouraged from all registered social workers who:

- Have at least 2 years' social work experience.
- Are able to meet the capabilities within the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) as an experienced social worker.
- Have capacity, enthusiasm for and commitment to supporting others to develop. This would involve supervising a student on a regular basis to maintain currency.
- Have the support of their manager to undertake the programme.

Expressions of interest can be made at any time during the year by contacting the relevant learning and development officer or learning and development support officer. Further information and an application form can be found in the [Workforce Section of the Durham Children's Services Procedures Manual](#).

9. Maintaining currency as a practice educator/supervisor

The Service supports practice educators and supervisors to maintain their currency by:

- Offering annual opportunities to support student placements.
- Encouraging practice educators and supervisors to attend a range of workshops on issues on practice education and supporting students offered by partner Universities.