

Social Work student Placements

Policy of the provision of social work student placements

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Hoople Ltd. and Herefordshire Council

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Practice Learning Facilitator

1. Context

- 1.1 Practice based learning is a core component of social work education. Good quality placements with experienced Workplace Supervisors and qualified Practice Educators are key government and local strategies to equip students with the skills, knowledge, capability and emotional resilience for front line practice.
- 1.2 The requirement for practice placements in the professional education of social work students is set out in the Department of Health Requirements for Social Work Training (2002), the Health and Care Professions Council's Standards of Education and Training (2012), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statement for Social Work (2008) and the former College of Social Work's Practice Learning Guidance (no date).
- 1.3 Herefordshire Council has an agreement with Hoople Ltd. to arrange social work student placements on behalf of Adults and Childrens Wellbeing Directorates. This policy provides an overview of the council's position on placements and covers guiding principles, partnership arrangements, requirements, quality assurance and finances.
- 1.4 Reporting will be made to the joint Adults and Childrens Wellbeing development group which has direct working links to the respective workforce and practice development leads.

2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1 To provide high quality social work practice placements that support and challenge.
- 2.2 To give a rounded experience of social work practice to prepare for a career in the profession.
- 2.3 To demonstrate a commitment to social work values, an anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive approach.

2.4 Working openly and transparently with stakeholders.

2.5 Meeting the requirements of legal and registering bodies such as the Department for Education and Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

2.6 To operate a quality assurance framework in relation to:

- (i) Preparation for placement
- (ii) Providing skilled and experienced Workplace Supervisors and
- (iii) Qualified and up to date Practice Educators
- (iv) Enhancement opportunities for students on placement

2.7 To capitalise on student placements for Herefordshire Council's recruitment strategy.

3. Partnerships with Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)

3.1 The council will prioritise commitments made in its agreements with the Universities of Gloucestershire and Worcester on their undergraduate courses, the University of Worcester on its Master's course and the Regional Partnership Step Up to Social Work programme.

3.2 The agreements specify the numbers of student placements to be provided. In practice more can be arranged depending on capacity and suitability.

3.3 Due to competing pressures the HEI and council may sometimes be unable to meet its commitments. When this happens the council will communicate openly with its partner to achieve best outcomes for the student or any other situation

3.3 Depending on capacity and suitability, additional placements can be arranged on an ad hoc basis with other universities.

- 3.4 The council will always meet professional requirements for student placements and will do its best to meet HEI's aspirational standards. When this cannot be achieved the HEI will be informed and will make the final decision whether the placement should go ahead.
- 3.5 Agreements are subject to regular review and re-negotiation.

4. Quality Assurance

4.1 Practice Placements

- 4.1.1 Placements will adhere to the criteria set out in The (former) College of Social Work's (TCSW) Practice Learning Guidance (undated).
- 4.1.2 A range of placements will be developed to ensure students have a broad experience and understanding of the profession.
- 4.1.3 Allocation of placements will be done on the basis of meeting students' identified learning needs, geographical location and availability of placements.
- 4.1.4 First placements will usually be in the voluntary sector and final placements in services which carry out statutory tasks as outlined in TCSW's Practice Learning Guidance.
- 4.1.5 The Practice Learning Facilitator will pro-actively recruit new placement providers to maximise the pool available to Herefordshire Council.
- 4.1.6 Placement providers will meet Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) requirements.

4.1.7 To ensure they continue to reach the required standards, placement providers will be reviewed through Quality Assurance in Practice Learning feedback (QAPL), the HEI's placement meetings and informal contact with the Practice Learning Facilitator.

4.1.8 Placement providers will be aware of the regulatory standards students must reach to pass the placement and be able to provide opportunities to meet them.

4.1.9 Profiles about placement providers will be available for HEIs and students.

4.1.10 Profiles of Workplace Supervisors and Practice Educators will be available for HEIs and students.

4.1.11 In the event of concerns about a placement, the Practice Learning Facilitator will work jointly and pro-actively with the HEI and other stakeholders to achieve best outcomes.

4.2 Preparation

4.2.1 Students will go through the council induction for new starters when they will be issued with assets, given access to systems and complete mandatory training.

4.2.2 Students will be provided with:

- Laptop (with carry bag and charger)
- Standard mobile (with charger)
- Business parking permit

4.2.3 Cryptocards will require a business case to justify allocation.

4.2.4 Workshops for Workplace Supervisors and Practice Educators will be delivered before placements start. They will cover the information needed to arrange access to the

council induction and address housekeeping issues such as motor vehicle insurance, DBS checks, MOT and mileage claims.

4.2.4 Informal meetings can be arranged before the placement starts to allow students to meet their supervisors, team members and get to know work bases.

4.2.5 Hoople Ltd. will ensure students' Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are current and at the level required by the council.

4.2.6 Placement providers will complete HEI's health and safety and insurance documentation.

4.2.7 Placement providers will be encouraged to attend HEI placement briefing days and CPD workshops.

4.3 Practice Learning

4.3.1 The Practice Learning Facilitator will arrange a programme of regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops for Workplace Supervisors and Practice Educators to maintain latest professional Practice Education standards.

4.3.2 A programme of student development groups is arranged to provide enhanced learning opportunities relevant to the placement.

4.3.3 Students are invited to other council training where appropriate

4.4 Concerns

4.4.1 The Practice Learning Facilitator will work transparently and inclusively with the training team to resolve placement difficulties.

4.4.2 The Practice Learning Facilitator is available to the student and assessors throughout the placement.

5. Assessors

5.1 Workplace Supervisor Qualifications

5.1.1 Workplace Supervisors will meet standards outlined in Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) for Social Work (updated Dec 13) which should be referred to for clarification.

5.1.1 They will have at least two years' post-qualification experience but in voluntary sector placements will not necessarily be a Registered Social Worker.

5.1.2 In statutory services Workplace Supervisors will ideally be senior social workers who have or are working towards the Stage 1 or Stage 2 Practice Educator award.

5.1.3 Workplace Supervisors who are not working towards the Stage 1 award will work towards the Stage 1 outcomes outlined in the PEPS standards and will be supported by a Stage 2 Practice Educator, who may be off-site. In statutory services they will normally be senior social workers. The Practice Educator will have ultimate responsibility for the placement and assessment.

5.1.4 We aim not to use team managers or agency staff as Workplace Supervisors due to competing demands.

5.1.5 Workplace Supervisors will be encouraged to attend HEI placement briefing days, preparation workshops and regular CPD workshops.

5.1.6 Workplace Supervisors will be recruited to maintain the numbers required to meet the council's commitments.

5.1.7 Workplace Supervisors will provide students and HEIs with a professional profile.

5.2 Workplace Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities

5.2.1 The Workplace Supervisor is the student's point of contact in the team on a day to day basis.

5.2.2 To trigger the council induction process s/he will arrange for Notification of Appointment form to be sent to HR Business Partnering Team and ID application form to be completed. To remove the student from council systems at the end of the placement, arrange for an exit form to be filled in and sent to HR Business Partnering Team mailbox.

5.2.3 Explain the team's role and needs of the service user group.

5.2.4 Following the HEI placement handbook and adhering to the relevant policies and procedures.

5.2.5 In consultation with the Practice Educator, allocating pieces of work or arranging for them to be allocated. Retaining ultimate responsibility for cases.

5.2.6 S/he will provide daily informal supervision and fortnightly case supervision until the mid-point review then decreasing as agreed by all parties.

5.2.7 Usually carry out and document 1 direct observation of practice (often the second of three). This can be negotiated and delegated to an alternative experienced practitioner, agreed by the Practice Educator.

5.2.8 Attend university placement meetings (at the beginning, middle and end)

5.2.9 Contribute to the student's formative assessment by attending 3 way meetings with the off-site Practice Educator.

5.3 Practice Educators qualifications

5.3.1 Practice Educators will always meet standards outlined in the Practice Educator Professional Standards for Social Work (updated Dec 13) which should be referred to for clarification.

5.3.1 Final placements will always be assessed by Stage 2 Practice Educators who may be on or off-site, council employees or independent. They take the lead in the practice learning environment, liaising with the Workplace Supervisor to design and manage the learning programme in line with HEI placement handbooks.

5.3.3. The Practice Learning Facilitator is available to support and advise Practice Educators as required

5.4 Practice Educator Roles and Responsibilities

5.4.1 Stage 2 Practice Educators will provide regular reflective supervision, do the majority of direct observations (which differ according to the programme), take responsibility for collecting evidence of the student's capabilities and writing the summative assessment report.

5.4.1 In final placements where the Practice Educator is off-site, the Workplace Supervisor will always be a registered social worker with a minimum of 2 years' post qualifying experience.

- 5.4.2 The Practice Learning Facilitator will pro-actively recruit new Practice Educators to maintain the numbers required to meet the council's commitments. For council employees it will count towards their CPD.
- 5.4.3 Practice Educators will retain currency in line with the recommendations in the Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS).
- 5.4.4 The Practice Learning Facilitator will design a programme to update skills and knowledge when the Stage 2 PE has not had responsibility for a student for more than 2 years.
- 5.4.5 To ensure up to date knowledge and robust assessments, the Practice Learning Facilitator will arrange regular CPD workshops for Practice Educators.
- 5.4.6 Stage 1 Practice Educators who are registered social workers can take full responsibility for first placements.
- 5.4.7 Stage 1 qualified Practice Educators who are not registered social workers will do the role of the Workplace Supervisor with the summative assessment being done by a Stage 2 Practice Educator.
- 5.4.8 Practice Educators will provide the Practice Learning Facilitator with a professional profile for the attention of HEIs and students.

6. Finance

- 6.1 Hoople receives financial payment from the HEIs to arrange student placements. This amount pays for independent Practice Educator fees, student development groups, CPD workshops and course fees.

6.2 The Practice Learning Facilitator will set up robust financial processes to manage this budget.

7 Support from Hoople

7.1 Practice Learning Facilitator Qualifications

7.1.1 The Practice Learning Facilitator will be a Registered Social Worker with a Stage 2 Practice Educator award or its equivalent

7.2 Roles and Responsibilities

7.2.1 S/he is the point of contact between HEIs and the council, attending HEI and council meetings as required

7.2.2 S/he will arrange:

- measures to safeguard students and service users
- initial student interviews to ensure learning needs will be met in Herefordshire and to maintain a high calibre of students
- a nominated Workplace Supervisor and Practice Educator
- a work based placement to suit the learner's needs as far as possible
- learning opportunities and peer support through student development groups.
- learning opportunities and peer support through Workplace Supervisor and Practice Educator development groups
- accessible, responsive support to Practice Educators, Workplace Supervisors and students
- robust financial procedures to pay independent Practice Educators
- systems to pay council employees' honorariums when relevant
- workshops for Workplace Supervisors and Practice Educators to coordinate a consistent approach to the start of placement

