

Guidance on undertaking Observations in Practice

Oct 2024

**DOCUMENT CONTROL**

Author Lead Auditor

Department: Quality Assurance

Distribution: Internal

Review date: Sept 2018

File name / location Available from Learning Space

Contact for further information email faye.mcniven@torbay.gov.uk

**DOCUMENT HISTORY / CHANGES:**

V1 FMCN

**DOCUMENT HISTORY / CHANGES:**

V1 Faye McNiven – Draft of initial - 8 September 2017

V2 Faye McNiven – 20 September 2017

V3 Sandra Sylvester 25.10.2024

[Observations of practice of newly qualified social workers](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resources/documents/Regulated-professions/Social-work/Observations-of-practice-of-newly-qualified-social-workers.pdf)

**Guidance on Undertaking Observations of Practice and Meetings**

**Scope of the guide:**

* Managers/Principal Social Worker undertaking routine observations of a practitioner’s practice.
* Managers/Principal Social Worker undertaking observations of a practitioner’s practice as part of their annual appraisal process.
* Manager / Mentor’s/Principal Social Worker/Practice Educator undertaking observations of less experienced practitioners.
* Managers/Principal Social Worker undertaking observations of experienced practitioners who are new to the Service, thus supporting their induction.
* Managers/Principal Social Worker supporting practitioner’s where this has been identified as part of their Personal Development Plan.

All the above include:

* Observations of direct practice with service users in a variety of settings such as home visits, office settings etc.
* Observation of practice within meetings.
* Observation of practice within supervision.

Please note that there is a separate process for newly qualified workers on the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment. This guidance should also be considered alongside Supervision and PDP guidance.

**Background and Rationale for this Guidance:**

Observation of practitioners in their everyday work is an important element of quality assuring front line practice. This enhances the quality assurance undertaken through case file audits to more fully understand the way practitioners work, support and build relationships with children and their families. Observation of practice offers the opportunity to gain a picture of practitioners’ behaviour, outlook and approach to both celebrate good practice, providing feedback from senior management and also to raise any learning issues.

Direct observations of practice can serve as a vehicle for two important parts of developing professional capability – the performance component of work-based learning and a learning component for continuing professional development.

All observations of practice in Torbay Council are undertaken using the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and The Post Qualifying Standards (PQS). This is an overarching professional standards framework, the correct level for the worker being observed should be selected to generate the framework for capability. The PCF can be accessed online at: <http://www.tcsw.org.uk/pcf.aspx> and the PQS at [Social work post-qualifying standards: knowledge and skills statements - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-and-skills-statements-for-child-and-family-social-work)

**Observation of practice: Roles and Responsibilities**

Team Managers/Advanced Social Workers and Principal Social Worker

* All Team Managers/Advanced Social Workers/Practice Educator will observe the practice of newly qualified social workers in line with local ASYE policy.
* All Team Managers/Advanced Social Workers/Principal Social Worker will observe the practice of experienced practitioners at least once a year. Where the practitioner is on a period of probation as a new starter to Torbay Council, at least one observation should be carried out before the expiry of the probation period – again in accordance with this guidance.
* All Team Managers and Advanced Social Work Practitioners will identify any practitioners within their teams who need support in improving their performance. These practitioners will be observed at least every 12 months and in line with the agreed action plan.
* All Team Managers/Advanced Social Workers/Principal Social Worker to share their observations with the relevant practitioner and undertake reflective supervision, developing a shared action plan if required.
* All Team Managers/Advanced Social Workers/Principal Social Worker to share completed observation with Head of Service.
* All Team Managers/Advanced Social Workers/Principal Social Worker to ensure that observation forms part of PDP process.

Heads of Service

* All Heads of Service will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in each team for staff observations.
* All Heads of Service to monitor compliance.
* Provide the Lead Auditor with a summary of learning from staff observations annually.
* Observe the practice of Team Managers, Advanced Social Workers and practitioners as required (to include visits / interventions, meetings and supervision).
* Complete a record of the observation (Appendix 1) and discuss this with the practitioner - a shared record of learning and actions will be agreed and recorded.
* Send a copy of the observation record to the Lead Auditor / Head of Service for safeguarding and quality assurance.

Head of Service for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance will:

* Compile an annual report identifying the key learning from observation of practice and identifying actions for workforce development.

Director of Children’s Services and Assistant Director will:

* Observe the direct practice of practitioners with young people or families a minimum of twice a year.
* Observe a minimum of two key meetings once per year.
* Complete a record of the observation (Appendix 1) and discuss this with the practitioner - a shared record of learning and actions will be agreed and recorded.
* Send a copy of the observation record to relevant head of service and to the Head of Service for safeguarding and Quality Assurance / Lead Auditor.

The Practice Observation Form can be found at Appendix 1. Good practice guidance for carrying out direct observation of practice can be found online at: *add link to Learning Space page*.

**Process for Direct Observation (includes observation of meetings and supervision):**

1. Manager and practitioner agree date and time of observation.
2. Practitioner obtains verbal permission from service user for the observer to attend.
3. Manager meet with the observee prior to the observation to agree the terms of reference for the observation.

4. Carry out the Direct Observation

1. Manager completes Practice Observation Form (Appendix 1).
2. Post Observation Meeting:

Observer and observee meet soon after the event to reflect on the experience. Role of the observer is help the observee identify what went well, what they might have done differently and what their learning has been from the experience.

1. A copy of the Practice Observation Form is given to the practitioner who completes reflection on learning section.
2. Copy of Practice Observation Form is sent to relevant Head of Service and Head of Service for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

Appendix 1

**Practice Observation Form (for observation of practice within visits / interventions, meetings and supervision)**

**Guidance for Completion – please read carefully:**

* It is not necessary to construct an observation to meet all domains on the form. Only the domains which relate to the observed practice need to be completed – so long as the following minimum domains are met: Professionalism, knowledge and theory, intervention and skills.
* For each domain completed, please summarise what went well (good practice) and any areas for development (what needs to happen to make this “good”?) For each domain, please comment on the extent to which the intervention has met the relevant expectations and standards (PCF, PQS and the relevant Practice Standards for this area of service).
* The observation must be a single formal event, (not an amalgamation of things seen, and impressions gathered over time). The observed practice may be supplemented by accompanying documentation such as reports/assessments.
* The Manager or Assessor should take the lead in identifying practice to be observed and should select an event of sufficient complexity and challenge to evidence capability in practice, relevant to the level of the observee on the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)and The Post Qualifying Standards (PQS)
* The PCF can be accessed at: <https://www.basw.co.uk/pcf/> The drop-down menus should be used to select the correct level. Managers and Assessors should use the capability statements as guides - they are not check-lists but indicative statements of capability. The practitioner (observee) should be assessed holistically.
* The PQS can be assessed at [Social work post-qualifying standards: knowledge and skills statements - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-and-skills-statements-for-child-and-family-social-work)
* When the observee has seen the manager’s report, they should write a brief reflection on the learning from the event on the staff practice observation form. This completes the observation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Practitioner observed** |  |
| **Name and role of observer** |  |
| **Date** |  |
| **Summary of activity observed and setting** |   |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Area for assessment** | **Expectations / good practice** |
| **Planning and Purpose** | * Activity has clear rationale and purpose
* Activity is linked to child’s plan
* Aim and outcomes of activity is clear
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Domain 1: Professionalism**(links to Knowledge & Skills 1,2,9 and 10) | * Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. As representatives of the social work profession, they safeguard its reputation and are accountable to the professional regulator.
* Worker demonstrates consistently high levels of professional behaviour with children, families and colleagues.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Domain 2:** **Values and****ethics** (links to Knowledge & Skills 1,2,8 and 10). | * Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice.
* Practice and decision-making consistently meets highest ethical standards.
* Social worker demonstrates good knowledge of the value base of their profession, its ethical standards and relevant law.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Domain 3:****Diversity**(links to Knowledge & Skills 3,4,6, and 8) | * Practice shows awareness and understanding of issues of diversity and inequality; worker is able to challenge appropriately.
* Practice actively protects and promotes equality and diversity.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Domain 4:****Rights, justice and economic wellbeing**(links to Knowledge & Skills 6 & 8) | * Social workers recognise the fundamental principles of human rights and equality, and that these are protected in national and international law, conventions and policies. They ensure these principles underpin their practice.
* Social workers understand the importance of using and contributing to case law and applying these rights in their own practice.
* They understand the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Domain 5: Knowledge and theory**(links to Knowledge & Skills 1,3,4,5 & 8) | * Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people, human development throughout life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice.
* Activity is informed by thorough understanding of case.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Domain 6:****Critical reflection and analysis**(links to Knowledge & Skills 2,3,6 & 9) | * Worker is knowledgeable about and applies the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment.
* Worker can identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. These include practice evidence, their own practice experience, service user and carer experience together with research-based, organisational, policy and legal knowledge.
* Worker uses critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Domain 7:****Intervention and skills**(links to Knowledge & Skills 1,2,3,4,5,6 & 7) | * Enables effective relationships and is an effective communicator, using appropriate skills.
* Using professional judgement employs a range of interventions: promoting independence, providing support and protection, taking preventative action and ensuring safety whilst balancing rights and risks. Understand and take account of differentials in power and can use authority appropriately.
* Evaluates their own practice and the outcomes for those they work with.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Domain 8:****Contexts and organisations** (Partnership working)(links to Knowledge & Skills 8 & 10 ) | * Operate effectively within multi-agency and inter-professional partnerships and settings.
* Work with other colleagues and organisations is effective and benefits from positive professional relationships
* The worker is able to offer effective constructive challenge to other colleagues and organisations.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Domain 9:****Professional leadership**(links to Knowledge & Skills 9) | * Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others through supervision, mentoring, assessing, research, teaching, leadership and management
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Service User Feedback (if applicable)** | * Please note that if you are assessing an observation where a child or carer is present, you should try - where his does not compromise the welfare of the child - to seek feedback.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Partner Feedback** | * Where the observation involves other professionals and no service users, the views of other professionals should be sought.
 |
| Good Practice (what went well?): |
| Areas for development: |
| **Any actions identified as a result of this observation should be carried forward into supervision.** |

**Observer’s signature:**

**Date:**

**The following section should be completed by the observee after seeing and reading the observer’s report:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Reflection on learning for professional development**  |
|  |
|  |

**Observee’s signature**

**Date:**