

Student Placements in Bradford

Practice Guidance

Bradford Teaching Partnership is committed to ensuring that our students on placement with the Local Authority have a positive learning and development experience to bridge the gap between the theory and practice learnt in their academic studies to the real life aspects of practice within Children's Services.

All students will have either have a Stage 1 or Stage 2 Practice Educator who is responsible for being a role model, coach, mentor, supervisor and assessor to the student which the support and assistance of others within the department. Where possible Practice Educators will be onsite but occasionally long arm Practice Educators may be used. A Workplace supervisor may also be allocated. A workplace Supervisor is usually a member of the same team who may not be a Practice Educator but who assists the Practice Educator in the assessment of students and will share the supervision. They are not responsible for writing the final report but will provide some information and observations to contribute towards the report.

For all Practice Educators they are required to attend a half day refresher session when they are allocated a student.

We have set out the expectations we have for our students and it is important that this guidance is used as a tool to enhance the student experience.

Induction

It is really important that students experience a good induction so that they understand the expectations of the placement and what support they will be given.

Induction is a protected period of time for 2 weeks at the start of the placement which allows the student chance to settle in, navigate the buildings, get to know the Practice Educator, Team and Service Area and read essential information. During induction no cases are to be allocated to the student on LCS but the students should have the opportunity to shadow other workers and different areas of the service as applicable

The Practice Educator is responsible for arranging that the laptop, along with a log in and telephone number so that it is available for the first day of placement. The Practice Educator is also responsible for completing the necessary paperwork or liaising with admin services to enable this. Students cannot visit children and families without an ID badge.

Students will complete the department induction and there is one specifically for students which covers all the mandatory tasks for completion along with suggested reading which will allow them to navigate the department's policy and procedures.

The Practice Educator will give details of any mandatory training to the student in the induction period.

Case allocation

As part of the placement experience students will be working with children, young people and families to practice social work skills and interventions and learn how to link theory to practice and then have a reflective discussion with the Practice Educator.

The Practice Educator, or the Workplace Supervisor, where there is one, is responsible for the allocation of work to the student ensuring that is appropriate for their learning and their abilities. The Team Manager or other members of the team are not to directly approach the student with pieces of work without the knowledge and agreement of the Practice Educator.

The following is a guide in terms of allocations; however, the student's ability and the complexity of cases should also be taken into consideration –

- First placement students in a locality team can hold cases for between 4 – 6 children and final placement hold cases for between 6 – 12 children.
- First placement students in the Fostering Service can work with 3 – 5 households and final placement between 6 -8 households.
- First placement students in the Friends and Family team can hold up to 3 assessments and final placements students can hold up to 6 assessments.
- For any student placed in Children in Care services they can lead on case work but be allocated as the alternative worker (Co-worker) but all statutory visits must be lead by the allocated social worker.

Students need to be guided through case allocation and be clear what is expected of them; this is a learning and development opportunity which gives the student the chance to practice their skills and build relationships with children and families.

Students, with support and oversight, can hold child in need cases independently but the Practice Educator needs to consider the complexity of the CIN case prior to allocation. For all other cases, Child Protection and Child in Care, students should be co-allocated with the social worker being the lead worker on LCS. All statutory visits must be undertaken by the social worker, with the student leading on some aspects of the case as agreed. For any students co-working these cases this will count as half a case for each child.

Sometimes students can be asked to supervise contact or family time sessions; if this is planned as part of their work or if they are going to be covering for another person they need to have been introduced to the family and had the opportunity to shadow a previous contact session and have a good knowledge of the family issues and what their role is.

Supervision

Supervision is pivotal to good social work practice and as such needs to be planned within the learning agreement meeting so that the student is clear about expectations; this includes how it will run and who will be taking minutes (usually this is taken in turns).

The student must have supervision every 5 placement days for no less than 1 and half hours; this is non negotiable and should be prioritised. Where possible the date and time should not be changed; rooms should be booked in advance and not take place in the open

office unless this is informal supervision where this is needed immediately without time to book a room.

At every supervision session the Practice Educator must sign the attendance and supervision log as this is a document required in the student's evidence portfolio.

At the initial supervision session, a supervision agreement must be completed and standing agenda items should be agreed.

Supervision should be a reflective experience and not just case focused. It should start with a check in about personal well-being.

Supervision sessions should be written up as soon after supervision as possible and shared and agreed so that the student can put these in their evidence folder.

During supervision the Practice Educator should frequently have access to learning journals and the evidence files to ensure that the student is on track with expectations and requirements with the PCF's.

Teaching/ Education

Teaching and education is a vital component of the student placement experience and should be carefully planned. It is the Practice Educator's role to teach/coach/mentor students about their roles within Children's Social Care so that by the time the student has completed their final placement they are confident to move into their career as a social worker.

Students are entitled to study time which is to be protected and will be agreed during the learning agreement meeting. It is expected that the Practice Educator will have an awareness of what the student has done during study; students will need to complete learning journals which is a reflective account of learning from a work experience.

Self directed study is okay but the Practice Educator may feel it would be beneficial for the student to read about a particular subject matter for example a particular theory or piece of research but they should be aware of the timing of this in terms of the student's academic work, personal circumstances and capacity.

The Practice Educator is responsible for recording any teaching within the supervision minutes following discussion with the student. Additional teaching sessions can be offered to the student where it is evident that they are struggling.

Learning Journals

It is a requirement of the student for them to write a learning journal about their learning experiences on placement. The student and Practice Educator can use these journals for evidence where it can show that they have met a PCF.

Learning journals need to be critically reflective, not a story or case analysis but a reflection on the student's feelings, thoughts, values and then linking this back to practice, the impact on the child/family; what does this learning mean for them moving forward in their practices? The student should be making explicit links to the PCF domains within those journals so the Practice Educator can see they understand the PCF link and understand why they are doing what they are doing each day.

For every 5 placement days, the student needs to complete 2 learning journals which they must send to their Practice Educator who will review the journal prior to supervision and give feedback to the student about what they have written.

Within the feedback the Practice Educator should consider the use of theory, research, perspectives, reflection, values and ethics and make suggestions or how this can be incorporated if missing. This should be recorded in the supervision minutes.

If the student is behind or not completing the learning journal this needs to be addressed within supervision and the discussion and outcome recorded.

Evidence Files

Throughout the placement experience the student should be collating evidence for their evidence file which is shared with the Practice Educator at the end of placement in order to assist the Practice Educator with their assessment and recommendation as to whether the student has passed the placement.

The Practice Educator must review the evidence file in every supervision session and sign to say this has been seen.

The evidence file is the student's responsibility but if any issues arise from this the Practice Educator must record this in supervision and can discuss with the placement tutor if required.

The student needs to include a small summary of how their evidence meets their PCF domains; they should not include any forms/documents from the child's file but can provide LCS details to the Practice Educator when cross referencing any evidence for the Practice Educator to check.

The Practice Educator should use supervision to help the student identify where they have evidence to meet a PCF domain if they are struggling to identify this themselves.

Issues/ difficulties

At times student placements may not run as smoothly as planned and there are processes in place to follow if this is the case.

If any safeguarding issues arise please follow the protocol in place; consider whether it is safe for the student to remain on placement. If in doubt contact Harbans Sandhu, placement co-ordinator, Gill Ward Learning and Development Manager or Traci Taylor, Principal Social Worker.

Where the Practice Educator has concerns regarding student practice, portfolio, journals, and expectations in relation to the PCF domains they should to contact the mentor/ practice learning tutor to discuss and consider if an action plan is needed.

Students should be made aware immediately that the Practice Educator identifies any area of concern and what action is being taken; this should be recorded in supervision notes.

For Further information or advice about student placements please contact Harbans Sandhu
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