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1. Context

1.1 Practice based learning is a core component of social work education. Good quality placements with experienced Placement 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), Social Work England Education and Training Standards (2020), as well as the Social Work Reform Board's requirements and guidance (initially developed by the College of Social Work).

1.3 Gloucestershire County Council's Social Work Academy (SWA) has an agreement with each university to arrange social work student placements on behalf of Gloucestershire Childrens Services. This policy provides an overview of GCC's position on placements and covers guiding principles, partnership arrangements, requirements, quality assurance and finances.

1.4 Reporting will be made to the Social Work Academy Board which has direct working links to the respective workforce and practice development leads.

2. Guiding Principles for Social Work Practice Placements

2.1 To provide high quality social work practice placements that support and challenge the student.

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 Social Work England.

2.6 To operate a quality assurance framework in relation to:

(i) Preparation for placement

(ii) Providing skilled and experienced Placement supervisors and

(iii) Qualified and up to date Practice Educators

(iv) Enhancement opportunities for students on placement

2.7 To support Gloucestershire County Council's recruitment strategy.

3. Partnerships with Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)

3.1 The SWA will prioritise commitments made in its agreements with the Universities of Gloucestershire, Bristol, UWE, Heart of Worcestershire (HOW) & Worcester on their courses, the Regional Partnership Step Up to Social Work programme and the Frontline Programme.

3.2 The agreements with each HEI specify the numbers of student placements to be provided. In practice there may be the opportunity to arrange more but this is dependent upon service capacity and suitability.

3.3 Due to competing pressures the HEI and council may sometimes be unable to meet their commitments. When this happens we will communicate openly as a partnership in order to achieve best outcomes for the student or any other situation.

3.3 Depending on service capacity and suitability, additional Placements can be arranged on an ad hoc basis with other HEIs. However, this would be dependent upon service capacity and suitability. Priority would also be given to students already living in Gloucestershire to support our recruitment strategy.

3.4 The SWA will always meet professional requirements for student placements and will do its best to meet the aspirational standards of the HEI. Where this cannot be achieved the HEI will be informed and will make the final decision on whether a placement should go ahead.

3.5 Agreements are subject to annual review and re-negotiation where necessary.

4. Quality Assurance

4.1 Practice Placements

4.1.1 Placements will adhere to the guidance set out in Social Work England - Practice Placement Guidance [found here](#)

4.1.2 A range of placements will be developed to ensure that students have a broad experience and understanding of the social work profession.

4.1.3 Placements will be allocated on the basis of meeting students' identified learning needs, geographical location and the availability of placements.

4.1.4 First placements will usually be in the Early Help service or other non-statutory services and final placements will be in services that carry out statutory work.

4.1.5 The SWA will pro-actively recruit new placement teams to maximise the pool available within Gloucestershire County Council children's services.

4.1.6 Placement providers will meet Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) requirements.

4.1.7 To ensure that placement teams continue to reach the required standards, they will be reviewed through the experiences of Practice Educators, feedback from students, the HEI's placement meetings and contact with the SWA.

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

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






4.1.10 Profiles of Placement supervisors and Practice Educators will be available for HEIs and students.

4.1.11 In the event of concerns about a placement, the SWA will work jointly and pro-actively, at the earliest opportunity, with the HEI and other stakeholders to achieve best outcomes.

4.2 Preparation

4.2.1 All students will have access to the same ICT equipment and phones as employees. These will be provided by CYP business support project team. The placement team will arrange access to the required systems, an induction for the student and mandatory training.

4.2.2 Students will be provided with:

-  Laptop (with carry bag and charger)
-  Headset (to ensure confidentiality when working from home)
-  Standard mobile (with charger)
-  Business parking permit
-  PPE as required by the team

4.2.3 Any non standard equipment/software will require a business case/additional needs assessment to justify allocation. This will be agreed with and provided by the SWA.

4.2.4 Workshops for Placement supervisors and Practice Educators will be delivered prior to the commencement of a placement. They will cover the information needed to arrange access to induction and address housekeeping issues such as motor vehicle insurance, DBS checks, MOT and mileage claims.

4.2.5 Pre placement meetings will be arranged before the placement starts to allow students to meet their supervisors, team members and to get to know their work base. This is also an opportunity to complete any forms required by GCC to prepare for access to computer systems, id badges etc.

4.2.6 All placements must be agreed by the team manager in writing to the SWA.

4.2.7 HEI's are required to ensure students' Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are current and at the level required, and provide confirmation of DBS and expiry date prior to placements commencing.

4.2.8 The Placement Coordinator will complete HEI's health and safety and insurance documentation.

4.2.9 Placement supervisors and Educators and will be encouraged to attend HEI placement briefing days and CPD workshops.

4.3 Practice Learning

4.3.1 The SWA will arrange a programme of regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops for Placement 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 a student's placement.

4.3.3 Students are invited to other training where appropriate, and with the agreement of their placement team manager.

4.4 Concerns

4.4.1 The SWA will work transparently and inclusively with teams, the student and HEIs to resolve placement difficulties, and will follow the HEI's escalation policy

4.4.2 Support from the SWA is available to the student and assessors throughout the placement. The SWA will endeavour to respond to any queries within 48 hours.

5. Assessors

5.1 Practice Supervisor Qualifications

5.1.1 Placement supervisors will meet the standards outlined in Practice Educator Professional Standards for Social Work [found here](#)

5.1.1 Placement supervisors will have at least two years' post-qualification experience. In first placements the Practice Supervisor is not required to be a Registered Social Worker. However, those supervising final placements must be practicing at experienced social worker level (PEPS Refresh 2019)

5.1.2 Placement supervisors will ideally be senior social workers who have or are working towards the Stage 1 Practice Educator award.

5.1.3 All Placement supervisors will be expected to complete in – house Practice Supervisor Training. In exceptional circumstances where there is a late change of supervisor, or new placement approved, then the Practice Supervisor will be offered an additional two days training, to be completed within 1 month of the placement starting. The Team Manager & Practice Supervisor must commit to the Practice Supervisor attending this. Those completing just the extra two days may be required to attend the two day course after the placement. The Practice Educator will have ultimate responsibility for the placement and assessment.

5.1.4 We aim to use permanent Placement supervisors to support consistency within the placement but can use agency staff with relevant experience where this is not possible. This would need to be agreed with the SWA.

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

5.1.6 Placement supervisors will be recruited to maintain the numbers required to meet our commitment to student placements.

5.1.7 Placement supervisors and Educators will provide the Social Work Academy, students and HEIs with a professional profile.

5.2 Practice Supervisor Roles and Responsibilities

5.2.1 The Practice Supervisor is the student's point of contact in the team on a day to day basis. If the Practice Supervisor does not work full time the placement team manager will need to agree someone to support the student on the Practice Supervisor's non working days

5.2.2 The Practice Supervisor is responsible for arranging the induction process, explaining the role of the team and the needs of the service user group.

5.2.3 The Practice Supervisor must follow the HEI placement handbook and Supervisor handbook, as well as adhere to any relevant policies and procedures.

5.2.4 In consultation with the Practice Educator, the Practice Supervisor is responsible for allocating pieces of work or arranging for them to be allocated to the student. Placement supervisors retain ultimate responsibility for service users.

5.2.5 The Practice Supervisor, in conjunction with the Practice Educator, the team manager and other team members, will plan and coordinate an Induction programme. The supervisor should not take leave within the first two weeks of placement, so as to be available to the student. While remaining available for informal supervision and advice, the Practice Supervisor will also undertake fortnightly formal supervision.

5.2.6 The Practice Supervisor will usually undertake and document 1 direct observation of practice (often the second of three). In exceptional circumstances this can be negotiated and delegated to an alternative experienced practitioner, agreed by the Practice Educator.

5.2.7 The Practice Supervisor will attend university placement meetings (at the beginning, middle and end of the placement).

5.2.8 The Practice Supervisor will contribute to the student's formative assessment by attending 3 way meetings with the Practice Educator.

5.3 Practice Educator Qualifications

5.3.1 Practice Educators will meet the standards outlined in the Practice Educator Professional Standards for Social Work [found here](#) which should be referred to for clarification.

5.3.2 Those Practice Educators that are not yet qualified will attend the University of Gloucestershire's Practice Educator programme or another recognised programme. Practice Educator training application form [found here](#) must be completed and approved by the team manager and submitted to the SWA along with the relevant HEI sponsorship form prior to any training commencing.

5.3.3 Final placements will always be assessed by Stage 2 Practice Educators who will normally be Advanced Practitioners within the student's team. They take the lead in the practice learning

environment, liaising with the Practice Supervisor, in order to design and manage the learning programme in line with HEI placement handbooks and student policies.

5.3.4. The SWA 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 HEI 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 Practice Supervisor will always be a registered social worker with a minimum of 2 years' post qualifying experience.

5.4.2 The SWA will pro-actively recruit new Practice Educators to maintain the numbers required to meet our commitment to student placements.

5.4.3 Practice Educators will retain practice education currency in line with the recommendations in the Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS).

5.4.4 As agreed with the SWA the following will apply.

- Where Practice Educators have not maintained currency over a two year period they will be required to complete the PEPS2 module again.
- If currency has been maintained through other Practice Educator activities there is no requirement for the Practice Educator to complete the PEPS2 module again.

5.4.5 To ensure up to date knowledge and robust assessments, the SWA 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 Practice Supervisor with the summative assessment being done by a Stage 2 Practice Educator.

5.4.8 Practice Educators will provide the SWA with a professional profile on PS/PE profile form XXX for the attention of HEIs and students.

5.4.9 Social Workers joining Gloucestershire County Council will not be able to supervise a student placement until they have successfully completed their probationary period.

5.4.10 There is an expectation that all placement supervisors & Educators will have completed essentials 2.0

6. Finance

GCC receives financial payment from the HEIs to arrange student placements. This amount contributes towards ensuring that we provide a good standard of student placements and includes,

Practice Educator training and development, provision of external Practice Educators if the need arises, student support and development groups, CPD workshops and any additional course fees.

The SWA will set up and run the administration and finance of placements.

6.1 Honorarium payments

6.1.1 Placement supervisors who are social workers/Community social workers/FSW/contact supervisors will receive a one off payment of £200 for 70 day placements and a one off payment of £250 for 100 day placements. Only one payment will be made per person per cohort of students regardless of the amount of students supervised or if also practice educated.

6.1.2 Practice Educators who are social workers/Community social workers will receive a one of payment of £200 for 70 day placements and a one off payment of £250 for 100 day placements. Only one payment will be made per person per cohort of students regardless of the amount of students supervised.

7. Support

7.1 SWA Qualifications

7.1.1 SWA Staff involved in the oversight and development of student placements, Placement supervisors and Practice Educators will be Registered Social Workers with a Stage 2 Practice Educator award or its equivalent. The

7.2 Roles and Responsibilities

7.2.1 The SWA is the point of contact between HEIs and the authority, attending HEI and council meetings as required

7.2.2 The Social Work Academy will arrange:-

- Appropriate measures to safeguard students and service users
- Initial student interviews to ensure learning needs will be met in Gloucestershire and to maintain a high calibre of students
- A nominated Practice 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 Practice Supervisor and Practice Educator development groups
- Accessible, responsive support to Practice Educators, Placement supervisors and students
- Robust financial procedures to pay independent Practice Educators where required
- Systems to pay council employees' honorariums where relevant
- Workshops for Placement supervisors and Practice Educators to coordinate a consistent approach to the start of placement

7.3 Students with Additional Needs

Any additional needs should be discussed at the pre placement meeting. It is the responsibility of the placement supervisor to ensure additional equipment required is ordered and supplied.

8. Exceptional Circumstances

8.2 National Pandemic

8.2.1 The SWA will issue additional guidance conforming to local and national guidance for student placements.

8.2.2 COVID- 19 has had an impact on risk assessments of children, and any post-COVID work environment, will need an ongoing risk assessment by the supervisor.

8.3 Working from home

8.3.1 Students working full-time from home become isolated and lack support and oversight. It is therefore recommended that they attend the office for a minimum of two days a week.