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Children, Families and

Education Directorate

Social Work Academy Specifications

# Luton Practice Guidance

**Putting children, young people and their families at the heart of everything that we do**

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# About This Document

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# Introduction

Luton Children’s Services, Social Work Academy launched on 12th October 2020. Implementation of a Social Work Academy is a crucial part of the Workforce Development Strategy for Children’s Services and is essential to sustaining permanency in the future workforce. We understand the importance and need for NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs to feel that they are welcomed into a learning environment where they can develop internal and external networks, understand what good practice looks like and be mentored into experienced Social Workers. The Social Work Academy in Luton will help to bridge that gap by providing NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs with high quality practice development opportunities with our strong links with the University of Bedfordshire, reflective supervisions and work based learning support through coaching and mentoring from our Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER) Assessor/Mentors.

**Our Mission:**

To attract and develop capable, motivated, pro-active Social Workers to support the vulnerable children and families in Luton.

**Our Vision:**

To support the learning culture in Luton where Social Workers are encouraged and supported to reach their full potential, to develop their practice through collaborative working, to be respectful and put relationships with children and families at the heart of everything they do. In Luton we inspire excellence within in an environment where social workers feel proud and their achievements are celebrated.

**Our Values:**

Collaborative - we work as one team, producing great results for Luton.

Ambitious - we're determined to improve lives every day.

Respectful - we are open, honest and embrace difference.

Empowering - we trust our own decisions and those of others.

Supportive - we help each other to reach our full potential.

**Our Practice Framework and Expectations**

In Luton we have adopted a strength/relationship based approach as its practice framework

* Conversation
* Curiosity
* Consideration
* Courage

We strongly believe that children belong with people that they know who love them and keep them safe within their networks. We expect all practitioners and managers to prioritise this value, and to help children have safe permanent relationships as a basic right.

The relationship approach to social work emphasises the need to foster open, honest and respectful relationships with families. This means social workers and other professionals have to have difficult conversations with families in a compassionate and respectful way.

The practice framework and expectations provides the foundation for learning for NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs which is supported by a robust Quality Assurance and Audit Framework to consistently achieve good social work practice.

**Strategic Priorities and Activities**

**1 - Recruitment**

* Targeted recruitment drives throughout the year
* Monthly assessment centre for NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs and permanent practitioners
* Strong presence at Universities
* Online presence

**2 - Retention**

85% retention of our NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs once they finished their programme

For all of Luton’s NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs, we:

* Deliver consistently robust induction programmes
* Define a clear learning and development mandatory offer
* Deliver routinely reflective supervision across the organization
* Deliver monthly team development sessions and quarterly service sessions

**3 - Workforce development**

* Work alongside Quality Assurance, Audit and Practice Improvement Team to deliver the Practice Week events.
* Alongside Corporate Learning and Development Team and QA Audit and Practice Improvement Team develop and deliver learning and development opportunities which include practice specific workshops, bespoke training and delivery of bite-size training sessions.
* Coach and mentor practitioners through solution focused approach and appreciative inquiry.

1. Roles within the academy

**Head of the Academy**

* Promotes the social work academy brand across the organisation and externally.
* Oversees the academy performance and budget.
* Develops the annual strategic plan.
* Attends Workforce Development Board.
* Represents the academy at senior leadership level and has authority above other Heads of Service on any decisions related to the academy or NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs
* Delivers mentoring and coaching sessions.
* Undertakes regular practice audits and deep dives

**Academy Manager**

* Recruits and manages the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS
* Coordinates the assessment centre
* Oversees the induction program for the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS
* Supervises the practice educators within the Academy
* Coordinates the Human Resources tasks for the recruitment and the team
* Delivers peer mentoring and coaching sessions
* Supervises and coordinates the activity of the senior practitioners
* Undertakes regular practice observations, audits and deep dives
* Links with the University of Bedfordshire, prepares presentations and co-ordinates skills sessions with students
* Co-ordinates 70 and 100 day placements for students
* Supports with the recruitment of Social Work Apprentices and attends Partnership Meetings
* Is involved with activities through the Teaching Implementation Partnership Group
* Facilitate the Departmental Induction Sessions for new starters

**Practice Educator/NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER Assessor Mentor**

* Oversee the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs progress through the assessed year.
* Arrange monthly mandatory peer supervision sessions
* To undertake and write a record of assessment reviews of 3, 6, 9 and 12 months for all NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs.
* Meet and provide monthly support for the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs.
* Undertake at least 2 direct observations of work of the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs.
* To undertake additional reviews and offer additional support when progress is unsatisfactory.
* To participate in any appeal process in the event of a fail of an NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER.

**Senior Practitioner**

* Support the Academy Manager with recruitment.
* Prepare bespoke 1:1 inductions for their new NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs.
* Senior Practitioner to be recorded on each case on the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER’s caseload as co-worker/Academy Senior Practitioner.
* Deliver 1-2-1 coaching and mentoring for the allocated NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs.
* Offer practical support in the early stages of the assessed year or the first time the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER undertakes a specific task.
* Model best Social Work practice when providing reflective supervision
* To undertake direct observations of the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER’s practice and provide feedback for learning
* Work alongside and provide practical support to NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs to complete complex pieces of work on the cases allocated to the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs such as court statements, visits, reports, case audits, risk assessments and multi-agency meetings
* Provide weekly reflective supervision with the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER for the first six weeks, increasing to fortnightly by month 3 and then monthly by six months in accordance with Skills for Care guidance. Ensure that all reflective case discussions are recorded on the child’s file using the reflective supervision template
* Maintain a chronology of support and supervisions for each NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER allocated
* Actively participates in the fortnightly SCRUM sessions.
* Delivers and coordinates as and when needed, case consultations with the child’s Independent Reviewing Officer, Team Manager, Deputy Team Manager, and the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER allocated to the child
* Attends monthly case supervision with the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER and their Team Manager and ensure the progress of the plan with the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER
* Provide informal Quality Assurance as part of the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER’s development and provide them with bespoke training and guidance to support their development.
* Maintain an overview of the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER’s caseload and escalate to the Academy Manager if caseloads are exceeding 15 children which is the recommended maximum per NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER.
* Act as ambassadors and provide exemplars of best social work practice.

1. Support for the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs

Support from the host team:

* At interview, the candidate’s skillset will be assessed.. They will then be matched with a host team.
* Within that team, the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER will be encouraged to develop relationships with the Team Manager, Deputy Team Manager and colleagues.
* The NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER will receive monthly case supervision with the Deputy or Team Manager and Senior Practitioner from the Academy.
* The NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER will attend weekly host Team Meeting / SCRUMs. The NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER will be expected to attend the office daily for at least the first three months to maximise learning and support opportunities
* The NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER will be on 12 months’ probation overseen by the host Team Manager.
* All NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs will have personal supervision monthly with the Host Team Manager in accordance with Luton’ Supervision Framework

Support from the Academy Senior Practitioners:

* The NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER will be allocated a Senior Practitioner from the Academy who will support throughout assessed year.
* The Senior Practitioner will prepare a bespoke two week induction where they will deliver 1:1 sessions with to help understand LiquidLogic, Luton’s Practice Framework, Tri.X Procedures and how these support the processes and the journey of the child.
* In accordance with Skills for Care guidance, the Senior Practitioner will meet with the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER weekly for reflective supervisions for the first six weeks, and then fortnightly until the six month point when the level of reflective supervisions will be reviewed in line with the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER’s developing confidence and skills.
* The NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER will retain case responsibility, however the Senior Practitioner will be recorded on all of their cases. This means the Senior Practitioner will join the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER on complex work, assessments and meetings until the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER is confident.
* The Senior Practitioner will support the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER to improve the quality of their work through auditing, identifying training, and offering bespoke sessions to each NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER.
* The Senior Practitioner will audit the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER allocated children’s case files and support to improve practice.
* Alongside the Practice Educator/Assessor and Host Team Manager, the Senior Practitioner will work with the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER to identify learning needs and appropriate training and learning opportunities.

1. Definition of co-working and case complexity

The allocated Senior Practitioner will be recorded on all cases open to the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER.

The definition of the co-working arrangement in this situation is:

* The Senior Practitioner will jointly carry out complex work, with the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER taking the lead. This is a supplementary supportive role where the Senior Practitioner models best social work practice in accordance with Luton Practice Framework and Expectations
* The Senior Practitioner will monitor Key Performance Indicators using the data on visits from Qlik and NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs LCS work trays.
* The Senior Practitioner will support the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER with complex case work which will include but is not limited to Public Law Outline, Court work and cases with escalating risk.

Examples of complexities can also include, not exhaustively; immigration, housing, mental health, substance misuse, trafficking, unaccompanied asylum seekers, child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, learning disabilities, domestic violence, neglect.

The level of co-working and co-production of documents will be determined by the assessed skills and knowledge of the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER, the needs of the child and the work required to ensure progression of the plan. This will be overseen and tracked by the Academy Manager within the Social Work Academy. Monthly reports in to Performance and Accountability Meeting will analyse the impact of the Social Work Academy in developing highly skilled and competent Social Workers in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment and how the Senior Practitioners are supporting complex case work. Additionally the Academy Manager within the Social Work Academy will report on the level of complexity held by Social Workers in their Assessed and Supported Year and how these are tracked and caseloads managed according to complexity as well as numbers.

1. Resource allocation

Each Senior Practitioner is allocated up to five NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERs to work closely with. They liaise closely with the Team Managers and offer support, mentoring and advice when needed. The Senior Practitioners proof read assessments and statements and make proposed / amendments to strengthen practice in leading to positive outcomes for children? to support the Team Managers.

The Academy are visible in the office daily and are accessible on Teams for ad-hoc advice and support to the service.

**Procedure if a NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER expresses a wish to move to another Team:**

1. Senior Practitioner has a conversation with the Social Worker and identifies skills sets, issues and challenges using a solution focused approach.

2. The Senior Practitioner arranges a three way conversation with their Team Manager, Academy Manager and the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER to unpick the reasons for the request to move teams. Within this meeting, a plan for additional support is prepared with a review in four weeks (from the meeting)

3. The support plan will be reviewed, at which point the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER will make a decision about whether they still want to move teams. If this is the case, they should send an email request to the Team Manager, Academy Head of Service and Academy Manager along with a copy of the plan and the reasons for the request.

4. Academy Head of Service will consider the request and respond.

1. Escalation process

**Escalations:**

1. If a concern is not easily resolved through discussion with the NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER, Senior Practitioner and the Practice Educator, the matter is brought to the attention of the Academy Manager.
2. The Academy Manager has a discussion with the Team Manager to see if a resolution could be found.
3. If no agreement, then the matter is escalated to the Head of the Social Work Academy.
4. Supervision and reflective action learning sets

**Reflective supervisions** are carried out by the Senior Practitioner and are recorded on the child’s file every two months. This is separate to the three way case management supervision with NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER and the Academy Senior Practitioner.

**Reflective action learning sets**

The Academy are facilitating reflective action learning sets.

Action learning is an approach to individual and organisational development. Small groups discuss important issues or problems and through discussions learn from their experiences. The small groups can continue to work together, meet regularly and a natural support system is developed. The peers and the group as a whole endeavour to tackle presenting challenges.

Complex issues do not always have an obvious right or wrong answer. Through questioning, listening, challenging and giving and receiving feedback the group learns. One participant presents a case with the issues and dilemmas for 5 to 10 minutes and then the rest of the group take turns to present their thoughts, insights, pose questions while the presenter listens. The presenter is then asked if they now have thoughts on how they could take action or progress the case.

**Aim –** Toimprove outcomes for children through practitioners building on their confidence, knowledge and experience through Action Learning Groups. Practitioners bring a case they would like to discuss to promote learning together and improving skills.