

ADVANCED PRACTITIONER OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE



February 2024
GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Version	2.0
Date	21/03/25
Changes	<p>Updated after consultation with staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarified number of ASYE observations that can be undertaken by APs - Included examples of Leadership and Management tasks - Clarified use of AP specific casenote on LCS

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 Approved: PGG July 2025
 Review Date: July 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 Advanced Practitioners are at the heart of Gloucestershire's practice model. They are practicing social workers who hold expert roles within their teams. Their role includes facilitating the team and service's ability to develop and deliver complex social work practice through a combination of joint working, practice advice and guidance, and quality assurance.

1.2 Advanced Practitioners model Gloucestershire's relational systemic practice model and are part of the service's leadership team in promoting Gloucestershire's practice standards.

1.3 Advanced Practitioners work closely with their Team Manager to continually learn and improve practice in their team.

1.4 There are Advanced Practitioners in every social work and personal adviser team where practitioners are allocated professionals for children and young people (ie there is no Advanced Practitioner role in Fostering or the Front Door).

1.5 This guidance applies to staff employed on permanent contracts with GCC. It does not apply to experienced social workers (often also referred to as Advanced Practitioners) employed via an agency on a temporary basis. Agency Advanced Practitioners are employed primarily to case hold complex children, and how they are deployed is at the discretion of the locality line manager. This does not preclude them from supporting the team with non-case holding elements of the role but paragraph 3.1 below does not apply to them in this context.

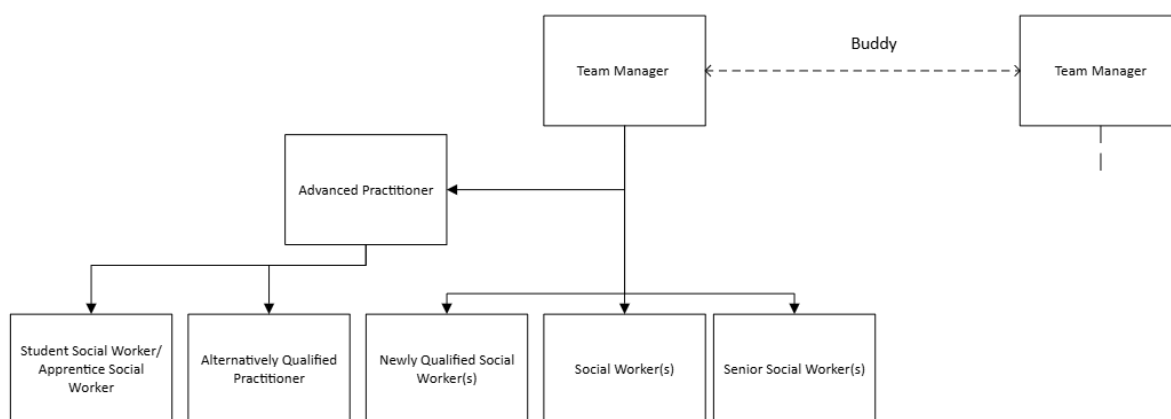
2. Team Structure

2.1 The Advanced Practitioner is the most senior practitioner within any social work or personal advisor team after the Team Manager.

2.2 The Advanced Practitioner reports directly to the Team Manager.

2.3 The Advanced Practitioner works alongside the Team Manager in overseeing the practice and development of the team.

2.4 The Advanced Practitioner line-manages, practice educates and/or has oversight of alternatively qualified or trainee social work staff. This will look different in different service areas, and will evolve as Family Help is embedded, but will include posts such as Student Social Worker, Apprentice Social Worker, Family Support Worker. This does not include Personal Advisers.



3. Caseholding

3.1 The Advanced Practitioner should ideally hold a caseload proportionate to a quarter of their role. This is likely to be around 5-6 allocated children but will vary depending on the team context, complexity and family size. This does not include children jointly allocated with other social workers or students. The purpose of this is for the Advanced Practitioner to maintain their practice skills and develop exposure to, and experience of, new ways of working and different situations.

3.2 As an organisation, GCC will commit to keeping caseloads within the range set out above. However, managers have the discretion to allocate additional work to Advanced Practitioners should the operational needs of the service require it. Any exceeding of recommended caseloads should take place only on a short-term basis, and should also be accompanied by consideration of which other elements of the Advanced Practitioners responsibilities can be temporarily paused. This should have Group Manager/Head of Service oversight.

3.3 In caseloads 1FTE Advanced Practitioner posts should account for 0.5FTE pro-rata for part time staff. This recognises the mixture of individually allocated and children allocated jointly to the Advanced Practitioner.

3.4 The Team Manager should maintain open discussions with the Advanced Practitioner about their development within supervision and performance development reviews and allocate accordingly where appropriate.

3.5 It is not expected that Advanced Practitioners always hold the most complex work in the team but that their role should facilitate their colleagues to be able to manage, effectively complete and learn from complex work. Therefore, around a further quarter of Advanced Practitioners time should be spent on jointly allocated complex work (not including any joint allocated work with student social workers which is part of the role aligned to management oversight – see below). This could include time-limited work such as supporting a Senior Social Worker with their first Child Permanence Report or undertaking a Parenting Assessment, or longer-term work such as joint working a complex situation for a Child in Care experiencing exploitation.

4. Management Oversight and Supervision

4.1 Advanced Practitioners are not Deputy Team Managers and should not be signing off assessments, managing allocations, chairing strategy meetings or pre-proceedings meetings.

4.2 The exception to this is where this is identified as a progression and development opportunity for a planned progression to apply for a Team Manager role identified in an Annual Performance Review and agreed between both the Advanced Practitioner and Team Manager with Group/Service Manager oversight. In this case the work to be undertaken will be defined – eg. “the Advanced Practitioner is to have the opportunity to chair 5 strategy meetings this year when the Team Manager is available for reflection and oversight”. This should not be done to cover Team Manager absence. It will be recorded in performance development reviews or in supervision notes.

4.3 When Team Managers are absent their role should be covered by another Team Manager not the Advanced Practitioner. Usually this will be their “buddy” Team Manager. Buddied Team Managers should work together to ensure that planned leave does not conflict wherever possible to provide the team consistent oversight. The Advanced Practitioner will have a crucial role working alongside the “buddy” Team Manager, supporting them to make informed decisions and management directions, and providing support to the Social Workers in the team.

4.4 Advanced Practitioners can provide ad hoc case direction to Social Workers and Personal Advisers in the team about their work for example setting out expectations for a visit or a specific piece of work following reflective discussion. These should be recorded as Advanced Practitioner case directions on the child or young person’s file using the LCS casenote type. However, the Team Manager retains overall responsibility for the practice and management oversight of the work and monthly supervision.

4.6 Advanced Practitioners will provide direction to team members about improving the quality of practice. This may include activities such as quality assuring an assessment or plan prior to it being signed off by the Team Manager. These tasks will be directed by the agreed Team Plan with the Advanced Practitioner focussing on identified areas for team improvement; emerging from quality assurance activity such as a thematic audit/dip sample; as directed by the Team Manager; or through collaboration with the Advanced Educators and Social Work Academy.

4.7 The Advanced Practitioner is the Practice Educator (and, where relevant, Practice Supervisor and line-manager) for Apprentices, Student Social Workers and, in some teams, alternatively qualified practitioners. Personal Advisers, like Social Workers, are managed by Team Managers not Advanced Practitioners. Where they are line-managers and/or Practice Educators, Advanced Practitioners will be responsible for assessing competency to practice using the agreed practice competency frameworks and agreeing suitable work to be allocated which is within the practitioner’s capability and meets their learning requirements. The Team Manager will continue to sign off

statutory social work tasks such as assessments. Where the child is jointly allocated to another Social Worker, the Advanced Practitioner will ensure there is joint supervision in place for this work. The Advanced Practitioner's directions to the student practitioner should be recorded as an Advanced Practitioner case direction on the child or young person's record.

4.8 All Advanced Practitioners must complete the PEPs2 Programme in their first year as an Advanced Practitioner. All Advanced Practitioners must have at least one student or apprentice social worker a year that they are Practice Educator for.

4.9 The Advanced Practitioner must plan and deliver monthly reflective systemic group supervision for a minimum of an hour a month to the team. Guidance on this can be found [here](#) and in the supervision policy on our procedures manual.

4.10 Team Managers are responsible for overseeing and assessing Newly Qualified Social Workers through the ASYE Programme. They will provide management oversight and supervision of the Social Worker. The Advanced Practitioner should provide the Newly Qualified Social Workers in their team monthly reflective supervision and undertake two of the observations of practice.

4.11 Leadership and management tasks vary between teams. However the following are examples of types of tasks that Advanced Practitioners could be allocated by their Team Manager:

- Weekly data and performance information reviews and operational actions, for example ensuring the team is on track to complete all upcoming visits and plans
- Review of currently allocated children and allocations weighting/plans for ending our involvement/advising on appropriate allocations for staff members
- Development and support of a member of staff's induction plan
- Contribution of evidence to performance and quality clinics
- Actions to support and monitor a staff member's Performance Improvement Plan
- Support to implement of reasonable adjustments plan for a team member
- Review and implement of health and safety processes
- Embedding of new policies and protocols in the team
- Equality and diversity action plan development and implementation ensuring we have equitable and rights-based access for all children and families
- Co-delivery with the Team Manager of vision and strategy sessions with the team to develop team's contributions to the One Plan or Ambitions Plan
- Support to address informal complaints or concerns
- Collaboration with local partners to develop, pilot and deliver new ways of working for the locality

5. Practice Development & Quality Assurance

5.1 A quarter of the Advanced Practitioner's time will be spent on team and service practice development and quality assurance. This will be directed by the priorities of the team or service's improvement and development plans and should include:

- Joint visits with Social Workers for action learning
- Joint chairing of complex multi-agency meetings with Social Workers
- Completion of the monthly thematic audits identified and coordinated by the Social Work Academy
- Completion of thematic audits and dip-sampling identified by the Team Manager, Service Manager, Group Manager, Head of Service or Assistant Director
- Collaboration and joint work with Advanced Educator(s) and the SW Academy to identify team and individual learning needs arising from thematic audits and devising / delivering approaches to improve practice.

5.2 In addition to this work in the team each Advanced Practitioner will have a joint lead for a particular area of practice (see appendix). They should offer a weekly consultation to practitioners from across the service to book into to support them to develop their practice in that specific area. This will be supported by regular coordination meetings led by the thematic areas' Senior Lead.

5.3 Consultations with practitioners must be written up with clear recommendations for next steps on the child or young person's record using the relevant consultation pro forma which should be reviewed by the Team Manager in their oversight of the work. Advanced Practitioners should follow up recommendations taken by the Social Worker and implement regular slots to follow a piece of work through.

5.3 Advanced Practitioners will be supported through a ring-fenced Social Work Academy training budget to access specific evidence-based training relating to their area. They will be encouraged to build networks of relevant partners and take action to improve practice in the service as needed as co-developed with the lead thematic Senior Lead.

6. Relationship to Social Work Academy Advanced Educators

6.1 There should be a close and collaborative working relationship between all Advanced Practitioners and Advanced Educators as they work collectively to support the service to drive improvements. Put simply Advanced Educators offer the service a consistent standardised training and improvement offer, coordinating cross-system learning and development, and Advanced Practitioners offer embedded action learning. This recognises different learning styles and the collective relational endeavour of improving outcomes in Gloucestershire.

6.2 Advanced Educators through the Social Work Academy will:

- Run the core training and development offer for essential social work skills. APs role in this is to support learning transfer and support social workers to put the training they offer into practice. Therefore, it is important that APs have a good understanding of the content of courses run and are notified by the SWA about the training attendance of their team members.
- Coordinate the programmes for routes into social care and early career framework. They will work with APs and the Team Manager to match apprentices, student social workers and NQSWs to the team. They will work with APs and Team Managers to ensure there is a good understanding of the standards of practice and methods of assessment. They will liaise with the accrediting bodies and support with navigating performance and standards issues for these groups.
- Access to personalised improvement support. APs can approach Advanced Educators to access bespoke support for individuals or their team. This will be delivered through the link Advanced Educators to their area or the Advanced Educators will link the AP to an AP with this expertise in the service to facilitate mutual learning exchange.
- Hold a ringfenced budget for specialist evidence-based training for the APs in their lead thematic areas to support them to develop excellent practice.
- The AEs will run events including the AP Forum to facilitate networking and influencing cross service improvement. The AP Forum will decide on topics for thematic quality assurance for the AP group informed by QPRM and emerging service or area themes. The AE lead will create simple evidence collection tools on Microsoft forms to feed this into the quarterly QAF report and create whole service-learning resources to respond to the findings.
- The AEs and APs will form a practice network to share and promote best practice, offering their collective expertise across the service to draw from. This will be facilitated by the Social Work Academy and will support links to wider learning opportunities, access to evidence based research and planning.

7. Diagram of Role



7.1 This document sets out the over arching expectations of the Advanced Practitioner role and how it fits with the wider team and functioning. Team Managers are responsible for supporting the Advanced Practitioner's performance and developing skills to balance the competing demands of different parts of their role. The management of different functions and tasks is a central skill for progressing in all types of practice leadership and management and should be developed and demonstrated in the role.

7.2 The division of the Advanced Practitioner's time will look different week-by-week and the expectations set out in this document describe expectations across a month. This means there is flexibility for the Advanced Practitioner to determine the best way to deliver the expectations of the role within their team context.

7.3 If the Advanced Practitioner is concerned that they are not being allocated work appropriately to enable them to fulfil their role they should raise this with their Team Manager. If the Advanced Practitioner and Team Manager are unable to resolve this then this should be discussed with the Group/Service Manager who will support them to review the functioning and understanding of the team and address barriers to part of the role being successfully fulfilled.

Appendix One – Chart of Practice Lead Areas

Each area will have a minimum of one thematic lead AP for each theme but may have more than one who work collaboratively together.

Service	Theme
North Child and Family Locality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Domestic Abuse - Child Sexual Abuse - Parenting Assessments - Neglect
East Child and Family Locality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Domestic Abuse - Child Sexual Abuse - Parenting Assessments - Neglect - Youth Homelessness
West Child and Family Locality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Domestic Abuse - Child Sexual Abuse - Parenting Assessments - Neglect - NRPF - Parental Substance Misuse (link to FDAC)
Children in Care Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unaccompanied asylum seeking young people - Adoption - Life story and long-term fostering - Exploitation and missing - Reunification
Care Experienced Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refugee and asylum seeking young people - Young people involved in the criminal justice system - Care experienced parents - Homelessness
Disabled Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BIA and Mental Capacity Act - Communicating with disabled children in assessment
Specialist Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child Exploitation Team (Harm Outside the Home inc. Missing)

Countywide teams can access APs in any Locality Teams in their thematic area and visa versa.

Thematic Area	Assistant Director or Head of Service/Group Manager Lead
Domestic Abuse	Rachel Townsend
Child Sexual Abuse	Finbar Breeze
Neglect	Shabana Warne

Parenting Assessment	Julie Miles
Exploitation	Claire Connolly
Life story and long term fostering	Tammy Wheatley
Reunification	Deborah Owen
Adoption	Tammy Wheatley
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People	Mark Bone
Care experienced young people involved in the criminal justice system	Fiona Walker
Care experienced parents	Mark Bone
Youth homelessness	Gemma Main
NRPF	Rachel Townsend
Parental substance misuse	Julies Miles
BIA and Mental Capacity Act	Naomi Adams
Communication tools eg talking matts, makaton	Naomi Adams