



DEVELOPING TOGETHER

SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

Evaluation Report: OnSite Supervisor Programme December 2019

Introduction and Context

Early engagement with Partners identified a specific need, and request, for support for staff fulfilling the role of the onsite supervisor (OSS) of social work students. This included both qualified social workers and supervisors with other qualifications or roles within the employing organisation. Interested Partners included those in both voluntary and statutory sectors.

Since the introduction of the Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) in 2012/13 Kingston University (KU) has not delivered any specific training for onsite supervisors, although supervisors have always been invited to attend the Practice Learning Support groups provided by the university, whilst working with a KU student. Prior to this, onsite supervisors were able to access a 15 credit module, Enabling Work-based Learning, which was often used as a precursor to the Practice Education Programme. The employer request for OSS support therefore correlated to a gap in Higher Education Institution (HEI) provision in recent years.

In addition, this development programme was seen as a means of addressing one of the goals of the Partnership, which was to develop the quantity and quality of practice learning opportunities in the region. By developing and supporting onsite supervisors, the aim was to enhance the quality of placement provision, as well as expand provision by developing 'new' onsite supervisors, particularly in the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector.

Process and Principles

Due to the need to address the learning of both Social Work (SW) and 'other' qualified staff, two programmes were designed with slightly different starting points and target audiences.

As the main driver for the **non SW programme**, it was agreed with **Welcare** that this would be delivered at KU, in order to enable staff to completely disengage from work and immerse themselves in an academic environment. The programme was opened to all Partner agencies and one participant was enabled to bring her infant to sessions.



DEVELOPING TOGETHER

SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

Partner Employer	No of. Participants
Welcare	3
Achieving for Children	3
Merton Children	1

In the spirit of inclusivity, 1 SW from Achieving for Children attended one day as a substitute for a day of the SW programme she was unable to attend.

The sessions were scheduled to help prepare supervisors for working with a student in the autumn period and included the possibility of three half day workshops alongside a placement, to support the application of knowledge and skills.

Three full days were delivered in September and October 2019 and three half day workshops were planned from January to March 2020.

One session was co-facilitated by a Senior Practitioner from Welcare and all three sessions were facilitated by Dale van Graan and Josie Newton from the Partnership PE Team.

At the programme end the group decided that they were unlikely to need the three half day workshops and so these were kept as tentative dates.

As the main driver of the **SW programme**, it was agreed with **Croydon Adults** that sessions would be delivered at local venues in order to maximise staff attendance. The programme was opened to all Partner agencies.

Partner Employer	No. of Participants
Croydon ASC and CS	12
Achieving for Children	3
Wandsworth Children	1

The programme was requested to be delivered as one full day and two half day sessions, with no follow up workshops.



DEVELOPING TOGETHER

SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

All sessions were co-facilitated with Natesha Yanguba, Practice Educator and Senior Practitioner in Croydon, and Dale van Graan, Sarah Cave and Paul Lawrence from the Partnership PE Team. This was a particularly engaged, enthusiastic and energetic group of learners, many of whom were graduates of KU and/or were preparing for forthcoming PE programmes, and the pace of learning was quick, due to the extensive content to be addressed.

Not all the participants were concurrently working with students, some had had extensive prior experience of working with learners or as supervisors of other staff, but some had absolutely no prior knowledge or experience in those roles. Some had already applied for the PE programme and some were just exploring options, so there was a wide range of starting points and personal goals.

All 23 learners were provided with a printed handbook, slides and handouts from each session, which included recommended reading, small tasks to complete between sessions in order to reinforce learning and provide differentiation, and a certificate of attendance.

Learning Outcomes

- Contribute to the design of a placement plan and a tailored Induction Plan for a learner;
- confidently work closely with the student, providing feedback on their progress and supporting their learning through robust supervision;
- work collaboratively with all the stakeholders to support the student and promote their learning and development;
- **(for non SW OSS to work collaboratively with all the stakeholders to)** identify the relevant assessment and professional frameworks and thresholds and their relationship to the student's particular learning needs
- identify your own strengths and needs as a practice supervisor and a plan to address them

Assessment

As this was designed as a non accredited learning programme, rather than either an accredited academic module or a training event, the following optional 'assessment' was designed:

A critical reflection on one's own learning and development and a personal development plan (PDP) for what happens next. Guidance on what would



DEVELOPING TOGETHER

SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

be required was provided in sessions.

(To date nobody from either programme has submitted - deadline was 13.12.19)

Content

The programme was designed to broadly address the domain and Values requirements of the PEPS (2012) and included knowledge about roles and responsibilities and skills in planning and managing a placement and enabling and assessing learning and development. The following is a brief overview:

1. **Context, planning and preparation for a placement**, followed up with writing a Personal Profile and designing an Induction Plan for a student.
2. **Assessing and enabling learning and development**, followed up with identifying learning opportunities, drafting a supervision Agreement, enabling learning, feedback and preparing for direct observations.
3. **Decision-making and dealing with difficulties**, including supervision skills and giving feedback, having difficult conversations and addressing particular learning needs.

Evaluation by Participants

7 evaluation forms were received from non SW supervisors and 11 from social work supervisors (total 18). Feedback was sought under the following key headings:

Knowledge, skills and confidence

On both programmes there was a significant shift in self assessment ratings from the start to the end of the programme, on knowledge skills and confidence relevant to the role of onsite supervisors.

At the start of the non SW programme the majority of participants rated themselves on a 5 point rating scale as 'average' in all three areas, but at the end the majority rated themselves as 'high' or 'very high' and all rated themselves higher than at the start.

At the start of the SW programme there was an almost even division between 'very high', 'high' and 'average' ratings in all three areas, but by the end there was an almost even division between 'very high' and 'high', with only



DEVELOPING TOGETHER

SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

one person rating themselves as 'average' on only two of the areas. All participants rated themselves higher than at the start.

Relevance and clarity of content

This was rated as 'very good' by 5 non SW participants and by 10 SW participants. Qualitative feedback highlighted: *the clear, 'user-friendly' nature of the content and relevance of exercises to the role; the extent to which it had helped participants to consider how best to support a student and to understand how they could make a difference in a student's journey; the breadth of knowledge addressed was useful and the whole course was felt to have boosted confidence.*

Facilitators' presentation styles (enthusiasm for the topic; approaches to engagement; responsiveness to questions)

Across both programmes 16 participants rated this as 'very good' and qualitative feedback noted facilitators' *passion and excitement, knowledge, patience, warmth and encouraging approaches which facilitated and ensured interaction and engagement.* One participant commented "Very good teaching style, I like that the trainers **teach** us, not only rely on our own discussions".

Extent to which the programme learning outcomes were met

It was unanimously agreed by **all** participants that the learning outcomes had been met **fully**. In addition, any additional questions had been addressed well in discussion. One participant noted that he/she was *already able to apply this learning in concurrent practice with a student.*

Rate the likely impact on your professional practice

4 non SW participants felt the impact was likely to be 'very high' and the remaining 3 felt it would be 'high', citing the use of tools, resources and reading as likely to have an impact on personal development, and the opportunity to apply the learning when actually working with a student, as another example.



DEVELOPING TOGETHER

SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

In contrast, all 11 SW participants felt the likely impact would be 'very high', citing increased reflection on own knowledge and practice; increased understanding of the potential impact of power dynamics and the student's anxiety about making mistakes; developing interest in the PE programme and consideration of career progression, as examples.

Rate the likely impact on your career development (enablers/barriers)

Only SW participants were asked this question and again **all 11** rated this as '**very high**' and comments referred to line management expectation that the participant would be taking on staff supervision responsibilities; that there was increased interest in the PE programme; that career progression would become a more active focus of their appraisal. A barrier identified by one participant was '*the team I am in and the magnitude of work I have*' .

Additional comments

A summary of these comments attest to the extent to which the programmes had been *enjoyable, very relevant, informative with lots of good guidance, ideas, thought provoking discussions and highly beneficial.*

The content was considered to have *enabled reflection and further exploration of knowledge and skills* and was supported by *excellent handouts and slides.*

The programmes and facilitation thereof were noted by more than one participant to have been *excellent.*

Overall, participants noted their *increased confidence and recognition of the benefits of supporting a student, feeling better prepared for putting it into practice.*

Participants were not specifically asked how the programme could be developed, but one social worker did suggest that further workshops would be helpful.

Initial Impact

To date I am aware that two social workers from Achieving for Children are pursuing applications to the PE programme at KU and one social worker in Croydon has requested the opportunity to work as an OSS.



DEVELOPING TOGETHER

SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

Conclusions and Recommendations

From all the feedback gathered and the attendance records, particularly at the social work programme, it is apparent that there was a strong need and appetite for a programme of development for those supporting students' practice learning in the role of OSS.

In both programmes the learning outcomes were achieved and seem to have been appropriate; content was relevant and the schedule of delivery suitable. The location of delivery was appropriate for each programme, but there are both advantages and disadvantages to delivering in the academic environment and in local venues, so this is an area that could be negotiated.

Although there are indicators that the programmes will contribute towards the expansion of practice learning opportunities in the region, it is possible that the real impact in this area may only become more apparent over time. Feedback suggests that the quality of support provided to students will be enhanced as a result of the programmes.

In hindsight, there is perhaps less need to differentiate programmes for social work and other qualified staff, as long as there is scope to address different strengths, needs and professional disciplines within the content and delivery. It could be argued that combining the programmes could enhance learning in a more realistic, multi-disciplinary way. In that case, maintaining the schedule of teaching over three full days may be more beneficial than one full and two half days.

From January 2020 KU is an early adopter of the refreshed PEPS and will be reporting back to British Association of Social Workers (BASW) on the impact of the changes and any need to develop the framework further. According to the refreshed PEPS (2019, p.17), "onsite supervisors should be working within the values and good practice guidance of the PEPS and be adequately supported and prepared for their role...Wherever possible, onsite supervisors should have minimum training and recent experience of supporting student social workers in the team". Therefore, it is suggested that this programme of learning and development be considered as a minimum requirement for all staff carrying out the onsite supervision of social work students in the Developing Together Teaching Partnership.



DEVELOPING TOGETHER

SOCIAL WORK
TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

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