



DEVELOPING TOGETHER

SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

Placement Activities Report

Context:

The Placement Activities were developed in response to the Covid 19 Pandemic in March 2020 which impacted on the placements of the MSW students who were on their final placements. Many of these students were half way through their placements when the pandemic led to social workers (SWs) needing to work from home with a significant change in how they would be working with service users (SUCs). It was agreed with Social Work England (SWE) that students completing 70 out of the expected 100 days would be sufficient for them to be able to be assessed as meeting their capabilities under the PCF. The majority of partners providing placements were able to continue the placements to the 70 day mark with students working from home and being assessed virtually, however there were a number of placements that were unable to continue past 50 days due to pressures in the workplace or the Practice Educator (PE) being off sick.

In these circumstances it was agreed with the University that the Teaching Partnership would create a range of scenarios and related activities that would enable students to develop their skills and complete their final 20 placement days, provided they had a satisfactory midway report. The PEs in the Teaching Partnership, Sarah Cave and Josie Newton, were assigned to students to both organise and deliver the placement activities and assess student social workers in order to complete the final placement report. It was hoped that through successfully completing the placement activities students would be able to complete their MSW and graduate with their peers, allowing them to progress into Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) posts without delay.

Preparation:

Prior to the Placement Activities commencing the Teaching Partnership PEs, University Tutors and students met to discuss the midway reports completed by PE's in the students' original placement setting and to establish the range of work that had been completed, areas of strength and areas for development. Where possible a discussion was also held with the original PE



who completed the midway report. One student was completing some voluntary work for the Organisation in which she completed her placement and therefore the activities were tweaked so that a direct observation could take place of this student completing a telephone assessment within her volunteering role and this assessment was reviewed by the social worker in practice.

All placement activities were planned in three week phases with a set timescale and deadlines in which to complete tasks in order to mirror the expectation of student social workers on placement. The timetable of activities and task details were sent out at the beginning of each week and invites created for online meetings, role plays and supervision.

Placement Activities:

Four scenarios were prepared by the Teaching Partnership team relating to individual team members' specialist knowledge. Two scenarios were child and family focused, one being around child sexual exploitation and the second on children experiencing neglect, with issues around domestic abuse and drug use. Two scenarios were adult social work focused; one scenario being an adult requiring support around mental health and the other with a young adult with learning difficulties (see appendices for scenarios and activities).

For each case study, activities included role play telephone calls with SUCs and other professionals, role play home visits to complete assessments, supervision, reflective writing and tasks to complete case notes, chronologies and written assessments. The activities aimed to develop student social workers' skills and knowledge on social work practice, reflection, legislation and theory.

In the children's scenarios students were asked to complete C&F assessments, strategy meeting referral, chronology, child protection conference reports and a referral to another agency. In the adults scenarios students were asked to complete a Care Act assessment and support plan, a Mental Capacity Assessment exercise, a referral to another agency, a safeguarding referral, a chronology and a panel report form.

The scenarios aimed to support students develop their analytical skills through planning, carrying out and writing up an assessment and presenting their analysis in order to aid decision making. Students were asked to prepare a session on how they would complete direct work with a child or an adult and



present this to their PE, as well as engaging in supervision where they would present the case they were working on in order to aid decision making and planning. Separate supervision sessions were also held to explore social work theories and how these related to the scenarios and also to provide students with a space to reflect on their practice.

Whilst appreciating that the placement activities were not 'real' and interactions were not with 'real' SUCs, the scenarios were based on real life examples and role plays included challenging and emotional service users where students were required to use a range of communication skills to support the SUC and accurately assess the situation.

A spreadsheet (accessible [here](#)) was created to evidence how each scenario could ensure students were able to evidence capabilities linked to the KSS and PCF and to ensure equity of tasks linked to each scenario in order for students to have the same learning opportunities depending on the scenario they were working with.

Three students completed the Placement Activities; two using the Children and Families scenario around CSE and the third being assessed using the adult transition scenario along with the voluntary work she was doing in her organisation. The students took approximately three-four weeks to complete the Placement Activities and all were engaged with the approach and successfully completed the remaining days of their placement.

Student Feedback:

A full breakdown of the feedback from students can be found in the appendices, however as an overview the evaluation found that students rated the planning of the activities between the PE and the tutor and the information they received about the activities as excellent. Two students found that the case study was extremely relevant in meeting their learning needs and the other found it to be very relevant. All of the students found the activities to have developed their social work practice with one student stating;

'The activities put my learning at a test because I had not had any experience in any of the activities. They actually made me feel as if I was in practice and faced with a new challenge which I needed to attend to. The activities enabled me to apply social work theory and law, as well as making informed decisions'.



All found their supervision and the feedback they received from their PE to be excellent and considered that the placement activities had prepared them for social work practice. Feedback around the support they received and the learning taken from the placements was excellent and included;

'Due to this current pandemic, I was anxious about my final year and how my placement would be completed as well as my practice and how effective it would be. However, with support from my PE and the activities provided, I definitely have improved on the things I was nervous and unsure about, as well it has increased my confidence within myself and my practice. I think the use of supervision and the different models that were used by Josie, was amazing and allowed me to reflect on things that I was not aware of. It has also helped me in taking care of myself!'

Whilst acknowledging that students were not in 'real life' practice situations and experiencing the dynamics of a social work office and the competing demands which come about as being part of a team, the comments made by students indicated that they valued the opportunity to practise and develop their social work skills in a safe environment with situations that mirrored contemporary social work practice and received the one to one feedback from their PE around their strengths and areas for development.

Feedback from the TP Practice Educators:

Feedback from Sarah Cave:

'I really enjoyed the learning opportunities that I had as a result of these activities. I particularly liked the challenge of creating a scenario and the activities to go with it, trying to ensure the activities reflected the tasks social workers undertake every day.

Due to the placements my student had already undertaken, she required a children's scenario, hence, I needed to support my student through a scenario I had not created myself, this provided me with the opportunity to develop my knowledge around CSE, which was the major concern in this scenario.

I learnt that it is difficult to role play and assess simultaneously, although not impossible. Once in the role, I was able to experience (to an extent) what it was like to communicate with the student as a parent would, and could see that when I felt offended 'in role' it was important for me to consider what the student had said in this situation, and reflect with her about this.



One of the most difficult tasks for me was feeding back on areas of development to a student I had never met in person, and whom I often could not see - as due to WiFi issues, we would often speak on the phone. All the cues we consider through facial expression and body language were not there, and I was dependent on the tone of her voice along with her response to know if she understands my feedback, and how she is receiving this. It was a pleasure to get to know my students, however, and due to the intensity of the activities, our working relationships developed quickly. These activities challenged my 'normal' way of working as a PE, however I was able to build a positive relationship with my students, and with this solid foundation anything is possible!

Feedback from Josie Newton:

'Although this was an intense 3 weeks which required a lot more work and focus than would as an Off-Site PE, and maybe even as an On-Site PE (in some placements), this way of working provided me with more good opportunities to assess the student and enable development.

- *There was flexibility to 'create' more challenging 1-1s so students could experience and 'practice' skills in a safe and secure environment;*
- *Providing feedback after each activity provided the student with real time, 'in the moment' reflections as experienced in Direct Obs;*
- *If the client group / area isn't your specialism, it provides the opportunity to develop transferable skills and improve new knowledge (this was obviously personal experience, and won't always be the case);*
- *This provided more than just 'experiences'. It was significant learning about entire processes that students may not necessarily experience on placement i.e. from referral to review, or indeed PLO. I think this provided a rich learning journey;*
- *It requires acting skills!*
- *I wonder if the amount of work expected was too much at times? Although I reflect on this given the context of working with an anxious student;*
- *Although it was an intense amount of work, shouldn't we expect regular, comprehensive feedback on verbal and written practice like this anyway? It may be harder with more than one student of course!*
- *If there had been any concerns or need to interrupt the student, the PE could do this comfortably and have discussion / reflection on what, how and why;*



- *If there were areas you had yet to assess capability / student demonstrate (which of course in this instance we did), these activities should provide you with this opportunity;*
- *It requires the PE to be creative and imaginative - any absence of information requires PE to 'think on toes' in activities, which may lead to different outcomes with the activities.'*

Feedback from Academic Tutors at Kingston University

Academic Lecturers at Kingston University fed back at the Board of Studies that the Teaching Partnership team had been able to work together with the University to meet the students' needs to ensure those students whose placements ended at 50 days were able to complete their placements and had excellent learning opportunities that were able to develop students skills and knowledge and prepare them for social work practice. It was acknowledged that the scenarios created could be used in the future where there was a need for a student to develop particular skills in certain areas within a placement setting or within the Readiness for Direct Practice modules.

Conclusion

Whilst acknowledging that Covid 19 and the changes in ways of working and the upheaval on students in their placement settings has brought many challenges, there has also been evidence of creative thinking and working across the social care sector to ensure that service users, social workers and those in the process of qualifying to be social workers have been able to receive the support they require.

The Placement Activities have been an example of this creative thinking and approach and have enabled student social workers to develop skills and knowledge through the use of simulated activities and in having a Practice Educator to support their reflection and development. It is hoped these activities can be used in future to support student learning as they prepare to go out on placement or to enhance placements where students require further learning opportunities to prepare them for their future social work practice.

Sue Lansley
Social Work Lead
Teaching Partnership



Appendix 1: Scenarios

Scenario 1: Mental Health Scenario

[Adult Mental Health scenario - Week 1 PE info for activities](#)
[Adult Mental Health scenario - Week 1 student activities](#)
[Adult Mental Health scenario - Week 2 PE info for activities](#)
[Adult Mental Health scenario - Week 2 student activities](#)
[Adult Mental Health scenario - Week 3 PE info for activities](#)
[Adult Mental Health scenario - Week 3 student activities](#)
[Adult Mental Health scenario \(Overview\)](#)
[Casenote template for scenario](#)
[Client assessment and care and support plan - 1 February 2017](#)
[National eligibility guidance - Care Act](#)

Scenario 2: Children & Family Scenario

[C&F Case Study - PE info for activities](#)
[C&F Case Study - student activities](#)
[C&F Scenario - Police Incident Report](#)
[C&F Scenario - Referral Form](#)

Scenario 3: Adult Transitions Scenario

[PE summary of resources for Luke case study](#)
[Student summary of tasks and deadlines for Luke case study](#)
[Whole Luke scenario Student and PE info on activities](#)
[Wk 1 Luke chronology from old file](#)
[Wk 1 Luke Police Incident report \(1\)](#)
[Wk 1 Luke Police Incident report \(2\)](#)
[Wk 1 Luke Referral to transition team](#)

Scenario 4: Child Sexual Exploitation Children & Family scenario

[PE Copy of Case study - Pollard family](#)
[Student Copy of Case study with details of activities - Pollard family](#)
[DT Child Referral form - Pollard](#)
[PLO Letter - Pollard](#)
[PLO Timeline](#)
[Chronology - Pollard](#)
[Police Incident report 1 - P family scenario](#)
[Police Incident report 2 - P family scenario](#)
[Police Incident report 3 - P family scenario](#)



Appendix 2: Student Evaluation

Q1. Please rate how well organised the planning was for the Placement Activities with the PE and your tutor at Kingston University

Excellent - 100%

Comments:

A time table was drafted and sent to me before the commencing date of the activities. This covered the whole duration of the activities and specified dates on which each activity needed to be completed. This arrangement kept me informed of my next activity rather than having them abruptly.

The activities scheduled were based on my learning needs and improved my ability to work in timescales better. However, the activity days whereby I had to complete assessments, I feel I could have produced a better report with 2 working days instead of 1.

Every week I was provided with a clear timetable which would outline every activity, what is expected to do and deadline.

Q2. Please rate the information you received from the PE about the Placement Activities.

Excellent - 100%

Comments:

The PE always sent the activities on the agreed date. We always had time to discuss these activities especially the ones I found to be challenging. This information was very relevant and it played a big part in making me successful during my ASYE assessment and interview.

Sarah identified the activities and expectations were coherent. If I had difficulty with an activity, Sarah was helpful and often encouraged me to seek support from Sarah. I appreciated Sarah helping me to reflect more on the implications my practice can have based on my age, ethnicity, upbringing and personal values.



All information received from my PE was clear and was broken down in smaller tasks which made it easier for me to understand due to my learning disability.

Q3. Please rate how relevant the case scenarios were in meeting your learning needs.

Extremely relevant - 67%

Very relevant - 33%

Comments:

Firstly, I learnt that the PE worked around my midway report to create these activities. She identified all the aspects that I had not been able to achieve during my first half of the placement, hence being able to meet my learning needs through these activities.

The case scenario allowed me to increase my knowledge of the statutory procedures when undertaking a s.47, which I had limited experience. I enjoyed the role-playing activities and Sarah definitely made the role playing realistic.

I aim to become a children and family social worker, the case scenario provided gave me the experience in working with a family from the point of referral, it provided me with an insight on what would be expected within my role as social worker for example undertaking direct work and visits as well completing child in need plans.

Q4. Please rate how effective the planned activities were in allowing you to develop your social work practice.

Extremely effective - 100%

Comments:

The activities put my learning at a test because I had not had any experience in any of the activities. They actually made me feel as if I was in practice and faced with a new challenge which I needed to attend to. The



activities enabled me to apply social work theory and law, as well as making informed decisions.

I was worried in the beginning whether the alternative placement setting would not be challenging, but the 16 days have made me more resilient and confident in my ability take on s.47 investigation and work through families complex issues.

I was very conscious of my practice due to the current pandemic and my confidence. The activities were effective as being able to complete them accurately developed my analytical skills which will be important in my practice.

Q5. Did the Placement Activities learning programme:

- a. Develop your knowledge and skills - Very much so - 100%
- b. Develop your values - Very much so - 100%
- c. Require you to integrate theory with practice - Very much so - 100%
- d. Require you to reflect on your social work practice - Very much so - 100%
- e. Develop your confidence - Very much so - 67% and To some extent - 33%
- f. Address areas for development - Very much so - 100%

Comments:

Due to this current pandemic, I was anxious about my final year and how my placement would be completed as well as my practice and how effective it would be. However, with support from my PE and the activities provided, I definitely have improved on the things I was nervous and unsure about it, as well as has increased my confidence within myself and my practice. I think the use of supervision and the different models that were used by Josie, was amazing and allowed me to reflect on things that i was not aware of. It has also helped me in taking care of myself!

Q6. Please rate the supervision you received from your PE.

Excellent - 100%

Comments:



Comments:

Having the case study carry out real tasks e.g undertaking home visits and telephone calls, developed my practice profoundly as I understood how important it is to not only behave as an professional but identify as one. It showed me what is expected of services from children, families and other professionals. To be able to have the opportunity to complete a child and family assessment was amazing, writing analytically and succinct was something that I was anxious about however actually completing it, I am aware of what needs to be included in regards to a child's needs, parenting capacity and etc. My analytical skills have definitely improved and having the chapter on analysis, breaks down what is needed. Being descriptive is not bad but does not explore the implications of the child's safety. As a social worker, why, what and so what? are the THREE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS that always need answering. Working with other agencies and actually understanding what the agency does to support children and families is important especially when completing referrals. Having a session with NSPCC, helped me to understand what work they complete with young people experiencing child sexual exploitation.

Each activity was relevant to my learning needs and helped me understand the statutory policies and procedures when working in safeguarding.

Q9. Overall please rate the Placement Activity programme in preparing you for social work practice.

Excellent - 100%

Comments:

The knowledge I have developed during these activities will stay with me all through my social work practice. Like I said, the knowledge was very helpful and fully applied during my ASYE assessment and interview, where I came out successful.



Q10: Please make any additional comments below.

To be honest, I lovely the massive learning I was able to achieve in such a short period of time. The PE was very knowledgeable around the subject, she was always professional, and she was flexible. She was thoughtful of me because she considered my other commitments when setting out the activities, which I believe was one of the reasons I was able to complete the activities without being stressed.

Sarah provided me with above excellent support and I hope to be able to continue to the relationship after I finish University. I feel Sarah's realism combine with knowledge and skills can be useful to any student and professional in social work.

I cannot thank Josie and Sue enough for helping me to get to a place where I am confident in working with children and families. Thank you so much both and God bless!