



**DEVELOPING TOGETHER**  
SOCIAL WORK  
TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

An Introduction to Practice Education  
in the Developing Together Teaching  
Partnership



# Introduction

## A Brief History

Our Partnership builds on an existing alliance in South West London and Surrey and aims to create a leading pre and post qualifying social work education community capable of attracting and retaining the best and brightest social workers in the country. Our HEI Partner, Kingston University, has a history of providing a highly regarded Level 7 Practice Education course which has been supported by this alliance with employer partners for more than 20 years.

The formation of the Teaching Partnership in 2018 enabled the creation of new Practice Education posts to specifically build upon existing strengths, particularly regarding the provision of high quality practice learning opportunities for our students. Broadly we aim to enhance the quality and quantity of practice learning opportunities across the region through multiple diverse activities targeted primarily at Practice Educators, Onsite Supervisors, Practice Assessors and Workforce Development leads.

## Who's who?

### Practice Consultants

The Partnership's Practice Consultants are key to implementing our vision to deliver well trained, capable and confident social workers who can meet the challenges of practice. They deliver support and development opportunities across the Partnership, through a wide range of activities, such as:

- Creating resources to support Practice Educators, Practice Assessors, Onsite Supervisors and students;
- Designing and delivering a variety of workshops to support and enable PEs, PAs and OSSs ongoing development of 'all things Practice Education';
- Facilitating support groups for PEs, PAs, OSSs;
- Being Practice Educator for a number of Kingston University students each year;
- Carrying out the Practice Assessor role to trainee PEs
- Facilitating the Community of Practice for Practice Educators across the partnership, by providing a drop in space and workshops to support development commensurate with the PE's level of experience.



Previously known as Practice Education Development Workers, their new job title since April 2020 reflects the evolving nature of their work, including the provision they now offer to ASYE Assessors and the role they will play in supporting newly qualified social workers during their early career development.

Meet our Practice Consultants:

**Josie Newton** started working in the mental health field as a support worker in a residential care home over 19 years ago. She qualified as a Social Worker following successful completion of MSc in Social Work, and subsequently joined New Malden Community Mental Health Team as a Care Coordinator. Josie has been a dedicated Social Worker in Mental Health for over 10 years, with dual diagnosis i.e. mental health and substance misuse, a particular passion. Josie developed in her career, becoming a Practice Educator, supporting, guiding, assessing and enabling social work students and then Newly Qualified Social Workers on the ASYE programme. Josie is a practicing AMHP and a qualified BIA. She is keen to improve the focus on mental health as well as dedicated towards the overall development of standards within Practice Education and Social Work education. This is Josie's second year with the Teaching Partnership.





**Sharon Evans** qualified as a Social Worker 21 years ago having completed her Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work at Leeds Metropolitan University. She has worked in a variety of settings, including Child Protection, Adoption and Children with Disabilities. Sharon has been a Practice Educator for 10 years and applied her mentoring skills in managing a social work team working with children with disabilities and acquired brain injury. Sharon has a particular interest and expertise in attachment theory which she has utilised in her work with adopters, adopted children and adults and birth families. Understanding the interplay between all members of the adoption triangle has informed her practice in this area of social work. Sharon is also passionate about the rights of children and adults with disabilities and continues to promote their rights to inclusion in all aspects of the community with equal opportunity. Sharon is a trainer rooted in practice and a practitioner rooted in training and research. Sharon has joined the partnership this year.





## Practice Educators

Practice Educators (PEs) are experienced Social Workers who have undertaken specific learning in order to teach, supervise, assess and support students undertaking a practice placement. The role of the PE is crucial in the teaching, support and assessment of all students and in the 'signing off' of qualifying social workers.

To be eligible to apply for the PE course you must be:

- A Registered Social Worker with a minimum of two years post qualified experience
- Committed and able to complete both Stage 1 and Stage 2 training become a fully qualified Practice Educator authorised to sign off a qualifying student
- Able to provide two student placements
- Approved by your manager/Workforce Development and meet any local eligibility criteria

The following are the responsibilities of a Practice Educator:

- Planning and managing the placement
- Teaching and enabling learning and professional development
- Assessing the social work student against the Professional Capability Framework (PCF)
- Ensuring the provision of a range of learning opportunities that allow students to have an appropriate level of responsibility and demonstrate the necessary skills, knowledge and values required to be a Social Worker, at the relevant level of the PCF
- Supporting and enabling students to integrate theory into practice and help them explore their values
- Providing the student with regular formal supervision
- Where based off-site, collaborating with the Onsite Supervisor (OSS) to ensure a coordinated assessment approach
- Leading on the completion of placement documents, such as the Practice Learning Agreement (PLA), midway and final reports
- Liaising with the student's tutor as necessary
- Attending regular support workshops and learning events at the university or inhouse
- Contributing to the quality assurance and evaluation of the placement



## Onsite Supervisors

An Onsite Supervisor (also known as a work based or practice supervisor) is based in the same team as the student, usually has line management responsibility for the student's work and is available for day-to-day support. This role is ideal for those wanting to contribute to, but not take full responsibility for, assessing a student. It may be the first step towards undertaking the Practice Educator course or progressing your career through gaining experience in supervising and managing staff.

There are some specific requirements for this role:

- For a final placement student, it is essential for the OSS to be a qualified Social Worker
- The OSS must be competent to provide day-to-day practice supervision of social work students
- The OSS must be located in the same team as the student's practice learning setting

The following are the responsibilities of an Onsite Supervisor:

- Jointly responsible for planning and managing the placement, including the induction for the student
- Allocating work to the student
- Providing day-to-day support and formal supervision focusing on cases
- Contributing to the holistic assessment of the student's learning and development by regularly sharing information with the PE and contributing to the midway and final reports
- Attending placement meetings and OSS training and support days before and during placements
- Contributing to the quality assurance and evaluation of the placement



## Students

Within the Partnership students could be drawn from one of two qualifying programmes: a three year BA in Social Work or a two year Masters in Social Work. There is absolutely no difference between the practice components of the two courses, however:

- BA first placements (70 days) take place from November to March and final placements (100 days) from September to March each year
- MSW first placements (70 days) take place from May to August and final placements (100 days) from January to July each year

All students are required to pass their placements AND academic modules before progressing to the next academic level and where a placement is failed, students may be offered only one repeat opportunity.

## Tutors

Each student has an allocated personal/academic tutor in the University who is the first point of contact for Practice Educators, Onsite Supervisors and students during placements, thereby providing a bridge between University and placement.

Tutor responsibilities include:

- Participating actively throughout the practice learning experience through ongoing contact with the student, Practice Educator and/or Onsite Supervisor through visits, meetings and other communication, such as telephone and email contact, as required
- Supporting all involved in the student's practice learning experience, to ensure that University procedures are followed and the placement meets suitability requirements
- Contributing to the learning and development of trainee Practice Educators by providing them with developmental feedback



## Practice Assessors

Practice Assessors are Stage 2 qualified, experienced Practice Educators who work with trainee Practice Educators as their assessors, mentors and enablers of learning and development, during the social work student placement. They are usually appointed within the employing organisation.

Practice Assessors:

- Are responsible for observing the trainee in live supervision with the student, reviewing and providing feedback on all placement documents and making a holistic assessment of the trainee's capability against the Practice Educator Professional Standards domains
- Are responsible for assessing practice as Pass or Fail; it is a requirement to pass this assessment in order to pass the PE course
- Have no direct role to play in relation to the social work student. They will not attend PLA meetings or midway reviews and will not intervene in the student's learning plan or if there are difficulties. However, they will support the trainee Practice Educator in following process, in assessing the student and in addressing difficulties
- Are supported by the University PE team through 1:1 contact and regular support groups





# Support and Development Opportunities

These are numerous and include:

- A [two stage Practice Education course](#) culminating in a Postgraduate Certificate in Practice Education at Kingston University;
- Partnership Practice Education workshops for Practice Educators and Onsite Supervisors. You can find the latest CPD Brochure on our [website](#) which will include dates of these workshops and links to book;
- Onsite Supervisor Programme: a developmental and support programme during practice suitable for non-qualified social workers and qualified social workers who will be acting as an OSS for a student - details included in our CPD Brochure found on our [website](#) You can read the evaluation report of our pilot programme [here](#) and the evaluation report of our established programme [here](#);
- 'Preparation for Placement' days for students, PEs, OSSs and Tutors;
- Practice Learning workshops for PEs and OSSs during placements;
- Practice Assessor workshops during placements;
- Employer based or Partnership facilitated PE groups and/or student groups;
- One day PE Refresher events: opportunities for 'dormant' PEs who have not worked with a student or a Newly Qualified Social Worker for more than two years to refresh their knowledge and skills to enable a return to practice education practice;
- Half day 'Becoming a PA' events: for experienced PEs interested in developing their knowledge and skills by becoming a PA;
- Individual development plans;
- A range of university based assessment and teaching opportunities;
- Monthly research seminars at Kingston University;
- Annual Departmental Conference;
- Annual PE Conference.

For further more personalised information or to let us know what you are doing to enhance or support practice learning in your setting, please contact:

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