

## Practice Learning Guide

### REQUESTS FOR STUDENT PLACEMENTS

London Borough of Camden currently has a partnership arrangement with Middlesex University, from whom we take the majority of student placements. As part of the North Central London partnership, we are also linked to Royal Holloway and London Metropolitan University. We will consider taking students from other universities for placements.

All requests for student placements must go through the Professional Social Work Educator (Adults or Children) who is responsible for looking at the student's learning needs, identifying appropriate learning opportunities and matching them to practice educators. The process aims to ensure that no student is discriminated against in line with the Equality Act 2010.

If a social worker or a manager is contacted directly by a student seeking a placement, they should discuss this request with the Professional Social Work Educator so that the proper process can be followed.

*Requests from student social workers asking to shadow experienced social workers as part of their skills development days should also be directed to the Professional Social Work Educators who will liaise with the social work teams. All requests must be accompanied by a letter of introduction from the student's university and a current DBS check.*

## **ELIGIBILITY TO ACT AS A PRACTICE EDUCATOR**

Practice educators must have the agreement and support of their team/ service manager before agreeing to supervise a student.

Social workers supervising and assessing a student on placement must hold or be working towards a suitable practice education qualification in line with the Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS); these are minimum requirements for practice education recommended by the College of Social Work.

### **The PEPS sets out two levels of qualification:**

**At Stage 1** practice educators can supervise, teach, and assess students on their first placements. They may contribute to the last placement but should **not** take full responsibility for the assessment of a student as fit to practice at the point of qualification.

**Stage 2** practice educators can supervise, teach, and assess students up to and including the last placement and have the authority to recommend that social work students are fit to practice at the point of qualification.

Those holding the Practice Teacher Award, or a Higher Specialist Award in Practice Education are deemed to be Stage 2 qualified. From October 2013, practice educators need to ensure their continued proficiency in their practice education skills and 'maintain their currency' by supervising a student every two years or continue to be involved in social work education (PCF social work experience level)

**Stage 1** practice educators will be supported by an experienced Stage 2 practice educator if they take a final year student, whose role is to help them in their assessment decisions and take some part in the teaching and assessment of the student.

In order to undertake the Stage 1 training, social workers should have a minimum of two years' post qualifying experience.

## **PRE-PLACEMENT PROCESS**

Student profiles are sent through to the Professional Social Worker Educator by the university. The Professional Social Work Educator checks the profile and contacts the student to ask them to fill out the LB Camden Student Placement Request form

(Appendix 1) and to send a copy of their previous placement report (if applicable). This information is then sent to the Practice Educator who is asked to contact the student and invite them in for a pre-placement meeting.

All students must be invited to a pre-placement meeting. Guidance has been written to help practice educators with this meeting. Students must be asked to bring a copy of their DBS (the most recent one) to the meeting. Previous convictions/cautions will not preclude the offer of a placement, but the social worker should contact the Professional Social Work Educator to discuss this.

Students must bring a photo I.D. to the pre-placement meeting; if the placement goes ahead the practice educator should keep a written note confirming that they have seen evidence of the student's identification documents.

Following the pre-placement meeting' if the practice educator or their manager has concerns about the student's suitability's for the placement, they should discuss their concerns with the Professional Social Work Educator before communicating this to the student. The P E should then put their concerns in writing in order that feedback can be given to the university. Otherwise, the practice educator should agree a start date with the student and inform the Professional Social Work Educator of this date.

A separate guidance on planning an induction for a student is available

## **DBS**

Students must valid DBS check for the duration of the placement and the practice educator must retain a copy of this. If the check will not cover the duration of the placement, then the student needs to apply for a new one. *(As this can take some time to process, the student cannot start the placement until the new DBS check has been received)*

## **WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

Practice educators must arrange for their student to obtain the appropriate security passes during their period in Camden. These passes must be returned to the practice educator at the end of the learning opportunity.

Students should have access to a laptop and have access to an email account. Students are **not expected** to use their own mobile phones for work calls and should be allocated a work phone if this is normal team practice.

Students must comply with the contractual agreement for attendance and the hours of duties, which will be agreed in the practice learning agreement.

It is the responsibility of the practice educator to allocate and manage case work to the student social worker. Cases allocated should take into consideration the student social worker's ability and previous experience.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Student social workers must adhere to Camden's confidentiality policy and must not discuss or disclose any information deemed to be confidential after they have left Camden.

## **TRAVEL EXPENSES**

Student social workers can claim money back for work-related travel expenses via the team normal procedures. Students cannot claim travel expenses incurred during their journey to and from placement and home.

## **TRAINING FOR STUDENTS AND FOR PRACTICE EDUCATORS**

Appropriate training will be provided for staff supporting practice learning.

Student social workers should only attend training that is essential to their role as it is important that their time on placement is used to engage with practice. Apart from mandatory training (E.g., Mosaic and mandatory e-learning modules), it is recommended that students attend **no more than 5 training days**. Students are not able to attend training that incurs a charge. Whilst we support student attending training, if a training course is oversubscribed priority will be given to social workers on the waiting list. Additional support and training is also provided to student via the student's forums.

Practice educators undertaking practice education training must have the agreement of their manager and are expected to attend the full programme. Experienced practice educators are expected to update their practice learning knowledge and provide evidence of continued professional development. They can access relevant workshops run by the university and the forums run by the Professional Social Work Educators. Practice educators can also continue to access Camden L&D' programme of short courses.

## **SUPPORT FOR PRACTICE EDUCATORS AND FOR STUDENTS**

**Forums:** The Professional Social Work Educators arrange and facilitate 6 weekly forums for students and for practice educators throughout the year. Students and practice educators are encouraged to use the groups to for support and information and are invited to suggest topics for discussion.

**Workload relief:** It is recommended that a practice educator's workload is adjusted by 20% during the period of supervising a student social worker. This adjustment is to ensure that the Practice Educator can adequately manage and oversee the student social worker's caseload (students are usually allocated an equivalent of 20% case load at any one time for the duration of the placement) In addition it is expected that the practice educator will be given time to complete the assessment reports for their students. Practice educators undertaking Stage 1 or Stage 2 are allowed 5 days' study leave to complete their assignments and reports.

**Mentors:** Practice educators undertaking the training for Stage 1 training will be allocated a Stage 2 qualified mentors if they are supervising final placement students. The mentor's role is to support the practice educator in the assessment of the student. Mentors are expected to provide some supervision to the student (approx. once a month) and contribute to the practice learning agreement, midway and final report. They are there to support the practice educator's judgement.

### **Coaching and Mentoring Role: supporting Stage 1 PEPS requirements**

- Undertake an initial meeting to agree coaching role and working relationship
- Provide ad Hoc advice and support
- Use a coaching approach to assist with problem solving should the need arise
- Read and sign off mid-way and final placement report
- Ensure that Practice Educator has a plan for the holistic assessment of student
- Quality assure the learning agreement, midway and final reports
- Observed at least one supervision session with the practice educator(learner) and student and provide feedback to the Practice Educator
- Help the Practice Educator to explore ways in which service users can be involved in the assessment of the student

- **Library resources:** The Professional Social Work Educator holds a small practice learning library at the Crowndale Centre which is available to practice educators. Practice educators should contact the Professional Social Work Educator who can provide a list of titles.

**Professional Social Work Educators:** they are both social workers and experienced practice educators and are there to provide support and advice on any aspect of practice learning.

- Undertake final meeting to complete the QAPL form

## **ROLE OF THE TEAM AND THE LINE MANAGER**

The line manager and the team play an important role in supporting the placement. It is expected that the student is made to feel part of the team and that team member's play a part in providing learning opportunities for the student.

The line manager is expected to provide regular supervision to the practice educator which addresses practice learning issues and to give consideration and support to workload relief. Practice educators need to be given support to attend training and meetings.

Managers are encouraged to set targets for the intake of students within their teams each year and to provide information to the Professional Social Work Educator. They need to encourage practice educators to take students every two years to maintain their proficiency in practice education in line with the PEPS.

## **WHEN DIFFICULTIES ARISE**

Where there are concerns about a student's practice and the likelihood of them **not** meeting the requisite standards to pass the placement, the practice educator and /or student must inform the tutor and professional social work educator as soon as possible and a placement concerns meeting convened at the ***earliest opportunity in line with the guidelines in the university placements handbook.***

In rare cases a placement may need to be brought to an end. Examples of this may be if there is an irreconcilable breakdown in the relationship between the practice educator and the student social worker, where there has been a serious breach of Camden's policy or if to continue the placement would constitute an unacceptable risk to service users or to the student. The practice educator should ensure that in these circumstances appropriate guidance is sought from the Professional Social Work Educator and the university.

Students have the right to complain and appeal against actions by, or decisions of, their practice educator. If the issue cannot be resolved directly with the practice educator, they should discuss the matter with their tutor and follow the appropriate university procedures for practice learning.

Students should also be aware of Camden's whistleblowing policy which can be accessed on Essentials. Practice Educators also have access to the university complaints procedure as well as LB Camden's procedures if it is an operational issue that is affecting the effective management of the placement. It is recommended that they discuss their concerns with the Professional Social Work Educator.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Universities require placement providers to complete the Quality Assurance of Practice Learning (QAPL) and practice educators will be required to complete the universities forms as part of the placement process.

*LB Camden is also developing an internal quality assurance tool and practice educators will be asked to complete a survey about the practice learning experience.*

## **FINANCE**

LB Camden receives a daily placement fee of £20 per day from the student's University. This is claimed at the end of the placement by the Professional Social Work Educator and is used to cover payment of practice educators and mentors, as well as administrative costs and updates to the practice learning library.

**Payments are made as follows:**

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Practice educators, qualified at stage 1 or stage 2   | £14 per placement day |
| Practice educators currently undertaking Stage 1 training   | £12 per placement day |
| Practice educators currently undertaking Stage 2 training   | £14 per placement day |
| Offsite/long arm practice educator (where there is an on-site supervisor)   | £12 per placement day |
| On-site supervisors (where there is an off-site/long arm practice educator)   | £500 one-off payment  |
| Mentors supporting practice educators undertaking Stage 1 training and contributing to the assessment of a final year student | £500 one-off payment  |

Payments are made in recognition of the extra duties carried out in the management of student social workers' learning opportunities. Payments are made at the end of the placement through payroll with the relevant tax deductions.

If the placement ends early for whatever reason, payments will be made for the number of placement days completed only.



In order to be paid, practice educators **must** return the following documents to the Professional Social Work Educator:

- A signed copy of the final placement report
- A payment claim form
- A placement evaluation form