



An Introduction to the Greater Manchester Social Work (TP) Practice Education



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1. Introduction.

The Greater Manchester Social Work Academy (GMSWA) is a consortium involving our partnership organisations working collaboratively to equip social workers at all stages of their career with the tools and experience they need, to provide the best service to the people of Greater Manchester.

For Practice Education, the GMSWA has a steering group – Practice Learning, which includes members from all partner organisations who have a role or invested interest around Practice Education such as Placement Leads for the Universities, Workforce Development and placement coordinators in the local authorities.

This Practice Learning Steering Group is chaired and managed by representatives from both the Universities and Local Authorities. The group has a sub group which manages and chairs the Practice Education Standards (PEPS).

Group Chair: Lisa Cassidy – Workforce Development Lead (Bolton Council).

Vice Chair: Su McCaughan – Senior Lecturer – Placement Lead for Salford University.

PEPS Chair: Lynda McDonald – Senior Lecturer in Social Work/ Practice Learning Team at Manchester Metropolitan University.



For specific information about how Practice Education works in your area, you should contact your workforce/ University lead responsible for placements in your organisation.

2. The Role of a Practice Educator

Practice Educators (PE's) are experienced social workers who have completed additional training to teach, supervise, assess, and support students on placements.

The role of a Practice Educator is an essential role during the assessment of students practice and learning on placements and is often the “signing off” of qualifying social workers.

Criteria to undertake the role of Practice Educator includes:

- Registered Social Worker with at least 2 years post qualifying experience.
- Commitment and line manager permission to provide two student placements.
- Understanding that you will need to complete assessment process as a practice Educator in training.
- Commitment to completing Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the training to become a fully qualified Practice Educator.
- Commitment and permission from your line manager to complete the full training programme.

The main responsibility of a Practice Educator is to manage and develop a student on placement.

General Responsibilities.

- Managing student development and skills
- Preparation of the team for the student placement
- Liaison with internal and external services, professionals and colleagues to ensure effective opportunity and support for the student
- Ensuring the student adheres to relevant policies and procedures
- Taking responsibility for the co-ordination of events in the case of any concerns arising during the placement
- Attendance at relevant meetings relating to placement (pre-placement, mid-placement and possibly final-placement meeting)



- Ensuring accountability arrangements are clear and that effective line management is in place
- Ensuring the student has essential equipment for work.

Teaching Responsibilities.

- Develop an effective learning agreement and curriculum
- Arrange appropriate induction plan
- Identification of learning opportunities
- Ensuring the student received all necessary learning opportunities to achieve Professional Capabilities Framework and the Knowledge Skills Standards
- Provide structured and reflective supervision sessions for the student on a regular basis (weekly or fortnightly)
- Provide informal supervision, advice and guidance
- Supporting the student to link University/Programme based learning to their practice on placement.

Assessment Responsibilities.

- Direct observations of the student's practice.
- Provision of feedback to the student regarding practice.
- Obtain feedback from relevant people on placement. E.G. Service Users, Internal and External Professionals.
- Judge the evidence provided against the assessment criteria.
- Writing reports in relation to the student's progress on placement. Generally this is the Mid-Point and Final Report.
- Make recommendations about whether the student has passed or failed the placement.

Source: Developing Quality Practice Learning in Social Work (Kirwin Maclean Associates, 2013).



3. Roles in Practice Education

Onsite Supervisors (OSS)

An Onsite Supervisor (or practice supervisor) is someone who take on the responsibility for supporting a student in the placement area/ team around the day day functionalities of the job role, usually management responsibility for the student's work.

The Onsite Supervisors Role is ideal for those who are considering being a Practice Educator, or those who want to contribute to, but not take full responsibility for, assessing a student. This role can provide valuable experience when considering your career development, gaining knowledge and skills 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

Social workers students placed in work-based settings across Greater Manchester could be from one of four Universities who provide several routes into Social Work Education via Master (MA) 2-year programme, Degree (BA) 3-year programme, Joint Programme (LD nursing and SW). Students are required to pass their placements AND academic modules before progressing to the next academic level and subsequently qualifying as a social worker. When a student's fails placement, they may be offered one repeat opportunity.

Placements within Local Authorities (Statutory Settings) will be final year students who will require a 100-day placement and for first placements students require a 70 days placement. Below is the placement start times for the programmes.

Manchester Metropolitan University:

MA – Final Placements	Start from November for 100 days
BA – Final placements	Start from November for 100 days
MA – First Placement	Start from January for 70days
BA – First Placements	Start from October for 70days

University of Bolton:

MA – Final Placements	Start from January for 100 days
BA – Final placements	Start from October for 100 days
MA – First Placement	Start from January for 70 days
BA – First Placements	Start from January for 70 days

University of Manchester:

MA – Final Placements	Start from January for 100 days
MA – First placements	Start from February for 100 days

University of Salford:



MA – Final Placements	Start from January for 100 days
BA – Final placements	Start from October for 100 days (March for Joint Programme Students)
MA – First Placement	Start from February for 70 days
BA – First Placements	Start from October for 70 days

Tutors

Every student on placement will be allocated a tutor from their University who is their first point of contact for Practice Educators/ On site supervisors while they are on placement. This provides a bridge of support between University and Placement.

The role of the tutor involves:

- Ensuring that the placement area can meet the University suitability requirements.
- Ensuring that the placement follows the University procedures and processes for placement.
- Provide a network of support for the student and the Practice Educator.
- Participate actively throughout the practice journey, provide ongoing contact via placement agreement meetings, visits and mid point reviews of placements.
- Contributing to the learning and development of trainee Practice Educators by providing them with developmental feedback.

Practice Assessors

Practice Assessors are experienced Practice Educators who are fully qualified at Stage 2. They support trainee Practice Educators with their development providing mentoring for the duration of the placement and supporting with the assessment of Practice Educators i.e. Observations of Practice.

The role of Practice Assessors varies across each partner agency, however often the role includes:



- Providing observation of practice for the trainee Practice Educator during a live supervision session.
- Reviewing and providing feedback on the placement documents to make a holistic assessment of the trainee Practice Educators capability against the Practice Educator Professionals Standards (PEPS).
- Responsible for assessing practice as a Pass or Fail.
- They are not directly involved with students on placements.
- However they can support the Trainee Practice Educator in following the process for assessing students or addressing any challenges.

5. Opportunities and Training for Practice Education

The GMSWA now a selection of training and development opportunities available for Practice Educators and those involved with students on placement. Our collaborative offer is supported and delivered by our partners in GMSWA.

The GMSWA have a new blended learning programme for Practice Educators, supporting the development of Practice Educator through to Stage 2 training and those refreshing their practice Educator skills.

The Practice Educator Training Programme involves completing online modules and then attending a workshop to share and consolidate the learning. Information on this training can be found in our Training Guide on the website.

Support and Development Opportunities:

- *Practice Educator Training Programme* – See above and Dates on the website.
- *Preparation for Stage 2 Practice Education* - See above and Dates on the website.



- Practice Educator Refresher Training – Designed for dormant Practice Educators who have had a break from the role and/or not worked with a student/ newly qualified social worker for more than 2 years, providing an opportunity to refresh their knowledge and skills – See above
- Practice Educator/ Onsite Supervisors – Masterclasses
Available during placements and provide short online workshops on a variety of topics related to Practice Education and placements including development to stage 1 and stage 2. Dates for workshops can be found on our website.
- Onsite Supervisor Training – Provided by one of universities which provides a support programme for non-qualified social workers and qualified social worker who are acting as an OSS for a student. Dates and details of this programme can be found on our website.
- Quarterly Practice Education Drop In sessions – Provide by our Practice Learning Steering Group. These drop ins are available and open to all involved with students' placements. The drop ins are led by both University and Local Authority representatives providing an opportunity for Practice Educators to come together, share knowledge, experiences, new ideas and raise queries regarding placements etc.
- Annual GMSWA Practice Educator Conference – The GMSWA provide for the partnership an annual conference of championing of the role of Practice Educator. This is great opportunity for networking, learning and keeping up to dates with regional and national developments in regard to Practice Education and Social Work. Dates for these events can be found of our website and also the evaluation report is available from the latest conference.