**Supporting LWSWTP social work placements during COVID 19**

This document has been designed to describe the support and adjustments which have been put in place for social work students, practice educators and PE mentors for social work placements within the Leeds and Wakefield Social Work Teaching Partnership during the COVID-19 pandemic, to support in new ways of working, learning and remote supervision.

1. **Number of days**

To recognise the challenging circumstances we are operating in, and in agreement with SWE, the partnership has agreed to an interim reduction in the number of placement days as below.

* University of Leeds MA2 – 70 days (was 100) **7/09/-18/12/20**
* Leeds Beckett MA2 – 100 days (no change as they did not complete a first placement) **21/9/20-19/2/21**
* University of Leeds BA3 – 70 days (was 100) **21/9/20 - 06/01/21**

1. **Working Environment and Practices**

Students have already had communication from their university about preparation for in part working from home – in terms of confidential work space, appropriate child care and personal wellbeing. This should be addressed at the PLA

It is an expectation the working rota of the student fall in with the team that they are working in. This means that the social work student may undertake some office work, some remote working from home, and some face to face service user intervention, each where appropriate, the distribution of which will change over time as the placement and Covid-19 pandemic and associated guidelines develops. This should be discussed at PLA and interim meeting.

It is an expectation that the PE will also provide the student with the individual, relevant LA guidance, policy and training on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which should be addressed at the PLA.

It is expected that the student undertake the **same work** within the placement that they would have been allocated pre-Covid-19, so will complete all expected tasks from office and/or home within Covid-19 procedures. If during the course of the placement this is no longer viable, the practice educator should discuss this with the tutor immediately.

1. **Amended Practice Learning Agreement**

The practice learning agreement has been updated to reflect new and changing working environment, to facilitate discussion on COVID 19 with respect of the students’ health needs. The PLA meeting will contain a discussion regarding meeting standards in an appropriate remote working environment.

We recommend that the initial introductory meeting is undertaken in person where possible but in line with local authority guidance, following current government guidance re social distancing. This should also contain a discussion to get to know the student and how they learn so they can be supported in a way that helps their learning style.

We recommend that the pre - Placement Learning Agreement (PLA) is undertaken before the placement begins, and can be undertaken remotely in a group discussion or done face to face.

1. **Induction**

We have provided a template for induction that the PE can amend with respect to their individual working arrangements.

1. **Remote supervision**

Social work student supervision should still be weekly, although it is recognised that this may take different forms dependent on individual Covid-19 working norms. Formal supervision can be undertaken online or by telephone with the PEs and students who are working from home as per the local supervision policy. The normal supervision process will apply in terms of agreeing who writes up the minutes and sharing and agreeing them.

Examples from Practice to support formal supervision:

* PE and Student discuss each morning the plan for the student for the day
* Student has a secondary named contact within the team, for times when the PE is not available. This is an alternative to the usual office support from colleagues would provide support in the office if the PE was not available.

1. **Direct Observations**

SWE (2019) stipulates that students should be directly observed a minimum of three times within the placement, twice by the practice educator and once by the PE mentor (if the PE is in training), or a qualified social worker if a mentor is not required.

We recommend a minimum of one direct observation of the student in face to face intervention with a service user where possible. This can be done by the Practice Educatot

The further two direct observations could be made by being present on a telephone call to a service user (with permission), remote inter-professional meeting, etc. Permitted IT platforms can be used to undertake a three-way direct observation of a service user, the university can support the student in facilitating this if required.

The practice educator will be required to provide immediate verbal feedback, followed with written feedback within the week of the observation.

Direct Observations will be different for many students when there is very little or no direct face to face contact with service users. However, while opportunities may be significantly reduced, PE’s might be able to facilitate direct face to face contact for some direct observations. It is possible to observe the student undertaking practice on the phone or via permitted local authority IT platforms such as SKYPE or MS Teams

**Examples from Practice:**

* Three-way phone calls, many teams have conference facilities, so the PE can listen in for instance to the student undertaking a social work assessment on the phone. While it lacks the face to face contact element, there are a set of skills with undertaking a phone assessment that are in many ways just as complex.
* Presentations to the team, to other social work students or teams are all perfectly possible on-line, they require a different set of skills from the student presenting at a team meeting face to face. Although the actual presentation part, is mostly the same set of skills demonstrated at the team meeting

1. **Recording Learning Activities**

The Practice Educator will be provided with a flexible template that they can chose to use to help to record the students activities while remote working. – **See Appendix one**

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