**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**

After discussion, LWSWTP are committed to social work students undertaking the full 70 day first placement and full 100 days final placement

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 meeting.

Social work students have a government agreed ability to be classed as a keyworker for childcare purposes, and have been advised to utilise this. As they cannot be on placement if they also have childcare responsibilities, it will be important to monitor this. However, it is also recognised that some parent-students will need to collect children from school (school buses do not run in lockdown in some areas), and we would ask that you afford flexibility to them. However, we recognise that this may result in additional days being added to the end of placement to ensure that sufficient placement time is completed.

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. **Impact of Covid-19 isolation/Vaccine**

Where a student is asked to isolate due to Track and Trace, they should continue to work at home, but are unable to complete office-based days or home visits.

Where a student is asked to isolate due to Track and Trace, but their children are also at home, the placement must be suspended.

Where a student has a positive Covid-19 test, but is asymptomatic they should continue to work at home, but are unable to complete office-based days or home visits.

Where a student has Covid-19 symptoms and is unfit to work for a full day, they should classify themselves as “off-sick”, and follow agreed protocol regarding informing PE and making up days at the of placement.

All students are advised to take up the offer of a covid vaccination, however, it is not compulsory.

1. **Amended Practice Learning Agreement**

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.

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 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**

Where possible, induction should contain some office-based student attendance. This facilitates the student getting to know both the team and the team’s day to day activities. We have provided a template for induction that the PE can amend with respect to their individual working arrangements.

Since placements have been restarted in September 2020 there have been multiple examples of good practice that can be undertaken with a student during remote induction (and beyond). A recurring theme is the setting of tasks to support the student’s development.

Examples from practice include:

* a leaflet on the services that the team delivers, aimed at service users, other colleagues or future social work students;
* a piece of work exploring how Covid-19 has impacted service provision or service user’s welfare;
* research for their team on service provision quality;
* exploring how Black Lives Matters has impacted service provision;
* exploring a new service/ procedure/ theory and presenting it to a team meeting, etc.

Attached is a document that provides multiple activities.

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 Educator

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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