

Supporting social work learners: practice educator refresher (England)



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Introduction

Welcome to *Supporting social work learners: practice educator refresher (England)*, a course designed to support practice educators (PEs) in England. Designed for PEs with lapsed currency, this course will enable you to update your knowledge and skills in supporting and assessing social work students and apprentices in their practice placements.

You should note that this course is not designed to teach you how to become a practice educator; you should be a qualified and registered social worker who has completed certified practice educator training in the past. This course will ensure you have refreshed your learning ready to support a social work student or apprentice in their placement.

Badge and declaration

While studying this course, you have the option to work towards gaining a digital badge. This course is not moderated and the digital badge you receive for completing the course and its associated activities relies on self-assessment. If you are using this course to refresh your knowledge and to enable you to support students on their placements, you may want to discuss the content of your self-assessment within supervision or with a trusted colleague; this would also enable you to record the activity as continuing professional development (CPD) with Social Work England, including a peer discussion.

To obtain your badge you will need to:

- select 'Yes' in the Declaration at the link below
- read all sessions of the course
- score 50% or more in the end-of-course badge quiz.

Access [Declaration](#) now.



Learning activities

The course includes learning activities throughout, and you should complete all of these. Your responses and answers will be anonymous in the course, however you should ensure that care is taken to anonymise them if discussing them with a colleague. You should also ensure that your answers reflect your social work values and professional standards.

Many of the learning activities will be relevant to PEs working in other nations but the course is mapped to Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) (BASW, 2022) and Social Work England (SWE) requirements for PEs.

A note about terminology

Within this course, the term 'learner' is used when referring to social work students and apprentices. We recognise that some organisations (such as Social Work England) refer to 'students', whereas others refer to 'learners'. In this course, we have chosen to use learners because this is the terminology used within the refreshed PEPS Standards.

Activity preparation: Working with a social work learner

As part of the final activity within this course you are asked to confirm that you have received feedback on your practice in working with a social work learner. There is flexibility here to be creative with the way that you capture this feedback, and the learner with whom you work. The goal of this activity is to enable you to consider how you could implement this refreshed learning in your practice, and to receive feedback.

You should start to think about how you might complete this task now so you can arrange to work with a social work learner during completion of this course and before you reach the final activity.

Learning outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand the current context of practice education
- apply messages from people with lived experience of using services to the design of learning and assessment processes
- demonstrate skills and knowledge mapped to Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS)
- identify actions for continuing learning as a practice educator.

1 Practice Educator Professional Standards

The Practice Educator Professional Standards were revised by The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) in 2022. You may have completed your own PE training prior to the updated standards being released, so it is important to ensure you are familiar with the revised standards.

Activity 1 Practice Educator Professional Standards



Allow approximately 1 hour

Familiarise yourself with the refreshed [Practice Educator Professional Standards \(PEPS\)](#), taken from the BASW website.

Are there any significant changes from previous versions that you notice, or areas you would like to focus on in your learning? Are there any specific issues that you want to keep in mind as you work through the course?

Provide your answer...

2 Practice educator knowledge and skills

Having familiarised yourself with the [updated PEPS guidance](#), you will now have the opportunity to engage in an audit of your own knowledge and skills.

You will repeat this exercise at the end of the course so that you can self-assess your progress. This contributes to the assessment of your learning and progress in the course.

Activity 2 Self-assessment of your skills and knowledge as a practice educator

 Allow approximately 30 minutes

The four domains shown in Tables 1–4 set out what is expected of you as a practice educator.

Work through each of the four domains and consider the descriptors. You should rate how confident you feel in your PE role against each standard on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you need to focus on this as you refresh your skills and knowledge and 5 means you feel confident in this standard. Note down your score and add examples or make notes relating to each standard in the boxes below. You will then repeat this activity at the end of the course to help you reflect on how you have progressed.

Table 1: Domain 1 – Working with others to organise an effective learning environment

Standard	Rating (1–5)	Examples
(A1) Establish an effective collaborative working relationship with learners and manage the power and authority in the educator/ assessor role skilfully.	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
(A2) Devise an induction programme that considers learners' needs and their previous experience.	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
(A3) Create reflective spaces for learners' growth and development and provide regular reflective supervision.	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
(A4) Ensure all those involved in supporting the student have clarity and understanding of each other's roles.	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
(A5) Work openly and cooperatively with others in the planning of learning opportunities and key activities	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...

at all stages of learning and assessment.

(A6) Consider student confidentiality and ensure all student information is maintained in a secure environment according to General Data Protection Regulations.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(A7) Contribute to the learning and development of the agency as a learning organisation. This may include encouraging the student to make links with others in the team by working alongside, making presentations and contributing to team resources. It may also include showing leadership by helping to review and improve the provision, policies and procedures of the learning organisation and identify barriers for learners.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Table 2: Domain 2 – Teaching, facilitating and supporting learning and professional development in practice

Standard	Rating (1–5)	Examples
(B1) Demonstrate informed expertise in their practitioner role, e.g. an applied knowledge of contemporary issues in research and relevant policy, legislation and practice.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
(B2) Using a range of learning methods, including modelling good social work practice. Teach and support the learning of relevant social work knowledge and research, and the integration of theory and research in practice. Knowledge taught should include the powers and duties, and policy and procedures of the agency.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
(B3) Help students to understand their own learning processes and to develop different models and strategies	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

for critical reflection and analysis.

(B4) Discuss and plan with the student the learning and assessment programme, the student's particular needs and capabilities, and how best the learner can derive further support for learning.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(B5) Make sound reasoned judgements about the level of work the student can be allocated, and the support required to achieve both learning and the work goals.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(B6) Demonstrate an understanding of, and critical engagement with, learning theories, to make professional educational judgements about students' needs and how to meet them.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Table 3: Domain 3 – Managing the fair and transparent assessment of students in practice

Standard	Rating (1–5)	Examples
(C1) Ensure that holistic assessment decisions are the outcomes of informed, evidence-based judgements, drawing on evidence, which is relevant, valid, reliable and sufficient from a range of sources, including direct observation. Clearly explain the decisions to students.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
(C2) Encourage students to self-evaluate and seek service users, carers and work-based colleagues feedback to develop their performance.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
(C3) Provide timely, honest and constructive feedback on student performance in an appropriate format. Review student progress throughout the assessment process, identifying strengths and any areas requiring improvement,	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

making clear to students how they may improve to meet the acceptable standard.

(C4) Ensure that all assessment decisions, and the supporting evidence, are documented and recorded according to the required standard. Provide holistic assessment reports which demonstrate clear evidence for decisions. Demonstrate ability to work well with others in the assessment process, particularly if learner's practice is marginal or failing.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(C5) Engage students in the design, planning and implementation of methods to assess students' performance against the appropriate standards.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(C6) Extend the development of all students including those who already have strong skills or are experiencing difficulties. Ensure that disagreements about assessment judgements and complaints made about the assessment process are managed in accordance with agreed procedures.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Table 4: Domain 4 – Developing knowledge and continuing performance as a practice educator

Standard	Rating (1–5)	Examples
(D1) Seek feedback from students on their experience of being assessed and the consequences of the assessment programme for them. Incorporate the feedback into future assessment activity.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
(D2) Show understanding of, and the ability to apply, models and theories of supervision, knowledge and research on assessment, teaching and learning, and critical reflection.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

(D3) Establish and maintain effective resources for their own support and supervision in respect of their role in workplace learning. Demonstrate the ability to consult and work with others in contentious and challenging contexts such as dealing with struggling students and formal appeals and complaints.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(D4) Demonstrate critical reflection on their own development as practice educators, including the use of feedback from direct observations, colleagues and HEI tutors and other assessment sources.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(D5) Apply learning to subsequent practice education experience using a range of methods.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

3 Roles and responsibilities of the practice educator

In this section you will reflect on what is meant by learning in social work practice before considering the role of a practice educator.

Learning in social work practice

Social work practice learning takes place in diverse places and with varying configurations in team structure. For example, some learners will have an on-site practice educator within their team or placement agency, whereas others will have an external or offsite practice educator and a workplace supervisor in place.

It is always essential to negotiate a robust learning agreement that shows what the different roles and responsibilities of those in the practice learning team will be. Your role as practice educator is central to the support, development and, importantly, the assessment of learners in practice. You have already explored some of the important skills and knowledge that you can bring to the role in Activity 2.

As a practice educator, your role in supporting social work learners is a complex process. You are required to work with learners in increasingly diverse services and contexts. For example, social workers work with people across the lifespan and in different focused services and integrated teams. The tasks of social work can be notoriously hard to articulate (Moriarty et al., 2015; Ferguson and Sicut, 2024) which means that supporting learners is also complex.

Understanding what it is like to learn as a social worker in direct practice involves recognising the unique and extraordinary work of the profession (Ferguson, 2022). Figure 1 shows the intricate web of physical and emotional elements that social workers navigate in places, spaces and tasks whilst in the workplace (Ferguson, 2021).



Figure 1 Learning in the workplace as a complex web (Ferguson, 2021, p. 154)

Irrespective of setting, social work practice learning must equip learners for working in dynamic contexts and develop their capacity to undertake statutory tasks.

‘Social work learning is usually understood to include the development of skills and competences which enable practitioners to undertake a role which is rooted in human rights and social justice, where ethical practice needs to be negotiated within a work role where there are competing moral, legal, organisational and policy demands.’

(Ferguson, 2021, p. 20)

Social Work England sets the requirements for practice learning in qualifying education programmes and there are several that are of importance to you as a practice educator. You will look at these in more detail in Activity 3.

Activity 3 Rules, regulations and guidance

 Allow approximately 45 minutes

Have a look at the [guidance on practice placements](#) published by Social Work England. While university programmes and agencies are responsible for setting up placement arrangements, the practice educator is often the lynchpin in negotiating a robust learning agreement with the social work learner and other parties at the start of placement.

Read through the guidance and, as you do, note down any particularly important aspects. Whilst accessing the guidance, to avoid losing your place in the course, if you are studying on a desktop you should open the link in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on it. If you are studying on a mobile device hold down the link and select to ‘Open in New Tab’.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

There are a lot of details in the guidance, but important aspects include:

- 2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.
- 2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.
- 2.4 Ensure that on placements, students’ responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.
- 4.8 Ensure that assessments are robust, fair, reliable and valid, and that those who successfully complete the course meet the professional standards.
- 4.10 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance.
- 5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments.

You might have identified several other key points from the guidance, and your experience will link with some of the information that you have read.

For more information about professional learning for social workers, please see the references and further resources recommended at the end of this course.

4 The fundamentals of fair and ethical assessment

Linked with the role of the practice educator is the importance of fair and ethical assessment. The assessment process is significant for the learner as it determines their progression towards achieving their qualification. As a practice educator, you have a key role in modelling ethical assessment for future practice. Through the supervision relationship you build with the social work learner, you will provide them with a model for professional practice and service user relationships.



The term *assessment* means different things to learners, so it is important to be clear about what this involves in social work practice learning. Assess is a form of the Latin verb *assidere*, to 'sit with'. It is something therefore that you do *with* and *for* the learner, not something you do *to* them. An assessment is a comprehensive multifaceted analysis of performance; it must be based on evidence drawn from authentic practice tasks.

Activity 4 Ensuring fair and robust assessment

 Allow approximately 20 minutes

List some methods and approaches you might use to ensure that your assessment of a learner is a fair one.

Describe how these methods and approaches would lead to fair assessment.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You might have noted that it would be important to be clear, and for the learner to know when and how they are being assessed. You might also have thought that giving clear feedback at different stages might give the learner a fair chance to build on their practice. Considering whether you are planning for a learner's specific way of understanding might also be important.

As a practice educator, you are making a judgement, but the assessment judgement needs to be related to the requirements you are assessing the learner on. It is essential therefore to understand these and to have discussed these with the learner. You might also have reflected on your previous experience as a practice educator and how the assessment process felt.

Power

Reflecting on the power inherent in your role as a practice educator is an essential part of your approach. What are the power dynamics in practice education generally? What are some specific issues of potential power imbalance in any individual learner/practice educator relationship? How can you bring these power dynamics into your discussion as a practice educator? At the end of this course there are links to reading material, which can help you consider issues of power in practice learning.

Ethical assessment

Ethical assessment is always about being clear and framing feedback in relation to the standards you are assessing against. Setting out the ways in which you will gather evidence and provide feedback should be clearly negotiated in the practice learning agreement and woven through your practice education. If you are interested, you can [read research from Jo Finch and Prospera Tedam](#) (2023) on issues relating to learners who are not progressing to meet the requirements in practice learning. Often practice educators are concerned about when learners or apprentices are not progressing well, but having a clear plan and pathway through the stages of your role can help support a fair assessment process.

5 The practice educator role

It is important to plan for the different stages of the practice education process. In the interactive below you can see a list of actions needed at each stage of the process. There may also be some additional actions you think should be added. For example, think back to when you previously worked with a learner on their placement. What were the things that were important to plan for? In the activity that follows, you can add to and adapt the resource to suit your preferences, style and the specific issues that you want to plan for. This can also help you review how things have gone when you reflect on the practice learning experience from your perspective. A [downloadable version of the list of actions](#) is also available for you to refer to.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Activity 5 A pathway through practice learning

 Allow approximately 15 minutes

Think about the stages of practice learning. Are there any other things you would add to any stage in your planning? Note down what your own plan would be.

Provide your answer... **Before a learner/social work student is allocated:**

When a learner is matched:

As the start of the placement:

In the early stages of placement

At the interim or mid-point stage:

Towards the end of placement and afterwards:

6 Reflecting on your values as an educator

It was not until 2013 that the national (England) requirements were set out for practice education with the Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) being launched by the College of Social Work following recommendations from the Social Work Reform Board. The PEPS are currently provided as a 'good practice' guide that learning providers and social work agencies supporting placements have embraced whilst the regulator decides on their approach for quality assuring programmes and annotating the Register for those who are qualified.

The PEPS have been revised and updated over the years with the most recent 'refresh' being in 2022. This review of the standards was informed by the importance of embedding anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice into the guidance.



As a qualified social worker, you will be demonstrating your values as guided by the [British Association of Social Workers](#). It is important that you are familiar with the PEPS guidance in relation to your values as an educator too. Whilst you have already reflected on the domains in Section 2 of this course, you will now reflect on your values as an educator.

Activity 6 Reflecting on values in the PEPS domains

Part 1 Values in the PEPS Domains

 Allow approximately 15 minutes

Read the Values statements (page 6–7) and Domains (page 18–22) in the [PEPS](#) and then answer the questions below.

Table 5 Value statements

Questions	Answers
How are the needs and interests of people with lived experience represented in the Values statements?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Value statement 5 refers to the need for PEs to identify and question their own values. Which PCF Domain is this aligned to?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
In Value 6, the requirement to accept and respond to the needs of learners is highlighted. What ways might this be achieved?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Value statement 8 requires PEs to take responsibility for their own work and development. How is it suggested they do this?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Which Domain statement requires PEs to ensure an effective collaborative relationship with their learner?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Being critical about your own development as a PE is vital. Which Domain statement refers to this?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Which Domain refers directly to the role of people with lived experience with social work learners?	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Discussion

Table 5 Value statements (completed)

Questions	Answers
How are the needs and interests of people with lived experience represented in the Values statement?	Value 4 refers to the requirement for PEs to ensure that those with lived experience should play an active part in assessing those being accepted onto and undertaking training in practice education.

Value statement 5 refers to the need for PEs to identify and question their own values. Which PCF Domain is this aligned to?

Domain 3

In Value 6, the requirement to accept and respond to the needs of learners is highlighted. What ways might this be achieved?

Those involved in practice education should recognise and build on learners' strengths, consider individual learning styles and use a range of assessment methods (including those preferred by the learner).

Value statement 8 requires PEs to take responsibility for their own work and development. How is it suggested they do this?

Critically reflect on their own practice and identify development needs in order to improve their own performance, raise standards, and contribute to the learning and development of others.

Which Domain statement requires PEs to ensure an effective collaborative relationship with their learner?

A1

Being critical about your own development as a PE is vital. Which Domain statement refers to this?

D4

Which Domain refers directly to the role of people with lived experience with social work learners?

C2 – encourage learners to seek the views of people with lived experience.

Part 2 Reflecting on Domain C

 Allow approximately 30 minutes

Following on from the list you came up with in [Activity 4](#) of methods and approaches you might use to ensure that your assessment of a learner is a fair one, reflect specifically on how it helps you to evidence meeting Domain C and importantly how that then links to evidencing your values as a practice educator.

(In Table 6 the terms student and learner have been used interchangeably.)

Table 6 Domain C

Domain C Descriptor	Evidence in your own practice as an educator	Links to the specific Values statements 1-8
(C1) Ensure that holistic assessment decisions are the outcomes of informed, evidence-based judgements, drawing on evidence, which is relevant, valid, reliable and sufficient from a range of sources, including direct observation. Clearly explain the decisions to students.	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...

(C2) Encourage students to self-evaluate and seek service users, carers and work-based colleagues feedback to develop their performance.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(C3) Provide timely, honest and constructive feedback on student performance in an appropriate format. Review student progress throughout the assessment process, identifying strengths and any areas requiring improvement, making clear to students how they may improve to meet the acceptable standard.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(C4) Ensure that all assessment decisions, and the supporting evidence, are documented and recorded according to the required standard. Provide holistic assessment reports which demonstrate clear evidence for decisions. Demonstrate ability to work well with others in the assessment process, particularly if learner's practice is marginal or failing.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(C5) Engage students in the design, planning and implementation of methods to assess students' performance against the appropriate standards.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

(C6) Extend the development of all students including those who already have strong skills or are experiencing difficulties. Ensure that disagreements about assessment judgements and complaints made about the assessment process are managed in accordance with agreed procedures.

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Discussion

As you have already explored in Section 4, in your role as a PE you have responsibilities to ensure a fair and ethical assessment of learners in practice. This should be guided by the structures in place to ensure you are providing the best possible learning environment for that to happen. Furthermore, as this activity has

shown, this needs to be underpinned by the values of the social work profession in this educative context.

7 Social justice and inclusion

Culturally competent practice in social work can take different approaches. Sue et al. (2016) believe that cultural competence is accomplished when cultural awareness is combined with skills, knowledge and a developmental perspective. This approach therefore fits with professional development and is an ongoing developmental practice. Cultural competence operates a values-based framework to working with people with lived experiences of services and colleagues.

This framework allows you to be intentional in relationship building and understand the individual's experience of their culture, rather than attempting to learn generic aspects of each person's culture (Laird and Tadam, 2019). There are different models of cultural competency available. Not all of them will be suitable to every situation and it is helpful to test what works in any specific situation.

Laird and Tadam (2019) suggest different methods, including:

- Developing a culturagram and cultural web
- Social GGRRAACCEEESSS (Burnham, 2013)
- Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor model (Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor, 2016)
- MANDELA model of practice learning (Tadam, 2013)

You may already be aware of some of these models, or you may use others. The MANDELA model is particularly helpful for practice educators as it is developed for working in that role with learners. If you'd like to revisit any of these methods in more detail you can find links in the References section at the end of this course.

Another important focus for practice educators is adapting and responding to the different ways that people learn. The next section explores neurodiversity and practice learning.

7.1 Neurodiversity

There is growing evidence that more people in the workplace are identifying as living with neurodivergence or as neurodivergent. Neurodiversity can be thought of broadly as the range of different ways individuals' brains function across a population. An individual whose brain may function differently from the population norm can be thought of as neurodivergent. Common forms of neurodivergence include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, autism, dyscalculia, developmental coordination disorder/dyspraxia and developmental language disorder. In response, employers and universities are exploring new ways to support people, and colleagues are becoming increasingly aware of the different skills neurodivergence offers that may complement a team.

The important point to remember in supporting neurodivergent people is that there is a legal requirement to offer a reasonable adjustment to support work or learning. This may involve linking in with human resources, Access to Work services or the university student support team (or all three depending on the issue, and the permission that the learner gives in sharing this personal information).

Understanding neurodiversity is a fast-developing area in social work and education, which is being shaped by people's lived experience of being neurodiverse. You will find links for resources on neurodivergence to explore and to help inform you at the end of this course. Exploring these resources might reframe what you previously understood. It may be helpful to take some time to think through how you would approach addressing support needs with a learner or consider how your own learning style will influence your role as a practice educator.

It is important to explore any adjustments neurodivergent learners need in social work practice learning arrangements, support and supervision. The neurodivergent learner is being assessed as well as managing learning and practice. It may be that new mechanisms and/or additional support are needed, compared to other settings they have been learning or working in. You will be an important support in identifying this help, as well as being part of the assessment.

You can find details of some further resources at the end of this course.

Activity 7 Identifying actions for your future practice

 Allow approximately 15 minutes

Now you have considered your role and responsibilities as a leader for social justice and inclusive practice learning, identify three action points for your future practice.

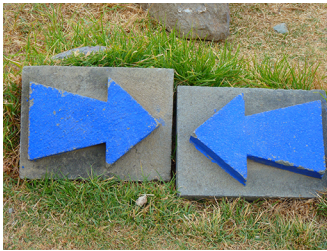
Provide your answer...

Discussion

The objective of this activity is to help you think outside of your current role and to consider the interface between yourself and a learner. By modelling to the learner how they may approach this interaction in their work with people with lived experiences, you can help the learner consider both the barriers and benefits of the approach.

8 Learning from lived experiences

In England, the involvement of service users and carers in social work education has been a requirement since 2002 (Department of Health, 2002). This was upheld by the regulator, Social Work England, stating that 'social work courses must be governed, resourced and managed using effective and transparent processes in collaboration with employers and people with lived experience of social work' (SWE 2020).



The Practice Educator Professional Standards also require that those involved in placements and practice education must:

'Commit to the needs and interests of people with lived experience of social work when assessing the capability and skills of learners at all stages of the assessment process. As appropriate, those with lived experience should play an active part in assessing those being accepted onto and undertaking training in practice education.'

(BASW, 2022)

Not only is this emphasis seen in social work education, but there is also a growing commitment to the validity of those who are 'experts by their own lived experience' in social work practice. Co-production is at the core of empowering approaches, particularly in adult social care whereby they 'work in partnership by sharing power between people who draw on care and support' (SCIE, 2022).

Activity 8 Co-production in practice education

 Allow approximately 30 minutes

Listen to Audio 1, which has been created by members of the Service User and Carer Group at The Open University. In this clip they discuss what co-production in the assessment of social work students means for them. Then answer the questions that follow.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 1 Co-production in the assessment of social work students

What are the benefits of co-production in practice education?

Provide your answer...

What are the barriers of co-production in practice education?

Provide your answer...

How might you address these challenges as a practice educator?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Input into assessment by people with lived experience is far reaching and potentially very impactful. In their research around this topic, Pearl et al. (2018) highlighted not only the benefits of constructive service user feedback but specifically the importance of the practice educator role in decoding this and making links to the development of learners' practice.

Co-production can also involve collaborative work with the learner, creating a space for shared learning and knowledge exchange. Traditionally for qualified social workers, supervision is used to plan work, ensure accountability, and reflect on the emotional impact of practice. It also provides an opportunity for organisations to understand how effectively their policies and procedures operate, through dialogue between colleagues and across hierarchies.

While learners share some of these supervision needs, they also have additional requirements. These include learning about the work they are involved in, developing a professional identity, and having a safe space to explore resilience as they process new and unfamiliar experiences. Supervision for learners is therefore primarily a learning environment (Gregory et al., 2025; Tsui, 2005). As a practice educator, it is your responsibility to ensure this space is supportive and safe, enabling the learner to explore different approaches and integrate academic learning with feedback from the experiences of people who use services.

Supervision can be an organisational and pedagogical tool to build resilience for social work learners. Secondary trauma from new and challenging experiences can be reflected on and additional supports identified. Learners can experience challenges to not only their emerging professional identity, but also their personal identity if a negative incident on placement compounds something difficult that has happened in another area of their life. Again, the practice educator should be open to identifying these aspects with the learner, understanding them through their new developing professional lens and enabling them to gain support (Ahmed, 2023, Tadam, 2013).

Optional resource

Listen to this Research in Practice resource in which Clenton Farquharson talks about 'working together and learning together'.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 2 Working together, learning together: A lived experience guide to co-production

9 Reviewing your learning

In this final section of the course, you will consider the feedback you have received on your work with a social work learner. This is a key element of the course, and may be an activity you wish to discuss in supervision.

Reflecting on feedback

In the introduction to this course, you were asked to prepare to complete a piece of work using your refreshed learning in working with a social work learner, and to receive feedback on this work.

The activity could be any interaction between you and a social work learner. For example, a colleague in your team may be the practice educator for a social work learner. You may have completed one of their direct observations and sought feedback from either the PE, or from the social work learner themselves. You do not need to include this feedback anywhere in this course; the feedback is for you, and you are asked to outline this in the next activity.

The feedback you receive can be from either a colleague, a manager, or from the social work learner themselves. It is deliberately not too prescriptive here to enable creativity in how this task is completed.

Some examples of activities you could undertake with a social work learner:

- Completing one of their direct observations (whether formally as part of their portfolio, or as a supportive tool)
- Supporting a learner through a case discussion.

Activity 9 Receiving feedback on your work with a social work learner

 Allow approximately 1 hour

Activity 9 has four parts which will help you consolidate learning from the course and your work with a social work learner.

Part 1

Please confirm that you have undertaken work with a social work learner. Write down 1-2 sentences outlining what you did with the learner.

Provide your answer...

Part 2

Please confirm that you received feedback on this work – either from a colleague who observed the interaction, or from the learner themselves. You should record who gave you this feedback and your reflection on this.

Provide your answer...

Part 3

Summarise in 2–3 sentences how your work in this course informed your interaction with the social work learner and how it will inform your future practice.

Provide your answer...

Part 4

In Activity 2 you completed a learning audit. Your responses to the audit can be found below. Review your comments and then complete the audit again.

Are there any areas in which you feel you have made considerable progress? Are there any areas you will focus on to continue to develop as a practice educator?

Note down any learning that has been particularly important for you and your areas for focus in continuing development.

Table 7 Revisiting your skills and knowledge audit (Domain 1)

Domain 1 – Working with others to organise an effective learning environment			
Standard	Rating at start of course (1–5)	Rating at end of course (1–5)	Examples from start of course
(A1) Establish an effective collaborative working relationship with learners and manage the power and authority in the educator/ assessor role skilfully.	<i>Display of content entered previously</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Display of content entered previously</i>
(A2) Devise an induction programme that considers learners' needs and their previous experience.	<i>Display of content entered previously</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Display of content entered previously</i>
(A3) Create reflective spaces for learners' growth and development and provide	<i>Display of content entered previously</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Display of content entered previously</i>

regular
reflective
supervision.

(A4) Ensure all those involved in supporting the student have clarity and understanding of each other's roles.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(A5) Work openly and cooperatively with others in the planning of learning opportunities and key activities at all stages of learning and assessment.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(A6) Consider student confidentiality and ensure all student information is maintained in a secure environment according to General Data Protection Regulations.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(A7) Contribute to the learning and development of the agency as a learning organisation. This may include encouraging the student to make links with others in the team by working alongside, making presentations and contributing to team resources. It may also include showing leadership by helping to review and improve the provision, policies and procedures of the learning organisation and identify barriers for learners.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

Table 8 Revisiting your skills and knowledge audit (Domain 2)

Domain 2 – Teaching, facilitating and supporting learning and professional development in			
Standard	Rating at start of course (1–5)	Rating at end of course (1–5)	Examples from start of course
(B1) Demonstrate informed expertise in their practitioner role, e.g. an applied knowledge of contemporary issues in research and relevant policy, legislation and practice.	Display of content entered previously	Provide your answer...	Display of content entered previously
(B2) Using a range of learning methods, including modelling good social work practice. Teach and support the learning of relevant social work knowledge and research, and the integration of theory and research in practice. Knowledge taught should include the powers and duties, and policy and procedures of the agency.	Display of content entered previously	Provide your answer...	Display of content entered previously
(B3) Help students to understand	Display of content entered previously	Provide your answer...	Display of content entered previously

their own learning processes and to develop different models and strategies for critical reflection and analysis.

(B4) Discuss and plan with the student the learning and assessment programme, the student's particular needs and capabilities, and how best the learner can derive further support for learning.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(B5) Make sound reasoned judgements about the level of work the student can be allocated, and the support required to achieve both learning and the work goals.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(B6) Demonstrate an understanding of, and critical engagement with, learning theories, to make professional educational judgements about students' needs and how to meet them.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

Table 9 Revisiting your skills and knowledge audit (Domain 3)

Domain 3 – Managing the fair and transparent assessment of students in practice			
Standard	Rating at start of course (1–5)	Rating at end of course (1–5)	Examples from start of course
(C1) Ensure that holistic assessment decisions are the outcomes of informed, evidence-based judgements, drawing on evidence, which is relevant, valid, reliable and sufficient from a range of sources, including direct observation. Clearly explain the decisions to students.	Display of content entered previously	Provide your answer...	Display of content entered previously
(C2) Encourage students to self-evaluate and seek service users, carers and work-based colleagues feedback to develop their performance.	Display of content entered previously	Provide your answer...	Display of content entered previously
(C3) Provide timely, honest and constructive feedback on student performance in an appropriate format. Review student progress throughout the assessment process, identifying strengths and	Display of content entered previously	Provide your answer...	Display of content entered previously

any areas requiring improvement, making clear to students how they may improve to meet the acceptable standard.

(C4) Ensure that all assessment decisions, and the supporting evidence, are documented and recorded according to the required standard.

Provide holistic assessment reports which demonstrate clear evidence for decisions. Demonstrate ability to work well with others in the assessment process, particularly if learner's practice is marginal or failing.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(C5) Engage students in the design, planning and implementation of methods to assess students' performance against the appropriate standards.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(C6) Extend the development of all students including those who already have strong skills or are experiencing difficulties. Ensure that disagreements about assessment judgements and complaints made about the assessment process are managed in accordance with agreed procedures.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

Table 10 Revisiting your skills and knowledge audit (Domain 4)

Domain 4 – Developing knowledge and continuing performance as a practice educator			
Standard	Rating at start of course (1–5)	Rating at end of course (1–5)	Examples from start of course
(D1) Seek feedback from students on their experience of being assessed and the consequences of the assessment programme for	<i>Display of content entered previously</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Display of content entered previously</i>

them.

Incorporate the feedback into future assessment activity.

(D2) Show understanding of, and the ability to apply, models and theories of supervision, knowledge and research on assessment, teaching and learning, and critical reflection.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(D3) Establish and maintain effective resources for their own support and supervision in respect of their role in workplace learning. Demonstrate the ability to consult and work with others in contentious and challenging contexts such as dealing with struggling students and formal appeals and complaints.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(D4)

Demonstrate critical reflection on their own development as practice educators, including the use of feedback from direct observations, colleagues and HEI tutors and other assessment sources.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

(D5) Apply learning to subsequent practice education experience using a range of methods.

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

Display of content entered previously

Provide your answer...

10 End-of-course quiz

It's now time to complete the End-of-course badged quiz. This quiz will test your understanding of what has been covered in the course.

[End-of-course compulsory badge quiz](#)

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time, you can attempt the quiz again 24 hours later.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window by holding down Ctrl (or Cmd on a Mac) when you click on the link. Return here when you have finished.

Conclusion

You have now reached the end of this course. We hope that you have enjoyed reflecting on your experience as a practice educator and refreshed your skills and knowledge.

If you haven't already done so in the Introduction to the course, in order to obtain your badge you will need to select 'Yes' in the Declaration at the link below.

Access [Declaration](#) now.

There continues to be a demand for practice educators across England. It would be helpful to consider how you will now continue to support practice learning. Discussing this course and the opportunities available to you can be done in supervision or with relevant learning and development colleagues in services. You can also use your learning as part of your CPD for continuing registration with Social Work England.

Where will your work on this course lead you?

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Further resources

You may find the following resources helpful:

- [National Organisation for Practice Teaching England \(NOPT\)](#)
- [Feedback loop-tools and tips for the student and supervisor](#)
- Videos from Bournemouth University:
 - [Making Service User and Carer Feedback Count Part 3](#)
 - [Making Service User and Carer Feedback Count Part 4](#)
 - [A key part of being a social work student is service user feedback - why does this stop after qualification?](#)
- [What is Neurodiversity? - Do-IT Profiler](#)
- OpenLearn:
 - [Neurodiversity: What is it and what does it look like across races?](#)
 - [Understanding ADHD: Brain circuits and selective attention](#)
 - [OpenLearn's Neurodiversity hub](#)
- [Anti racist supervision](#)

The following list is further reading you may be interested in:

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Acknowledgements

This free course was written by Sarah Brown, Lindsay Giddings, Gillian Ferguson and Ann Flynn.

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Figure 1: in Fig. 2 Learning in the workplace as a complex web (Ferguson, 2021, p154) <https://www.iriss.org.uk>

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Text

Activity 1: Practice Educator Professional Standards for Social Work Executive Summary. BASW (2022) Practice Educator Professional Standards for Social Work Birmingham: BASW. © BASW July 2022

Audio

Audio 2: <https://soundcloud.com/rip-ripfa/working-together-learning-together-a-lived-experience-guide-to-co-production> www.researchinpractice.org.uk Open Access

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