



Scottish  
**Social Services**  
Council

# **Getting involved and getting started with practice learning**

Guidance for organisations new to providing  
practice learning opportunities and  
supporting social work students

## **Welcome to practice learning**

This leaflet will:

- provide you with information about practice learning.
- describe the potential benefits for your organisation.
- offer you guidance about how to get involved.

## **What is practice learning?**

Social work students need to spend significant periods of their training in practice, similar to nurses, teachers and other professionals. The practice is assessed and students must pass their practice elements to qualify and gain their degrees in social work.

You can find out more about practice learning at **[www.scottishpracticelearning.com](http://www.scottishpracticelearning.com)** or email **[pladmin@sssc.uk.com](mailto:pladmin@sssc.uk.com)**

**‘Working with social work students undertaking the new degree in Scotland’** is a useful document and can be found on the website at publications. It will give you more information about the learning opportunities required by each university.

## **What kind of practice learning opportunities do students need?**

Good quality practice learning can take place in all settings involving people who use services e.g. voluntary sector, public sector, health, housing, early years, education

All of these settings will help students learn about the diverse needs of people who use social services and about how these needs can be met as organisations work together.

## What benefits could my organisation obtain through involvement in practice learning?

These are some of the things organisations and their staff have said about working with students.

### PRIVATE PROVIDERS

It gives the agency a bit of kudos to work with the university.

It grounds us as an agency and makes us go back to basics, explaining what we do.

They can bring so much enthusiasm and commitment as well as fresh ideas. The team takes pride in knowing that they have helped and supported the student through the placement.

### CHILD CARE SOCIAL WORKER

A student can provide an existing team with a different dynamic and perspective on how things are done within the team.

### SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER

Taking a student involves a great deal of commitment... but it is rewarding to see them grow and develop.

### WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

Positive reasons for having a student are sharing good practice and seeing a person grow and develop.

### YOUTH JUSTICE TEAM

Being a practice teacher challenges your thinking and refreshes your skills.

### ANONYMOUS

## **Your organisation would benefit from providing practice learning opportunities by:**

- using work with students as a way of contributing to continuing professional development and, for those who are eligible to register with the SSSC, post registration training and learning
- gaining experience towards new qualifications such as Practice Learning Qualifications (Social Services) PLQ(SS) which is a suite of qualifications for those involved in the learning and assessment of students. (see [www.scottishpracticelearning.com](http://www.scottishpracticelearning.com))
- helping students realise the value of your sector and service to social services provision
- having students contribute to the service of your agency
- receiving a fee from the university which covers each day a student is with you. This will vary according to specific circumstances
- having students who frequently bring energy, enthusiasm and commitment to their practice learning
- having students who are registered with the SSSC, the regulatory body for social service workers and have been subject to disclosure
- having students who can share knowledge and skills gained in training
- making potential links to training and research
- linking, if you are not already, to your Local Learning Network.

More information about Learning Networks can be found at **[www.learningnetworks.org.uk](http://www.learningnetworks.org.uk)**

## **Can my organisation provide practice learning for students?**

Learning opportunities need to be consistent with the standards in social work education and take account of the Codes of Practice which social work students have to adhere to when they register with the SSSC. You can learn more about the standards at **[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/01/16202/17015](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/01/16202/17015)** The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland can also be obtained from the Stationery Office, 71 Lothian Road, Edinburgh EH3 9AZ. Telephone 0870 6065566.

Your organisation can be involved if it carries out any of the following work tasks:

- working with individuals, families, carers and groups to assess needs and circumstances
- planning, carrying out and reviewing how you work with individuals, families etc
- assessing and managing risk to individuals, families etc
- working to a high professional standard and framework of values that respects choice and offers empowerment
- supporting individuals to represent and manage their needs, views and circumstances.

## **What kind of support will a student need from my organisation?**

Everybody who is new to a situation and trying to learn needs support and the following may contribute to a supportive environment:

- identifying someone who will be primarily responsible for supporting the student and linking into formal supervision and assessment

- being sure your organisation can provide a safe working environment
- discussing with staff and service users plans for arrival
- discussing with the student what is expected of him/her as a learner, what kind of work he/she will do
- be welcoming and make time
- have additional disclosure checks done if your organisation requires that
- offer induction as carried out by your agency.

### **Will the staff in my organisation be involved in the assessment of the student?**

- Some shorter learning opportunities do not require formal assessment.
- Depending on the type of practice learning opportunity provided by your organisation your staff may contribute to the supervision and assessment of a student.
- Contributing to supervision and assessment could help your staff undertake some part of the PLQ(SS).
- It may be that a qualified social work practice teacher from another organisation will undertake the primary supervision and assessment role but work closely with your staff to select appropriate work and contribute to the assessment process.
- If there is formal assessment the student/tutor/practice teacher/agency worker will contribute to a learning agreement.

## **What kind of support will my organisation receive from the university?**

The university will provide support for each learning opportunity and will make an agreement with you about:

- the role of your staff and their staff
- the guidance and information you will receive about participating in assessment
- providing information about what is expected of the learning opportunity
- providing guidance about what to do if there is a disagreement concerning any aspect of the learning opportunity.

## **How can my organisation help a student to learn?**

- Be clear what is expected of them.
- Offer a variety of opportunities to learn.
- Value what they bring as individuals and learners.
- Offer feedback about work well done.
- Offer clear but constructive comment about how to improve work.
- Accept that mistakes may happen and can be learned from.
- Be clear about the roles of others.
- Do not expect them to understand or do too much at once, and think of them as learners rather than simply extra help.
- Offer uninterrupted time to talk.
- Know what to talk about.

## **How can my organisation prepare to welcome a student?**

- Be clear what is expected of your agency and its staff.
- Ensure staff are consulted and informed.
- Ensure service users are consulted and informed.
- Make agency time available to the student.
- Encourage staff to model good practice.
- Know who to talk to in the university, whatever the reason.
- Have an additional disclosure check done if your agency requires that.

## **What practical things can my organisation do to help a student acclimatise?**

You can provide the following:

- a map and directions for your agency
- access to key health and safety policies
- access to other key documents or policies about your agency
- access to complaints procedure
- ID card or letter of introduction if needed
- team information.



## **Useful links**

Scottish Practice Learning:

**[www.scottishpracticelearning.com](http://www.scottishpracticelearning.com)**

Scottish Social Services Council:

**[www.sssc.uk.com](http://www.sssc.uk.com)**

Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education  
(Institute) & Learning Exchange:

**[www.sieswe.org](http://www.sieswe.org)**

Scottish Organisation for Practice Teaching:

**[www.scopt.co.uk](http://www.scopt.co.uk)**

Scottish Executive:

**[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)**

Scottish Executive, Changing Lives Review:

**[www.socialworkscotland.org.uk](http://www.socialworkscotland.org.uk)**

Scottish Social Services Learning Networks:

**[www.learningnetworks.org.uk](http://www.learningnetworks.org.uk)**

## **Scottish Universities**

### **Scottish Universities offering social work courses.**

In the first instance please contact the department and ask to speak to the Practice Learning Co-ordinator or Administrator:

University of Dundee: Tel 01382 464283

**[www.dundee.ac.uk](http://www.dundee.ac.uk)**

Edinburgh University: Tel 0131 651 1463

**[www.socialwork.ed.ac.uk](http://www.socialwork.ed.ac.uk)**

Glasgow Caledonian University: Tel 0141 331 8074  
[\*\*www.gcal.ac.uk/shsc/\*\*](http://www.gcal.ac.uk/shsc/)

Glasgow School of Social Work: Tel 0141 950 3579  
[\*\*www.gssw.ac.uk\*\*](http://www.gssw.ac.uk)

Open University: Tel 0131 549 7148  
[\*\*www.open.ac.uk/hsc/\*\*](http://www.open.ac.uk/hsc/)

Paisley University: Tel 0141 848 3130  
[\*\*www.paisley.ac.uk/socialsciences\*\*](http://www.paisley.ac.uk/socialsciences)

The Robert Gordon University: Tel 01224 263247  
[\*\*www.rgu.ac.uk/social\*\*](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/social)

Stirling University: Tel 01786 466437  
[\*\*www.dass.stir.ac.uk/courses/social-work.php\*\*](http://www.dass.stir.ac.uk/courses/social-work.php)



**Acknowledgements:**

The assistance of SIRCC staff in compiling this leaflet is gratefully acknowledged.

If you would like to request this leaflet in another format/ language, please get in touch with us.

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