



**workforce unit**

voluntary sector social services workforce unit



**Developing Student Placement Policies:**

**Guidance from the Voluntary Sector  
Social Services Workforce Unit**

**June 2008**



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## Developing Student Placement Policies

### Guidance from the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit

*As a social service worker, you must be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills. This includes ... contributing to the learning and development of others.*

(Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers, SSSC, 2005)

#### Introduction

Student placements play an important role in learning and development, both for students and their placement organisations. A student placement policy can enable organisations to optimise the usefulness of placements and to meet regulatory requirements. The Workforce Unit has worked with stakeholders to develop the broad policy guidance below. It is envisaged that organisations will use the material to inform the development of their own student placement policies and procedures.

'Student Placement' is used as a generic term but it is recognised that other terms are in use, such as 'practice learning opportunity' and 'practice-based learning', which organisations may prefer to use within their own policies. Organisations providing placements specifically for social work students should refer to the Scottish Social Services Council's guidance and resources.

#### What is meant by a student placement?

A student placement is a specified period of work experience undertaken as part of a course and/or qualification at college, university or other educational or development agency. There should be specific aims and objectives associated with the placement, which can be assessed or not, as required. It may be in any relevant discipline ranging from housing support or care practice to social work or business administration. Student placements should be seen as a partnership of student, agency and placing body (e.g. college or university).

#### Distinguishing between Policy and Procedure

A policy defines general intentions, goals and/or principles to guide decisions and achieve desired outcomes. Procedures specify how policies are to be put into action through tasks, activities and actions. This 'guidance', whilst being concerned primarily with policy, also suggests possible areas for the development of procedures (see Table 1).

#### Why provide student placements?

Working with a student is one way in which agencies can make a real and valuable contribution to the development of a skilled workforce. It is an important role to undertake that is not just about helping a student with their learning; it is also about contributing to decisions about who can enter the workforce.

The importance of this role is reflected in the Code of Practice for Social Service Workers (SSSC, 2005), which clearly says that everyone has a duty to contribute to the learning of others.

Supporting practice learning helps workers with their own professional development and can provide teams with an opportunity to develop and improve services. Working with students can also contribute to the development of a learning culture; students have new ideas and bring a fresh perspective to the work. In addition, providing a placement can help raise awareness of the work or your organisation, and even contribute to effective recruitment in the future.

## Principles

There are a number of principles that should underpin the establishment of any student placement.

These include:

- Agencies should recognise and value the unique contribution that students can bring
- Students should be able to work without fear of discrimination. They should practice in ways that are anti-discriminatory, promoting equality and respecting confidentiality
- Students should be aware of, and subject to, the applicable legislation, national standards and codes of practice, including a duty to protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers

These three principles underpin all of the areas for the development of policies and procedures set out in Table 1 below:

## Developing a Student Placement Policy

Table 1 presents the basis on which policy can be structured. For example, a placement policy may set out the principles and rationale for the placement, followed by a section for each of the areas indicated below, according to the needs of the agency and the placements offered.

**Table 1 – Developing a Student Placement Policy**

Policy Area	Procedures Areas for consideration
Student placements have defined aims and objectives	<p>Are there defined aims and objectives of student placements?</p> <p>Does the agency have clear criteria for accepting students?</p> <p>Has the agency identified the type of placements it can offer?</p>
Student placements complement the role of staff	<p>Has the student's role been defined and distinguished from the role of staff?</p> <p>Can the placement opportunity be used to contribute to service development e.g. through projects that would not otherwise be possible?</p>
The student placement policy should be aligned with and underpinned by other organisational policies (e.g. health and safety, equal opportunities) and the organisation's overall strategy	<p>Have clear links been made between the student placement policy and other relevant organisational policies, procedures and strategy?</p> <p>Are you familiar with the student placement policy of the placing body, and are they aware of yours?</p>
Students should be adequately prepared to undertake their role	<p>Has a visit been organised prior to commencement of the placement?</p> <p>Is induction in place to ensure that the student is introduced to organisational practices and procedures? (SSSC, 2007b)</p> <p>Is there a clear understanding of roles and boundaries, and issues of confidentiality?</p> <p>Is there a student contract in place?</p>

<p>Staff should be adequately prepared to support the student placement</p>	<p>Does the agency involve all relevant staff in planning support for student placements?</p> <p>Are staff aware of any specific role they may play in relation to the placement?</p>
<p>Allocation of supervisor / link supervisor</p>	<p>Does the student have a named supervisor, and where appropriate a link supervisor, who is accessible?</p> <p>Has the supervisor the resources and capacity to do the job?</p>
<p>Adequate opportunities for the student to learn and develop should be provided</p>	<p>Is regular supervision in place?</p> <p>Is there a learning agreement setting out expectations of the placement and a placement plan?</p> <p>Does the student have access to adequate resources?</p>
<p>Links should be established between the placing and placement agency</p>	<p>Has the supervisor been adequately briefed by the placing organisation?</p> <p>Have meetings been organised between supervisor, tutor and student?</p>
<p>Involvement of service users and carers</p>	<p>Have service users and carers been asked about the student placement?</p> <p>How has informed choice been addressed?</p> <p>As appropriate, and with adequate support and preparation, do service users and carers play a role in the student's learning and assessment?</p>
<p>Is the organisation working towards being a 'learning organisation'?</p>	<p>Has a learning organisation audit taken place?</p> <p>Is there an organisational workforce development plan?</p> <p>Has use been made of available tools to assist with these process e.g. the Workforce Unit's workforce planning toolkit, learning organisation tools from SCIE and the Scottish Government's 'Learning in Regeneration' (see Links and Resources section)</p>
<p>Risk assessment</p>	<p>Are students subject to the organisation's risk assessment procedures?</p> <p>Is appropriate insurance cover in place?</p>
<p>Reference to relevant legislation, codes and standards</p>	<p>Is there an opportunity to discuss and apply relevant legislation, codes and standards?</p>

Disclosure checks where required	Are there procedures in place to manage Disclosure checks?
Claiming expenses	Are procedures in place to enable the student to submit expenses claims as appropriate?
What happens if there are difficulties, or if a placement doesn't work out?	Are there clear procedures in place for the student, supervisor and placement organisation to deal with difficulties that may arise?  Is there a process for dealing with complaints from student, tutor or staff member?
Monitoring, assessing and evaluating the placement	Are procedures in place for monitoring and assessing the student?  How will the placement be evaluated?
Monitoring the policy	Are there organisational monitoring and review procedures in place for the student policy?
Documentation	Are procedures in place for documentation of placement progression?
Student Contract  [Some agencies may wish to formalise their learning agreement with students by jointly signing a student contract, see page 9 for further details]	Is there a student contract which establishes clear roles and responsibilities for the student?

## Links and Resources

SSSC, 2007, Recognition of Prior Informal Learning: Guidance and Resources for Mentors and Learners

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

SSSC, 2006, Standards and Audit for Practice Learning

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

SSSC, 2007, Getting Involved and Getting Started with Practice Learning

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

SSSC, 2005, Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers

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

SCIE, 2004. Learning Organisations: A self-Assessment Resource Pack:

[www.scie.org.uk](http://www.scie.org.uk)

Workforce Planning: A Toolkit for Voluntary Sector Social Services Organisations

[www.ccpscotland.org/workforceunit](http://www.ccpscotland.org/workforceunit)

## Useful Websites

Disclosure Scotland

[www.disclosurescotland.co.uk](http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk)

Social Work Scotland Website (contains links to a wide variety of resources and publications)

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

Scottish Social Services Learning Networks

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

Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS)

[www.iriss.org.uk](http://www.iriss.org.uk)

The Workforce Unit would like to thank the following organisations for contributing to the development of this guidance:

Ark Housing  
Abbeyfield Dumfries  
Aberlour  
Alzheimer Scotland  
Argyll College  
British Red Cross  
Child Care @ Home  
Children 1st  
Cornerstone Community Care  
Deaf Connections  
Enable  
Falkirk Council  
Forth Valley Social Services Learning Centre  
Grampian Racial Equality Council (GREC)  
Key Housing  
Kibble Care and Education Centre  
LinkLiving  
Loretto Care  
Margaret Blackwood Housing Association  
Multi-cultural Family Base  
Penumbra  
Perth and Kinross Council  
Richmond Fellowship Scotland  
SACRO  
Scottish Social Services Learning Networks  
Scottish Society for Autism  
Sue Ryder Care  
Support for Ordinary Living  
University of Stirling  
William Simpson's Home  
YMCA Glasgow

The following people have agreed to be included in a reference pool, so that anyone developing a student placement policy can contact them for discussion:

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## Supplementary Material

### Student Contract

Developing a student contract can be a useful way of establishing the boundaries and expectations of a particular placement, as well as outlining the practical details of the agreement.

Information that may be useful to set out within the student contract includes:

- Name of Unit or service offering the placement
- Start and end date
- Expected hours of work
- Name of supervisor
- Frequency of supervision sessions
- Core policies and procedures that must be adhered to (eg Codes of Practice, Health and Safety, Confidentiality) – copies of policies may be attached as an appendix, and can be discussed in detail at induction
- Statement relating to the expectations on the student. For example while the student may not assume the role or responsibilities of a keyworker, they may work within this role or shadow Support Workers undertaking this role
- A role description for the student
- Information about expenses
- Who to approach in the case of a grievance or complaint
- Arrangements for first day and induction, including start time and contact name
- Welcome to the organisation

### Service User Consent Form

It is important to keep evidence of a service user's informed consent to have contact with a student, and that this consent is regularly reviewed. A consent form may include:

- Consent to a student accessing notes / records
- Consent to a student being directly involved in care
- Understanding that consent can be withdrawn at any time
- Date for review

### Pre-placement meeting

After agreeing in principle to offer a placement, a pre-placement meeting between the student, tutor and the host agency can provide a useful opportunity for planning the placement, and for ensuring that the student can be placed within a part of the agency where their learning needs can be met.

Suggestions for topics to discuss at the pre-placement meeting include:

- Learning objectives
- Supervision arrangements
- Expectations of the host organisation
- Expectations of the student
- Expectations of the college / university
- Practical issues such as duration of placement, hours, etc