

## **A model to support Key Capabilities within practice learning settings**

### **Background.**

The placement that is illustrated in the **model** had been underway for a number of weeks before the Key Capabilities literature was distributed to Practice Teachers. The student had been placed in the Emergency Social Work Services Team serving Edinburgh and the Lothians. It was important to access opportunities for the student to **demonstrate understanding and knowledge of child protection practice appropriate to this setting.** The student had, in fact, been exposed to opportunities which were relevant to the Key Capabilities criteria. However, in order to supplement these opportunities an additional piece of work was sought in the form of an Initial Assessment Report which had been requested for a three year old child by the Reporter to the Children's Hearing. An Extended Link role was agreed with an experienced social work colleague in the Children and Families Team and the student engaged with the family for the duration of the placement.

This arrangement, as with many aspects of Key Capabilities, was not a new one and had been used many times in other placement situations to enhance a student's experience and or to seek out specific tasks designed to offer learning opportunities tailored to learning needs. It was important however, to make sure that the additional Extended Link and the student were clear about the terms of their relationship. It was important to avoid the student being over supervised as there was already another Link supervisor involved with the placement. The fact that these Links were known to each other did help and, in fact, the original case work had been sought out via this relationship. Regardless of this link, this model can be set up easily between teams and indeed also happens between voluntary and statutory sectors to good effect on an ad hoc basis.

### **Communication**

Key to the success of such an arrangement is communication and clarity of accountability. The issue of potential over supervision is a real one. Students can be torn between a number of advisors therefore clarity of role is essential. In this instance, the Extended Link advised the student on matters of practice and procedure, accompanied the student on one visit for "back-up" and also advised the student on some key reading on risk assessment all of which was very useful and appropriate. On the subject of Supervision the following quotes illustrate how this went:

**Student:** *"I make a lot of use of technology, I text, email and call both my Links so that they know where I am and when to expect me....I am working between two teams so this is a way around this (potential difficulty).. On the benefits of Linking out of placement into another area: " I am learning from two people. My extended team are interested in how I am getting along with this case and are good for sounding out ideas"*

**Extended Link:** *" (student) organised regular communication with me and updated me despite being based in another work place for the majority of the placement"... On managing the extended Link / Student relationship: "(student) sought advice and consultation about practice very appropriately and managed the busy practice team environment competently"*

**Practice Teacher**

The primary placement Link Supervisor was not much involved in this aspect of the student's work and, as the Practice teacher, I received detailed feedback via reflective recordings and discussion and ensured that Key Capabilities was on the agenda in weekly supervision in relation to this and other aspects of the student's overall work load. I ensured that the Extended Link had access to me and we agreed what feedback I would receive at the end of the placement and in preparation for the Final Report.

**Conclusion**

I was involved in a recent workshop organised by the South of Scotland Learning Network looking at the subject of the Application of Key Capabilities in non Children and Families settings. In discussing this model with other Practice Teachers, it was easy to conclude that this model is not a radical departure from current or past practice with regards to how we access opportunities for students. However, in terms of placement planning we do need to consider before hand how we offer opportunities within placements for meaningful experiences and look at what is possible within a setting as well as what might be accessible elsewhere. It can be satisfying for busy colleagues to have expert input without the responsibility for report writing and weekly supervision of students. Existing Link Supervisors fit this bill very well, as do those who are considering this role. Equally, students can gain access to another colleague who can offer them fresh perspectives. This borrowing of expertise is therefore to be planned, agreed, monitored and overall encouraged.

Anne Spiers.

Learning and Development Advisor

Practice Learning

City of Edinburgh Council

Department of Health and Social Care

# Extended Link Supervisor Model

