

PRACTICE LEARNING PROJECT

This report is based on evaluations completed by students, service users and university tutors. Evaluations completed by staff at our quarterly staff development days are also referred to.

AIM OF PROJECT

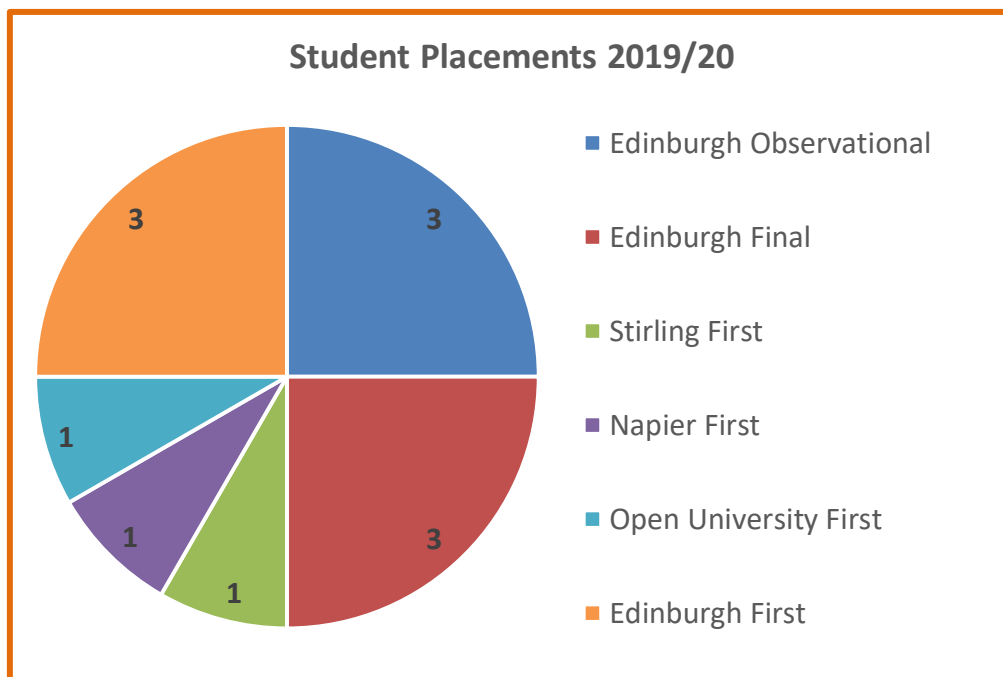
The project's aims are:

- to provide high quality placements to students from a range of academic institutions;
- to develop effective relationships with partner agencies including universities, local authority social work teams, other third sector providers and the wider learning community;
- to contribute towards a culture of learning and continuous development within the organisation through the facilitation of practice teacher forums, solution focussed induction, quarterly staff development days, and the annual lecture; and
- to offer support to candidates undertaking the Link Worker/PDA training.

The project is funded by the revenue raised from invoicing the universities for each of the individual placements.

BENEFICIARIES

We offered 12 student placements this reporting period. This is less than in previous years, as the practice learning project did not take any placements between April and August due to the manager covering the maternity leave of the Harbour Project Manager.



SUMMARY OF YEAR'S ACTIVITIES

- *Positive links with all universities maintained*
- *Continued links with Learning Network West*
- *Continued relationship with Napier University; successful first placement completed*
- *Established a link with Toronto Univeristy, was due to host a student from Toronto prior to the COVID-19 outbreak*
- *Continued partnership with Sunflower Garden offering students direct work with children*
- *Continued development of the two-week 'readiness for practice' experience for Edinburgh University students*
- *Supporting marginal students or those with additional needs*
- *Project Manager sits on Social Work Education Partnership sub group on Practice Learning*
- *Three Staff Development Days covering a range of themes:*
 - *Profesional Boundaries*
 - *Working with Personality Disorders*
 - *The Sololution Focused Approach*

Our event planning and organisation was well supported by Quensley in our Admin team and we continue to be most grateful for her expertise in this area, ensuring that our events run smoothly.

Feedback from the Staff Development Days included the following:

"Thought it was brilliant, super useful...felt like the organisation was invested in us."

"Make all SDD training like this; best one I have been to in years."

"Very interesting and applicable to my cases."

OUTCOMES

The primary outcome of the Practice Learning Project is satisfactory completion of placements by students, during which they will have had the opportunity to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and values required to evidence the Standards and Key Capabilities. Where there are issues of difficulty achieving this outcome, Circle seeks to manage these in a supportive and sensitive manner.

There is an evaluation system in place and there has been a good return on student feedback forms. However, feedback from tutors remains poor.

Student feedback

<p>Regarding supervision</p> <p><i>“I experienced both individual and group supervision. Individual supervision was incredibly helpful and supportive. I could discuss anything I had a concern about and was challenged on my views and challenged to develop my understanding of theories, policies and legislation.”</i></p> <p>Final placement student</p>	<p>Regarding the induction period</p> <p><i>“My induction was thorough and helpful. I was made to feel welcome at both the Edinburgh and Hamilton offices. There have been an abundance of observation opportunities throughout my placement, and I never felt stuck for something to do. Everyone was very helpful in offering observation opportunities, especially with home visits where I had never done this kind of work before.”</i></p> <p>Final placement student</p>
	<p>Regarding learning experiences that have been offered</p> <p><i>“Despite the challenges I encountered early on with many of my individual cases falling through, by the end of the placement I had ample learning opportunities that varied between working with parents and children, as well as the group work.”</i></p> <p>Final placement student</p>
<p>Regarding whole team approach to Practice Learning</p> <p><i>“Staff in Circle have been so supportive, checking in how I was doing both personally and with my cases. They are also always available if I was looking for advice or guidance on how to use a specific approach or explain something to a service user. For example, when I was looking for the best ways to explain the Children’s Hearings to a mum, I was pointed to all the resources on the website for different people and ages.”</i></p> <p>Final placement student</p>	
<p>Regarding support from the Link Worker</p> <p><i>“I could not have asked for a better link worker. Nothing was ever too much to ask, and I was made to feel like part of the team straight away. I was supported with anything I ever disclosed that I was struggling with, and always knew that Liz was there for me whenever I needed her.”</i></p> <p>Final placement student</p>	<p>Other comments</p> <p><i>“This placement has offered me a range of learning in children and families social work. The amount of lives we touch with our efforts is unbelievable and worth commenting on. I am so pleased to have been part of this team for 17 weeks.”</i></p> <p>First placement student</p>

Tutor feedback

There has been limited feedback from tutors however what has been received continues to be positive.

<p>Regarding range of learning opportunities</p> <p><i>“Great opportunities provided – lots of clear learning.”</i></p> <p>First Placement exam board</p>	<p>Regarding overall quality of placement</p> <p><i>“The student’s feedback to the university on recall days and after the placement was extremely positive and enthusiastic and it was evident that she had been very well supported by her Practice Educator and the Team as a whole.”</i></p> <p>First placement tutor</p>
--	--

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR YEAR AHEAD

The coming year be a challenging one, trying to reduce the impact of COVID-19. We have four placements which were suspended due to the pandemic; at present the plan is for these to resume September/October if Circle and the universities have returned to normal working practices. The numbers of placements next year will be lower due to the knock-on effect of the suspended placements. Multiple universities will be looking to secure placements at the same time to fulfill their obligations to students. A small practice learning unit such as ours will struggle to offer placements to all of our usual partners. The project manager has been liaising closely with university representatives to reduce the impact on future placements.

Once again we would hope to increase the number of practice teachers. Napier University delayed the start of their Practice Learning Programme from January 2020 to January 2021. If this programme goes ahead as planned, we have two members of staff who would be keen to undertake the qualification.

We will endeavour to build on the success of recent Staff Development Days and continue to offer high quality training opportunities to the staff team. We would like to include themes that staff themselves have asked for; themes already identified are Trauma Enhanced Practice and Self Care.

As an organisation we were looking forward to welcoming our first student from an international university. Unfortunately this did not go ahead due to the global pandemic. The practice learning manager will continue to liaise with Toronto University to try and support a placement next year.

Author: Fiona Burness

Date: April 2020