

## PRACTICE PLACEMENTS POLICY/PROCEDURE DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

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### Consultation Checklist

	Stakeholder consulted in the development of this document	
1. Practice Placements/School Policies & Procedures Group	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
2. External Partners/Stakeholders (list details)	Social Work Partner Agencies	
3. University Secretary's Office (Legal)	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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## LONE WORKING ON PRACTICE PLACEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE

### Qualifying and Post Qualifying Social Work Programmes

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*This policy and procedure applies only to Qualifying and Post Qualifying Social Work Programmes*

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This policy is designed to provide guidance on the management and supervision of students undertaking any qualifying or post qualifying Social Work Programme who may work alone or unsupervised when allocated to practice placements

Students undertaking practice placements are allocated either a Link Worker and/or a Practice Assessor (or appropriate representative) who will provide direct supervision of their practice. Direct supervision is particularly important for inexperienced students during the initial stages of their programme and may also apply to students approaching qualification. It is recognised that the specific learning outcomes/competencies required of the professional social work programme requires students to be exposed to more challenging experiences and learning opportunities to facilitate the acquisition of professional skills. This may require students to either work alone or with minimal supervision.

#### 2. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy applies to any qualifying or post qualifying Social Work programme, in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences which requires student allocation to a practice placement as part of a programme of study. The policy and procedures have been developed in collaboration with Placement Providers.

It aims to provide specific guidance on the management of situations where students work alone or with minimal supervision in order to minimise risk and safeguard the student, service users and carers and placement providers.

This policy is not designed to replace those of placement providers, but should be read and interpreted in the context of whatever policy regarding Lone Workers is currently being adopted within placement provider organisations and their associated organisations. The policy for Lone Working on Practice Placement should also be read in the context of Northumbria University Student Welfare and Safety Policy.

The purpose of this policy is to assist decision making and the ongoing management of those situations where a student, with the agreement of their Link Worker and/or Practice Assessor, is pursuing a learning opportunity, with indirect or offsite supervision, to support achievement of pre-determined learning outcomes/competencies.

### 3. PROCEDURE

Risk assessment of lone working should include consideration of any risk to the student, service users, carers, other workers, other agencies and the organisation providing the practice placement environment.

Consideration must be given to student welfare and safety when travelling whilst undertaking their practice learning opportunities. Strategies should be initiated to reduce/minimise risk or harm. This is especially important if the student is using public transport or on placement during winter time when dark mornings/evenings may mean the student may feel potentially more vulnerable.

Where the placement provider has in place a Lone Worker Policy for staff working in similar situations and offers resources such as 'attack alarms' or mobile phones, arrangement should be made to provide these for the student. Other strategies such as how to seek help in an emergency and 'calling in' to the arms length mentor/supervisor or an office of the placement provider to report progress of calls must be explained.

#### 3.1 Guidance

Indirect supervision or lone working in the pursuit of professional learning is an event sanctioned by the Link Worker or the Practice Assessor (or appropriate representative) and should be negotiated with the student.

The student must be given prior access to the Lone Worker policies for the placement organisation and made aware of any health and safety requirements that apply in the practice setting. The student must be able to seek clarification and where possible be given the opportunity to practise under supervision or undertake a simulated exercise before carrying out such activities unsupervised.

As in all practice placements students are under the supervision of a named Link Worker or Practice Assessor (or their representative) at all times. This can be direct or indirect and the level of supervision is determined by:

- a. The students' stage of training
- b. The students' capability/previous experience
- c. The type and nature of the skills being developed
- d. The Link Worker/Practice Assessor's knowledge of the service user(s) carer(s) and the potential risks involved in lone working.

In order to develop the skills that are required of a qualified practitioner, the student must be an active participant in practice. Lone working forms part of the normal pattern of work within many social work and social work related agencies; the following must be considered when students work alone

- e. The student understands the local policies and procedures for Incident Reporting
- f. All activities aim to promote the students' learning. The student is made aware that he/she can terminate a visit if circumstances change or they feel unsafe
- g. Practice Assessor or Link Worker feedback is provided after the intervention
- h. Formal documentation associated with the visit must be completed in line with agency recording and reporting guidelines.

- i. Students who choose to use their own motorised transport whilst allocated for community based placements must ensure that they have arranged business cover through their Motor Insurance Company. This requirement will be communicated to all students.
- j. Those with direct responsibility for supervising and sanctioning a student's indirectly supervised learning experience that involves a motorised journey to a service user and/or carer, are advised to satisfy themselves that the student has made this amendment to their motor insurance policy. This can be seen as both good practice and safe practice. If the student cannot evidence Business Cover for their motor vehicle, then the student must not use their own vehicle.
- k. Students carrying service users and or carers must adhere to the agency's policy in relation to risk assessing these events. In the early stages of a programme it is expected that service users and carers would normally be well known to the agency.
- l. There needs to be evidence that a risk assessment is in place and ongoing assessment of individuals evaluated and updated accordingly. The risk assessment should include the suitability of un-accompanied visits by students, environmental, psychological, social and physical circumstances surrounding the visit including historical information, risk posed and interventions to manage the risks identified. Any formal risk assessment should be recorded in accordance with the normal practice for student record keeping. It is for the professional with responsibility for supervising the student in practice to consider this as part of the risk assessment and to satisfy themselves that the student is competent to contribute to practice that maintains the ongoing safety, comfort and well being of all interested parties.