



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

Placements Handbook for Students of
BSc (Hons) & MA Social Work
Programmes.

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Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure the following information is correct, please be aware that it is subject to change. The current Covid-19 pandemic has changed the ways in which we and our placement providers are working and how we support your learning. Any changes affecting your programme of study will be communicated to you at the earliest opportunity.

1. Introduction

Welcome to Northumbria University and the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences.

Placements are an integral part of your programme. This handbook provides you with an overview of how your placements are organised and how it affects you. Please read it carefully so that you can make best use of your placement experience.

Throughout your time on the Social Work programme you will spend a total of 170 days in practice settings, plus 30 days skills development (which may include shadowing opportunities). You will be required to meet and achieve a variety of learning outcomes whilst on placement. In order for this to happen, we will have ensured that there are appropriate staff to support you and that the learning environment is suitable to meet the requirements of the placement modules.

Our aim is to ensure that students have a meaningful placement experience. If you need additional support or advice when on placement, please seek support from your Practice Educator/Supervisor, Personal Tutor or Practice Learning Lead.

We hope this booklet will answer many of the questions you may have before and during your placement.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Student Placement Team by emailing practiceplacements@northumbria.ac.uk.

2. Overview of the Practice Placement Team

The Placements & Internships Team is responsible for organising all placements throughout the university; the Practice Placement Team is an integral part of that team and, in conjunction with the Practice Learning Lead, are responsible for organising any placements that are required for Social Work students. The term “placement” refers to those practice learning opportunities where a student will observe and work with service users with support and guidance from practitioners and academic staff, in order to achieve the required standards as set out in the practice learning documentation. Please note the professional requirements identified within this handbook refer not only to ‘placements’ but also preparation for placement activities.

The Practice Placement Team has a number of coordinators and administrators, each with responsibility for administering practice learning for a different Programme. The Director of Placements has responsibility for providing strategic leadership for practice placement development, for devising policies for risk identification and management and for assuring the quality of the placement experience.

2.1 Contact Information

The Practice Placement Team are available:-

- **Monday to Thursday:** 08.30 – 17.00
- **Friday:** 08.30 – 16.30



practiceplacements@northumbria.ac.uk

Further information regarding Practice Placements (including frequently asked questions) can be found within your student Portal from the following link - [Understanding Practice Placements article](#). For any queries not covered within these pages, we can be contacted by e-mail practiceplacements@northumbria.ac.uk; we aim to respond to your message within three working days.

When we are closed, the university’s Ask4Help service may be able to help. They can be contacted by telephone (0191 227 4646) and through the student portal. If you are yet to receive access to your portal, please refer to the following <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/contact-us/>

2.2 The Placements Website

Although we are currently updating the website and will be moving most student content to the student portal, we advise all students to visit the Placements website at northumbria.ac.uk/practiceplacements, to view the frequently asked questions and to keep up to date with news and developments, and to obtain up to date versions of handbooks, policies and procedures, etc.

We are continually looking to evolve and enhance our website service, so please do not hesitate to get in touch with suggestions of how you feel it could be improved.

3. Allocation of Practice Learning Opportunities

3.1 General Information about Practice Learning Opportunities

Practice Learning at Northumbria University has been designed to enable students to demonstrate the Standards of Proficiency (SOPS), Professional Capabilities Framework (BASW), the requirements of the Department of Health, and the Quality Assurance Agency's Benchmark Statement for Social Work (QAA, 2019).

Throughout your time on the Social Work programme you will spend a total of 170 days in practice settings, plus 30 days skills development (which may include shadowing opportunities). Student will undertake one 70 day placement at Level 5/MA Year 01 and a final placement of 100 days to be undertaken at Level 6/ MA Year 02.

We aim for each student to experience:

- Placement in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences
- A minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high-risk decision making and legal interventions. For further details see [Social Work England Standards for Practice Placements](#).

Students may be allocated a placement in one of the following:

Residential settings, fieldwork teams, hospitals, day service/centre provision, and schools. These settings may be in either statutory or non-statutory environments such as the private, independent or voluntary sector (it should be noted that this list is not exhaustive).

Students may be expected to work with one or more of the following service user groups (list is not exhaustive): Carers, older people, mental health, domestic abuse, refugees and asylum seekers, disabled people, families, children, adolescents and offenders.

All social work students must sign a Professional Suitability Declaration on commencement of each year of the Programme which commits them to adhering to [Social Work England Standards](#) and to abide by the rules and procedures set out in the Northumbria University Handbook of Student Regulations that form part of the contract between a student and the University.

The University, Stakeholder Agencies and Practice Educators all share responsibility for enabling the PCF and Social Work England standards to be met and upheld. Students also have responsibility for their own learning, practice and professional development during the social work programme. The Social Work England Standards and website can be accessed: <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/education-training/students-and-graduates/>

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3.2 How Practice Learning Opportunities are Organised

Students will be allocated to suitable practice learning opportunities throughout the duration of their Programme. Procedures are in place to ensure that student placement requirements are managed in a systematic and objective way, ensuring equity throughout the process.

Students on the BSc (Hons) and MA Programmes, subject to successful progression, will usually have at least 2 assessed practice learning opportunities known as placements.

Students will be required to complete a placement profile for every placement undertaken as part of the programme via the ARC Student Profile Management System. Students will complete and submit a profile for review to their personal tutor. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that the Profile is submitted by the deadline date.

The profile will be used by the Practice Learning Lead in conjunction with Stakeholder Agencies and the Placement Employability Co-ordinator to allocate students to suitable practice learning opportunities. The contents of your Profile will be shared with placement providing agencies. **Profiles submitted after set deadlines may impact upon the availability of a placement and may raise concerns about your professional suitability.**

We cannot accept requests from students to be allocated to a specific practice learning opportunity. **Students must not approach any agency to seek a placement opportunity doing so may raise concerns about your professional suitability**

For information regarding travel to placement, please refer to "Practice Placements Travel information for Students of Social Work Programmes" see appendix 1.

3.3 Sharing Personal Data with the Practice Learning Area

Both the University and the placement providers we work with have a legal obligation to ensure that the people involved in clinical practice, or those working with vulnerable people, are suitable and do not pose a risk to those they will come into contact with. We therefore have a duty to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to verify that the people we place into this environment are both appropriate and capable of working in it.

This requires that the University share information with placement providers so that they can make appropriate assessments of capability and, where required, reasonable adjustments to accommodate your individual needs. If we do not share relevant information, the placement provider cannot take you, for this reason processing does not require the consent of the individual.

Information is shared under the lawful basis provided under:

GDPR Articles 6 (1)

- (b) processing is necessary for the performance of a contract to which the data subject is party or in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering into a contract;
- (e) processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller;

GDPR Article 9 (2)

- (b) processing is necessary for the purposes of carrying out the obligations and exercising specific rights of the controller or of the data subject in the field of employment and social security and social protection law in so far as it is authorised by Union or Member State law or a collective agreement pursuant to Member State law providing for appropriate safeguards for the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject;
- (g) processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest, on the basis of Union or Member State law which shall be proportionate to the aim pursued, respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide for suitable and specific measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject

UK Data Protection Act 2018

Schedule 1 Part 1 Para 1 – Employment, social security and social protection:

- (1) (a) the processing is necessary for the purposes of performing or exercising obligations or rights of the controller or the data subject under employment law, social security law or the law relating to social protection

Schedule 1 Part 1 Para 2 (1 & 2) – health or social care purposes:

- (1) This condition is met if the processing is necessary for health or social care purposes.
- (2) In this paragraph “health or social care purposes” means the purposes of—
 - (a) preventive or occupational medicine,
 - (b) the assessment of the working capacity of an employee,

The data required to facilitate your placement includes:

- Your name, student number and cohort.
- Your University email address.
- Your birth day and month (not the year).
- Your DBS reference number and clearance date.
- Your Occupational Health clearance date.
- Requirement for ‘reasonable adjustments’ in practice. Recommendations for reasonable adjustments will have been identified in Occupational Health reports. The full report will be

shared with the personal tutor who will liaise with the Practice Educator about any reasonable adjustments required to support the student in the placement area.

- Requirements for specific risk assessments in practice, for example, if required, pregnancy risk assessments.
- Your Covid risk assessment score (but not its contents) – this information is shared with relevant Practice Partner representatives.
- Covid vaccination status
- Verification of good health and good character as required by the professional bodies.
- Verification of statutory and mandatory skills that have been undertaken before commencing in practice.

Students undertaking professional programmes are required to declare criminal records, disciplinary records or health issues that would affect the suitability for the programme or admission into the appropriate profession. Students will need to have suitable clearances for DBS and occupational health for practice before undertaking any placements.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the University and/or placement organisation immediately of any transgression or change of circumstance that may affect their suitability. Students who fail to disclose information and are subsequently discovered to have failed to notify, or who are no longer deemed suitable to continue studies, may be withdrawn from their placement and or programme immediately pending review.

Please refer to the Northumbria University Handbook of Student Regulations for further information.

Students on Social Work Programmes who have previous convictions, cautions etc will be required to declare this on their Placement Profile and in most cases provide the Programme Leader with a written statement disclosing details of the incident(s). This information will be given to an appropriate person within the Agency where the student is to be placed.

You must inform the Programme Leader immediately if you are the subject of police investigation or prosecution during the programme. This also includes any disciplinary investigations, Section 47 Investigations under the Children Act 1989 and investigations under Safeguarding Adults procedures as well as any involvement with statutory social care services (i.e. Section 17 assessment or Care Act assessment). Any ongoing investigations may have an impact on the placement allocation process, students are advised to contact their Personal Tutors/ Programme Leader in the first instance.

4. Practice Learning Allocations with ARC-WEB

4.1 Accessing Your Placement Allocations with ARC-WEB

Students will be required to log-in to a system called ARC-WEB in order to access their placement allocations and view other related information. Data collected and displayed in ARC-WEB is stored on an externally hosted web server which is maintained by ARC Technology Ltd under agreement with Northumbria University.

ARC-WEB is a web-based system that enables students to obtain details about their placement allocations, and evaluate their placements online. You will be provided with further information about the ARC-WEB system when placements are released.

Students will normally be informed of their placement allocation 3 weeks prior to commencing placement. Due to the careful matching process that takes place which ensures students are allocated to placements that meet with their learning requirements, changes to placement will not normally be considered. However, should a student feel that they have an extenuating circumstance that may require a change to their allocation, they should discuss this with their Personal Tutor in the first instance. Should the Tutor feel that the change should be considered, they will discuss this with the Practice Learning Lead. This request should be made within the first week of notification.

4.2 Evaluating your practice learning allocations using ARC-WEB

At the end of your practice learning experience you are required to evaluate your experiences by logging into ARC-WEB via the student Portal. Practice learning needs to be evaluated in this way before ARC-WEB can reveal details of the next allocation. Students should be aware that the evaluation of placement process is a requirement of the programme. This also applies to students on final year placements as confirmation of completion of the programme cannot be forwarded to the Exam Board or Social Work England until a completed evaluation is submitted. For further information, please consult the ARC-WEB Student User Guide, downloadable from the Placements website.

In order for us to monitor and improve the quality of practice learning, data and information collated via the practice learning evaluation questionnaire shall be used to produce anonymised reports for partner placement providers and Social Work England using bench-marking statements and monitoring tools as set out in Quality Assurance of Practice Learning (QAPL). However, to support the quality enhancement of the practice placement and to meet the Social Work England standards, Academic colleagues will be provided with reports that include the name of the person who has submitted the evaluation. You should note that information gathered via the evaluation process, may be shared. We do remind all students to take this into consideration when making comment about individual members of staff or identifying specific practice learning areas. All information entered on the system will be collected and managed in accordance with the Northumbria University General Data Protection Regulations notification and under the terms outlined within the Handbook of Student Regulations.

5. Contacting the Placement Area

Students are required to make contact with their allocated placement **within one week** of receiving notification. You will usually be expected to visit the agency prior to the commencement of the placement period to introduce yourself, provide copies of relevant paperwork (including a copy of your DBS Certificate from commencement of the programme) and to ask any pertinent questions. This pre-placement visit will also provide you with the opportunity to meet the Practice Supervisor and/or the Practice Educator.

In addition, you will find information regarding the placement within ARC-WEB such as learning opportunities available, hours of placement and description of client groups and services provided.

6. Placement Support

The three main support routes for the student whilst on placement are as follows:

- Practice Educator and/or Practice Supervisor
- Personal Tutor
- Practice Learning Lead

In addition, the student will be supported by their Programme Leader.

6.1 Practice Educator & Practice Supervisor

For every 'placement' within the BSc and MA Programmes all students will be allocated to a Practice Educator who will be a qualified Social Worker, some may also have a Practice Supervisor onsite.

If the Practice Educator is directly employed by the agency providing the practice experience then they usually have overall responsibility for the student, their learning and management of their workload.

Some agencies will need to employ the services of an off-site Practice Educator. In these instances an on-site Practice Supervisor, employed by the agency will be appointed. Management of the practice learning opportunity and student will be shared between the Off-site Practice Educator and the Practice Supervisor.

The Practice Educator is responsible for the overall assessment of the student's practice for each module and for marking of relevant assignments as detailed in the module outlines.

6.2 Personal Tutor

Your Personal Tutor will be able to provide advice, counselling and other pastoral care support in relation to academic matters. All qualifying Social Work Programmes have a requirement to ensure that students are 'fit for practice', both in terms of demonstrating proficiency in the threshold

standards required to enter their chosen profession and that they meet the professions' and public expectations of conduct and behaviour.

During the placement ongoing contact between the Personal Tutor and student is required to ensure that the student be assisted in their Personal and Professional Development and to monitor the students overall professional suitability.

6.3 Practice Learning Lead

The role of the Practice Learning Lead is to ensure the quality of the learning environment meets the standards set by the Professional, regulatory and statutory bodies. In order to achieve this they must work in partnership with representatives of the agencies providing placements, Programme Leaders, Educators and staff within the university.

Broadly the role is to increase the range, quantity and quality of practice placements. Based within Northumbria University Social Work Programme Team they are able to support the needs of students and educators based within a range of settings including local authority and the independent and voluntary sector. Specific responsibilities include the following:-

- **To increase the range and quantity of practice placements**
- **To support individual practice learning teams as required**
- **To ensure quality of placement provision is being monitored, maintained and improved in line with Social Work England and University requirements**

7. Preparation for Placement

The Academic Programme is designed to prepare students for practice learning opportunities. Specific sessions will also be held to familiarise students with placement documentation and to explore the requirements of each stage of learning. Attendance at these sessions is compulsory and part of the attendance requirement of the Programme.

Prior to the first practice learning experience, students will be given the opportunity to undertake a range of activities to ensure readiness for practice during Level 4 of the BSc (Hons) Programme and during year 1 of the MA Programme. Please note that attendance is compulsory for all skills and preparation for practice days. Failure to attend is likely to impact negatively on your progress through the programme.

Before you begin your practice learning experience you will be given further information in a timely manner, in lectures, seminars, skills days, through the Programme Handbook and website about:

- Dress code for practice
- Professional behaviour
- Policies and procedures to guide your learning in practice e.g. health & safety
- Key skills required for staff and service user safety

- Key skills required to maintain your own safety
- Understanding the Practice Learning Document (PLD) and process
- Social Media usage

8. Working Hours & Making up time

8.1 Working Hours during Placement

Each placement has a specific number of days that need to be completed within the agency. Whilst Social Work England does not stipulate a specific day length, students are expected to work the same hours as other workers within the agency. This may vary between different organisations; students hours of work should be detailed on the Practice Learning Agreement, the *usual* range of hours worked per week is between 37 – 40. Students should be aware that this may include working a shift pattern. Should any difficulty arise, students should contact their Personal Tutor for further information.

Students may be required to work weekends and Bank Holidays as some agencies provide continuous services. Bank holidays that occur during a placement are to be classed as a normal working day. Please refer to your practice learning documentation for further information.

8.2 Making up time

In order to meet the regulations of the programme, students will be required to make up any placement days lost through illness or negotiated leave at the end of their placement. This is to ensure that they have completed the number of days set per placement. (Level 5 70 days practice, Level 6 100 days practice – BSc Programme, Year 1 70 days practice, Year 2 100 days practice – MA Programme).

Please refer to the Sickness Absence Policy within your Social Work Programme Handbook/Practice Learning Documentation.

8.3 Working Hours OUTSIDE of Placement

Students working outside of placement hours for personal earnings, or to gain work experience, should follow the Universities recommendation that you work no more than 15 hours per week. Students who are undertaking work outside of Placement hours must ensure that this does not interfere with attendance on placement.

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/student-life/earn-while-you-learn/>



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PRACTICE PLACEMENTS TRAVEL INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMMES

1. Travelling to your Practice Placement: Our Expectations and Your Responsibilities

All Students will be allocated to suitable placements throughout their programme.

The University works with social work and social care agencies that cover a wide geographical area north to the borders of Scotland and south to County Durham, Teesside and Darlington. While it is accepted that practice learning opportunities need to be reasonably accessible, travel is an implicit part of the programme. Students may also have further travel in the course of your work after arriving at your placement. Unless a student can provide evidence of any personal extenuating circumstances, our expectation is that ALL students will make every effort to attend the practice placement they have been allocated.

2. Using Public Transport and Planning Your Journey

Attending your practice placement may require the use of various modes of public transport, e.g., The Metro, Buses and/or Trains. Nexus, the organisation responsible for the Metro Subway system of Newcastle and Sunderland have a website at <http://www.nexus.org.uk/>. This site provides an excellent journey planner facility that links metro, bus, train and ferry timetables. It is our expectation that ALL students will make every effort to plan their journey in advance, so to avoid delays in arriving at their placement on time.

3. Use of Personal Vehicles

Students are not insured by the University to use their own cars. To undertake visits whilst on placement students will need to have **Business cover** which includes the statement that you are empowered to carry people whilst on business as part of your car insurance. Some Insurance Companies make a charge for this but others do not charge. You will be asked to let the programme know whether or not you have the use of a car before practice learning opportunities are allocated as there are some placements which will only be available to students who are able to have the use of a car. Some placements will require sight of your insurance documents.

4. Mileage Expense Claims

For Students in receipt of an NHS social work bursary an amount per year is included in the bursary payment and is a contribution towards their travelling costs to and from their placement agency. Please refer to the Guidance notes within the Application forms via the NHS BSA webpages <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students/986.aspx> . Some students not in receipt of a bursary may still be able to seek help for placement travel expenses from the NHSBA and are encouraged to clarify this with the NHSBA. Those unable to access any financial support for placement should discuss options with their Personal Tutor.

It is expected that students should not be financially disadvantaged whilst undertaking placement duties. It is anticipated that the placement providing agency will contribute to costs for any travel expenses incurred as part of undertaking any necessary work whilst on placement.

We strongly advise that any student struggling to meet placement travel expenses, make contact as early as possible, with Student Support and Wellbeing. They will be able to support you with budgeting and coping with financial shortfalls and will also be able to provide information and advice on the Access to Learning Fund (a means tested hardship fund available to assist with costs relevant to your programme). Further information and contact details are available via their web pages at <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/support-for-students/>

5. Seconded Students

For students who are supported on the Programme by an employer (and therefore not in receipt of an NHS social work bursary) they should receive financial support from the employers in relation **to travelling expenses to and from their placements.**