



Lone Working on Practice Placement (Healthcare)

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1. INTRODUCTION

This policy is designed to provide guidance on the management and supervision of students working alone or unsupervised when allocated to practice placements.

It is normally a requirement of professional awarding/accrediting bodies that students are required to be under the direct supervision of a Practice Supervisors, Assessors, Educators/Clinical Educators who is a professional in the same discipline in which the student is aiming to register/qualify when allocated to practice placements, as part of their programme of study.

Direct supervision is particularly important for inexperienced students during the initial stages of their programme and should apply equally to students approaching qualification. However, it is recognised that the specific learning outcomes/competencies required of some programmes of professional preparation, require students to be exposed to more challenging experiences and learning opportunities to facilitate the acquisition of professional skills. In some instances this may require students to either work alone or with minimal supervision.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy aims to provide specific guidance on the management of such situations in order to minimise risk and safeguard the student, their patients/clients and placement providers.

Examples might include:

- Students working in community contexts and during the latter stages of their programme such as managing a caseload with in-direct / minimal supervision or wholly on their own

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 the 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 Practice Supervisors, Assessors, Educators/Clinical Educators is pursuing a learning opportunity where indirect or arms length supervision is a requirement of the programme and is needed to support achievement of pre-determined learning outcomes/competencies.

In the event that an untoward incident occurs during a period of lone working, the student must immediately inform the relevant Practice Supervisors, Assessors, Educators/Clinical Educators and or manager of the placement provider.

3. PROCEDURE

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

Consideration must be given to student welfare and safety when travelling alone to and from patient/client premises. 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 is 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 students. Other strategies such as how to seek help in an emergency and 'calling in' to the arms length Practice Supervisors, Assessors,

Educators/Clinical Educators or an office of the placement provider to report progress of calls must be explained.

The guidance outlined in this policy applies to all settings where Healthcare students are allocated to practice placements as part of their programme of study. See **Appendix 1 Flowchart** – Process for approving and managing situations where students on placement may be required to work alone or at arms length.

3.1 Guidance for Practice Placement Facilitators and Mentors

Indirect supervision or lone working in the pursuit of professional learning is a sanctioned event by the appropriate Practice Supervisors, Assessors, Educators/Clinical Educators 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 be given the opportunity to practise under supervision any safety or other intervention techniques that may be required before undertaking such activities unsupervised.

If in doubt about the value of the planned experience to the student's professional development, placement provider managers, PPF's, Practice Supervisors, Assessors, Educators/Clinical Educators, are advised to discuss the proposal with the relevant Programme Leader for programme of study the student is following or their Personal Tutor. If this is not possible, contact should be made with the Director of Placements and Employability at the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences on 0191 2156052.

As in all practice placements students are under the supervision of a qualified member of staff 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) Qualified staffs' knowledge of the patient/client/pupils and the situation and 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. However, unaccompanied visits with or to service users should only be undertaken after careful consideration of the following factors:

(a) Patients/clients are well known to the service providers and are an established service user and where relevant, have been previously assessed by a caseload manager and deemed appropriate for the student to visit.

(b) There needs to be evidence that a risk assessment is in place and the ongoing assessment of individuals should be 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 and maintain standards of practice and the ongoing safety, comfort and well being of all interested parties.

(c) The student must not use their own vehicle if they cannot evidence the correct insurance.

(d) The registered practitioner supervising the student remains accountable for any delegation of patient/client care/work load.

3.2 Information for students

- (a) The student understands the local policies and procedures for Incident Reporting.
- (b) Lone working may form part of the normal pattern of care for particular patients/clients as identified by the nursing, allied health or social care professional.
- (c) There is feedback after the intervention between the student and the professional that includes the completion of any formal documentation associated with the visit. The entry should be followed up, witnessed and countersigned by the supervising professional at later date.
- (d) All activities are to promote the students' learning. The student is made aware that he/she can terminate a visit if circumstances change or they feel vulnerable/unsafe.
- (e) Students who choose to use their own motorised transport whilst allocated for community experience must ensure that they have arranged business cover through their Motor Insurance Company. This requirement will be communicated to all students.
- (f) Those with direct responsibility for supervising and sanctioning a student's indirectly supervised learning experience that involves a motorised journey to a service user, are advised to satisfy themselves that the student has made this amendment to their motor insurance policy. This can be seen as both good and safe practice. If the student cannot evidence Business Cover for their motor vehicle, the indirectly supervised learning opportunity **must not** take place.
- (g) **Students are not allowed to carry service users, or their carers as passengers. Students should follow the policy of the placement provider with regards to driving any unit vehicle.**
- (h) Exceptions to this can only take place after a full risk assessment in-line with the placement provider's own policy and procedures for carrying service users. Students are responsible for ensuring they hold a current, valid driving licence, that their vehicle is taxed and has a current MOT certificate and they have appropriate insurance with business cover or are covered by the organisations insurance cover.

Unplanned situation arises where student on placement may be required to work alone or at arms-length. Practice Supervisors, Assessors, Educators/Clinical Educators or supervisor to complete [Form LW1](#)

Is it appropriate for the student at this stage of their programme to work alone or with at distance supervision?

Practice Supervisors, Assessors, Educators/Clinical Educators must inform Programme Leader (PL) or PPF

Have PL/Student Placement Team approved / sanctioned the student to continue on placement?

Have alternate placement arrangements been agreed between PL and Practice Supervisors, Assessors, Educators/Clinical Educators mentor/practice/clinical educator/supervisor

Has the mentor, clinical-practice educator or supervisor conducted a risk assessment and have reasonable steps been implemented to safeguard the student, organisation and

Has the student been?

- Informed of relevant placement providers Lone Worker Policy and personal safety and security arrangements?
- Provided with relevant personal safety alarms, contact equipment / arrangements
- If in exceptional situations the student is requested to convey patients/clients in their own/ placement provider vehicles, the Practice Supervisors, Assessors, Educators/Clinical Educators to complete [Form LW1 \(Questions 9 and 10\)](#)

Has the student agreed to work at arms length / without supervision?

Are strategies in place to monitor / evaluate student progress whilst working alone or at arms length supervision?

No further action required

Key to Colour Coding

Urgent/Action required

Procedure to be followed

Matter resolved

Yes

Yes

No

Yes

Yes

No

Yes

Yes

Yes

