



“It feels like a blink of an eye!”

Things felt slower to start with, then the pace picks up – this helped to take things in to start with.

The monthly schedule you develop in terms of your workload, your supervisions, your portfolio...this really helps once you get into the swing of things.

Your experiences will depend on your placement experience. For example, you might feel you have no idea about Safeguarding and Care Planning – so ask lots of questions and do lots of shadowing! Same for any other team, even if you don't think you would work there right now. Take your time to learn about other departments, other processes, policies that are different to what you have learnt before. The most valuable thing are the relationships and people you'll meet – make these points of contact and connections. You'll be so grateful when you can drop them an email to ask about something further down the line!

Don't be afraid to ask questions – no question is a stupid question.

We want to give you reassurance – you will learn, and learning on the job is the best way!

Our main learning has been really understanding what our role is as social workers.

You can be a new starter and so keen, and actually start to take on the roles and responsibilities of other people.

There are resources like family support workers, community resources – and you are NOT housing! It isn't possible to do it on your own and be everything to every family, so don't expect yourself to be – get advice, guidance and signposting yourself so that you can pass it on and provide the most meaningful support.

We've all learnt about our boundaries and limitations in our roles. One of these areas is communication – if you make yourself ALWAYS available it will become the norm. Get used to turning your phone off – if your families have emergency numbers, they won't be left by themselves when you are not there.

Whilst you want to be there for families you need to take time to reflect on how difficult situations make you feel. Take time to recognise your own responses and don't feel bad sharing them with your team members, colleagues, mentor, manager... You are only human and things will make you feel certain ways sometimes! Be aware of knowing any of your own potential triggers – you will also work some of these out as you go. We can't express enough what a strength this is as a social worker to recognise the impact on you of the work you do and it does not make you weak, it makes you the empathic social worker that you want to be.

We've loved opportunities for weekly unit meetings in certain teams (Contextual Safeguarding) – definitely shadow or take part if you can!



Sometimes a team mood or vibe can be a bit off – it isn't about or because of you or anything you are or aren't doing. Please take time to let things settle and don't get swept up in any negative comments or culture, it just isn't worth it.

A long way away but at 9-12 months, do the presentation option! Especially if you aren't a writer, the three that have done it this year found it to be a really good experience. Your learning style can come through in your portfolio in the way that you get feedback and present your learning over the year. Also with the portfolio – definitely get as much done in the first couple of weeks as you can and don't presume you will always be able to do portfolio things the day or night before. When things get busier and your workload is bigger, things can be unpredictable. Prepare well in advance for your review meetings!

Be organised – get everything in your diary. There are loads of tips we have to share for day to day practical things... you'll find things that work for you, but here are some ideas:

- Type Core Groups / Care Teams straight after (the meetings don't always take an hour so use the rest of the time to write up the plan).
- Write any assessment work you are doing straight into the documents. Feels much less overwhelming when writing it up!
- Colour code your diary. And speak to Phoebe Swan about her system for colouring diary when visits are completed and also leaving unsuccessful visits in and labelling them as 'unsuccessful'. It means you'll always have the dates available if you look back.
- Block out time first thing to write up last night's visit/s.

And loads more – chat to us as we're happy to share from what we've done (and not done!).

Take your lunch! This isn't just about having a break, it is also about the time you get to reflect when you are away from your desk and talking about other things as well as work.

Also leave the office – even if you don't vape/smoke you can always go for a little walk around the Civic or into Gateshead.

Crack the clocking in and out system early – sort out your requests there and then when you forget otherwise it becomes a massive job to sort out.

Use supervision – say what you feel you need. Your supervisor won't know unless you communicate how you are doing and feeling.

You may have a 6 month dip...a few of us did and questioned how good we were, whether we could do it – but we all got through it and feel so much better for asking those questions and now feel even more motivated to work with our families!

You will be brilliant and we wish you the best of luck 😊

From

Mikaela, Phoebe, Emily, Lucy and Iona