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Handbook on principles and methods for employers to support Reflective Practice (RP) in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for the social work workforce: an exemplar from an ‘Adult Safeguarding’ module at Masters level

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Introduction

This Handbook sets out the background to and requirements for developing reflective practice (RP) in social work professionals' continuing professional development with particular reference to a Masters module in Adult Safeguarding. In addition it is intended also as a model for what to take into account, how, in applying learning to practice. It also sets out key requirements on individual workers, managers and supervisors in relation to the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards, the Local Government Association (LGA) Standards for Employers, and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), and how these might be met in supervision and developmental portfolios.

The Handbook has been developed from a Skills for Care (SfC) funded project based on qualified social workers undertaking a 'Safeguarding Adults' module at Masters level. The project was carried out in partnership between the University of Hertfordshire and local authority partners Hertfordshire County Council, Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire, and Luton Borough Council. The project was based on the idea that in order for learning in CPD to be most effective, activities on the module and assessment of it should be closely aligned with work based activity, and be part of ongoing supervision, within a commitment to development of practice and development of RP skills for the candidate that are assessable and measurable.

This Handbook sets out some key areas to take into account in the process and content of RP and CPD, and how this fits with informal and formal CPD, be this in-house training, professional discussions forums, other courses and those accredited by Higher Education Institutions. It has taken into account the work of the Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), along with the Workforce Development Strategy (Skills for Care), the Munro report on child protection, and the recent white paper '*Caring for our future: reforming care and support*' (DH), that requires social workers and their employers to implement reforms in practice, and which emphasises that integrating critical reflection and analysis within practice is pivotal to the process of professional decision making by autonomous professionals. It is based on work with social workers and their managers who have undertaken the 'Safeguarding Adults' 30 credit module at Masters level at the University of Hertfordshire for social workers who work with Adults, which along with a 30 credit 'Personalisation' module, constitutes a Post Graduate Certificate as part of a validated pathway through our MSc Social Interventions Programme at the School of Health and Social Work, University of Hertfordshire.

The work of the project focussed on improving integration of critical reflection and analysis within the module, and more widely into CPD, which is pivotal to the process of professional decision-making by autonomous professionals at 'social worker' or 'experienced social worker' level in the

PCF. The module had already been evaluated well by staff undertaking it and their managers in terms of the delivery of learning and impact upon the social workers' practice.

This was aided by the fact that the Safeguarding module and its associated module on Personalisation, which are both part of the Masters/PGCert Social Interventions Programme at the School of Health and Social Work, were developed at the request of, and in close consultation with, Hertfordshire County Council, with a number of the teaching sessions delivered by them, including sessions delivered by the highest level of management.

In a similar vein to Munro's recommendations about freeing social workers from bureaucracy, the adult social care white paper states that "*the role of social work is being transformed in order to focus on interpersonal support, to promote choice and control, and to better meet people's needs and goals*". This also fits with other developments, such as Social Work Practice Pilots, which aim to liberate social workers from case management, allowing them to focus on promoting active and inclusive communities, and empowering people to make their own decisions about their care.

It also took into account how the Professional Capabilities Framework and the Health and Social Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers in England can be taken forward in relation to the Reflective Practice (RP) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of social workers.

The emphasis in CPD

We have developed an emphasis on CPD in our Safeguarding/ Personalisation modules that uses supervision and other RP opportunities in order to help managers and staff to meet their requirements under both the HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Social Workers requirements on individual workers and the Local Government Association (LGA) Standards in this area, as detailed below.

In order to support the managers' role in this, Higher Education Institutions can provide short sessions or 'Lite bites' (short courses of a few hours) for managers as agreed with the agency, but ideally at least once a year, in order to provide input and discussion on the model for RP, and the managers part in the assessment process for the modules.

In addition to our normal processes to evaluate learners' views on the module, we evaluated with learners and their managers their experience of their opportunities for reflective supervision with tutors over and beyond normal module requirements, to review and change learning opportunities, content and assessment strategies.

The Health Care Professions Council CPD requirements

This CPD approach and the principles that govern it offer employers and social workers a flexible approach to the provision and process for CPD. One of the major changes incorporated in the new HCPC approach, reflected in the requirements for re-registration by them (<http://www.hpc-uk.org>). This is a shift from an “input” model i.e. 15 days of training/learning activity to an “output” model – how does the organisation need me to develop, what do I need to do and what is the impact on practice? It is expected therefore that planning, support and assessment of this will occur through the supervision and appraisal process (See Appendix A).

The Local Government Association (LGA) Standards for Employers

The LGA Standards for Employers and supervision framework (www.local.gov.uk/social-worker-standards) that apply to all employers of social workers not only describe the joint expectation on employer and social worker to ensure that CPD is ongoing, but also describe the expectation that all social workers will have access to reflective supervision provided by a social worker (see Appendix B). The requirements laid down in the Standards for Employers and Supervision framework underpin the support for all Social Workers and are assumed in these principles as underpinning the CPD process.

The Professional Capabilities Framework

The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) (www.collegeofsocialwork.org/pcf.aspx) provides the standards and expectations for all social workers as they progress through their professional development, providing for the public, employers and social workers a common understanding of the role and the standards that they can expect at any point in a social worker’s professional development. The principles contained here support employers to embed the PCF as an organisational workforce development tool. To do this the expectation is that the PCF will provide the link between organisational development and business planning and the workforce development needs that must be satisfied to deliver the plan.

The Professional Capabilities Framework emphasizes and integrates critical reflection and analysis, which is pivotal to the process of professional decision making by autonomous professionals. It includes for our purposes here in particular:

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS - Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making

- ☐ Social workers are knowledgeable about and apply the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment. They identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence.

- ▣ KNOWLEDGE - Apply knowledge of social sciences, law and social work practice theory
- ▣ Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people; human development throughout the life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice.

- ▣ INTERVENTION AND SKILLS - Use judgement and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse
- ▣ Social workers engage with individuals, families, groups and communities, working alongside people to assess and intervene. They enable effective relationships and are effective communicators, using appropriate skills.
- ▣ Using their professional judgement, they employ a range of interventions: promoting independence, providing support and protection, taking preventative action and ensuring safety whilst balancing rights and risks. They understand and take account of differentials in power, and are able to use authority appropriately. They evaluate their own practice and the outcomes for those they work with.
- ▣ They collaborate, inform and are informed by their work with others, inter-professionally and with communities.

The relevant HCPC Standards to be considered by social workers in Adult Safeguarding work, and as a social worker their responsibility for their own practice, CPD and RP, are set out in Appendix C.

The principles described here take from and carry forward the expectations and standards for ASYE, recognising that from that point on in a social work career the CPD approach is a more flexible and hybrid one. In these principles CPD refers to all learning and development activity that a social worker would be expected to undertake. The principles apply equally to the normal appraisal and professional development planning cycle as they do to formal accredited academic programmes. This ensures that all social workers are working towards and being assessed against the standards described in the PCF. The use of the PCF requires that holistic assessment is the process by which the standards are measured and it is recommended that the minimum requirements for this form of assessment also apply for all forms of CPD.

Reflective supervision/supporting reflective practice

Where the CPD includes significant requirements for learning, application and assessment, this can be done by the single case model- baselining using scales as agreed by the manager and social worker, and gauging how these change (or not) over time in practice. It is beneficial for enhanced critically reflective supervision to be made available to the candidate (see e.g. of the assessment to be used in the Adult Safeguarding module resulting from the work in Appendix D).

Enhanced critically reflective supervision may include a variety of methods to support the development of critical reflection (e.g. action learning, group/peer supervision, informal learning, mentoring, critical incident analysis, auditing, coaching). This relates to the SWRB and TCSW statement that “*The recommendations in the new approach to CPD recognise that learning can, and does, take place in a range of different ways and circumstances. It is not always associated with a ‘course’ and the development need may be met through a range of different activities, it recognises that learning can and does take place in a range of different ways and circumstances*” (TCSW The future of continuing professional development - [www.collegeofsocialwork.org/.../Future-of-CPD\(cpd1\).pdf](http://www.collegeofsocialwork.org/.../Future-of-CPD(cpd1).pdf)).

The measurement of the impact of CPD on practice and service delivery should be managed and judged by the line manager/supervisor, and should be seen as a central aspect of the assessment- see example of this in Appendix D.

The overall holistic assessment of the development of capability will be made by the line manager. Where others are contributing or making assessments account needs to be taken of these judgements and decisions (e.g. supervisor offering enhanced/reflective supervision, academic assessment, others- e.g. supervisors)

Use of the Professional Capabilities Framework can be used to inform individual professional development planning, inform learning outcomes, and organisational planning.

RP also includes analysis and critique of existing agency practices and /or an exploration of different ways of working or service delivery.

Employers may consider how to manage knowledge and experience transfer through the use of experienced social workers supporting the CPD of other staff.

The Continuing Professional Development portfolio

A CPD portfolio is part of a social worker's evidence of how they have progressed for HCPC re-registration, and may be the minimum expectation for giving evidence of development against the PCF. The College of Social Work (www.collegeofsocialwork.org/) offers the facility of an e-portfolio to its members.

APPENDIX A

The advice from the HCPC on social workers' CPD profiles is as follows:

A CPD profile has four components:

1. List of CPD activities (for the last two years)
2. Summary of recent work (for the last two years) - 500 words maximum
3. Statement of how standards have been met - 1,500 words maximum
4. Supporting evidence

The list of activities shows that you have met standard one, whilst the summary gives you an opportunity to highlight your recent scope of practice. This is so we can assess whether your CPD is relevant to your area of work.

The statement is the largest part of the profile. It is where you can highlight in detail a number of activities that you feel have benefited your practice and service users. The most straightforward approach to doing this is to select three or four activities that you feel have made a difference to your work.

You will need to explain:

- What the activity was
- What you learnt; and
- What you now do differently as a result

Ideally, we want a reflection of 300–500 words per activity. The key thing is to focus on standards three and four and the benefits to your practice and service users.

The HCPC will ask to see a small selection of evidence, which supports what you have told us in the CPD profile. This can be almost anything ranging from journal reviews to research notes, certificates and reflections.

Standards for employers of social workers in England and Supervision Framework

Social Work Reform Board

Good social work can transform people's lives and protect them from harm. In order to achieve consistently high outcomes for service users, social workers must have the skills and knowledge to establish effective relationships with children, adults and families, professionals in a range of agencies and settings and members of the public.

Social workers need to be confident, articulate and professional with highly developed listening, oral and written skills. They also need stamina, emotional resilience and determination.

Evidence submitted to the Social Work Task Force highlighted the need for a set of standards and supervision framework for all employers of social workers. These standards and framework set out the shared core expectations of employers that will enable social workers in all employment settings to work effectively. Good supervision has been shown to provide more consistent outcomes for children, adults and families.

The Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework build on existing guidelines for employers of social workers, and it is envisaged that these expectations will be incorporated within the emerging self-regulation and improvement framework for public services. The standards will inevitably then inform the revised inspection frameworks that will be aligned to this developing approach to public service regulation.

The standards apply to all employers and relate to all registered social workers that they employ, including managers and student social workers within the organisation.

All employers providing a social work service should establish a monitoring system by which they can assess their organisational performance against this framework, set a process for review and, where necessary, outline their plans for improvement.

The standards and supervision framework are available as follows-

Social worker employer standards and supervision framework (PDF, 10 pages, 3KB)-

http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/workforce/-/journal_content/56/10171/3511605/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE

APPENDIX C

Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC- www.hpc-uk.org) *Standards of proficiency for social workers in England.*

Some key points from the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC- www.hpc-uk.org) Standards of proficiency for social workers in England relating to RP, CPD and Adult Safeguarding

- ◆ 2.2 understand the need to promote the best interests of service users and carers at all times
- ◆ 2.3 understand the need to protect, safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- ◆ 2.4 understand the need to address practices which present a risk to or from service users and carers, or others
- ◆ 2.5 be able to manage competing or conflicting interests
- ◆ 2.6 be able to exercise authority as a social worker within the appropriate legal and ethical frameworks
- ◆ 2.9 recognise the power dynamics in relationships with service users and carers and be able to manage those dynamics appropriately
- ◆ 4.2 be able to initiate resolution of issues and be able to exercise personal initiative
- ◆ 4.3 recognise that they are personally responsible for, and must be able to justify, their decisions and recommendations
- ◆ 4.4 be able to make informed judgements on complex issues using the information available
- ◆ 4.5 be able to reflect on and take account of the impact of inequality, disadvantage and discrimination on those who use social work services and their communities
- ◆ 5.2 understand the need to adapt practice to respond appropriately to different groups and individuals
- ◆ 5.3 be aware of the impact of their own values on practice with different groups of service users and carers
- ◆ 7.2 be able to recognise and respond appropriately to situations where it is necessary to share information to safeguard service users and carers or others
- ◆ 6.2 be able to use practice to challenge and address the impact of discrimination, disadvantage and oppression
- ◆ 7.2 be able to recognise and respond appropriately to situations where it is necessary to share information to safeguard service users and carers or others

- ◆ 9.3 be able to work with service users and carers to promote individual growth, development and independence and to assist them to understand and exercise their rights
- ◆ 9.4 be able to support service users' and carers' rights to control their lives and make informed choices about the services they receive
- ◆ 9.9 be able to work with resistance and conflict
- ◆ 9.10 be able to understand the emotional dynamics of interactions with service users and carers
- ◆ 11.2 recognise the value of supervision, case reviews and other methods of reflection and review
- ◆ 12 be able to assure the quality of their practice
- ◆ 12.1 be able to use supervision to support and enhance the quality of their social work practice
- ◆ 15.1 understand the need to maintain the safety of service users, carers and colleagues

APPENDIX D

Development of the assessment for the Adult Safeguarding module at the University of Hertfordshire (UH)

Introduction

The assessment proposed in this document was arrived at after a 4-month consultation with candidates on the Masters level Adult Safeguarding module at the University of Hertfordshire and their managers over the duration of the module at the start and the end of the module. This consultation focused on what was of value in the module and the assessment for it, and also what could be improved in order to develop skills, knowledge, and Reflective Practice (RP) in this area, as part of improving links to work based learning and supervision in order to aid the application of learning within candidates' practice.

What became clear was that assessment should be based on practice over time, with guidelines for what is considered, how, within RP. The way that the revised assessment can provide crossover points between supervision in the work place and the module teaching and assessment can, we suggest, provide a model for how Reflective Practice (RP) can be used more effectively in module assessments, and also then in supervision in a much wider sense, as proposed in our Handbook for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and RP for social workers (also available on the Skills for Care website).

On the basis of a first round of consultation, the UH team formulated a proposal for the draft assessment, which we then used for a further round of consultation with managers and candidates based on these proposals, leading to this revised assessment.

The first part of this document sets out the key points extrapolated from focus groups/interviews with candidates and managers concerning content and assessment that have been taken into account in preparing the module assessment.

General points

1) In our consultation, we found the focus on reflective RP in the Safeguarding module at the University of Hertfordshire (and the Personalisation module for those who had taken it) is welcomed, and should be strengthened. What then becomes important is how this emphasis on RP is used subsequently after the end of the module. There can be conflict between case management and in-depth discussion, with the latter often overlooked. Sometimes candidates thought they needed a reminder/trigger for reflection, with dedicated space in supervision, as pressures of work, and in supervision, tend towards *doing* rather than *reflecting*.

2) Staff need *time, space and focus*, to identify and develop their own reflective style. It needs to be acknowledged that there needs to be more individualisation of RP- what one person finds valuable/stressful, another does not- finding one's own best RP learning style is important.

3) Knowledge of theory and method of reflective practice is important, be this from workshops focussed on this, and/or from learning on modules.

4) Learning in the University should trigger RP thinking, and the use of methods to develop this further, e.g. the use of Critical Incident Analyses.

5) Encouraging opportunities to discuss and reflect with other workers based on theoretical and practice frameworks can help social workers develop new ways and means for them in their practice, service delivery, and development of RP.

6) Greater knowledge of theory and legislation gives confidence and improved performance in practice.

Specific areas of note:

Supervision

Supervision that had a focus and time for RP in addition to case planning was the main issue for a number of candidates and managers. This is a key component for social workers to be able to work professionally, and to develop critically evaluative skills, in order to apply considerations in the areas that were seen to be constituent elements of RP (set out in section B of the '*Checklist-for supervision*' below). This was thought to be essential in order for them to provide the most effective service for service users and carers. Staff acknowledged their

personal responsibilities as professionals needed to be recognised and acted upon by themselves and their supervisors.

Constructive criticism/ near misses/success: Constructive criticism in an environment of ‘no-blame’ to look at e.g. ‘near misses’, to avoid possible future problems was thought valuable by the social workers. Discussion of ‘what ifs’ is seen to valuable- with a focus on key points in assessment and intervention such as

- Where problems arose from
- The service user’s reactions to interventions, and finding threads in, and further plans for, the case
- Learning from it.

This learning could include what might the worker might do differently in a similar situation next time, based on what considerations? There is also a need to acknowledge successes in assessment/interventions, and what contributed to that success from social worker’s knowledge, skills, and methods- and what could have been improved in these areas.

Links from module assessment to supervision: Candidates and managers were of the view that a mechanism to encourage them to feedback what they have learnt in the modules to managers, and what they are embedding by way of supervisory practice, would be valuable. Bringing line managers more into the University process and assessment was seen to be valuable by all.

Assignments need to be explicitly linked to promoting RP and, in turn, be linked to supervision and appraisal reviews and plans. All welcomed linking RP with direct practice and with performance management, but there may be difficulties in obtaining feedback on assignments from managers due to the time constraints on them.

Content of RP discussions: Candidates stated that it would be useful to have trigger questions to promote reflective thinking (set section ‘B. Checklist-for supervision’ below)- in order to have a focus upon social work values and methods.

Communication - e.g. consideration of the particular needs of the individual, and issues of abuse and power /control in Safeguarding work, and therefore what /how service users and carers will communicate to social workers and others, and how the worker can facilitate this.

Spaces other than supervision: Time and space with others than managers/supervisors was also seen to be important. Respondents reported that one thing they found being valuable in this was peer support- e.g. team tables, and regular groups for experienced workers organised by themselves. Physical space for sharing could be important; some found that the environment of the large Centres in the County where there was a concentration of staff was very conducive to such informal RP space.

Taking these points into account, and further consultation with managers/candidates after distribution of the suggested assessment, the following assessment was determined.

Module assessment for the Safeguarding module

A) Critical Incident Analysis (CIA)

The candidate will identify a case from their practice experience, as agreed with their manager (and where relevant, any allocated professional social work supervisor if the line manager is not a qualified social worker), that has led to a Safeguarding Strategy meeting and an Investigation.

In the preparation of the assignment, the candidate will demonstrate, by way of recorded discussions as agreed with their manager/supervisor in supervision, over the whole course of the module, that they have considered the following areas:

1. Evidence of critically reflective practice, incorporating where possible feedback from service users and carers. This may include consideration of what was agreed with whom on what the service user and/or carers wanted/needed; with who and how this was reviewed; and at end of engagement, if these were achieved, recognising that in safeguarding situations with certain power/control dynamics in abusive situations this can be difficult. Where possible/practicable, direct observation by the manager/supervisor or another designated and appropriate person may take place

2. Analysis and critique of existing agency practices and /or an exploration of different ways of working and service delivery in meeting the needs of the service user/ carers
3. Developments in learning about own personal CPD learning style, and further development needs to develop further - e.g. use of informal learning
4. Reflection on undertaking a presentation to the candidate's team concerning 2 or 3 key learning points from the module and the assessment s/he is completing
5. Statements from the candidates manager/supervisor that these issues have been appropriately raised and discussed by the candidate in supervision, and that the candidate's use of RP as evidenced by discussion in supervision had an impact on practice- as judged by an agreed statement from manager/supervisor and candidate provided jointly to the University, supported by contact with the University tutor, on at least one occasion with the supervisor/candidate to discuss progress on this midway through the module.

There is a pro forma available below for you and your manager/supervisor to discuss these areas for each relevant item at the start of the module, that will then act as a baseline descriptor in relation to each of them. The candidate will discuss and agree this with their manager/supervisor. This will then form the basis of consideration of the candidate's development in these areas over the period of the module, up to the point at the end of the module that these discussions have been 'completed' or 'not completed', for the candidate and manager to sign off to say that these issues have been addressed in supervision.

B) Checklist of issues for supervision, to be included in the above (you may identify more in discussion with your manager/supervisor):

- Legal issues
- PCF/HPC Standards (ethical/Professional practice considerations)
- Safeguarding policy/procedure issues

- Communication with service user and carers- methods skills/used, problems identified and how they were dealt with
- Inter-professional working issues
- CIA, and what learnt; from what went well and what did not- what changes or different approaches or knowledge might the candidate adopt if s/he meets a similar situation in the future?
- Consideration of own RP style- e.g. use of informal learning; use of other courses/ 'lite bites'; other agency training sessions; other outside inputs/opportunities, etc.
- Ensuring that time is set aside in supervision for RP, and that development of RP is included in PMD planning

Proforma for impact undertaking assessment:

Identify between manager and candidate the dates for, and times within, meetings when RP development and assessment will be discussed. Use the following scales over the course of the meetings after carrying out an initial assessment as agreed between the manager/supervisor and the candidate. Use this baselining as the basis for assessing 'distance travelled' from the original baseline scores at a minimum at the midway stage through the module and at the end, and more often if that is agreed to be useful.

At the commencement of the module

Using the following points as a focus for discussion of the areas set out in the CIA above, assess the following:

1) Candidate feels confident in abilities to be able to undertake critically reflective practice as part of daily considerations, incorporating feedback in discussion with the manager/supervisor, and where possible feedback from service users and carers.

Please circle one of the following:

(Where 1 is not confident at all, and 5 is very confident)

