



**GRADUATE CERTIFICATE in Consolidation
of Social Work Practice
LEVEL 6 - 60 Credits
BMPF6044**

**LEARNER PORTFOLIO
(PORTH AGORED and UNIVERSITY OF WALES
TRINITY SAINT DAVID)**

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Cohort: 21 onwards

Task 2

Observation of Practice

Guidance:

*A learner must choose an observation of **direct social work practice** with people in need of care and support and/or their carers. The observation cannot be from giving evidence in court, contributing to strategy group meetings, case conferences or tribunals or any other indirect activity. The consent of the individual/s in need of care and support and/or their carers must be sought before the observation is undertaken. The observation must be undertaken by an observer who is social work qualified and has at least 3 years' experience (criteria set out in the Programme Handbook). The observation must be for a minimum of 30 minutes. The observer will gain feedback from the individual/s in need of care and support and/or their carers using either the pro forma below or one of the learner's own design at the end of the visit.*

The learner is responsible for providing a method of gathering feedback for the observer to use. This can be of their own design, and/or adapted to meet the needs of the individual. The provided pro forma can be used where appropriate. The method used will depend on age, ability and language/communication needs of the individuals in need of care and support and/or their carers.

This section will include examples of the ways in which effective communication impacts on practice in relation to language use, language needs and cultural sensitivity. You must demonstrate the principles of the "Active Offer" and make reference to "More than Just Words" (Welsh Government, 2012).

Please ensure you meet the Learning Outcomes for this task (See appendix 5 of the handbook).

Please answer the questions below.

Observation Summary

Please include name of the expert witness observing in learner's details section of the portfolio.

Date of observation: 06/03/2024

To be completed by learner.

Question:

Context

Set out the social work objectives and give a brief description of the situation including geographical and legislative contexts and any relevant cultural, ethnicity and language issues, including how consent was gained and how you have considered the impact of the observation on the individual in need of care and support and/or their carers.

300 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section).

The observation involved a visit to a mother, who I will refer to the mother as 1 throughout this task for confidentiality purposes. 1 lives in a small town in rural Wales. She is a Welsh national, and has lived in Wales all of her life.

The purpose of the visit was to share Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) reports with 1, including what we were worried about, in a way in which she understood. ICPC had been agreed due to concerns about domestic violence between 1 and her ex-partner, who had two young children together. Whilst 1 was maintaining that the relationship was over, reports had been received stating that the two had been spending regular time together, which was in breach of the written agreement. It was felt that both parents were being dishonest and minimising concerns.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence highlights that thorough preparation can 'improve the outcomes' of a visit (2023). In efforts to avoid anti-discriminatory practice (Equality Act 2010; Human Rights Act 1998), I arranged to share the ICPC reports several days in advance, to give 1 ample opportunity to read and digest the content. I planned to read through the reports with 1 so that she was aware of my views, and had the opportunity to ask questions.

I had discussed the visit and gained consent from 1 to be observed ahead of time. I made sure that I gained consent again on the day of the visit, and again when I arrived at the home. To prepare for the visit, I printed out two copies of the ICPC reports so that 1 could read it alongside me. I had also arranged the visit at a time when 1's sister was collecting the children from school. Visits had previously been disrupted by 1's children, and I wanted to avoid this to enable us to focus on the report.

Word count: 316

Question:

Critically reflect on your communication methods and skills during the observation; including how you identified whether you had the necessary communication skills to work with the individual in need of care and support and/or their carers.

You must use a person-centred approach to demonstrate the integration of social work ethics, values and the Code of Professional Practice. This must include culturally and linguistically sensitive practice and the principles of the “Active Offer” and make reference to “More than Just Words” (Welsh Government, 2012).

1300 (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section).

I had been working with 1 and her family for around 3 weeks prior to my visit, and had built rapport with her. Despite this, I reasoned that 1 may be worried about my visit, and what my ICPC reports might contain. The purpose of my visit was to help 1 understand what my worries were, and to gain her views on the current situation. I therefore knew that it would be important to make her feel comfortable and listened to. Rollnick et al's theory of Motivational Interviewing (1991) argues that individuals who feel heard and understood by professionals are more likely to make and maintain positive progress in their lives.

Upon arrival, I introduced my observer to 1, and again checked that she was happy for the observation to take place, which 1 confirmed she was. To put 1 at ease, I reiterated that my observer was simply there to watch me, not her. I explained that if she was comfortable in doing so, my observer would like to ask her some questions at the end of the visit, and 1 said that this would be fine. The three of us sat in the living room. As a significant proportion of human emotion is conveyed non-verbally, body language can be crucial in helping services users to feel relaxed and comfortable (Beesley, Watts and Harrison, 2017). I was conscious of the positions of myself and my observer- we sat on an adjacent sofa to 1. I sat closest towards 1, angling my body towards her in the hopes that this would help her to focus on our conversation and not become preoccupied with my observer's presence.

As I had worked with 1 for some weeks, I had already given consideration to the Active Offer (Welsh Government, 2015). Despite 1 being a Welsh national and having have lived her entire life in Wales, she confirmed that she did not speak Welsh and was happy to speak in English. The More than Just Words Framework is a 5 year initiative which seeks to embed the Welsh language across health and social care, by placing a responsibility on professionals to offer services to take place in Welsh, rather than service users having to request this. As highlighted in the Welsh Language Measure (2011), the Welsh language should be treated 'no less favourably than English'. This is crucial, as continuing in a service users non-preferred language would form a barrier to their engagement and comprehension. It would also cause the service user to feel less valued. If 1 had accepted the Active Offer, I would have arranged for the session to have taken place in Welsh, as I am not a Welsh speaker.

I could sense that 1 was nervous at the start of the visit. Despite having reassured her about the role of my observer, I was conscious of the power dynamics between us with my observer also present. Fook (2016) notes the importance of being aware of the power of the role of social worker, and how this can impact upon interactions. I was conscious that because Child Protection proceedings had been initiated, there was an innate power imbalance given that 1 had no say in the matter. Beesley, Watts and Harrison (2017) highlight that communication is central to good social work, as this will ensure that the service user feels valued and listened to, and will promote a positive relationship. To put 1 at ease, I began by asking general questions about her week and the children's. I ensured that I smiled and maintained eye-contact. I made reference to an activity 1 had told me she had done with the children the week before, to demonstrate that I had listened to what she had told me. I noticed that this had a quick effect on 1's presentation; she seemed to relax after a few minutes of talking. I then explained that I had brought the report I had written ahead of the ICPC with me, and asked if she would like me to read through this with her. 1 confirmed she would like this. I provided 1 with her own copy of the report, and together we read through the sections of the report. I had written my report with sharing it with 1 in mind; therefore I had made an effort to avoid using jargon, acronyms or words which would be difficult to understand.

I read through the report slowly, ensuring I took breaks to check that 1 understood what I had written and to answer any questions. I made an effort to keep my tone of voice clear but gentle. I was also conscious of keeping my body language open and relaxed, and avoided crossing my arms, to help her feel that I was approachable. In my previous visits and calls with 1, I had felt that she was demonstrating 'disguised compliance' by telling me what she thought I wanted to hear in order to allay concerns (Reder et al, 1993). I had been concerned about her honesty and comprehension of the risks associated with continuing in a relationship with a domestic violence perpetrator for the children. The British Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics (2021) highlights the importance of honest communication, particularly where there are safeguarding concerns. I therefore took the most time in 'why are we having an initial child protection conference', and in the 'what are we worried about' sections.

When I finished reading the worries, I invited 1 to share her views with me about what she had heard, and I asked her if she agreed with my concerns. 1 stated that she agreed with what had been written, and she became emotional. Whilst my instinct was to comfort 1 as she was in distress, I knew that my focus needed to remain on the concerns identified and how this was impacting the children. I told 1 that she could take her time, and could take a 5 minute break if she wanted to, however 1 said that she wanted to continue. I used the opportunity to speak candidly with 1 about what we needed to see happen to feel that the children are safe.

Once I had read through the report, I asked 1 if she had any questions. 1 asked for some more information about what would happen at the conference itself. 1 commented that it helped her to feel calmer when she could visualise what the room would look like, and so I took some time to explain this, alongside who would be there, and how the meeting would run. I explained that the Chair (Independent Reviewing Officer) would be in touch with 1 ahead of the meeting to introduce herself. I had previously offered 1 an advocate in her own right for the conference, and 1 had declined, stating that she would like her sister to attend with her. I took the opportunity to confirm with 1 that this was still the case, and she stated that she would prefer

her sister's support over an advocate. I explained to 1 that she would be given the opportunity to share her views at each stage of the conference.

Towards the end of the visit, 1's children came back to the home, having been picked up from school by their auntie. Their arrival meant that it was no longer appropriate to continue discussing the reports. Additionally, the children were both very energetic and wanted their Mum's attention, which caused a disruption to the meeting and meant that I was not able to finish in the way I had planned. It may also have meant that 1 had questions that she was not able to ask. On reflection, if I were to complete the visit again I would have ensured it took place earlier in the day, to avoid it clashing with the children's home time. This would have enabled me to finish the visit by ensuring that I had answered all of 1's questions about the reports or upcoming ICPC.

On evaluation, I feel that this was a successful visit overall. I accomplished my primary aim of sharing the ICPC report in a way in which 1 understood. I also felt that I clearly outlined the worries and concerns. 1 engaged well in what may have been a nerve-wracking experience for her, and I feel that this evidenced that I had helped her to feel comfortable and listened to.

Word count: 1407

Feedback and comments from individual in need of care and support and/or their carers

Information for the observer

This section of the Observation should not be completed in the presence of the learner.

No formal written feedback is required from the observer on the learner's practice. However verbal feedback should be provided to the learner as soon as possible after the observation. If the observer is not the mentor, then feedback should also be provided to the mentor.

Some or all of the questions below may be used by the observer who can rephrase and add explanations and prompts as required. The observer should record responses from the individual in need of care and support and/or their carers below, or by using an alternative method if required/provided.

Before asking the questions, the observer must explain to the individual comments will be shared with the learner. It may be useful to explain that it is used as a learning tool for the learner to develop their own practice.

If the observer is unable to gain feedback, they should briefly say why.

Was the social worker on time? Or, if delayed, did he or she contact you?	She's always been on time.
Did the social worker get your permission in advance for the observer to be present? Did they explain why they were being observed?	Yes to both.
Were you clear why the social worker met with you today?	Yes.
How well prepared do you think the social worker was for his or her meeting with you?	Very well prepared.
How has the social worker listened to you and respected your views and wishes?	She has listened very well.
Did the social worker talk to you in a way that you understood? Did the social worker consider your language needs?	Yes. She always asks if I understand and will explain again.
How has the social worker's involvement met your expectations for this visit?	It has met the expectations.
Are there any other comments or suggestions that you would like to make?	She has been really helpful and made me feel comfortable. I was worried about social services involvement but she has been supportive.

