



**GRADUATE CERTIFICATE in Consolidation
of Social Work Practice
LEVEL 6 - 60 Credits
BMPPF6044**

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

Learner's name: Katie Pullin

Email address: katiepullin@hotmail.com

**Learner's University Registration Number:
1001492**

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: 17/09/2024

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 was of a visit to see a 2 year old child at home with his mother and step-father. The child will be referred to as 2 (Data Protection Act 1998). The purpose of the visit was to begin collecting information to complete a comprehensive assessment for 2 and to begin completing a pre-birth assessment for the mother's unborn baby.

I had already met 2 and his family when a SARC medical examination was completed in respect of 2, a week prior to the visit. I had attended the medical examination as the social worker on duty for that day and, following a Section 47 joint investigation record being completed, I had been allocated as the social worker for 2 and their unborn sibling.

I explained the purpose of the visit to 2's mother on the phone prior to the visit. I was aware from previously working with a wider family member, and from reading the records held on 2's file that the mother can experience poor mental health and can be anxious when speaking to professionals. As the visit was planned in advance, 2's step-father was able to take time off work to support the mother and we arranged to meet at the family home where the mother felt most at ease.

I discussed the observation with 2's mother prior to the visit taking place. The family have a significant history of involvement from statutory services and I checked that my observer being present would not place any unnecessary pressure on 2's mother's mental health. I explained what her role would be during the visit and the purpose of the observation.

The main purpose of the visit was to discuss the consent form with 2's mother and explain what the comprehensive assessment and pre-birth assessment would entail. I also wanted to gather information about which professionals are currently involved with the family, and discuss advocacy services for 2's mother due to her experiencing periods of poor mental health.

Word count – 330 words

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).

When I arrived at the visit, 2’s mother had invited several of her wider family members to attend which I was not expecting. I confirmed with 2’s mother that she was happy for the information we needed to discuss to be shared with everyone present prior to beginning the visit. I discussed confidentiality and that the information was sensitive to 2 and confirmed that everyone present understood the need to treat the information sensitively (Social Care Wales 2017). I had worked briefly with the family four years ago, as a trainee social worker. I addressed this with 2’s mother briefly during the SARC medical that had taken place the week prior. I discussed with 2’s mother again during the visit and explained the difference in my previous role to my current role. I considered the Code of Professional Practice and asked if she would like a different social worker to complete the assessment if she felt that it would be a conflict of interest (SCW 2017). 2’s mother declined, saying that she was pleased that she didn’t have to meet a new professional.

In accordance with the “More than Just Words” framework I had discussed the ‘active offer’ (Welsh Government 2012) and had offered 2’s mother and step-father the preferred language option when I met them during the SARC medical so I was aware of their preferred language choice before undertaking the visit. I briefly discussed this again at the beginning of the visit due to several of the wider family members also being in attendance. As the wider family members were a significant part of 2’s support network, it was important that they were offered the option to engage with professionals in the language of their choice (Welsh Language Act 1993). In accordance with the Code of Professional Practice (2017), social workers have a duty to respect an individual’s language preferences and culture. During this visit, 2’s maternal grandmother was the only individual who spoke Welsh but said that she would prefer to communicate in English during the visit. I explained that I could unfortunately only speak limited Welsh but that if she wished for me to arrange for a translator to be present at the next visit, I would be happy to do so. I was aware that the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language in accordance with the Welsh Language Measure 2011.

During the visit, I was mindful of the power imbalance between myself in my role as a professional and the family as service users. Adams et. al (2009) recognises that the power during the safeguarding of children lies with the social worker due to them being ‘a representative of the state’. I ensured that I asked 2’s mother if I could sit down and we began the visit by talking about natural topic such as how the weather had been and what they had done as family over the weekend. I ensured that I offered 2’s mother the opportunity to discuss any concerns that she had prior to me talking. Beresford (2016) highlights four important

qualities that service users respond would like from practitioners, one of them being to listen without judgement and offering emotional support when necessary.

Due to 2's mother's anxiety regarding involvement from professionals, I was mindful of my body language during the visit. I ensured that my posture was relaxed during the visit; I sat down on the sofa at 2's mother's request and was mindful not to cross my arms or write too many notes which would prevent me from maintaining eye contact. I did explain that I would have to take some written notes during the visit which the family said they understood. In accordance with the Code of Professional Practice (SCW 2017), I ensured that I used direct communication to clearly explain my role and the next actions that would be carried out as part of the assessment process. Maiter et. al (2006) highlights that parents who work with parents regarding a child protection matter found it particularly distressing if a social worker withholds information or speaks to parents in a sarcastic manner. With this in mind, I ensured that I kept my tone even during the visit and spoke to the family in a sincere manner, using jargon free language. Adams et. al. (2009a) cite the work of Pinkerton et. al (1997) to highlight the importance of social workers using everyday language that can be understood by service users.

In accordance with the main overarching principles of the SSWBA(W) 2014 I used a person-centred approach when engaging with 2. He appeared to be more comfortable to chat when he was playing so I sat on the floor with him and played with his toys. Koprowska (2008) cites Simmonds (2008) who states that social workers focusing on engaging with parents at the expense of communicating the child can lead to failure to protect children from harm. During this time, I was able to get a basic understanding of 2's level of development and presentation. He was happy chatting to me about going to the shop with his Mother and looked to her during the interaction for reassurance and attention which I noted was readily given by 2's mother. Tait and Wosu (2013) discuss the importance of practitioners facilitating an environment that allows children, even those as young as 2, to volunteer information about their lived experiences.

During the visit, I discussed advocacy services with 2's mother in accordance with the Section 145 of the SSWBA(W) 2014 which places a duty on the local authority to arrange an independent professional advocate to support individuals to communicate their views. Due to 2's mother having support from the Perinatal Team regarding her mental health, and due to the previous involvement from social services regarding her older children, I felt that the support of an independent advocate could help 2's mother to communicate her views during any future visits and meetings. I explained the role of an independent advocate and what support they would be able to offer but 2's mother politely declined the referral and stated that she currently felt comfortable to share her views and feelings with me. I reassured 2's mother that if she reconsidered this, I could refer her at any point during my involvement with the family. 2's mother stated that she would feel more comfortable with her family members supporting her and advocating on her behalf when necessary. I encouraged this as the SSWBA(W) 2014 states that family and friends providing advocacy support can empower an individual and encourage them to participate with professionals and feel in control of the decision making.

During the visit, I discussed the consent form with 2's mother and which of the relevant agencies she would be happy to be contacted as part of the assessment. Walker (2018) cites the 'seven golden rules' as set out by HM Government (2015a) regarding data protection with the second point being to communicate openly and honestly about what information will be shared and why; and to gain consent for this wherever possible. I encouraged 2's mother to re-read the consent form with support from her family members to ensure that she had understood my explanation of it before she signed to give consent for the assessment to be completed. 2's mother confirmed to me that she understood the consent form and signed it to state that she was happy for all relevant agencies to be contacted as part of the assessment.

Overall, I feel that it was a positive visit, 2's mother voluntarily consented to a comprehensive assessment being completed and engaged well with me. I felt that I was able to begin building a good working relationship with 2 and his mother, along with establishing who the wider family members were who could provide support to the family. I felt that 2's mother would be willing to communicate with me during the assessment and was aware that advocacy services were available if she required further support.

Word count – 1339 words

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

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?	Katie was on time. When she has been delayed by traffic previously she has made me aware.
Did the social worker get your permission in advance for the observer to be present? Did they explain why they were being observed?	Katie explained the process well and asked for my consent.
Were you clear why the social worker met with you today?	Yes fully aware.
How well prepared do you think the social worker was for his or her meeting with you?	Katie seemed prepared enough with the information she was provided.
How has the social worker listened to you and respected your views and wishes?	Katie is A1, top class. She was previously involved with my sister when she was a trainee and she knows my issues with mental health and is very accommodating to my needs, she is really lovely. I can speak to her about any worries I have and she is open with me in her responses.
Did the social worker talk to you in a way that you understood? Did the social worker consider your language needs?	Yes.
How has the social worker's involvement met your expectations for this visit?	Katie has always done what she has said she will do.
Are there any other comments or suggestions that you would like to make?	No, just that she is absolutely top class and the best person I could wish for in a social worker. She tells me straight, makes me feel at ease and answers all my questions. She's quick to get back to me, she's just really good.