

Student Name: Marian Vasile Popa
Programme: Certificate of Higher Education Skills for the Workplace(Health and Social Care)
Module:Professional Development within Health and Social Care.
Lecturer:Arif Ahmed
Internal Verifier: Patronella Ganza
Assignment title:Self-Awareness Presentation

Developing Professional Competence in Health and Social Care: A Reflective Portfolio2

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Task 1: Personal Action Plan	3
Task 2: Academic Report on a Key Skill	5
Task 3: Critical Reflection Using the GRC Model	7
Conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
References	103

Introduction

This portfolio reflects my development in the field of Health and Social Care in terms of critical self-assessment, strategic planning, and reflective practise. Expanding on the concepts of my Assessment 1 SWOT presentation, it expands the analysis into a systematic examination of my strengths and learning areas as a budding Children and Families Social Worker. The portfolio consists of 3 connected activities: a Personal Action Plan reflecting the specific career objectives (Task 1), an academic report on communication as a fundamental professional skill (Task 2), and critical reflection with the help of the GRC model applied to analyse the performance in presentation and current learning (Task 3).

Task 1: Personal Action Plan

My short-term (immediate) career goal is to obtain a position as Children and Families Social Worker (CFSW) and successfully undergo the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and further become a Practise Educator. This outcome matches perfectly with my 70-day

responsibility in Local Authority Child in Need team as I engaged in assessments in the Section 17 of the Children Act 1989; this placement allowed me to experience the real-life event of multi-agency meetings, statutory report writing, and safeguarding procedures. The professional standards that the regulator requires practitioners to meet to follow this pathway include in particular continuing professional development, accountability in practise, and the latter, so I will

be basing my development activities on what the Social Work England and the BASW Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) recommend (Social Work England, 2019).

A CFSW requires a cluster of interrelated competencies: effective communication (including recording), empathic relational skills, resilience under pressure, and sound legal/assessment knowledge. My placement evidence demonstrates strengths in each area: I prepared timely case notes and statutory reports, participated in core group meetings where I communicated multi-agency plans, and used empathic engagement to build rapport with families. The importance of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, regulation, social skills) for safe decision-making in social work has been highlighted in recent literature, which links EI to improved engagement and reflective practice in emotionally charged contexts (Luna et al., 2021). Likewise, resilience is increasingly recognised as a protective and functional competency for practitioners managing4 complex caseloads; resilience strategies can be learned and supported organisationally

(Sheikhrabari, Peyrovi and Khankeh, 2022). Finally, Kolb's experiential learning cycle provides a theoretical rationale for how placement experience converts into professional competence through cycles of action, reflection and planned experimentation a process I have already used to consolidate learning from casework.

Despite strengths, I identify two primary developmental needs. First, perfectionism and over-detailed report writing have delayed my submissions so this tendency risks missing statutory deadlines and increases personal stress. Second, I need a more structured approach to conflict management in challenging family meetings, where I sometimes prioritise relational harmony over assertive safeguarding decisions. Both issues have professional consequences, such as delayed reports, reducing service responsiveness, and weak conflict handling can obscure risk escalation (Machost and Stains, 2023). Schön's notion of the reflective practitioner and contemporary critiques of reflective models indicate that self-awareness must be coupled with structured reflective cycles that lead to concrete changes in practice; this theoretical frame underpins the need to identify these gaps for safe and accountable practice.

To address these gaps, I propose the following SMART actions. First, improve timeliness and reduce perfectionism: adopt a standard statutory report template and commit to a draft-and-revise routine that produces an initial draft within 48 hours of case conclusion; measurable outcome

100% of statutory reports submitted on time over three months, monitored via supervisor sign-off. Second, develop conflict management skills: attend a half-day CPD workshop on restorative approaches and conflict resolution within six weeks and practise techniques in simulated role plays with peers; measurable outcome supervisor observation rating improvement in assertiveness within three months. Third, strengthen resilience and self-care: implement a weekly wellbeing log and a monthly reflective supervision agenda item focused on caseload stressors, measurable outcome reduced self-reported burnout indicators and evidence of proactive workload discussions.

Each action maps to CPD principles and Kolb's cycle: concrete experience (placement), reflective observation (supervision), abstract conceptualisation (CPD learning), and active experimentation (applying new templates and skills), ensuring professional accountability and continuous improvement. These steps also respond directly to Social Work England's call for continuing professional development and safe practice.⁵

Interview preparation (three practice questions and model answers)

"Tell us about a time you managed competing priorities and met deadlines."

Answer: use STAR to describe the Section 17 assessment, explain how you used a report template and supervisor prioritisation to meet the statutory deadline, and conclude with measured outcomes.

2. "How do you manage emotional stress in high-pressure situations?"

Answer: reference resilience strategies (regular reflective supervision, wellbeing log), cite a recent workshop or evidence of improved coping, and connect to ongoing CPD.

3. "How would you manage a disagreement in a child protection conference?"

Answer: describe using evidence-based decision making, assertive communication to prioritise child safety, and how you would record and escalate concerns according to agency procedures.

Each response should demonstrate values awareness, reflective competence and adherence to statutory guidance.

Task 2: Academic Report on a Key Skill

Effective communication is a core professional skill for Children and Families Social Workers (CFSWs): it underpins assessment accuracy, supports safeguarding, and enables partnership with children, parents and multi-agency colleagues. Clear, two-way communication reduces misunderstanding in high-risk contexts and is explicitly emphasised in recent professional standards and sector guidance (Social Work England, 2020).

Communication in social work is best understood as an interactive, context-sensitive process rather than a unidirectional transfer of information (Reith-Hall, 2022). Contemporary work applies transactional models which stress simultaneous sending/receiving, feedback loops and shared meaning-making to explain how practitioners and families co-construct understanding during assessments and conferences. Such models highlight that meaning is negotiated and vulnerable to distortion by noise (emotional arousal, organisational pressure) and differing frames of reference (Bragg et al., 2021).

Argyle's communication cycle (as interpreted in recent reviews) remains useful for practice: it stresses encoding, transmission, decoding and feedback, with particular attention to non-verbal cues and the need to check understanding features critical when working with distressed families or language barriers (Argyle, 1976). Recent social-work research applies these classical frameworks while emphasising relational dimensions such as empathy and power dynamics in the encounter (Dijke et al., 2020).

Barriers to effective communication in child and family practice are well documented: emotional stress, cultural and linguistic diversity, institutional time pressures and power imbalances can all impede accurate information exchange and increase the risk of misjudgement. Systematic and scoping reviews since 2020 identify workload, mistrust and limited engagement as persistent obstacles to meaningful dialogue with parents and carers. Policy guidance (DHSC, CQC) further warns that systemic pressures can degrade communicative quality, with direct consequences for safeguarding outcomes (Saifan et al., 2025).

Emotional stress and burnout alter cognitive processing and reduce practitioners' capacity to listen actively; research links high caseload and poor wellbeing to shortened consultations and reduced empathic attunement (Ashraf et al., 2019). Cultural differences and language barriers create asymmetries in meaning where assumptions may replace explanation; without deliberate use of interpreters or culturally adapted communication strategies, social workers risk misinterpreting parental behaviour or failing to detect hidden harms (Al-Mutairi, 2025). Power imbalance e.g. where the family feels like social services punish them encourages defensive behaviour that clouds risk. The combination of the transactional framework and the Argyle framework imply specific mitigations: intentional feedback cheques, clear non-jargon summaries and organised turn-taking to enable families to raise issues (Mihai et al., 2025).

I applied structured summaries and reflective questions in explaining care plans to parents during my placement which aligns with the recommended practise of ensuring understanding and recording choices. In meetings where I applied feedback checks (asking parents to summarise agreed actions), misunderstandings fell and engagement improved; however, in one case time pressure limited my ability to use these techniques fully, and a subsequent review revealed incomplete follow-up. This experience aligns with empirical findings that procedural

commitments (templates, supervision prompts) support consistent communicative practice, while organisational constraints often block thorough application. To improve, I will adopt formal checklists for family meetings, prioritise interpreter use when needed, and record explicit comprehension checks in case notes actions that map directly to Social Work England and BASW expectations for clarity, dignity and partnership.

Task 3: Critical Reflection Using the GRC Model

Preparing and delivering my SWOT presentation required focused synthesis of placement experience, theory and practical aims. The preparation phase exposed gaps in my time management, drafting slides took longer than planned and provoked presentation nerves when practising delivery aloud (Khorwal et al., 2024). Nonetheless, the final presentation achieved clarity of message, a professional visual style and coherent signposting of my career aims and PDP, which peers and my lecturer recognised in feedback as “well-structured” and “professionally presented”. Peer feedback highlighted effective use of placement examples while suggesting tighter timing and fewer on-slide words; the lecturer recommended clearer, measurable targets in the PDP. These responses provide concrete evidence of growth: I translated messy placement notes into an organised narrative and produced visual materials that supported my spoken delivery. This practise, which developed my capacity to scaffold professional accounts in the presence of assessment conditions, despite demonstrating practical constraints in rehearsal and time. I felt anticipatory anxiety before presentation, alternating between self-doubt and preparation, then up to enhanced concentration during presentation and relief then. Emotional expressions overlaid on theoretical explanations of presentation anxiety and reflected coping mechanisms such as controlled breathing and changes in posture decreased somatic symptoms and enhanced projection of the voice, in line with intervention research on anxiety of speaking in public audiences (García-Monge et al., 2023). Analytically, the reflective practitioner model outlined by Schön and the structured cycle developed by Gibbs helped me to conduct my post-event assessment: I stated what happened (what occurred), analyse my feelings and analysed results, and then made conclusions. This introspective series showed that anxiety was primarily fronted by time pressure and perfectionism beliefs and not the absence of content knowledge (Zhenlei et al., 2024). It further explained that feedback (peer commentary, lecturer commentary) are required to ensure accurate self-assessment as the felt experience is always partisan; studies on feedback in higher education substantiate the worth of an external formative input in enhancing the performance in presentations. This self-reflective piece is closely related to professional competencies, resilience,⁸ communication and self-awareness and demonstrates how emotional regulation forms the basis of ethical and effective practise in child and family settings.

I acquired three practical lessons. To begin with, rehearsal should be discipline-oriented and scheduled: run-throughs with a stopwatch, peer cheques and an ultimate recording should result in a pacing that is more accurate and less cognitive load in live performance. Results on rehearsal and simulated practise, such as VR and audience-support simulation, indicate significant decreases in anxiety and enhancement of performance (Donnelly et al., 2021). Second, there should be formalisation of feedback loop, including asking lecturer to provide feedback in writing, giving a short post-presentation debrief with peers and documenting improvements. The educational literature focuses on the effectiveness of auto-feedback in learning skills. Third, wellbeing and time management interventions have a direct positive impact on presentation quality, incorporation of a weekly planning schedule and aspects of a scheduled time slot to feed on make sure perfectly to meet deadlines rooted in perfectionism (Anna Navin Young et al., 2024). The following changes will be incorporated into my PDP through SMART goals (e.g., three time-constrained practise sessions with peer feedback till any assessed talk; participate in a workshop on skills of a public speaker within eight weeks). These actions connected to the concrete experience (presentation) and reflective observation (feedback and feelings) provoke fundamental experience then active experimentation (implement structured rehearsals and wellbeing cheques) tie this loop in (Meijer et al., 2022). In practise, this will not only enhance evaluated presentations, but even daily workplace communication in the multidisciplinary meeting, minimising the risk that anxiety or time limitation will interfere with the child-centred decision-making process. Also, I will ask my supervisor to observe my next professional presentation, to triangulate my self-assessment with that of managers.

Conclusion

Overall, this portfolio has demonstrated a distinct development of self-awareness to professional and reflective level. Tasks 1, 2, and 3 allowed me to set priorities on my development, achieve academic knowledge by applying communication theory to practise, and learn by reflecting in a structured way, respectively. All these activities demonstrate that I can combine theory, feedback, and experience to improve practise. In the future, I will focus on lifelong learning, ethical principles, and reflective practise to guarantee responsible, empathetic, and competent social work with children and families.¹⁰

References

Al-Mutairi, F. (2025). *Language Barriers And Their Impact On Effective Communication In Different Fields*. [online] ResearchGate.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.29788.09607>.

Anna Navin Young, Bourke, A., Foley, S. and Zelda Di Blasi (2024). Effects of time management interventions on mental health and wellbeing factors: A protocol for a systematic review. *PLOS ONE*, [online] 19(3), pp.e0288887–e0288887. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0288887>.

Argyle, M. (1976). Non-verbal Communication and Language. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures*, 10, pp.63–78. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0080443600011079>.

Ashraf, F., Ahmad, H., Shakeel, M., Aftab, S. and Masood, A. (2019). Mental health problems and psychological burnout in Medical Health Practitioners: A study of associations and triadic comorbidity. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 35(6). doi:<https://doi.org/10.12669/pjms.35.6.444>.

Bragg, B., Cooley, S., Cooley, A., Hinck, R. and Kitsch, S. (2021). *Prepared for: Strategic Multilayer Assessment Integrating Information in Joint Operations (IIJO) Transactional Communication Model Quick Look*. [online] Available at: https://nsiteam.com/social/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Quick-Look_Transactional-Comm-Model_FINAL-1.pdf.

Dijke, J., Nistelrooij, I., Bos, P. and Duyndam, J. (2020). Towards a relational conceptualization of empathy. *Nursing Philosophy*, 21(3). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/nup.12297>.

Donnelly, M.R., Reinberg, R., Ito, K.L., Saldana, D., Neureither, M., Schmiesing, A., Jahng, E. and Liew, S.-L. (2021). Virtual Reality for the Treatment of Anxiety Disorders: A Scoping Review. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 75(6). doi:<https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2021.046169>.

García-Monge, A., Guijarro-Romero, S., Santamaría-Vázquez, E., Martínez-Álvarez, L. and Bores-Calle, N. (2023). Embodied strategies for public speaking anxiety: evaluation of the Corp-Oral program. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, [online] 17. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2023.1268798>.

Khorwal, G., Meshram, R., Vaibhav, V., Sharma, R., Singh, B., Chandran, S. and Sharma, K. (2024). Peer assessment of student presentations: Key Takeaways and Lessons Learned. *Cureus*, [online] 16(5). doi:<https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.59809>.

Luna, L.M.B., Vilar, M.M., Soto, C.M. and Santiago, J.L.C. (2021). Emotional Intelligence Measures: a Systematic Review. *Healthcare*, [online] 9(12). doi:<https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare9121696>.

Machost, H. and Stains, M. (2023). Reflective Practices in education: a Primer for Practitioners. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, [online] 22(2), pp.1–11. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.22-07-0148>.

Meijer, M.W., Brandhuber, T., Schneider, A. and Berberat, P.O. (2022). Implementing Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle by Linking Real Experience, Case-Based Discussion and Simulation. *Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development*, [online] 9(2), pp.1–5. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23821205221091511>.

Mihai, A., Elen Silvana Crivoi, Lucian Alecu, Pop, O., Nita, D., Rentea, G.C., Luca, A. and Lazar, F. (2025). Stress and burnout among social workers – a relation mediated by coping styles. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, [online] 12(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05780-1>.

Reith-Hall, E. (2022). The teaching and learning of communication skills for social work students: a realist synthesis protocol. *Systematic Reviews*, [online] 11(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-022-02125-w>.

Saifan, A.R., Tadros, E.M., Hawazen Rawas, Hekmat Yousef Al-Akash, Ghaida Shujayyi Alsulami, Wesam Taher Almagharbeh, Elshatarat, R.A., Almasri, Z.A., Nabeel Al-Yateem and Ahmed, F.R. (2025). Cultural and systematic barriers to communication between nurses and family members in the ICU. *BMC Nursing*, 24(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-025-03417-x>.

Sheikhrabari, A., Peyrovi, H. and Khankeh, H. (2022). The Main Features of Resilience in Healthcare Providers: A Scoping Review. *Medical Journal of The Islamic Republic of Iran*, [online] 36(3). doi:<https://doi.org/10.47176/mjiri.36.3.12>.

Social Work England (2019). *Professional Standards*. [online] Social Work England. Available at: <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards/>.

Social Work England (2020). *Professional standards guidance*. [online] Social Work England. Available at: <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards-guidance/>.

Zhenlei, Y., Boyuan, M., Lin, S., Guo Chunxia and Qiang, H. (2024). Identification of knowledge anxiety factors among researchers based on grounded theory. *Heliyon*, [online] pp.e25752–e25752. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e25752>. Similarity.

London School of Business and Management on 2012-12-15 Submitted works

<1%

Jane Bottomley, Patricia Cartney, Steven Pryjmachuk. "The Complete ... Publication

<1%

iscap.us <1%

Internet

w01.lbutest.da.ulcc.ac.uk <1%

Internet

Sheffield Hallam University on 2025-10-22 Submitted works

<1%

BPP College of Professional Studies Limited on 2025-10-06 Submitted works

<1%

St. Patrick's College on 2013-06-30 Submitted works

<1%

University of Birmingham on 2022-12-16 Submitted works

Brit Academy for Training Ltd on 2025-10-01 Submitted works

<1%

Ikon Institute on 2025-10-18 <1%

Submitted works

Sources overview