



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

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

Learner's name: Rebekah Andrews

Email address: 2219195@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Learner's University Registration Number: 2219195

Cohort: 20

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: __15/02/2023__

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 direct work will take place with two young girls, child 1 and child 2, who were removed from their parents due to significant alcohol use. Both children are of Polish nationality, however made it clear that they are more comfortable conversing in English. Sadly, the children's father passed away due to the significant alcohol misuse and their mother is in Critical Care due to her own alcohol use.

The Authority are currently in care proceedings and need to gather the children's wishes and feelings, to identify areas of worry, and future wishes. There is significant importance placed on being mindful around the difficult experiences these children have lived and are still living, with a strong focus on managing the intervention sensitively and carefully, and with a clear emphasis on the children's emotional wellbeing whilst they express their views.

The direct work will utilise the 'Three Houses' model, which is taken from Turnell and Edwards (1999) Signs of Safety framework of intervention. The focus will be on 3 key assessment questions, which include 'what's working well', 'what are we worried about' and 'what needs to happen', however for the purpose of the direct work, the questions will be based on a 'house of good things', a 'house of worries' and a 'house of dreams'.

The need for the direct work is based on the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act (2014), premise of hearing the child's voice and being child focussed within any assessment. The information will be used within court proceedings where the Authority is recommending a Full Care Order, to safeguard the children from any further trauma and neglect. Both children were asked in a previous visit if they would be comfortable taking part in the direct work and gave consent for this work to be part of an observational task. They were also reassured that the individual observing was a person they had met several times and who they were already comfortable around.

Word Count - 326

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).

The observational task was centred around direct work with child 1 who is 15yrs old, and child 2 who is 10yrs old, and who are siblings of Polish nationality. The geographical area I cover is both rural and urban, with many Polish nationals residing in the urban area, some of which speak no English. The cultural and language need must be taken into account and understood as part of the Welsh context in which we work, as thousands of Polish nationals live in Wales (Welsh Government (WG) 2021).

Within the context of the direct work, child 1 had been in Wales since the age of four and child 2 was born in Wales, with both children attending English medium schools. Even with the knowledge of needing to actively offer assessments within the language of choice, I feel I assumed the children would choose English, which is something I have reflected on as being incongruent to the social work values within Welsh legislation and guidance. I have identified that I need to improve future practice with the active offer of a language being offered rather than presumed, and in this particular interaction a simple ‘are you ok with English?’ would have sufficed. Every individual should be able to converse in their first language, as this supports effective engagement (Lishman 2020) and furthermore, supports the standards within the Code of Professional Practice (CoPP) (Social Care Wales (SCW) 2017), where it outlines the need to promote working with individuals in a manner that respects their language needs and culture. This can then be translated into my current practice with Welsh nationals, as Wales has high levels of both Welsh and English speaking residents, therefore the need for an ‘Active Offer’ of Welsh is essential, as outlined in the More than just words strategic framework (WG 2012) for the promotion of the Welsh language.

The direct work was carried out within a neutral setting to avoid any power imbalance between myself and the children. I was inherently aware of the children’s perception of power, as they had recently experienced being removed from parent by social services. My aim was to mitigate the power imbalance through a neutral location and relaxed atmosphere, as research has shown that any perceived power imbalance can prevent positive engagement during social work intervention (Cossar, Brandon, and Jordan, 2016), as a positive and trusting relationship between a social worker and a child is essential for any child to participate and engage in direct work or discussion (Kennan, Brady, and Forkan, 2018).

Every individual has the right to participation, as outlined in the Code of Ethics (British Association for Social Work, 2014). Gathering the views and wishes from a child is also a way

of working outlined in the Children Act (1989) and in Welsh legislation within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (SSWB(W)A) (WG, 2014). It is also a manner in which to engage children which is congruent to the directives within the Convention on the rights of the child (1989), in particular Article 12, where it states, 'the right to express views freely and have these taken into account'. This right was further conceptualised by Lundy (2007), who stated that firstly a child needs the space to participate, secondly, they need to be supported to express their views, and thirdly, have the knowledge that they will be listened too. My approach when gathering the children's wishes and feelings was supported by the Signs of Safety (Turnell and Edwards, 1999) tool called 'Three Houses', where three columns outlined 'a house of dreams', 'a house of worries' and 'a house of good things', which gave the children the opportunity to express their views. Prior preparation with setting up the table, placing multiple pens and stickers out for the children's use, and asking the children to choose some background music, assisted both children to relax and feel comfortable in what can often be a difficult exercise, as it brings forward thoughts or worry and anguish.

On reflection, I feel that my approach assisted child 1 and child 2 to take ownership of the task, and furthermore, allowed each child to record their feelings in their own unique way. This method of working encompasses the person-centred approach outlined within the SSWB(W)A (WG, 2014), as each individual has differing needs which must be respected. During the work I focussed on ensuring the children felt I was there to support them and build on the positive relationship we had already formed, as research has shown that a child's participation cannot be seen as just a procedural requirement, and that participation is deeply connected to the quality of the relationship that is developed between the social worker and the child (Coulshed and Orme, 2018).

The direct work that was carried out was chosen specifically to offer a creative way in which to identify positive areas of the child's life, along with offering a tool to record the negative feelings they were experiencing, as both children were able to express their views independently through speaking, drawing or writing down their feelings and wishes. I believe the work promoted the children's wellbeing through gathering their individual voice and acting on the information they shared, which is congruent to the principles set within the SSWB(W)A (WG, 2014) and the CoPP (SCW, 2017) around promoting voice and control.

Child 1 was able to independently complete the task, however her body language displayed anxiety, which when asked if she was feeling ok she freely shared that she was anxious about her sister seeing what she had written. I assisted child 1 with these anxieties by placing a physical barrier between her and her sister to prevent her sister from reading what had been written. I also verbally encouraged them to think of their own views and wishes, and explained to them that every person would feel differently about what was happening in their life. I felt that maintaining a child-centred method for engaging in communication was essential, as research has shown that social workers must develop their skills in effective communication with children, especially when trying to engage conversation around deeply personal and painful issues (O'reilly and Dolan 2016). This manner of engagement is also congruent to the CoPP (SCW, 2017) where it states social work must promote communication in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way.

During the direct work, I supported the children through verbal communication in the form of supportive comments and verbal prompts to develop their thought processing, as well as non-verbal communication in the form of facial expressions. Positive communication can be seen as the foundation to engagement (Lishman, 2020), and I felt that child 1 and child 2 needed to know they were in a safe place and with a safe adult who they could trust, which I feel assisted in their engagement in the task.

On reflection, the decision to work with both child 1 and child 2 at the same time, did inhibit the engagement of child 1, as she was concerned about her sister seeing what she had written, or hearing any discussion regarding her thoughts and feelings around being in care or around her parents. However, I felt that in order to get child 2 to engage, her sister needed to be there, as child 2 lacks the confidence in exploring her feelings, as she feels vulnerable and anxious. If this task were to be undertaken again, I would do one session with both children so that child 2 was comfortable, and another session with child 1 separately, in order to gather her thoughts and feelings independently, so as to eliminate the possibility of either child not engaging due to anxiety.

When reflecting on the direct work carried out with child 1 and child 2, I feel that their experience was positive due to the preparation and relaxed environment. However, it is clear that I need development in my approach, particularly in relation to offering language choice, rather than presuming it. I feel that since qualifying, my communication skills have improved significantly with the children I work with, and I understand the need for a range of communication along with adapting to individual needs, however this can be improved further through observing colleagues in practice.

Word Count = 1375

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?	yes, She picked us up from school 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. She explained what we would do and that the observer would be here too and why.
Were you clear why the social worker met with you today?	yes, to get our wishes and talk to the judge about it.
How well prepared do you think the social worker was for his or her meeting with you?	yes, she brought pens, stickers & decorations.
How has the social worker listened to you and respected your views and wishes?	yes. She doesn't interrupt, & listens carefully. She lets us finish and gives us time and asks more questions if she needs to.
Did the social worker talk to you in a way that you understood?	yes.

Did the social worker consider your language needs?	yes.
How has the social worker's involvement met your expectations for this visit?	yes, we achieved and did what we expected to do today.
Are there any other comments or suggestions that you would like to make?	Rebecca is a good social worker and does things that we enjoy, like listening to Taylor Swift and making arrangements for family time.