



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

**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: 25/09/2025

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).

This observation took place during a planned supervision session with two approved foster carers. I am their newly allocated social worker, and was our first formal meeting. The purpose of the session was to build a professional relationship, review the carers' fostering placement, and assess their well-being and support needs in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, which promotes person-centred and strengths-based practice. The session aimed to identify carers' strengths and challenges, with the desired outcomes of enhancing placement stability, promoting the well-being of the children, and ensuring the carers demonstrate the fostering competencies set out in Welsh legislation and guidance.

The carers are currently provided care for a foster baby while also managing challenges with their adopted daughter who is displaying emotional and behavioural difficulties. The family are financially stable with one of them working full-time, often away from home, and their other being the main caregiver. This dynamic can increase emotional pressure and potential isolation, where were explored during the supervision to ensure they are supported and able to maintain placement stability, and achieve positive outcomes for the children.

I gained informed consent in advance by explain, explaining the Continuing Professional Education and Learning framework and the purpose of the observation. Consent was reaffirmed in person at the time of the observed practice. To help reduce potential power imbalances, the observing social worker was already known to the foster carers, supporting open and honest communication during what was a sensitive discussion.

In line with 'More than Just Words' (Welsh Government, 2012), I implemented the Active Offer by asking about language preference. Both carers confirmed English as their only spoken language. The supervision followed the Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018 and National Minimum Standards (2011), which require regular supervision to support carers and promote children's well-being.

Words: 299.

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 reflection explores my communication and interpersonal skills during an observed supervision sessions with the above two foster carers. It considers how I identified and applied appropriate communication methods in line with person-centred and outcome-focused practice, integrating social work values, the Code of Professional Practice for Social Care (2017), and the principles of culturally and linguistically sensitive practice as outlined in More than Just Words (Welsh Government, 2012), and the Signs of Safety framework to support reflective, collaborative assessment.

Prior to the supervision, I prepared by reviewing the carer’s background information, previous supervision records and training logs to ensure I had a clear understanding of their circumstances, strengths and areas of stress. The carers were providing stable and nurturing care for a foster baby while also managing challenges with their adopted daughter, who was displaying emotional and behavioural difficulties. My aim was to use supervision as a reflective space to support their well-being, strengthen placement stability, and co-produce clear actions aligned with desired outcomes, consistent with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Preparation enabled me to plan purposeful communication that was empathetic, reflective and grounded in partnership.

Before the visited, I telephoned the foster carer to explain the Continuing Professional Education and Learning framework and the purpose of observed practice. This early contact was essential in establishing trust, clarifying expectations and gaining informed consent. I then reaffirmed consent at the beginning of the visit, ensuring transparency and that the carers fully understood. The process reflected my adherence to the Code of Professional Practice, which requires social workers to promote choice, autonomy and respect. I also considered potential power imbalances in the relationship, as I was newly allocated to the family. To mitigate this, I arranged for the observation to be completed by a social worker already known to the family, providing a sense of familiarity and safety that would help promote comfort and facilitate open and honest discussion during a potentially sensitive discussion.

Throughout the session, I adopted a person-centred and strengths-based approach drawing on Signs of Safety to structure the conversation. This allowed the foster carers to reflect on what was working well, what they were worried about and what needed to happen next. This framework supported a balanced discussion that recognised the carers achievements while exploring areas of concern. The foster carers identified that the foster baby was thriving and described positive family routines, which I acknowledged and reinforced. When discussing difficulties with their adopted child’s behaviours, I encouraged the foster carers to share specific examples and feelings, using open-ended questions and reflective listening to explore the underlying impact on their well-being. Their approach ensured that strengths, needs and risks were considered holistically and collaboratively.

Verbal and non-verbal communication were central to the session. I used clear and accessible language, avoided jargon and maintained a calm, supportive tone. My non-verbal cues including open posture, consistent eye contact, and active nodding demonstrated attentiveness and empathy. I observed the foster carers body language, noticing when they were emotional or hesitant, and responding by allowing pauses and offering

space to reflect. Through active listening and being emotionally attuned, I created a safe environment for honest dialogue, help them feel heard and validated.

In addition to working with the foster carers, I also considered the presence and needs of the foster baby who was nine months old. While direct verbal communication with the infant was limited due to developmental stage, I adapted my communication style to be sensitive and responsive to non-verbal cues, such as eye contact, facial expressions and vocal tone (Brazelton and Sparrow, 2006). I used a calm, gentle voice and engaged in playful gestures, smiles and supportive body language to create a safe and comforting environment. This approach not only helped the baby feel secure but also modelled nurturing interaction for the carers, reinforcing positive caregiving practices (Schorer, 2001). Being attuned to the infant's responses informed how I guided the carers in reflecting on routines, attachment, and developmental needs, demonstrating the importance of adjusting communication methods according to age, cognitive development, and individual needs while maintaining a person-centred, strengths-based approach.

In line with the Active Offer and More than Just Words, I asked about the carers' preferred language of communication. Both confirmed English as their only spoken language, and no Welsh Language support was required. Nonetheless, making the offer proactively upheld their linguistic rights and aligned with national policy. While no additional cultural or religious needs were identified, I remained mindful of the family's set-up as a full-time carer and the other's frequent absences due to work. Recognising this dynamic helped contextualise their strengths and challenges, including their resilience and commitment, alongside the emotional strain of managing day-to-day care.

Being mindful of power dynamics, I used inclusive language such as "we" and "together" to reinforce partnership and co-production. I validated the carers' experiences acknowledging achievements and difficulties they faced. Using the Signs of Safety scaling tool, I invited them to rate how confident they felt in managing current challenges, which opened discussions about what is helping them cope and what additional support might be useful. This method promoted shared understanding and encouraged them to identify solutions, building a sense of control and empowerment.

The session integrated the principles of the Code of Professional Practice, particularly promoting well-being, maintaining trust, and being accountable. Ethical communication was demonstrated through empathy, honesty, and respect for autonomy. Emotionally sensitive issues, such as feeling overwhelmed or struggling to manage behaviour were approached with reflective statements like "it sounds like you've been carrying a lot on your own." This helped the foster carer to process emotions and feel supported, consistent with research emphasising containment and emotional safety in supervision (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012).

Collaboratively, we identified next steps, including continued engagement with therapeutic services and exploring adoption support services and respite to alleviate pressure. We also discussed proactive learning including listening to podcasts as evidence of their commitment and strengths. Using the Signs of Safety 'What Needs to Happen' framework, we co-produced clear, achievable actions, ensuring accountability and clarity for reviews. Recognising and celebrating progress was vital in sustaining motivation and building resilience, consistent with strengths-based and solution-focused practice (Saleebey, 2013).

I reflected critically on my communication throughout. My verbal and non-verbal methods were effective in promoting trust and collaboration, but I identified areas for development, particularly in deepening trauma-informed approaches and facilitating emotionally complex conversations. I plan to address this through further professional development and reflective supervision. Had there been barriers such as language or sensory needs, I would have sought appropriate support or interpreters to ensure full inclusion and understanding.

During the session, I completed a supervision record capturing the carers' voices, strengths, risks, and agreed outcomes in accessible and strengths-based language. The record demonstrated how the carers' preferences and well-being outcomes were central to assessment and planning, fulfilling professional standards for accurate, reflective recording.

Reflecting on this observation, I recognise how intentional communication, structured frameworks and emotional awareness combined create a meaningful and supportive session. The Signs of Safety approach

helped balance discussions of worry with recognition of strengths and practical next steps. Implementing the Active Offer ensured linguistic rights were upheld, and maintaining a person-centred approach ensured that the foster carers' experienced guided the assessment process. By integrating empathy, ethical awareness and structured reflection, I was able to support the carers in identifying their needs and co-producing outcomes that promote both their well-being and the stability of the foster placement.

This experience reinforced the centrality of communication in social work practice. Through preparation, transparency, and the use of structured, reflective frameworks, I was able to uphold social work values, promote trust, and facilitate meaningful dialogue. It also highlighted the importance of recognising emotional dynamics, family context, and potential power imbalances. Going forward, I will continue to develop my communication skills, deepen my understanding of trauma-informed and solution-focused approaches, and use supervision to reflect critically on practice. By integrating frameworks such as Signs of Safety, alongside the Code of Professional Practice and More than Just Words, I can ensure my practice remains person-centred, culturally sensitive, and outcome-focused, ultimately supporting better well-being for cares and children.

Words: 1328.

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, dead on time!
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Did the social worker get your permission in advance for the observer to be present? Did they explain why they were being observed?	Yes Yes
Were you clear why the social worker met with you today?	Yes. It was supervision.
How well prepared do you think the social worker was for his or her meeting with you?	She was very prepared and asked only relevant questions.
How has the social worker listened to you and respected your views and wishes?	She wrote everything down to take away to find out more. She will get to know me, it takes time to build rapport.
Did the social worker talk to you in a way that you understood? Did the social worker consider your language needs?	Yes she was clear in the way she communicated.
How has the social worker's involvement met your expectations for this visit?	Yes it was just like a normal supervision catch up.
Are there any other comments or suggestions that you would like to make?	No she covered everything. I'm looking forward to having continuity of a full time supervising social worker after having 4 this year.

