



**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: 18 onwards

Task 1

Developmental review – Part a

Guidance:

This task should be completed by taking into account the work that you will have undertaken since qualifying, and discussions with your mentor and supervisor/line manager as part of your First Three Years of Practice Individual Plan.

Task one (part a and b) should incorporate the use of a model of reflection.

You must meet the Learning Outcomes for this task (see appendix 5 of the handbook).

Please answer the question below.

Question:

Using a reflective model critically reflect on your professional development since qualifying as a Social Worker. Make reference to the supervision, training, learning and research that has impacted on your work. Based on this and continuing to use a reflective model outline what you have identified and agreed with your manager and/or mentor for your development over the coming 12 months. You must demonstrate how you intend to meet all of the following learning outcomes:-

- applying analysis in assessment to inform interventions;
- working collaboratively with people in need of care and support, their carers and other professionals;
- intervention and application of professional judgement in increasingly complex situations.

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

I will use the “What? So What? Now What?” reflective model developed by Borton (1970) for this question. Maclean (2010, p. 98) points out that this model has often been criticised for its simplicity but I feel it lends itself well to the question and feel it will be a helpful tool. **(52)**

What?

Qualifying as a Social Worker has been harder than I ever imagined. Before qualifying, I had worked for my agency for 10 years as a support worker in my area of service. I thought I knew what to expect, I was wrong. I had to adapt to the transition from support worker to qualified social worker, alongside a period of very difficult personal circumstances and at a time of the

global Covid-19 pandemic and all of the constraints on professional and personal life that brought. **(85)**

I remember going out on a prearranged visit with a colleague from one of the support teams within my service. When we arrived a crisis was occurring, the preparation and purpose of the visit went out of the window and we needed to respond to the apparent mental health breakdown we were witnessing and consider the safety of a young person. My colleague turned to me and asked, “what do we do”? **(72)**

Having spent so many years in this service as a support worker, I had gotten used to being the one who asks, “what do we do”, now this comfort blanket was taken away from me. At times I feel overwhelmed at the responsibility of the workload, at the volume of work, my ability to produce work within tight timeframes and develop collaborative relationships with both families and professionals, so that I can ensure care and support is offered to the children and families I work alongside. **(86)**

So what?

I see many similarities in my own experience to those reflected in a report by Social Care Institute for Excellence (2022) which found that during the pandemic many NQSWs found it difficult to establish a work/home balance because working from home the “emotional weight and trauma of complex cases were associated with their personal environment, triggering stress and anxiety in moments they were supposed to unwind”. **(66)**

I have struggled to share my vulnerabilities with my managers because of what I perceive to be their lack of emotional and practical support, and their focus instead on performance and professional development. I have fully utilised the support of my learning mentor. This has not only helped my professional development (by reminding me of policies and procedures, helping me consider research) but has helped my emotional resilience which is just as vital in this job. **(76)**

Through my studies I am aware that Hugman (2013) states “while the experience of a junior member of a profession may not always be experienced as ‘powerful’, the impact of all practice on service users can be said to be powerful in that it has the capacity to affect human lives in profound ways”. However, I continue to doubt my own abilities and worry that my inexperience has a negative impact on my practice and I at times doubt my own abilities and opinions, especially when sharing with other professionals. **(90)**

Now what?

As Covid restrictions ease, I need to make more use of the opportunity to work in an office so that I feel supported by my colleagues and to better develop collaborative working with colleagues within my service area. This type of informal support and spontaneous interactions are key in helping social workers develop a sense of belonging and to feel more connected to colleagues (SCIE, 2022) and are what I miss from my pre-qualified work days. I feel this will help develop my confidence. **(84)**

I am being give more complex pieces of work (e.g. Court reports, Public Law Outline). The enormity of this work and the formality of this arena (i.e. Court/legal) makes me anxious due to my inexperience in the field. As a result, I want to shadow more experienced colleagues, have access to Good Practice examples of such work and I will take part in training to develop my understanding and my role. This will also ensure I continue to comply with the Code of Professional Practice (Social Care Wales, 2017) by being accountable for the quality of my work and taking responsibility for maintaining and developing knowledge and skills. **(115)**

Lishman (Lishman, 1998) states that supervision can become a “management tool of accountability and efficiency” but can also enhance professional development. She further says supervision “should involve mutual trust...an opportunity to express feelings...and to go ‘below the surface’ in the analysis of problems and situations”. I will continue to prepare for my supervisions and to give them priority in my work schedule in the hope of building the trust with my supervisor to aide my development. **(76)**

Word count - 802

Task 1 (Part b) Developmental Review

Guidance:

Please ensure you refer to a reflective model and that you met the require learning outcomes for this task (See appendix 5 of the handbook).

Question:

Using a reflective model critically reflect on your development including reference to training, learning, research and use of supervision since completing Task 1 (part a) (when you began the programme).

Consider in discussion with your mentor/supervisor/line manager the extent to which your learning needs has been achieved. Identify any additional learning needs to support your development in the transition to becoming an experienced practitioner in your future career. You must include a reflection on feedback that you have received from individuals in need of care and support and/or their carers and how this feedback has informed your future professional development.

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

I will again use Borton's model of reflection for this task. **(11)**

What?

Restrictions have begun to ease following the Covid pandemic and working from an office is an option again. I have not made best use of this option for a number of reasons (turnover in the team has been constant, there has been little "team spirit"; the buildings were being repurposed and we were waiting to be moved to a new location; the sheer volume of work meant I was worried about engaging in conversation with colleagues because it would hinder my progress on completing assessments). **(85)**

Initially my managers gave me private law reports to complete which I feel helped ease me into court writing. The general rule of thumb seems to be that a social worker is “a friend of the court” in these matters and their reports and opinions are valued. In contrast, social workers are under more pressure and scrutiny in public law matters. **(61)**

I completed “Courtroom Skills and Giving Evidence Training” which helped develop my skills and knowledge in regard to court work. This was provided by a reputable firm of solicitors so gave insight into what “the other side” would be looking for and helped me consider what to write and how to write. I am disappointed that I wasn’t able to expand this further by taking part in the “Excellence in Report Writing” training offered by the same company. Unfortunately on each occasion this training was offered. I had other commitments which could not be changed and I accept that this is often the harsh reality of social work within a busy, statutory child protection team like mine. However, I did benefit from having more experienced members of staff secondary allocated to cases where there was more complexity (i.e. s37 report, Local Authority care proceedings). **(144)**

So what?

I feel my professional development as well as the maintenance of my personal values are reflected in the feedback I had from a parent who I had worked alongside to support her daughter and was later instructed to write a Section 7 report for the Court. Some of the comments the mother made were: - **(54)**

Zoe has been amazing. She has given my family and I the most support since we have been working with Social Services... she is open, honest and very inviting... she is generally an amazing social worker. I hope as her job progresses that she doesn’t lose this...If she sees I am uncomfortable she will say things in a different way. She is very good at this. Things haven’t always been written down or been clear previously with other workers but Zoe always does this. She provides very detailed information. When she supported my child through the recent

court process everything written down was accurate. She is not misleading or blaming and she is very helpful". **(115)**

I also received positive feedback from my manager and Senior Manager after completing a Social Work Evidence Template for court, I was told that it was a thorough piece of work and gave the reader a complete sense of who the child is and what the risks are. Comments from this mother and from my managers has given me confidence in what I do and in such a difficult working environment, I am proud that I am managing to retain the strengths I felt I had when I first qualified (e.g. excellent communication skills; empathetic and respectful to people which helps to develop positive practice relationships; conscientious and hardworking and committed to the work I do with children and families). **(120)**

Now what?

In September staff in my service area were issued with a new directive from Senior Managers that workers need to be in the office several times per week. This direction has been made so that we can support each other with the difficult job we do and difficult decisions we make, as well as support the NQSWs who have joined the department. I can see that by spending time in the office I will be better able to impart my knowledge and experience on the NQSWs which in turn will help me accept and appreciate the progression I have made and so will develop my confidence in myself. This has already started with advice shared virtually or in joint visit, but the physical presence will develop this further and create a team atmosphere which I have so greatly missed. **(139)**

I still experience nerves when I am asked to give evidence in court but I now accept this is due to my inherent "fight, flight, freeze" response and is not because of my inexperience and anxiety. I will continue to develop by attending further training offered, by discussing my reports in supervision and developing from the Quality Assurance feedback I get. **(61)**

Word count – 790

