

Practice Education in Social Work: Achieving professional standards

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Reviewed by Oliver Burford

The aim of this book is to support those in the role of Practice Educators to work effectively with Social Work Students, supporting them through their placement experience, whilst also exploring and considering how Practice Educators can evidence ability to practice within the standards set within the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) Practice Educator Practice Standards (PEPS). The content of the book is applicable and of benefit to Practice Educators at varying points in their career, ranging from those undertaking Practice Educator Training and those who are longstanding in the role.

The introductory chapter supports in setting the scene for practice learning, considering the historical context of Social Work education, the impact and legacy of the Covid 19 Pandemic and subsequent increase in blended learning experiences, whilst also reinforcing the importance of the Practice Educator and student relationship being honest and collaborative.

The following layout and structure of this book runs alongside the timeline and critical elements within the practice placement, ranging from the preparation and planning of the placement through to assessment, including enabling learning, critical reflection and supervision. A great benefit of this book is that the chapters are structured and have a clear emphasis, but also include prompts on when it would be beneficial to cross reference against other chapters. It is a book that you can dip in and out of, which is beneficial given the busy practice lives that Social Work and Practice Education entails. It also prompts reflection on the landscape of practice education following the Covid 19 pandemic and to encourage consolidation, application of reading and reflection, self-directed developmental activities are threaded throughout. This supports you to delve deeper and consider how the content applies to you and those that you support.

As a trainee Practice Educator I found much of the content, theories, models and framework within this book to mirror those taught through University content, including prominent works from those such as

Kolb, Collingwood and Honey and Mumford. It steps beyond this however and covers a wider breadth of knowledge for practice, such as the MANDELA model which was developed in response to particular issues faced by students of Black African heritage. It also covers what type of challenge could arise in the placement and how to manage and address these, which is often overlooked, but an essential knowledge base to have to ensure that you are prepared for all eventualities. The book is aimed at practice within England and the BASW PEPS, but the consideration given to anti-oppressive practice, collaboration how to effectively support students and consider their individual needs are common practice element, therefore, the book is very transferable to practice in other countries.

Practicing in an off-site Practice Educator role I did feel that this book focussed heavily on situations in which the Practice Educator is on site, or potentially supporting in the Placement Supervisor role and in contact with the student on a daily basis. This is not detrimental as it provides in depth consideration on topics such as how the physical learning environment can be managed and the importance of modelling good practice, however off site Practice Educators may need to reflect further on how they can engage with the placement setting to ensure that these elements are managed appropriately and effectively, also considering how students can be best supported when face to face interactions with an off-site Practice Educator may be of a limited quantity. Some of the suggestions relating to physical office spaces, although setting out the ideal scenario, may also no longer be realistic in current practice settings, with much of the ability to have specific desks and storage spaces being lost as a result of the shift towards hybrid working and hot desking.

In summary, I found this book to be informative, thought provoking and it very much enhanced my knowledge base, building on University taught content. The layout and structure is very much user friendly and convenient when wanting to review a specific topic or element of a practice placement.

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