

## Case study

Reference number

### Subject details (fields in red to be completed by DfE staff)

<b>Teaching Partnership name</b>	Kent, Medway and the South East Social Work Teaching Partnership (KMTP)
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Medway Council
<b>Sector</b>	Social Work
<b>Subject</b>	Academics in Practice
<b>Potential related work area</b>	Practitioner Support and Development Academic Delivery Placement and the Curriculum Workforce and Labour Market Planning Progression

## Case study details

### Main title

Academics in Practice.

### Subtitle

Developing opportunities for the academics from our Partner Universities to become 'academics in practice' in order to influence both practice and academic input.

### Introduction (max 100 words)

In the Kent, Medway and the South Social Work Teaching Partnership (KMTP), there are two HEI's, the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University, alongside two LA's: Medway Council and Kent County Council.

The two HEI's both work with each of the two LA's. Prior to the Teaching Partnership, the academics from both HEI's had worked with the LA's on a range of projects e.g. to promote the publication of research; attendance at moderation panels for the ASYE; to undertake lectures; and to undertake specific tasks as placement tutors. This has continued during the Teaching Partnership.

This case study focuses on the work undertaken with the two HEIs and the two LA's to develop additional practice opportunities for academics to undertake within the LA's.

### Fact box

There are currently 20 full time equivalent posts across the HEI's, 9 at UOK and 11 at CCCU. In addition, the KMTP have funded 2 Lecturer posts and 0.6 and 0.4 Researcher posts until March 2020.

In April 2019, 8 academics from both HEI's attended a voluntary half day workshop / scoping exercise with the LA's to identify potential opportunities for academics within the LA. Following the scoping session:

16 academics (9 CCCU: 7 UOK) expressed an interest in a two-day shadowing opportunity within the LA's.

2 Academics from UOK expressed an interest in undertaking specific action research, focused work.

To date:

- 2 Academics have undertaken shadowing one in MC and one in KCC.
- 5 Further shadowing opportunities are currently being planned
- 3 'Lunchtime with academics' are being planned.
- 3 Research Seminars have been planned.

### Quotes

Feedback from the academics who have shadowed practice is:

*'I certainly had an insight into the processes and pressures faced by social workers. The hub model was new to me and I was able to explore and understand the advantages and potential difficulties of this model of working.*

*I observed a lot of computer inputting and saw the impact on the social workers' day.'*

*'I have been able to use illustrative examples from my experience in my teaching.*

*I have been able to understand the organisational pressures and in particular recording systems.'*

*Through this work 'professional friendships' have been developed between the HEI's and the LA's (feedback from a Social Work Manager in the LA).*

## **Body of case study text**

### **Objectives**

To produce a case study about how 10% of academic staff have protected time in practice, to enable them to:

- Have informal discussions with staff about the culture of the agency and services
- Develop an understanding of services and service user experiences and translate this into University learning.
- Develop the Higher Education Institution (HEI) social work modules,
- Reflect upon the impact of the implementation of specific practice models in LA Adults' and Children's services:
- Encourage critical reflection in practice contexts
- Encourage outward facing, learning organisations encouraging evidence based, reflective supervision

### **Establishing the Objectives**

A facilitated scoping event was held with the academics from the HEI's and attendees from the LAs covering a range of roles. The attendees were tasked to identify, discuss and capture ideas for appropriate practice activities for academic staff and what support would be required in order to enable these activities to take place.

The range of practice activities identified were:

- Academics developing their understanding and experience of the LA's
- Sharing expertise in practice
- Sharing expertise in decision making forums
- Research
- Workshops
- Reflective supervision

The issues regarding DBS, GDPR and whistleblowing, were significant areas to be addressed for each organisation. In the initial stages, an overarching 'confidentiality' protocol was developed by the KMTP which was based upon the LA's 'volunteering protocol'. However, as relationships developed within the KMTP, this was revised by the KMTP to a simpler personal information format, which was shared by the participants in the activity and their managers.

Two KMTP Lecturer roles were in post since June 2019 and further details of these roles are provided in the Placement and curriculum case study. One of these posts was part time as a lecturer with the HEI and part time as an Advanced Practitioner within the LA. This post has been integral to developing the professional relationships with the academics and the practitioners and has been key to understanding the current demands and requirements within the HEI's and the LA's.

## **Academics developing their understanding and experience of the LAs**

### Shadowing of Practice by Academics

Two academics have undertaken formal shadowing opportunities with the LA's in 2019. The management team, within MC Adults Services developed a two-day shadowing programme for one academic from UOK, who undertook this opportunity in August 2019. The objectives of the academic for the shadowing experience were:

*"I have never worked in adult services before, so I was keen to get a flavour of the type of work and processes which take place.*

*I was also keen to observe current social work practice due to being out of statutory services for a while.*

*I was also keen to observe how service users experienced adult social care."*

During the two days shadowing experience the academic was able to visit a service user, however:

*"I was only able to observe one service user meeting who was lacking capacity, so it made me question how consent for my attendance had been achieved."*

Following this feedback, significant work was undertaken to ensure that the consent of the service user was included in future shadowing opportunities. The second Academic undertook a formal shadowing opportunity within the hospital social work team within KCC, facilitated by an Advanced Practitioner from the KMTP. The day was planned to include work with a service user; however, the service user was not available on the day the academic shadowed the team. Therefore, *"the day did not include any SW-SU contact. I was able to see the sheer amount of non-direct social work activity (admin) that professionals now face."*

The outcome of the shadowing opportunity was that the academic was able to:

*"Have informal discussions with staff about the culture of the agency and services".* The rest (of the objectives) were unmet.

The overall feedback from the second academic was that:

*"I was a bit unnerved by the team's expectation for me to undertake an impromptu session at lunch time, specifically around legally-focussed input into practice questions. This was not the purpose of the day from my understanding. If there is an expectation for academics to be presenting to the teams, notice needs to be given..."*

Following the feedback from the two academics, the KMTP have worked to ensure that future shadowing opportunities are a bespoke shadowing opportunity to each academic, with a clear agreed timetable and expectations by all parties. Future shadowing opportunities that are being planned and developed with individual academics are within: the LA Youth Offending service, LA Adoption Service, LA Adults team and LA Children's services.

Feedback from the academics who have already undertaken the shadowing opportunities is that they would like to undertake more in-depth work with the Local Authority

*'I would welcome the opportunity to shadow again.'* and

*'... what I would like to do next is get involved in specific tasks.'*

### **Sharing Expertise in practice: Lunch with Academics**

The future plans are to introduce 'lunch with academics' which will be informal sessions with academics and a small group of practitioners who are interested in a particular topic. The first planned event will be linked to an academics' shadowing experience in a community adults' team, where the academic will meet with invited practitioners within the team, to discuss the academics work with the organisation, 'social workers without borders.'

A further two 'lunch with academics' sessions are being planned with the academics who have expressed an interest in undertaking this pilot before the end of March 2020.

### **Research: Action Research Approach**

Following the facilitated scoping event, two academics were keen to undertake action research within the LA's. The plan was for them to liaise directly with the two KCC Principal Social Workers in order to develop this work.

In KCC Children's services, several meetings were held, and subsequent plans were made to develop a 3-month action research programme for undertaking work on the 'invisible child'. However, this work was not implemented as the 'business needs moved on' more quickly than the project could be developed.

The KCC adults' services, project which was explored, was action research about the views of staff following the reorganisation of the service. This was pursued by the academic *'with enthusiasm' because I wanted to respond positively and also it seemed like an excellent research problem.'* However, as time progressed the action research was not a priority for the LA. Therefore, the work did not continue. For both projects the issues regarding DBS and GDPR were not resolved.

One of the Advanced Practitioners had gained a research grant from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, to research international approaches to grief and loss and supporting bereaved children in care. The Advanced Practitioner undertook this research whilst working within KMTP and has shared the findings of her research with the LA and the HEI's.

### **Research: University Based Seminars**

The KMTP appointed two University based research posts, 0.6 FTE within the University of Kent and 0.4 FTE within Canterbury Christ Church University, which have worked to develop three research-based seminars led by the academics from the HEI's. Two of these seminars are based in the university and the other in the LA. These lectures are available to all LA social work staff and students from the HEIs.

One of the sessions has taken place: 'The Politics of Risk in Child Protection: What can research tell us?' In the seminar one of the lecturers presented their findings from their research involving interviews with British Members of Parliament to understand the role of politicians in their public reactions to events, particularly following the death of a child.

The two other seminars which are planned will focus upon: Dementia Matters which will include research about Dementia carers and Life Review work with people with dementia, and the other is focusing upon Transitional Safeguarding Mending the Gaps in Transitional Safeguarding; Improving the journey from adolescence to adulthood in social work' which will be held within the LA.

These seminars are also referred to in the *Workforce and Labour Market* case study.

### **Research: Student Research**

The KMTP has developed a proposal for students to undertake research on specific topics which are relevant to the local authorities and this is to be implemented later in 2020, for the MA students.

This is an area where the joint KMTP lecturer with UOK has taken a keen interest to develop. It is planned that the work will continue to be implemented when she returns to her substantive post.

### **Workshops: Increased Participation by Academics within the Activities of the LA's**

The HEI's have undertaken participation and planning of three joint Practice Educator practice forums within the LA's. This has led to the HEI's establishing an open dialogue with the LA's Practice Educators about their experience of working with HEI Social Work students on placement.

The topics for the Forums were suggested initially by the KMTP Advanced Practitioners, who were working within the LA's as Off-Site Practice Educators and presented by both HEI's. The topics have included:

- Planning for your student
- Reflective supervision
- Supporting BAME students in placement
- Working with struggling and failing students
- Unconscious bias
- Trans\* awareness in Social Work and Practice Education

The forums have also included facilitated discussions about the development within the LA of a PE resource bag, student caseloads, student and Practice Educator feedback to the LA's. Further details about these forums are within the Practitioner Support and Development case study.

## **Conclusion**

There has been a high level of enthusiasm from both the academics and the LA's to support 'academics in practice' and following an activity the academic has been keen to continue to develop the work further. However, it is recognised that this work is time consuming both to arrange and to undertake when all parties are 'so busy' with their day to day activities.

A scoping of the time given by the LA Practitioner Teachers has been undertaken, which is hoped to form the basis of an agreement for future 'protected academic' time in practice.

## **Future Developments**

- To continue to work with the academics who wish to undertake the shadowing opportunities to provide shadowing opportunities throughout the academic year.
- A directory showing areas of interest for the 'Academics in Practice' to be established and shared with the LA academics.
- Academics to consider developing their work with the LA's to become involved in practice: Providing the role of 'critical friend' to teams, joint research / evaluation initiatives for example with service users / customers, facilitation of action learning sets, consultation on policy and practice developments and practice innovation and involvement in learning / case / thematic audits.
- To formalise the arrangements for academic staff to have protected time in practice.