

Case study

Reference number

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

Teaching Partnership name	Kent, Medway and South East Social Work Teaching Partnership
Lead Organisation	Medway Council
Sector	Social Work
Subject	The Placement and Curriculum
Potential related work areas	Academic Delivery Practice Support and Development Academics in Practice

Case study details

Main title

Placements and the Curriculum

Subtitle

A case study of placement and curricular changes and the development of Teaching Partnership Advanced Practitioner and Lecturer posts

Introduction (max 100 words)

In the Kent, Medway and the South East Social Work Teaching Partnership (KMTP), there are two Local Authorities, Medway Council and Kent County Council working with two HEI's, the University of Kent (UoK) and Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). The two HEI's differ in their approach as the CCCU social work courses are based within the HEI's School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work and the UoK social work courses are based within the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research.

The KMTP has built upon the previously established strong working relationships between the Local Authorities and the two partner universities.

Fact box

In 2018/19: a total of 215 student placement opportunities were provided across the two Local Authorities.

In 2019/20: currently 216 student placement opportunities have been provided across the two Local Authorities.

Medway Council:

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>HEI First Placements</i>	<i>HEI Final Placements</i>	<i>HEI Readiness for practice</i>	<i>Step Up</i>	<i>OU</i>	<i>Think Ahead</i>	<i>Social Work Apprentices</i>
2018/19	5	21	17	4	0	0	0
2019/20	1	18	16	6	0	0	4

Kent County Council:

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>HEI First Placements</i>	<i>HEI Final Placements</i>	<i>HEI Readiness for practice</i>	<i>Step Up</i>	<i>OU</i>	<i>Think Ahead</i>	<i>Social Work Apprentices</i>
2018/19	2	72	58	11	21	4	0
2019/20*	4	75	35	14	18	0	25

placement data on 20th January 2020.

Quotes

“Think of a student journey who learns in the first year about theories, methods and how his/her role is to challenge systems and to empower the one without the voice. Then the student goes on a 70-day placement and is facing budget cuts, an on-site manager who is overwhelmed with responsibilities, forms which need to be completed and families who are angry at times. The student returns to university to learn more about research, different methods of intervention and laws. In the last placement, he/she feels prepared theoretically, but unequipped with practical skills. The roles of Advanced Practitioner and lecturer have given me the opportunity to have a better understanding about the reality in both worlds, academia and practice.

(TP Lecturer/Advanced Practitioner).

Objectives and Evidence of Impact

This case study describes how the KMTP has worked together to further enhance the experiences and learning for social work students. The Partnership has worked together to develop and test a range of new approaches to support an improvement in the quality of social work student placements and curricular changes through:

- the appointment of five and a half Advanced Practitioners based in the Local Authorities: 2 in MC and 3.5 in KCC.
- the development of new first placements within the LA's
- specific modifications to the HEI's and LA's Social Work student placement handbooks
- the appointment of two KMTP lecturer posts, one in each of the HEI's.
- the development of the Social Work Curriculum

The Impact

The Appointment of 5.5 Advanced Practitioners, based in the Local Authorities

The Advanced Practitioners, 2 in Medway Council and 3.5 in KCC, were appointed throughout the first twelve months of the Teaching Partnership to work within the LA's to develop and support placements in the LA i.e. to work directly with Social Work teams through supporting eight student social work placements as an Off Site Practice Educator, where there was not an available Practice Educator and as an assessor to six of the trainee Practice Educators undertaking the PEPS courses.

The Advanced Practitioners have developed social work student and practitioner seminars for all students on placement within each of the LA's. These covered a range of topics e.g. permanency for children through adoption: grief and loss: youth offending and trauma informed practice. Feedback from one of the attendees at the permanency for children session was that the session had enabled them to learn about "*the process and consideration of the changes for the child.*"

Other feedback from the grief and loss sessions were:

"I liked that we looked at theory and concepts that are relevant to children and adults,"

"the different concepts and approaches to work with grief and loss,"

"that there are many different types of grief and loss we overlook in daily life,"

"It was a really important topic to discuss and inform practice."

The Advanced Practitioners also worked directly with the HEI's to participate in: HEI employability days: the admission of new Social Work Students: Readiness for practice panels: Practice Assessment Panels, the reading of student portfolios, the quality assurance of student portfolios

and undertaken practitioner teacher sessions at the HEI's. For further information, see *the academic delivery case study*. The work of the Advanced Practitioners enabled them to undertake a formal comparison of the Practice Assessment Panels at the HEI's, which has led an open dialogue between the HEI's of the Quality Assurance process' within the placements.

As a direct result of the work of the Advanced Practitioners, four of the Social Work students successfully applied to become NQSW's within the Local Authority. One of these Social Work students wrote: The Advanced Practitioner *"always gave me lots of time to be able to reflect on cases and I feel more confident after having (the AP) as I had previously struggled with applying the relevant theory to my cases."*

One of the Advanced Practitioners undertook research into the students from both of the HEI's who had failed their placements in 2018/19.

HEI students who failed the final placement

Characteristics	Number
Gender	
Unknown	5
Female	4
Age	
Unknown	5
50-60 years	3
20-30 years	1
Ethnic origin	
BAME	3
White British	3
Other	3
ILP / SLP	
Yes	5
No	2
Additional Considerations	2

The research concluded that a high percentage of students that failed had additional learning and/or caring needs and responsibilities. Therefore, it was agreed by all of the partners that the scoping of students who had failed their placement should continue on an annual basis and shared between the members of the KMTP.

The Advanced Practitioners have worked to support Practice Educators within the Local Authority. One of the Advanced Practitioners contacted over 200 of the Practice Educators in KCC in order to discuss with them about their current role and to ascertain the support that they required in order to continue with their Practice Educator role. This work has led to KCC developing an ongoing online survey for Practice Educators to identify the current status and training needs of the Practice Educators.

Medway Council has an established system that records this information and an informal survey was sent out to identify their learning needs. KCC is working to develop a sustainable system to establish and update the status of the Practice Educators.

The feedback from the Practice Educators led to the development by the KMTP of quarterly Practice Educator Forums, for Practice Educators from both LA's, which featured contributors from both of the HEI's. The feedback from the Practice Educators about the Forums has been very positive. Feedback from the Practice Educators was that they:

“Really liked the opportunity to discuss positives and issues in groups. Got some good ideas to use in practice” and that it was an “opportunity to share experiences and feel these are being listened to / things will change.” This work is also highlighted in *the practice support and development case study*.

Two of the Advanced Practitioners work also focused upon working with their respective LA to develop the curriculum for the ASYE programme for children and adults and have been involved in the moderation of the ASYE portfolios. The development of the ASYE curriculum has included a specific session with the HEI's regarding research informed practice, which is highlighted in *the academics in practice case study*.

The Development of New First Placements within the LA's

There has been a long term commitment from both of the LA's that all final placement students from the HEI's who complete a student profile, and meet the LA requirement of 'being able to drive and having access to their own transport' are guaranteed access to a final statutory placement within adult's or children's services. Having carefully considered all options, the Partnership agreed that two statutory placements was not the preferred option for the KMTP, as this would not meet the learning needs for all of the Social Work students and would exclude valuable learning opportunities, which could only be provided in the PVI sector. Therefore, a range of placement opportunities for the first placements would continue to be available in both the LA and the PVI's to the Social Work students.

The definition of a statutory placement was debated by the KMTP for some time. The Partnership is now working towards the definition from Social Work England, which was introduced in July 2019.

In Medway Council a formalised matching and allocation process for student placements has been established and developed through the Student Faculty within the Medway Children and Adults Social Care Academy. The Student Faculty membership includes managers from the services and regularly invites representative from the HEI's to attend to discuss the student profiles.

In Kent County Council, KMTP worked with them to develop a new process of matching students to the available placement locations and services using the student profiles. This process involved an initial screening of the student profiles, followed by an indicative matching process from the Social Care Development team. A formal allocation meeting followed, with representatives from KCC Adults and Children's services, and the HEI's to finalise the matching process. However due to difficulties in finalising the PEPs course some of the identified placements were not available. Therefore, the timescales for the placement allocation process will continue to be developed and

linked to the timetable for future PEPs courses and the timings of the Medway Council student faculty allocation meetings. This will be finalised by March 2020.

In KCC, the first social work placements historically have been prioritised for LA sponsored students undertaking the OU course. These placements are sourced in both the LA and the PVI sector. In 2018/19 the Teaching Partnership in a LA mental health enablement service developed one placement opportunity. One student from the HEI was matched successfully with this new placement and completed in July 2019. The feedback from the student about the placement was:

“On reflection, I found that the placement to be a good placement because it has prepared me for my final year statutory placement; the placement enabled me to demonstrate effective use of knowledge and skills and commitment to core values in social work in a given setting, predominantly dealing with situations of lower complexity, with supervision and support from the site supervisor, the members of staff and my practice educator.”

In Medway Council in 2018/19, there was a long running successful LA student unit initiative called SSWISS (Student Social Workers in school settings) which was linked to children’s services, working with the school alternative provisions. This LA student unit worked with ten Social Work students from the HEI’s on their first placement each year, providing ongoing opportunities for the Social Work students to work with the LA’s children’s statutory services. However, the post holder was seconded to the KMTP and Medway Council were unable to recruit to the post.

In 2019/20, five additional first placements and one final placement have been developed by KMTP in the LA’s. One of these was in Medway Council, in the Self-Directed Support team, with one of the Advanced Practitioners in the role of the Off-Site Practice Educator. Feedback from the student about the experience was that *‘it was a children and adults’ team. It would have been good to do more on the children’s part and incorporated the Children Act. But overall good experience.* “

Four additional placements were developed in KCC, three in Early Help teams and one in the Kent Enablement & Prevention Service, working with children and young people with disabilities. These placements have been established with an Advanced Practitioner as the Off-site Practice Educator. These placements are still ongoing, but early indications are that the placements will be very successful, and they will be formally evaluated before the end of the March 2020.

In addition, three first placements were created in the KCC Social Work Teams, through PEP’s candidates undertaking their training. However only one of these placements was utilised by the HEI’s, due to the students either not having access to their own transport or not having a current DBS.

An evaluation of the first placements, was carried out by the Advanced Practitioners, who identified that the new placement opportunities were well received by the services and the Social Work students, who also thought that the placement experience had prepared them for the final placement. The KMTP have worked with both of the LA’s to develop a placement evaluation tool for the LA’s to evaluate the placement experience for student Social Workers and the Practice Educators. This remains to be adopted by the LA’s.

Specific Modifications to the HEI's and LA's Placement handbooks

The KMTP has worked with both LA's to develop a student handbook / student induction pack, to introduce the social work students from both HEI's to the placement and the wider LA at the start of the placement. In these student handbooks, advice is given to students to keep them safe while on placement and guides them to the LAs lone working policy This was fully implemented in Medway prior to KMTP and introduced in KCC from September 2019.

The two HEI's have met to discuss their respective placement handbooks and subsequently made moderations, to streamline the placement assessment process. This has brought the two portfolio requirements from both HEI's in a greater alignment, however substantial differences in the assessment process and requirements remain.

A discussion was had between the HEI's and the LA's about introducing 'pan – Kent' portfolio requirements, and although the LA's were keen on this development, the HEI's held the view that substantial changes to the content of the HEI portfolio requirements through the work of the KMTP, both of the HEI's wanted to embed these changes and did not want to align the students' holistic assessment. Therefore, the overall assessment remains distinctly different at each HEI. i.e. for UoK the assessment is completed entirely by the Practice Educator and for CCCU the additional assessment is completed by the student, with comments by the practice educator, which then informs the holistic assessment.

The Appointment of two KMTP Lecturer Posts, one in each of the HEI's.

Two Teaching Partnership Lecturer posts have been in post since June 2019. One of the posts is a joint KMTP post, part time as a lecturer with UoK and part time as an Advanced Practitioner at KCC.

The reflections from the joint TP lecturer/Advanced Practitioner are:

'As a practitioner, there is a risk to be focused on the processes, policies, organisational context and keeping the deadlines, therefore there is less time to debate dilemmas and to question your professional judgements. There is definitely less time to keep up to date with research and publications. Having this dual role gave me the opportunity to bring "practice" into academia, but also to be more prepared to challenge the local authority system.....I am a participant observer in both worlds, which gives me an in depth understanding about the problem they face, and the barriers need to break.

As a practitioner social worker, I know it is crucial to integrate information from different fields like attachment theory when you work with adults. I have been very fortunate to work with children and older people and I learnt how important are transferable skills and knowledge. I have read different modules from curricula and discussed with the lecturers how they integrate and correlate the information between their courses. Some of them acknowledged that they are very much focus on their topics in the classroom, without making the links with other modules.

Having this dual expertise empowers me to advocate for a better experience for the students."

The lecturer post at CCCU was based on a traditional model, to work as a full-time lecturer at the HEI. However, as the appointment occurred in the middle of the academic year, the lecturer was initially able to directly link with some of the activities of the KMTP e.g. discussions about developing the work with service users and the development of the curriculum. However, in the new academic year the lecturer was allocated set teaching hours and undertook the role of personal tutor and placement tutor and the KMTP became secondary to her role. In effect the KMTP lecturer became 'absorbed into the University and went with the priorities of the HEI i.e. the teaching of the students.'

The lecturer was involved in other aspects of the developing the curriculum e.g. the readiness for practice sessions for the MA Social Work students, skills module, introduction to social work and the application of the law. The reflections from the KMTP lecturer about this aspect are;

"The best bet is to share my experience of practice with the next generation of Social Workers...the current dilemmas and link this to their learning."

The lecturer also undertook the role of Social Work lead for service users for the HEI. Through this work, she was able to undertake a development day for three service users focusing upon admissions, diversity and unconscious bias.

Through undertaking the post, the lecturer has gained a valuable experience of lecturing and it has enabled them to successfully transition from the role of a practitioner to lecturer.

Developments to the Social Work Curriculum

The Partnership has aimed to develop and enhance the curriculum through developing the Practitioner Teachers, which is also highlighted in *the academic delivery case study*. The KMTP has formalised the process to enable qualified and experienced social workers, with an interest in supporting learning to be matched according to their area of expertise, to participate in the teaching, within the curriculum of the HEI's. Producing materials such as case studies from day-to-day practice for use as good practice examples and interactive exercises. This has led to a significant interest from practitioners in one of the LA's and is already showing potential for building stronger collaboration between Local Authority practitioners, allowing for the curriculum to reflect current practice needs.

The KMTP Lecturer at UoK has been involved with reshaping specific areas of the curriculum i.e. including more tools and practical skills in courses like Readiness for Practice BA 1 (September to May), Skills Development Days (BA2, BA3, MA1, MA2 and Step Up) and Social Work with Adults. The UoK lecturer has also created a visual tool for Readiness for Practice to use with the BA1 students in each session from September to May and has ensured that there will be dedicated time for the students to discuss how they integrate the knowledge from all courses in practice and how they can make use of self in practice. *The outcome of this work has aimed to reduce the gap between the student's expectations from placement and reality by equipping the students for practice.*

As a joint LA Advanced Practitioner and HEI post, the worker has been able to develop 'a continuum of curriculum support' from being a student Social Worker to a NQSW's e.g. the Advanced Practitioner has worked in KCC to develop the ASYE programme. In undertaking this work, it has enabled an analysis of the knowledge and skills gaps of the NQSW's. These gaps have now been

included in HEI curriculum. For instance, grief and loss/ end of life care was not previously been part of the curriculum, however this has now been added in skills development days at UoK.

Future Developments

- 1. To review and continue to develop the student allocation process in KCC.*
- 2. To implement the LA placement evaluation tool within both of the LA's to analyse the placement experience for student Social Workers and Practice Educators.*
- 3. The HEI's through the placement coordinators to undertake an annual review of the students who have failed to identify potential improvements within the HEI's and LA/ placements and discuss this with the Student faculties of the Academies on an annual basis.*
- 4. For the KMTP to take a formal view about developing a 'pan- Kent' Student Social Work assessment portfolio.*
- 5. A formal evaluation of the TP Lecturer/Advanced Practitioner and TP Lecturer posts.*
- 6. The placement and the curriculum task and finish group to become a regular bi-annual joint HEI / LA placement and curriculum development group.*