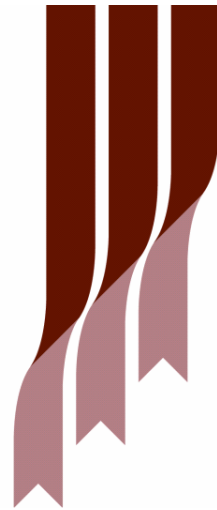# SCOTTISH INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

# REPORT ON L.E.E.P. (1.2) AND INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT (3.2) PILOT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF PAISLEY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH QUARRIERS

Report on L.E.E.P. (1.2) and Integrated Assessment (3.2)
Pilot Demonstration Project

## 1. **Background**

The University of Paisley has the Universities of Dundee, Stirling and the Open University as university partners. The pilot project will inform our demonstration project, and Renfrewshire Council will join the above grouping to undertake this.

Our remit is to combine the key objectives of both projects:

- Opportunities for Inter-professional Learning (LEEP 1.2)

"To develop innovative opportunities for inter-professional learning within new service settings to serve as models of good practice."

- Shared Approach to Performance Assessment (IA 3.2)

"To explore and further develop a shared approach, with other professionals, to the performance assessment of social work students."

The integration of these objectives is intended to acknowledge the symbiotic relationship between practice learning and the assessment of competence to practice.

The University of Paisley Pilot project is a collaborative project with Quarriers as our partner agency.

"Quarriers is a Scottish charity providing a diverse range of services that offer support and care for children, adults and families. They aim to challenge poverty and inequality of opportunity and choice, to bring about positive changes in people's lives. They provide a total of 80 services spread over 100 locations throughout Scotland. Staff numbers are 1400- 95% of which are frontline care and support staff."

Quarriers Annual review 2002/3

The expected outcomes from the Pilot and Demonstration project are;

- Pilot demonstration project with Quarriers to be completed by 31st August 2004 and evaluation report completed by 31st October 2004.
- Demonstration Project, informed by Pilot Project, to begin on 25th October 2004, with project update completed by 31st January 2005 and project evaluation 31st July 2005.
- Contribution to Comprehensive Knowledge Review for L.E.E.P. and Integrated Assessment projects.

- Involvement in Training Programme with Institute partners to disseminate the findings of L.E.E.P. and Integrated Assessment Projects.

## 1. **Pilot Demonstration Project**

Our aim was to consider new opportunities for inter-professional learning within a range of existing and new service settings and explore the possibilities for a shared approach to the assessment of social work students in these placements. We have done this by placing one cohort (8) of Fast-track Direct Practice 1. (D.P.1.) Diploma in Social Work (Dip.S.W.) students in a range of placements provided by Quarriers.

These placements provided opportunities for collaborative practice as defined by Whittington (2003), i.e. opportunities for a range of inter-professional, multi-disciplinary and inter-agency approaches. Inter-professional learning opportunities were defined as those taking place in settings where there was perceived adaptations of roles, responsibilities, values, knowledge and skills between professionals and where workers were expected to take account of and interact with these in their practice. Multi-professional learning opportunities were defined as those taking place in settings where collaboration within roles occurred but did not necessarily involve adaptation of professional values, knowledge and skills. Collaborative practice learning opportunities were those which involved people working together from different agencies or professions towards providing a better service for users Payne (2000).

The range of opportunities available to students was as follows;
- Inter-professional teams - Youth Homelessness and Homeless Support Project; School Support Project
- Multi-disciplinary teams - Residential School, support projects for adults with complex needs
- Inter-agency collaborative practice - Housing, Health, Education, S.C.R.A., Voluntary Sector Agencies, Statutory Social Work Agencies, Psychological Services, Pastoral Services, Prison
- Collaborative practice with service users and carers
- Social Care Settings - staff from a range of professional disciplines
- Joint Training - Homelessness, Essential Lifestyle Planning
- Team-working
- Shadowing other professionals
- Visiting other agencies

The primary responsibility for assessment of students was undertaken by practice teachers from a social work background. We did not have non-social work practice teachers available to us, but would in any case have questioned the suitability of practitioners from other professions taking primary responsibility for the assessment of social work students. Given the assessment frameworks and requirements of the Dip.S.W., it is difficult to imagine how other professionals would assess against required competences without substantial training and support. The absence of common standards and assessment

frameworks across professions together with differing perspectives, commitments and imperatives to such an approach are seen as persuasive barriers.

Most placements did however involve a link supervisor generally from a profession other than social work e.g. health, education, community education, housing. Verbal and written contributions made by these people to the summative and formative assessments of students provided data relating to the views of other professionals about what is important when assessing competence to practice. It was acknowledged that these link supervisors required additional training and support to undertake their extended role. They were trained to identify competence in relation to collaborative practice and evidence indicators were developed to allow them to identify suitable learning opportunities. They had the continual support of Quarriers dedicated practice teachers and were able to capitalise upon these well established relationships. These link supervisors provided the students with valuable insight into the work of other professionals. All students in this cohort had the same tutor which encouraged some consistency of communication, assessment and practice.

## 1. **Issues raised by Practice Audits and Reviews**

Relying on findings from the 1.2 Practice Audit and Literature review we set out to explore whether students would demonstrate;
- Enhanced awareness of their own professional identity and those of other professionals
- Understanding of the roles and responsibilities of social workers and other professionals
- Appreciation of the different perspectives and values of a range of professionals
- Greater familiarity with collaborative processes and systems
- Improved joint practice to the benefit of service users and carers
- An improved level of reflection and critical analysis as a result of exposure to other ways of thinking and doing

In addition, we anticipated that students might demonstrate learning in the following areas;
- Understanding of the legal, policy and organisational context within which inter-professional practice occurs
- Collaborative practice with service users and carers
- Communication skills when working with other professionals
- Networking skills
- Working as effective team members
- Appreciation of the potential for conflict and dilemmas in inter-professional practice and how to manage these

Relying on findings from 3.2 Practice Audit and Literature review, the following questions were considered by the demonstration project;
- How and what can other professionals contribute to the performance assessment of social work students on practice placement?

- Is their contribution different to that offered by a social work practice teacher?
- What approach to inter-professional learning were we to adopt? The Pilot Project has adopted a "pragmatic model" (Trevillion & Bedford 2003) to assist students to focus on the ethos and values underpinning inter-professional practice and to help them develop the knowledge and skills necessary for effective collaborative practice.

## 1. <u>Implementing the pilot demonstration project</u>

In exploring the above areas we were faced with a number of constraints;
- We were not able to consider opportunities for shared practice learning and assessment with students from other professional groupings. This may limit students preparedness for joint working
- Other professionals did not carry primary responsibility for the assessment of social work students. Availability of such people made this problematic and as the 3.2 project audit states, there seems less of an imperative or incentive for this in other professional groups. The social work profession also remains divided about the wisdom of such a development and what is required to support it.
- The timing of this experience for these D.P.1.students was likely to have considerable influence upon their learning about inter-professional practice (Payne 2000) i.e. had they yet a firm enough professional identity to accommodate the challenges of inter-professional practice?

However, in an effort to consider a shared approach to performance assessment we identified link supervisors from a range of professional backgrounds who would play a central part in the support and assessment of the students. We also built in opportunities for service users to offer feedback on the student. Service user feedback was sought directly by the practice teacher or link supervisor and included in the final report. Service users did not submit written feedback and this is an area for further consideration in the next stage of the demonstration project.

Six of the eight students were allocated link supervisors from a range of professional backgrounds and they were asked to complete a short written assessment on the students as part of the final assessment. Considerable support was built in to allow the link supervisors to undertake their assessment responsibilities e.g. workshops on inter-professional practice and assessment as well as individual support from practice teachers.

They were not asked to write to the Diploma in Social Work Competences but encouraged to respond in their own way to the areas that they had agreed were important. They were subsequently provided with a proforma asking for comments on the following areas and examples to illustrate their assessment;

- The student's ability to develop and sustain effective working relationships with service users
- The student's ability to work in partnership with service users, building on their strengths
- The student's ability to work as a member of your team

- The student's ability to work with professionals from your own or other agencies
- The student's ability to identify dilemmas in working with other professionals
- Feedback from service users, other professionals and agencies upon the student's performance
- How the student has worked with you as link supervisor
- The student's ability to manage workload; reliability, attendance; punctuality
- The student's progress in undertaking the work carried out by your agency

## 1. <u>Evaluation of Pilot Demonstration Project</u>

**Sources of data**
- DP1 Placement reports from student, practice teacher and link supervisor
- Feedback on DP1 placement reports from tutors and Practice Assessment Panel
- External Assessor comments
- Students Part 1 Integrative Practice Studies
- Placement evaluation forms completed by the learning team

Documentary analysis allowed us to gather information relating to the following areas;

**a) Students' understanding of the legal, policy and organisational context for inter-professional and collaborative practice;** In all but one student report there was clear evidence that the students had a sound understanding of the legal and policy imperatives which were driving inter-professional practice. They linked this to a clearer understanding of their role, the role of their placement agency and any organisational constraints and opportunities. Evidence suggests that this contributed to the students' analytical skills in relation to agency function and their own role as a social work practitioner.

**b) Students' understanding and appreciation of the origins and ethos of inter-professional and collaborative practice;** All reports supported the principle that inter-professional and collaborative practice benefited service users by avoiding duplication, and by combining knowledge, skills and resources. The benefits of information sharing to shared assessment and care planning were appreciated but there was less evidence that students understood how information sharing was central to risk assessment and the protection of vulnerable people. This may relate to the stage students were at in their learning. There was a strong emphasis on the centrality of service users when working collaboratively.

**c) Students' appreciation of the roles and responsibilities of social work;** Given these were DP1 students, achieving clarity about role and purpose was a major focus. There were a number of examples throughout the reports which related to misunderstandings about the social work role vis-à-vis that of other professionals. These incidents however were taken as learning opportunities to help students become clearer about their role and to build appreciation of the diverse values, roles and tasks of other professionals and service users. The reflective sections of students' reports and their Integrative Practice Study (I.P.S.) suggest that these 'critical incidents' have acted to positively reinforce the

literature and practice wisdom associated with effective inter-professional practice and further encouraged students to reflect upon their own practice.

**d) Students' appreciation of the roles and responsibilities of other professionals;** Students seemed to appreciate the need to understand the roles and responsibilities of other professionals. Most of them have been assisted in this via opportunities to work alongside other professionals in inter or multi-professional teams. All students have been able to work on an inter-agency basis to provide services appropriate to user need and where appropriate to protect and support vulnerable individuals. Many of the students benefited from visits to other agencies and some from shadowing other professionals as well as social workers. Those students with a link supervisor from another profession seemed to be quite aware of the differing priorities and value bases and generally stated that they benefited from this exposure. This was particularly the case when working alongside Housing and Education colleagues.

e) **Students' ability to acknowledge differences in values and approaches between professionals and agencies;** The students seemed especially aware of the potential for different value bases and approaches between professionals. Although alert to this they seemed on the whole more open to exploring alternative perspectives whilst adhering to those appropriate to the social work profession and their employing agencies. This was appreciated by the learning team as a sound indicator of effective collaborative practice. Again this may have occurred as a result of their exposure to colleagues within the placement setting who had a different professional background and the influence of link supervisors from a range of backgrounds. The culture of Quarriers as an organisation and the role of service users in its development also cannot be underestimated as influences.

**f) Students' ability to acknowledge and manage practice dilemmas and the potential for conflict in inter-professional and collaborative practice;**
Reports gave evidence that students were beginning to appreciate that practice dilemmas relating to inter-professional and collaborative practice were complex. The potential for conflict was understood but there was less evidence that students were confident or competent in managing this. Supervision was used appropriately but there was less progress to be seen in improved inter-professional relationships or integrated service provision. This may be related to the short duration of placements or to historical relationships between agencies. Some students and all practice teachers recognised that this lack of progress is often associated with organisational constraints and territorial attitudes between professions/ agencies. Other students were keener to adopt personal responsibility for this lack of progress. Where students were placed in inter-professional teams their experience of other professionals and the benefits of collaborative practice was far more positive.

**g) Students' appreciation of service users and carers as core to effective collaborative practice;** Working in partnership with service users was seen as a strength in all reports. Students worked collaboratively with service users in examples of direct service delivery, service planning and evaluation. Students and practice teachers acknowledge that this was influenced by practice methods preferred in the agency e.g.

person-centered and essential lifestyle planning. The ethos and mission of the agency was seen to give a clear message about the place of service users within the organisation and the services provided. Value issues were strongly represented in all student reports and all located service users at the centre of their concern. It was evidenced that collaborative practice has as its aim improved service delivery and life chances to service users.

**h) Students' understanding of teamwork in a range of contexts;** Students seemed more confident in their knowledge about team working within the placement setting and clearly articulated and valued the benefits of a teamwork approach. This was the case irrespective of the type of placement setting although those in multi or inter-professional settings more clearly articulated the potential benefits as well as challenges.

**i) Students' ability to work as part of a team;** The skills essential to work as part of a team within the placement setting were strongly evidenced in all reports and were commented upon in placement evaluations as an important area of learning. Students as well as practice teachers and link supervisors saw this as core to the effective practitioner and as foundational to effective collaborative practice. Student reports however suggested that further development is required to aid transferability of group/team working skills into multi and inter-agency contexts. Some further thought is required about the complexities created by agency agendas, priorities and professional boundaries and how they influence individual and team practice.

**j) Demonstration of skills necessary to effectively work in an inter-professional and collaborative context;** Students highlighted the benefits of collaborative practice to service users and workers alike, but were less confident in dealing with dilemmas arising as a result of differing roles, responsibilities and perceptions. Issues of power and authority were apparent in many of the practice dilemmas faced by students and there was evidence that the potential to be effective in inter-professional practice was influenced by power differentials felt by the students. This might be expected of students at this stage in their training when their own professional identity is developing and not necessarily well established. Use of supervision and exposure to colleagues from other professional backgrounds did allow students to explore dilemmas from different viewpoints and the impact of this will be evaluated throughout their DP2 placement experience. Those students in inter-professional placement settings had more regular opportunity to develop skills in working with other professionals and evidenced appreciation of shared agendas and priorities but continued to 'struggle' with some of the challenges posed by differing value assumptions.

**k) Contributions made by service users and other professionals to the assessment of students;** All reports included feedback from service users that had been collated by link supervisors and practice teachers. The focus of service users' attention was upon the students' ability to communicate effectively and to take their views into account. The students' ability to see them as important individual people and treat them with respect was of some significance. Emphasis in service user feedback was not upon achieved outcomes but rather upon how they felt about working with the students and how the student made them feel about themselves. Service users did not comment upon specific outcomes but upon "how much better the student had made my (their) life". It is

acknowledged that this might be particular to the types of service settings and service users involved.  However the range of service users were relatively representative of those who use the gambit of social work services (children and their families; accommodated children; homeless young people who experienced mental ill health, abuse, unemployment, addictions, offending behaviour, social isolation; adults with learning disabilities and complex needs; older people in group care settings; carers groups).

## 1.  <u>Information from link supervisor reports</u>

All link supervisors rated highly the student's ability to develop and sustain effective working relationships with service users and to work in partnership with them.  They drew on an appreciation of inter-personal skills and gave evidence of the range of skills used to demonstrate effectiveness in this area.  Their contribution to assessment of these areas was very similar to that offered by the social work practice teachers i.e. reliance upon literature and practice knowledge about effective communication skills and the nature of 'relationship' in good practice.  The professional background of the link supervisor seemed to make little difference to how they assessed these areas.

Comments about the students' ability to work as a member of the team were varied but mostly related to the practical tasks undertaken by the students and their willingness to "chip in", rather than to the skills and knowledge which the student contributed.  Two link supervisors did offer a detailed evaluation of the students' skills in working as team members. Both of these link supervisors came from a health background.

Comments about the students' abilities to work with other professionals demonstrated that students had become more aware of the roles, responsibilities and priorities of other professionals, but there was limited comment about the practice skills involved or about their progress in this area.  Rather a range of examples were cited as evidence of good outcomes.  Most commented upon the students' ability to build relationships with other professionals and agencies but did not consider what had contributed to these outcomes. All reports highlighted the students' increased awareness of the practice dilemmas involved when working with other professionals and growing sensitivity that this was a challenging but rewarding area of work which when effective, did seem to benefit service users.  Those students in an inter-professional setting (3) did demonstrate a more sophisticated understanding of the tensions and challenges whilst achieving a more substantial range of skills in working with other professionals and managing conflict. They also had more detailed feedback available from a range of professional colleagues about their performance.

Comments about the student/link supervisor relationship were very positive. Interestingly, students and practice teachers in their reports did comment upon the added value of having a link supervisor from another profession stating that this helped them appreciate differing views and priorities.

Assessment of the students' ability to manage their time and workload reflected the comments made by the social work practice teachers i.e. emphasis upon reliability, attendance, and commitment to partnership with service users and the work of the agency.

Most link supervisors commented upon the student's ability to establish good relationships with other professionals and agencies and to represent the agency in a positive light.

## 2.  **Information from placement evaluation forms**

Placement evaluation forms identified how the placement learning opportunities had contributed to student understanding about collaborative practice.  The following areas were noted consistently as important;
* Learning about social work values and those of other professional groups
* Helped clarify own role and purpose as a social work student
* Helped understanding about the attitudes, roles and priorities of other professionals and agencies
* Helped question our own attitudes, values, priorities and practices
* Benefits in giving a holistic view of peoples' lives and more integrated service responses
* Being clear about the policy and legal contexts for inter-professional practice helped us understand the rationale for inter-professional work

## 1.  **Information from External Assessors report**

The quality of both placement reports and IPS was seen to be "of an impressive standard."  The external assessor commented upon most students displaying a good ability to reflect upon their interactions with service users and other professionals.  Several students were noted to have "included useful critical analysis" although there is no comment on what may have contributed to this.

## 2.  **Analysis and Overview**

The opportunities available in these placements seemed to encourage students to develop their understanding of inter-professional practice issues and the policy, legislative and organisational context within which it occurs.  This did seem to help students reflect more widely upon their practice, but the development of skills necessary for effective inter-professional practice could be said to be at an early stage.  This could be related to the stage these students were at in their training and professional development (D.P.1.) and to the relative lack of power and associated authority they perceive themselves as having as student practitioners.  Students are understandably grappling with their own professional identity and as such may lack confidence to understand or accommodate that of other professions.  Organisational constraints and professional competitiveness should also be considered for their potential impact upon effective practice in this area.

Students clearly valued opportunities to gain a better understanding of what other professions and their agencies do and stated that they would be better practitioners as a result and able to offer a more integrated service to service users.  Students appreciated working alongside colleagues from other professions, either as link supervisors or within inter-professional teams.  The opportunities to shadow other workers, or be involved in

joint practice, were considered invaluable. Whilst many of the benefits of inter-professional and collaborative practice are recognised by students, those related to the protection of vulnerable people was not fully appreciated and is an area which will be pursued with the DP2 students in the demonstration project.

Collaborative work with service users was seen as core and students felt more confident in this area. This confidence was borne out by evidence in placement reports, evaluation forms and feedback from the learning teams.

The contribution by other professionals to performance assessment of practice learning shows little variance in certain areas from that offered by social work practice teachers. The possibilities of having non-social work practice teachers have been considered but at present there is a sufficient dearth of these within this geographical area to make this a difficult proposition for the demonstration project. Debates about the wisdom of developing a comprehensive approach to the assessment of our respective students require airing before we commit to such a challenge at practitioner and agency level. We will continue to use link supervisors from a range of professions to contribute to the performance assessments of the students involved in the demonstration project.

Opportunities to learn, and be assessed alongside other professionals in practice placement has not been available to this group of students. Whilst this may continue to limit our exploration, it is possible that there may be opportunities for joint practice learning with health colleagues in the demonstration project. Both partner agencies may be able to facilitate this.

The students involved in the pilot project were D.P.1 students who had not yet benefited from substantial teaching on inter-professional practice or groupwork. They attended a workshop on inter-professional practice provided jointly by the University and Quarriers as a support to placement, and focused upon related theory and practice within supervision. It is considered essential that students have the opportunity to better integrate theory and practice in this area, and DP2 students involved in the demonstration project will receive more substantial input in inter-professional practice, groupwork and working in teams. They will also have the opportunity to undertake an assessed small group enquiry exercise into collaborative practice. Students will also be given more in-depth teaching on risk assessment and risk management which may contribute to the development of inter-professional practice skills.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

- More opportunities for practice learning in a wider range of inter-professional settings are required
- Increase the number of students involved in the demonstration project to widen applicability

- Monitor the development of this pilot group of students to evaluate any impact this placement experience might have had upon collaborative practice as demonstrated in their D.P.2. placement
- We should continue to encourage all practice teachers and link supervisors to develop a range of opportunities for students to network and work alongside other professionals
- Continued consideration should be given to the contribution made by link supervisors and other professionals to the performance assessment of students
- Articulate evidence indicators and learning opportunities for students with a link supervisor from a different professional background/training
- Encourage the learning team to use the suggested performance indicators as a guide for the evidencing of inter-professional practice
- Continue to offer additional training and support for link supervisors undertaking this role
- Further consideration to be given to service user feedback and their contribution to the performance assessment of students
- Teaching on inter-professional practice, teamwork, groupwork and risk assessment/management to support placement learning - emphasis should be upon the development of practice skills in these areas
- Consider repeated opportunities for group supervision of students to encourage effective team-working skills
- Consider repeat opportunities for academics, students and practitioners to share experiences of inter-professional practice in workshops

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