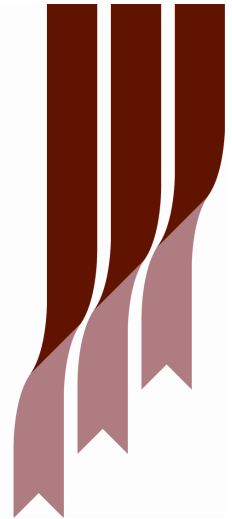SCOTTISH INSTITUTE
FOR EXCELLENCE IN
SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

LEARNING FOR EFFECTIVE AND ETHICAL PRACTICE

Agency-based Practice Learning Opportunities

LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model

Evaluation Report (Full Version)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS   **PAGE**

Background

The Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (the Institute) is promoting the Learning for Effective and Ethical Practice (LEEP) Project, the overall purpose of which is to improve radically the quality, quantity, range, relevance, inter-professionality and management of agency-based practice learning opportunities for the new social work degree. In order to achieve such an aim, the LEEP Project has the following objectives:

1. To enhance the integration of learning for practice within the university and in the workplace.

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

3. To work in partnership with social work agencies to identify possible solutions to problems associated with or arising from the supply of agency-based practice learning opportunities

Three Higher Education Institutions are involved in the development of the LEEP Project: the University of Edinburgh has a leading role in enhancing the integration of learning for practice (objective 1), the University of Dundee is focusing on developing opportunities for inter-professional learning (objective 2), and the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, is working in partnership with social work agencies to achieve objective 3.

Prior to the implementation of the Project's Demonstration Model, the key themes highlighted by the Practice Audit and Literature Review were used to design two pilot projects, which were run in Local Authority Social Work settings between February and May 2004 (Bruce, 2004). One pilot project was based in Aberdeen City Council's Criminal Justice Service, and another pilot project in Children's Services, Aberdeenshire Council. A total of twelve students –in two groups of six- took part in the pilot projects.

Findings from the evaluation of the two pilot projects were presented by the report 'Project 1.3 Pilot Evaluation'. Such findings have informed the next stage of the Project, which encompasses the design, implementation and evaluation of the LEEP

Project 1.3 Demonstration Model. The Demonstration Model, developed in partnership with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils Social Work Departments between August and December 2004, has explored an integrated approach to agency-based practice learning based on the following principles:

- Creation of opportunities for interchangeable roles between university and agency.

- Development of the role of practice learning facilitator as a manager, negotiator and co-ordinator of packages of learning opportunities. The practice learning facilitator also has major responsibilities in the teaching and assessment of students.

- Develop service specific and cross sector packages of learning opportunities.

- Development of a team approach to student learning and assessment by engaging a range of staff (links) who coach and supervise discreet aspects of a student's direct practice.

- Implementation of a group and individual pattern of student supervision. The pattern used in the Demonstration Model includes:

    - Weekly 1/1.5-hour case-based supervision with link supervisor(s) (between 1 – 1.5 hrs);

    - Fortnightly 3-hour group supervision with practice learning facilitator.

    - Three weekly 2-hour individual supervision with practice learning facilitator.

    - In addition three joint meetings are arranged over the duration of the agency-based practice learning experience for student, links and practice learning facilitator to come together, one of which is also followed by a mid-point review meeting involving the student's personal tutor.

- Involvement of service users and carers in the assessment process.

Aim of the study

To evaluate the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model.

Sample

All students and professionals that took part in the implementation of the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model (n = 51) were initially considered as potential participants in the present study. However, it has not been possible to approach for evaluation purposes four staff members who were involved in the project as link supervisors – two of them due to illness and two having left their job. Therefore, the sample size of the study is 47 participants (n = 47) who are distributed according to the following roles:

- 8 personal tutors;

- 11 students;

- 2 practice learning facilitators;

- 2 senior managers;

- 24 team managers, team seniors and link supervisors.

Methods

a) **Research design.** A post-test only design, has been used for the evaluation of the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model.

b) **Evaluation tools:**

- Personal tutors were given the choice to provide their feedback through an on-line questionnaire or an individual semi-structured interview using the same questionnaire.

- A focus group session with the support of a questionnaire was conducted with each of the student groups. An on-line questionnaire was used by one student who was not able to attend the group session due to illness.

- An individual semi-structured interview with the support of a questionnaire was conducted with each of the practice learning facilitators.

- On-line questionnaires were distributed among senior managers, team managers, team seniors and link supervisors.

c) **Evaluation method.** The present study has used a mixed-method approach to evaluation: both closed- and open-ended questions have been formulated in order to collect quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. This approach is adequate to quantify participants' feedback regarding a range of areas as well as know participants' understanding and insights about the programme and what can be done to improve it.

Response rate

32 out of the 47 participants in the study returned the questionnaire or held an interview or group session in order to provide their feedback, which yields an overall response rate of 68%. Although there are different opinions about this issue, a response rate over 60% can be considered acceptable for survey research (Babbie, 1990; Schutt, 1999). Response rate in this study has been largely affected by relatively low participation among link supervisors: only 45% of link supervisors completed and returned the questionnaire, which might be accounted for by the length and complexity of the questionnaire coupled with time constraints at work.

Findings

The evaluation of the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model has focused on the following areas:

1. Interchangeability of university and agency staff.

2. Placement preparation.

3. The role of practice learning facilitator.

4. Service and cross-sector learning opportunities.

5. Team approach.

6. The role of link supervisor.

7. Individual and group supervision.

8. The role of senior managers, team managers and team seniors.

9. Access to Information Technology.

10. Service user and carer involvement.

11. Impact of the integrated assessment process.

12. Student contribution.

13. The future: prepared for practice.

14. Other comments and suggestions.

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1. <u>Interchangeability of university and agency staff</u>.

The survey tool included several open- and closed-ended questions aimed to gain a better understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of interchanging university and agency staff in the agency-based practice learning process – e.g., involving academic tutors in providing knowledge to social work agencies and agency staff in making a teaching contribution to higher education institutions. Results are shown in tables 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4.

Table 1.1: Advantages of interchanging academic and agency staff roles

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
- It helps the student make links between theory and practice ……….	14
- It allows university and social work agencies to work in partnership, to establish links and exchange ideas…….…….……	8
- Input from academic tutors help students not lose sight of academic demands ……….……….……….……….……….……….	8
- It allows university staff to make stronger links with practice, more contact with the 'real world' ……….……….…………………	7
- It facilitates further professional development for agency staff ……	7

"A very positive step", "Best of both worlds – getting good theory base together with current practice experience."

Table 1.2: Disadvantages of interchanging academic and agency staff roles

Themes	Frequency
- Boundaries issues: roles and responsibilities can become blurred, potential conflict of interests ……..…………………………	7
- Academic staff may be too far from practice …………..……...	6
- Time constraints for academic tutors, less time for research……	6
- Sustainability may be an issue	2

"Very often, academic tutors live in an 'ivory tower'."

Figure 1.3: To what extent has the placement been useful in allowing the student to integrate theory and practice?

		To what extent has the placement been useful in allowing the student to integrate theory and practice?			
		To a great extent	To a moderate extent	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Total	Count	**13**	**6**	**4**	**23**
	% of responses	**56,5%**	**26,1%**	**17,4%**	**100,0%**

Table 1.4: Further comments and suggestions about interchangeability of staff for future agency-based practice learning

Themes	Frequency
- Academic tutors teaching in agencies having experience as practitioners …………………………………………………	4
- Academic staff involved in agency work ……….. ……………..	4
- Dissemination of recent research findings in practice settings …..	2
- HEI may need to give greater consideration to a range of factors which impact on practice learning – e.g. staff recruitment, workloads of teams, geographic factors	1
- Extension of scheme to newly qualified workers, who need to be well supported so that they develop good practice ……………..	1

"Academic input should be brought to agencies by somebody who has not escaped from practice."
"If academia expects practitioners to have input to teaching, then the reverse should be the same."

Findings: Helping the student link theory and practice is the most frequently mentioned (n = 14) advantage of interchanging academic and agency staff roles. Some participants (n = 8) also highlighted the importance of input from academic tutors in order to help students not lose sight of academic demands. Increased opportunities for higher education institutions and social work agencies to work in partnership (n = 8) is another of the most frequently mentioned advantages of this approach (table 1.1).

Boundaries issues (n = 7), lack of contact of academic tutors with practice (n = 6) and time pressures are the most frequently cited disadvantages of interchanging academic and agency staff roles (table 1.2).

As table 1.3 shows, a total of 13 respondents (56.5%) answered that the placement has been useful "to a great extent" in allowing the student to integrate theory and practice, and six respondents (26.1%) answered "to a moderate extent". No participant reported that the placement has been little useful or not useful at all in allowing the student to integrate theory and practice. Four respondents answered that they did not know the answer or the question was not applicable to their role.

More involvement in agency work of academic tutors who have experience as practitioners is the most frequent suggestion produced by participants in relation to this section (table 1.4).

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2. **Placement preparation.**

This section deals with the evaluation of preparation arrangements for the Demonstration Model. For this purpose, participants were asked about four different aspects of the preparation process carried out before or at the beginning of the placement: (i) placement preparation provided by the Robert Gordon University; (ii) information about the agency provided by the practice learning facilitator to the student or his/her personal tutor; (iii) placement preparation provided to the agency team by the practice learning facilitator; and (iv) agency induction provided to the student. In addition, personal tutors were asked to give their opinion on the

information about the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model provided to them before the placement.

Tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10 and 2.11 show the distribution of responses across the different response categories as well as the themes most frequently produced by participants.

Table 2.1: How useful was the placement preparation in RGU in familiarising the student with the structure and content of the placement?

			How useful was the placement preparation in RGU in familiarising the student with the structure and content of the placement?				
			Very useful	Useful	Moderately useful	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	3	0	8	0	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	27,3%	,0%	72,7%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	3	1	1	2	7
		%	42,9%	14,3%	14,3%	28,6%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	0	0	1	2
		%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	50,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	0	5	0	4	9
		%	,0%	55,6%	,0%	44,4%	100,0%
Total		Count	**7**	**7**	**9**	**7**	**30**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**23,3%**	**23,3%**	**30,0%**	**23,3%**	**100,0%**

Table 2.2: How useful was the information about the agency provided by the practice learning facilitator (PLF) to the student/personal tutor prior to the beginning of the placement?

			How useful was the information about the agency provided by the PLF to the student/personal tutor prior to the beginning of the placement?				
			Very useful	Useful	Moderately useful	Not applicable	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	6	0	5	0	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	54.5%	.0%	45.5%	.0%	100.0%
	Personal tutor	Count	3	1	2	1	7
		%	42.9%	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	100.0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Link supervisor	Count	0	0	0	1	1
		%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	2	7	2	21
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	47.6%	9.5%	33.3%	9.5%	100.0%

Table 2.3: How would you evaluate the placement preparation provided to the agency team by the practice learning facilitator?

			How would you evaluate the placement preparation provided to the team by the PLF?			
			Excellent	Good	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Team senior	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	100,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	3	4	1	8
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	37,5%	50,0%	12,5%	100,0%
Total		Count	**3**	**5**	**1**	**9**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**33,3%**	**55,6%**	**11,1%**	**100,0%**

Table 2.4: How would you evaluate the quality of the agency induction received by the student (structure, content, delivery...)?

			How would you evaluate the quality of the agency induction received by the students (structure, content, delivery...)?					Total
			Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Not applicable/do not know	
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	1	5	4	1	0	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	9,1%	45,5%	36,4%	9,1%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	0	2	0	0	0	2
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	0	0	1
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	1	4	0	0	4	9
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	11,1%	44,4%	,0%	,0%	44,4%	100,0%
Total		Count	**3**	**11**	**4**	**1**	**4**	**23**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**13,0%**	**47,8%**	**17,4%**	**4,3%**	**17,4%**	**100,0%**

Table 2.5: How useful was the agency induction received by the student?

			How useful was the agency induction received by the students?					Total
			Very useful	Useful	Moderately useful	Little useful	Not applicable/do not know	
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	4	1	4	2	0	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	36.4%	9.1%	36.4%	18.2%	.0%	100.0%
	Personal tutor	Count	4	2	0	0	1	7
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	57.1%	28.6%	.0%	.0%	14.3%	100.0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	2	0	0	0	0	2
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	**10**	**3**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**20**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**50.0%**	**15.0%**	**20.0%**	**10.0%**	**5.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 2.6: How useful was the information about the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model provided to personal tutors?

			How useful was the information about the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model provided to personal tutors?		
			Very useful	Useful	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Personal tutor	Count	3	4	7
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	42,9%	57,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**3**	**4**	**7**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**42,9%**	**57,1%**	**100,0%**

Table 2.7: Useful elements of agency induction provided to the student

Themes	Frequency
- Slow pace, gradual incorporation of the student to the duties of the agency by "shadowing"/observing other workers …….	7
- Availability of staff members ……………….………………………..	6
- Familiarising with policies and procedures……….………………..	3

"*Students ready to become involved in agency work after 1 week of induction*".

Table 2.8: Less useful elements of agency induction provided to the student

Themes	Frequency
- Too much information ……………………………………………….	7
- Structure of the induction kept students out of teams, which was unhelpful ………………………………………………………..	6
- Considerable variation across teams ……………………………..	4
- Minimum induction received by some students; some students given pack only ………………………………………………………	3

Table 2.9: What could usefully be added to agency induction?

Themes	Frequency
- Front loaded approach with general themes and then integrate other more specific topics throughout ……………………..	6
- Better to have time in the placement before receiving some of the information ………………………………………..	6
- Out of hours practice procedures should be added into induction	6
- Information provided as to how the placement is set-up which outlines the role and function of Children's Services and the specific areas e.g. LAC, Youth Justice	1

"A diagram of what teams exist in the setting and a line management map would be useful".

Table 2.10: What could usefully be taken out of agency induction?

Themes	Frequency
- One day of Care First is enough – two days is too much ………	6
- Information overload ………………………………………	1

Table 2.11: Further comments and suggestions about placement preparation for future agency-based practice learning

Themes	Frequency
- Placement preparation in RGU: best timing possible according to the student's needs and long enough for the amount of information to be delivered ………………………………….	5
- It would be useful to provide tutors with a package about the placement containing agency leaflets, profiles of links, etc….	2
- Information to tutors about LEEP Demonstration model: it would be better to have more input from practice learning facilitators rather than project co-ordinators………………….	2
- The whole preparation process appears to cover a very wide range of relevant areas ……………………………………….	1
- Make sure that students with dyslexia receive placement information in handouts prior to the preparation session in RGU	1
- Fine as it was	1

Findings: As table 2.1 shows, seven respondents (23.3%) rated the placement preparation in RGU as "very useful" in familiarising the student with the structure and content of the placement, the same number rated it as "useful" and nine (30%) as moderately useful. No respondent considered this part of placement preparation "little useful" or "not useful at all". Among students, there is a significant difference between those students who responded "moderately useful" (72.7%) and those who rated this placement preparation in RGU as "very useful" (27.3%)

As shown in table 2.2, a large majority of respondents (90.4%) rated the information about the agency provided by the practice learning facilitator to the student or his/her personal tutor either as "very useful" (47.6%), "useful" (9.5%) or "moderately useful" (33.3), with no respondent giving a negative answer ("little useful" or "not useful at all"). This question was not applicable to senior managers, team managers, team seniors and link supervisors. Conversely, agency staff members were specifically asked about the placement preparation provided to the agency team by the practice learning facilitator. No negative response is reported, with five respondents (55.6%) rating the preparation they received as "good" and three respondents (33.3%) as "excellent" (table 2.3).

Table 2.4 shows that feedback about quality of the agency induction provided to the students is overall positive, with only one respondent (4.3%) rating it as "poor" and a large number of respondents (47.8%) reporting that agency induction was "good".

Regarding usefulness of agency induction, table 2.5 shows that the highest score ("very useful") achieves the best results (50%) with the rest of responses spread across other categories. Two negative responses ("Little useful", 10%) were given to this question.

As shown in table 2.6, all personal tutors consider either "very useful" (42.9%) or "useful" (57.1%) the information about the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model provided to them by the co-ordinators of the project.

Among useful elements of the agency induction, gradual incorporation of the student to the duties of the agency by "shadowing"/observing other workers (n = 7) and availability of staff members (n = 6) were the most frequent responses produced by participants (table 2.7). Table 2.8 shows that providing the student with too much

information (n = 7) and keeping students out of teams during the induction process (n = 6) appear to be the elements most frequently cited as less useful.

Tables 2.9, 2.10 and 2.11 show that the most frequent suggestions provided by participants in relation to agency induction include:

- adopting a front loaded approach with general themes and then integrate other more specific topics throughout (n = 6);
- spending some time in the placement before receiving some of the information (n = 6);
- out of hours practice procedures being added into induction (n = 6);
- one day of Care First instead of two (n = 6);
- adapting placement preparation in RGU according to student needs (n = 5).

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3. The role of practice learning facilitator.

This section deals with several aspects related to the role of the practice learning facilitator in the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model. Several closed- and open-ended questions were combined in order to obtain quantifiable data as well as further comments and suggestions about this feature of the project and how to improve it. Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11 and 3.12 show the distribution of responses across the different response categories as well as the most frequent themes provided by participants.

Table 3.1: What were the main functions of the practice learning facilitator in the placement?	
Themes	Frequency
- Responsible for providing the student with learning opportunities ……………………………………………..	19
- Responsible for monitoring student progress, organising individual and group supervision …………………..………..	18
- Responsible for integrating theory and practice ………..………	11
- Direct teaching ………………………….……………………	6
- Ensure time keeping ……………………….…………………	6
- Liaise/negotiate with/support link supervisors.…………....	6

Table 3.2: Was the number of contacts between practice learning facilitator (PLF) /student adequate?

			Was the number of contacts between PLF/student adequate?		
			Yes	To a moderate extent	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	8	3	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	72,7%	27,3%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	6	1	7
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	85,7%	14,3%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	2
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	**15**	**5**	**20**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**75,0%**	**25,0%**	**100,0%**

Table 3.3: Further comments and suggestions about this point

Themes	Frequency
- It was intimidating for students to have the practice learning facilitator working on-site ………………………………….	6
- Confidentiality was not always maintained by the practice learning facilitator ……………………………………...…..	6
- Involvement of link supervisor impacted on how often the practice learning facilitator was needed – those with less formal contact with link supervisors would like more contact with the practice learning facilitator ……………….	3
- The model procedures were a bit rigid. Need for more flexibility, creativity……………………………………..	2
- Given rural location, the students did not appear to be able to draw support: little availability for them to have other informal contact with practice learning facilitator ………….	1

"I am aware that the nature of the practice learning facilitator is different to the one-to-one traditional approach".

Table 3.4: How effective was the practice learning facilitator (PLF) in facilitating packages of learning opportunities to the students?

			How effective was the PLF in facilitating packages of learning opportunities to the students?			Total
			Very much	Moderately	Not applicable/do not know	
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	9	2	0	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	81,8%	18,2%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	6	1	0	7
		%	85,7%	14,3%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	2	0	0	2
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	8	0	1	9
		%	88,9%	,0%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**26**	**3**	**1**	**30**
		%	**86,7%**	**10,0%**	**3,3%**	**100,0%**

Table 3.5: What factors enabled the facilitation of packages?

Themes	Frequency
- Practice learning facilitator worked very closely to link supervisors ……………………………………………………	9
- Practice learning facilitator followed up if there was a shortfall ……………………………………………………	4
- Identifying learning needs at pre-placement stage and developing packages of learning to meet needs in conjunction with link supervisors ……………………………………………………	3
- High involvement and enthusiasm of practitioners ………….	1
- Relevance to learning opportunities …………………………	1

Table 3.6: What factors prevented the facilitation of packages?

Themes	Frequency
- Inconsistencies with some students getting more packages than others ……………………………………………………..	7
- Some opportunities identified were seen as "punishment" for raising issues ……………………………………………	6
- Staffing difficulties ………………………………………….	3
- Newness of the project, many new things to be explained …….	1

"Sometimes, facilitation of packages depended on who were identified as links and which teams the students were placed in".

Table 3.7: How effective was the practice learning facilitator (PLF) in addressing professional development issues and individual needs of students during the placement?

			How effective was the PLF in addressing professional development issues and individual needs of students during the placement?				
			Very much	Moderately	Little	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	3	7	1	0	11
		%	27,3%	63,6%	9,1%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	4	3	0	0	7
		%	57,1%	42,9%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		%	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	7	0	0	2	9
		%	77,8%	,0%	,0%	22,2%	100,0%
Total		Count	**16**	**11**	**1**	**2**	**30**
		%	**53,3%**	**36,7%**	**3,3%**	**6,7%**	**100,0%**

Table 3.8: What factors enabled the practice learning facilitator to address professional development issues and individual needs of the students during the placement?

Themes	Frequency
- One-to one supervision focusing on professional development...	4
- Transferable skills and how these have been developed ………..	2
- Looking at what students learnt at their first placement……..…	1
- Knowledge base and how this has been developed …………….	1
- Looking to the future/employment ……………………………..	1
- Recruitment/interviewing techniques as group session …………	1

"The practice learning facilitator was seeing the students interacting in different supervision methods (individual, group…)".

Table 3.9: What factors prevented the practice learning facilitator from addressing professional development issues and individual needs of the students during the placement?

Themes	Frequency
- The involvement of the practice leaning facilitator in case-based supervision not seen as appropriate or expected …	6
- Practice learning facilitator seen to emphasise the negatives only ………………………………………………..	6
- A lot of time was spent in bureaucratic tasks rather than focusing on the intervention ……………………………..	1
- The programme was very structured and, therefore, some issues like anti-discriminatory practice could not be dealt with until it was scheduled in the programme …………. .	1
- Staffing difficulties ……………………………………	1

Table 3.10: Advantages of having the practice learning facilitator role in agency-based practice learning.

Themes	Frequency
- Ability of networking and facilitate learning opportunities ….	11
- No pressure from case-based work with service users: the practice learning facilitator can just focus on students …......	8
- Links between Higher Education Institutions and practice …..	6
- Encourages a learning environment within teams ………….…	1
- Overview and consistency rather than individual practice teachers ……………………………………………..	1
- Support link supervisors	1
- Co-ordinate placements and direct teaching	1

"Maybe the learning is richer, since the practice learning facilitator enables the student to work with a range of agencies."

Table 3.11: Disadvantages of having the practice learning facilitator role in agency-based practice learning.

Themes	Frequency
- Lack of clear boundaries between links, managers and practice learning facilitator ………………………………………...	11
- Less direct involvement with students ………………………..	6
- Time pressures …………………………………………………	5
- The model is too structured …………………………………	2
- Possibility of being pulled in two directions ……………..……	1

"Students were not sure who was taking responsibility for them".

Table 3.12: Further comments and suggestions in this area for future agency-based practice learning.

Themes	Frequency
- More professional discretion within the project plan ……..	1
- More time for preparation ……………………………	1
- Practice learning facilitator needs to be good time manager, good co-ordinator, good placatory, keep everyone happy, have good memory…………………………………	1
- The time spent by the practice learning facilitator at RGU may need to be revised	1
- This was a planned and well-facilitated partnership between an experienced practice learning facilitator and link supervisor……………………………………………………	1

"The practice learning facilitator has to be super-organised. Otherwise, the whole thing would fall apart!"

Findings: A significant number of respondents mentioned providing the student with learning opportunities (n = 19), being responsible for monitoring student progress (n = 18) and being responsible for integrating theory and practice (n = 11) as the main functions of the practice learning facilitator in the placement (table 3.1).

15 respondents (75%) reported that the number of contacts between practice learning facilitator and student over the placement was adequate, while five respondents (25%) answered that the number of contacts was adequate to a moderate extent. No negative response ("no") was reported in relation to this question (table 3.2), though some concerns (n = 6) were expressed about having the practice learning facilitator working on-site (table 3.3).

Table 3.4 shows participants' opinions about how effective the practice learning facilitator was in accomplishing one of the key functions of the role, namely, facilitating packages of learning opportunities to the student. 26 respondents (86.7%) rated practice learning facilitator's performance in this area as "very effective" and 3 respondents (10%) as "moderately effective", with no negative responses ("little effective" or "not effective at all") reported. Among factors that enabled the facilitation of packages, practice learning facilitator working very closely to link

supervisors (n = 9) is the most frequent response produced by participants (table 3.5). On the other hand, inconsistencies across students are reported (n = 7) with some students getting more packages than others (table 3.6).

As shown in table 3.7, feedback with respect to how effective the practice learning facilitator was in addressing professional development issues and individual needs of students during the placement is, overall, positive, with a majority of respondents (53.3%) reporting that the practice learning facilitator was "very effective" in performing this function. However, outcomes in this area appear to be significantly lower than those regarding effectiveness in facilitating packages of learning opportunities (table 3.4).

Overall, the role of practice learning facilitator in the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model receives positive feedback, especially in relation to providing students with learning opportunities (table 3.10). Also the practice learning facilitator not being under the pressure of case-based work with services users is seen as one of the advantages of the approach (table 3.10). However, it is suggested that particular attention should be paid to establishing clear boundaries between practice learning facilitator and the members of the staff involved in the agency-based practice learning process (table 3.11).

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4. Service specific and cross-sector learning opportunities.

The aim of this section is to explore whether the students had access to sufficient learning opportunities in the agency they were based as well as in other agencies within the same sector. For these purposes, a combination of closed- and open-ended questions was used. The distribution of responses across different response categories and the most frequent responses produced by participants is shown in tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 as follows:

Table 4.1: Did the practice learning facilitator (PLF) provide the student with sufficient learning opportunities during the placement?

			Did the PLF provide the student with sufficient learning opportunities during the placement?			Total
			Yes	To a moderate extent	Not applicable/do not know	
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	9	2	0	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	81,8%	18,2%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	7	0	0	7
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	2	0	0	2
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	8	0	1	9
			88,9%	,0%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**27**	**2**	**1**	**30**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**90,0%**	**6,7%**	**3,3%**	**100,0%**

Table 4.2: Comments and suggestions about this point

Themes	Frequency
- The student would like to have been busier ………………………	1
- Community Service Team not seen to be sufficient ……………...	1
-This was one of the strengths of the placement	1

Table 4.3: Did the student have access to a range of services/agencies within a sector during the placement?

			Did the student have access to a range of services/agencies within a sector during the placement?				
			To a great extent	To a moderate extent	Little	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	8	2	1	0	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	72,7%	18,2%	9,1%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	2	5	0	0	7
		%	28,6%	71,4%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	2	0	0	0	2
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	6	2	0	1	9
		%	66,7%	22,2%	,0%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**19**	**9**	**1**	**1**	**30**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**63,3%**	**30,0%**	**3,3%**	**3,3%**	**100,0%**

"Students worked with many different service providers within the Criminal Justice sector, including the Scottish Prison Service, General Practitioners, Childcare, Restriction of Liberty Orders (ROLO), Court, Police, Safeguarding Communities Reducing Offending (SACRO), Apex, etc."

Table 4.4: How did this impact on the student's learning and development?

Themes	Frequency
- Students reported having the opportunity to work with other services within the Criminal Justice sector ………………..	6
- Widened the student's perspective of services/agencies …..….	5
- Increased knowledge of resources available for clients …..….	2
- Regarding cross-sector learning opportunities, there is a danger of information being too general and some relevant material may be missed ……………………………………	1

"Good to get experiences wider than just one team".

Table 4.5: To what extent were the different services/agencies interconnected or linked to each other?

			To what extent the services to which the student had access were interconnected/linked between them?				
			To a great extent	To a moderate extent	Little	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	7	3	1	0	11
		%	63,6%	27,3%	9,1%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	6	1	0	0	7
		%	85,7%	14,3%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		%	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	7	1	0	1	9
		%	77,8%	11,1%	,0%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**22**	**6**	**1**	**1**	**30**
		%	**73,3%**	**20,0%**	**3,3%**	**3,3%**	**100,0%**

Table 4.6: Was the level of work in partnership between services/agencies adequate?

			To what extent the services to which the student had access worked in partnership between them?				
			To a great extent	To a moderate extent	Little	Not applicable/I do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	6	3	1	1	11
		%	54,5%	27,3%	9,1%	9,1%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	3	3	0	1	7
		%	42,9%	42,9%	,0%	14,3%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		%	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	6	2	0	1	9
		%	66,7%	22,2%	,0%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**17**	**9**	**1**	**3**	**30**
		%	**56,7%**	**30,0%**	**3,3%**	**10,0%**	**100,0%**

Table 4.7: Further comments and suggestions in this area for future agency-based practice learning.

Themes	Frequency
- Providing students with packages of learning opportunities that are service specific increases knowledge and skills in one particular area. On the other hand, cross-sector learning opportunities allow the student to have a wider overview of issues. It is important to achieve a balance between both.	8
Agencies should provide more information to students about how to liaise with other services within the sector ……….	6
- It is very important to strike a balance in the number of agencies involved: not too few but not too many, either ……………………………………………	2
- Students should be provided with flexible packages of learning in a range of service providers ……………………	1
- Practice learning facilitators could develop placements with voluntary organisations ………………………………..	1
- Information sharing between social work agencies and university needs to be improved ………………………..	1

"If there are several teams in a section who do different pieces of work, students should have the chance for learning opportunities in other teams."

Findings: As table 4.1 shows, a very large majority of respondents (90%) agree that the practice learning facilitator provided the student with sufficient learning opportunities during the placement, and two respondents (6.7%) consider that such function was accomplished just to a moderate extent. No negative response ("very little" or "no") was reported.

Also a majority of respondents (63.3%) report that the student had access to a range of cross-sector learning opportunities "to a great extent" (table 4.3). However, nine (30%) respondents answered that this function or feature of the project was achieved only "to a moderate extent". There was one negative response ("very little" access to a range of cross-sector learning opportunities). Widening student perspective of

services/ agencies (n = 5) is one of the most frequent responses in relation to how access to a range of cross-sector learning opportunities impacted on student learning and development (table 4.4).

Table 4.5 shows that a large majority of respondents (73.3%) consider that the different agencies to which the student had access during the placement were "to a great extent" interconnected or linked to each other. Six respondents (20%) answered that the agencies were linked only "to a moderate extent" and one respondent reported that agencies were "very little" interconnected between them.

Although a majority of respondents (56.7%) consider that levels of work in partnership between cross-sector agencies were adequate, responses suggest that there might be room for improvement in this area – taking into account how these agencies are interconnected to each other within a sector levels of work in partnership between them appear to be not extremely high (table 4.6).

As shown in table 4.7, the most frequent suggestion in this area produced by participants (n = 8) stresses the need to achieve a balance between service-specific and cross-sector learning opportunities in order to benefit from the benefits of both approaches.

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5. <u>Team approach</u>.

Participants were asked about the development of a team approach to achieve student progress and development during the placement. Closed- and open-ended questions were combined in order to gain an adequate understanding of respondents' views in this area. Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 show the distribution of responses across the different response categories as well as the most frequent responses produced by participants.

Table 5.1: To what extent did team members share responsibility for the student's learning, development and assessment during the placement?

			To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a little extent	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	8	2	1	0	11
		%	72,7%	18,2%	9,1%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	5	2	0	0	7
		%	71,4%	28,6%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	2	0	0	0	2
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Senior manager	Count	2	0	0	0	2
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	2	5	1	1	9
		%	22,2%	55,6%	11,1%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**20**	**9**	**2**	**1**	**32**
		%	**62,5%**	**28,1%**	**6,3%**	**3,1%**	**100,0%**

Table 5.2: What factors enabled team members to share responsibility for the student's learning, development and assessment during the placement?

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
- Established networks, information sharing ....…	5
- Strong team commitment to working together………………..	4
- The role of practice learning facilitator ………………………	2
- Availability of suitable opportunities …………………………	1
- Participation in team meetings ………………………………..	1

Table 5.3: What factors prevented team members from sharing responsibility for the student's learning, development and assessment during the placement?

Themes	Frequency
- In rural placements, teams may be dispersed, teams may consist of just 1 or 2 workers ………………….……..	9
- Lack of staff available ……………………………….	5
- Time pressures ………………………………………….	4
- Placement not being full-time resulted in the team having less 'ownership' of it ……………………………....	1
- Reluctance and lack of confidence by team members in own ability to supervise students …………………….	1

Table 5.4: Further comments or suggestions in this area for future agency-based practice learning.

Themes	Frequency
- Students found a good and supportive co-working environment ..	9
- Seniors were particularly helpful in offering clarification ………	6
- Think carefully about whether split placements are manageable ...	2
- Facilitating a team commitment s very important	2

"Team members felt reinvigorated and more confident in their own professional practice: they realised that they knew a lot through the role of supervising students".

Findings: As shown in table 5.1, a majority of respondents (62.5%) report that team members shared "to a great extent" responsibility for the student's learning, development and assessment during the placement. Nine respondents (28.1%) think that this function was achieved only "to a moderate extent" and two respondents (6.3%) gave negative feedback in this area ("very little").

Established networks, information sharing and a strong team commitment to work together are cited as some of the factors that enabled team members to share responsibility for student learning, development and assessment process (table 5.2). Dispersed teams in rural areas is the most frequently mentioned obstacle to a team approach in agency-based practice learning (table 5.3).

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6. <u>The role of link supervisor.</u>

Engaging a range of staff (links) who coach and supervise discreet aspects of the student's direct practice is another main feature of the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model. Several closed- and open-ended questions were combined in order to obtain quantifiable data as well as further comments and suggestions about the role of link supervisors involved in the project.

Tables 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7 show the distribution of responses across the different response categories as well as the most frequent responses produced by participants.

Table 6.1: Number of link supervisors actively involved in the student's learning and assessment process?

| | | How many link supervisors were actively involved in the student's learning and assessment process? | | | | |
		1	2	3	6	Total
Total	Count	**5**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**11**
	% of responses	**45.5%**	**18.2%**	**27.3%**	**9.1%**	**100.0%**

Table 6.2: What functions did the link supervisors have in the placement?

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
- Responsible for all aspects of case-based work ………….	22
- Day-to-day information and support ……………………..	21
- Formal supervision/assessment through feedback ………..	18
- Observed practice ………………………………………	12
- Contributing to placement report …………………………	5

Table 6.3: What factors enabled shared supervision and assessment?

Themes	Frequency
- Clear lines of responsibilities for practice learning facilitator and link supervisors ……………………………………….	5
- Liaison via telephone/E-mail regarding observed practice ….	2
- Casework supervision notes recorded by student e-mailed to link supervisor and practice learning facilitator …………..	1
- Group supervision topics/individual topics identified on timetable to reduce duplication ………………………..	1

Table 6.4: What factors prevented shared supervision and assessment?

Themes	Frequency
- Staff shortages …………………………………………….	3
- Lack of clear boundaries between practice learning facilitator and link supervisors ………………………………………	1

Table 6.5: What are the advantages of having a number of link supervisors involved in the student's learning experience?

Themes	Frequency
- Access to different styles of work ………………..……...	14
- Greater accessibility of support and information for the student …………………………………………	7
- Increase range of learning opportunities …………………..	7
- Increased collation of feedback about the student's work ...	4

"You may think that the student is not doing well, but the link can give you evidence from observation or other sources about the good quality of the student's work".

Table 6.6: What are the disadvantages of having a number of link supervisors involved in the student's learning experience?

Themes	Frequency
- Having too many links can create confusion, learning can be too fragmented …………………………………………..…	10
- Lack of time ……………………………………………..	3
- It can dilute the assessment ……………………………	1
- Lessening of individual knowledge for the student ………….	1
- The student needs to get on well with the link supervisor ……	1

Table 6.7: Further comments and suggestions in this area for future agency-based practice learning

Themes	Frequency
- It is critical to have clear lines of responsibilities for practice learning facilitator and link supervisors ……………………..	6
- Link supervisor needs to be up-to-date and informed …………	5
- More recognition of the important role of links ………………..	4
- Balance in the number of links …………………………..	3
- Link supervisor individualised to student's needs ……………….	1
- Link supervisors need to be targeted appropriately	1

"Links should be given caseload relief and financial recompense. Part of their job description should be to be involved with students in agency-based practice learning."

Findings: Six students (54.5%) had more than one link supervisor during their placement but a significant proportion of students (45.5%) report having just one link supervisor (table 6.1). As shown in table 6.2, being responsible for all aspects of case-based work (n = 22), providing the student with day-to-day information and support (n = 21) and providing formal supervision/assessment through feedback (n = 18) were the most frequently mentioned functions performed by link supervisors (table 6.2).

Establishing clear lines of responsibilities (n = 5) for practice learning facilitator and link supervisors was the most frequent enabling factor (table 6.3) and staff shortages (n = 3) the most frequent obstacle to supervision and assessment being shared by link

supervisors (table 6.4). Access to different styles of work (n = 14) is the most cited advantage of having a number of link supervisors involved in agency-based practice learning (table 6.5) whereas risk of the learning process being too fragmented (n = 10) is the most frequently reported disadvantage of the approach (table 6.6).

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7. <u>Individual and group supervision.</u>

Another of the innovations introduced by the LEEP Project is the combination of a group and individual pattern of student supervision. Several closed- and open-ended questions were used in order to obtain quantifiable data evaluating this integrated approach to supervision as well as further comments and suggestions aimed to enhance it where necessary. Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9 and 7.10 provide the distribution of responses across the different response categories as well as the most frequent responses produced by participants.

Table 7.1: Was the frequency of individual supervision with link supervisors adequate for the student's needs?

| | | | Was the frequency of individual supervision with link supervisors adequate for the student's needs? | | | | |
			To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a little extent	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	4	5	2	0	11
		%	36,4%	45,5%	18,2%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	7	0	0	0	7
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		%	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Senior manager	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	4	2	0	3	9
		%	44,4%	22,2%	,0%	33,3%	100,0%
Total		Count	17	9	2	3	31
		%	54,8%	29,0%	6,5%	9,7%	100,0%

Table 7.2: Was the frequency of individual supervision with the practice learning facilitator adequate for the student's needs?

			Was the frequency of individual supervision with the PLF adequate for the student's needs?				
			To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a little extent	Not applicable	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	6	5	0	0	11
		%	54,5%	45,5%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	3	3	1	0	7
		%	42,9%	42,9%	14,3%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	0	2	0	0	2
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Senior manager	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	4	2	0	3	9
		%	44,4%	22,2%	,0%	33,3%	100,0%
Total		Count	**13**	**14**	**1**	**3**	**31**
		%	**41,9%**	**45,2%**	**3,2%**	**9,7%**	**100,0%**

Table 7.3: How useful for the student was individual supervision with link supervisors?

			How useful for the student was the individual supervision with link supervisors?			
			Very useful	Useful	Moderately useful	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	9	1	1	11
		%	81,8%	9,1%	9,1%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	6	0	0	6
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	**15**	**1**	**1**	**17**
		%	**88,2%**	**5,9%**	**5,9%**	**100,0%**

Table 7.4: How useful for the student was individual supervision with the practice learning facilitator?

			How useful for the student was individual supervision with the practice learning facilitator?			
			Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	6	4	1	11
		%	54,5%	36,4%	9,1%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	1	5	0	6
		%	16,7%	83,3%	,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	**7**	**9**	**1**	**17**
		%	**41,2%**	**52,9%**	**5,9%**	**100,0%**

Table 7.5: Was the frequency of group supervision adequate for the student's needs?

			Was the frequency of group supervision adequate for the student's needs?				
			To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a little extent	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	4	6	1	0	11
		%	36,4%	54,5%	9,1%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	3	4	0	0	7
		%	42,9%	57,1%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		%	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Senior manager	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	1	4	0	4	9
		%	11,1%	44,4%	,0%	44,4%	100,0%
Total		Count	**9**	**17**	**1**	**4**	**31**
		%	**29,0%**	**54,8%**	**3,2%**	**12,9%**	**100,0%**

Table 7.6: How useful for the student was the group supervision received?

			How useful for the student was the group supervision received?			
			Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	5	5	1	11
		%	45,5%	45,5%	9,1%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	3	4	0	7
		%	42,9%	57,1%	,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	**8**	**9**	**1**	**18**
		%	**44,4%**	**50,0%**	**5,6%**	**100,0%**

Table 7.7: Was the balance between group and individual supervision adequate?

			Was the balance between group and individual supervision adequate?				
			Yes	To a moderate extent	No	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	7	3	1	0	11
		%	63,6%	27,3%	9,1%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	4	1	2	0	7
		%	57,1%	14,3%	28,6%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	0	2	0	0	2
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Senior manager	Count	0	0	1	0	1
		%	,0%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	2	1	1	5	9
		%	22,2%	11,1%	11,1%	55,6%	100,0%
Total		Count	**14**	**7**	**5**	**5**	**31**
		%	**45,2%**	**22,6%**	**16,1%**	**16,1%**	**100,0%**

Table 7.8: What was useful about the combination of group and individual supervision model?

Themes	Frequency
- Enhanced support, guidance and advice from both, link supervisor and practice learning facilitator …………….	17
- Ability to share learning experiences, peer support ..……..	17
- Help in linking theory and practice ……………………….	10
- Group supervision allowed practising and rehearsing role-plays ………………………………………..……..	5
- Students taking more responsibility for the supervision sessions	1

"It was very helpful to be part of a group".

"Group supervision allowed challenging students in a less oppressive way than one-to-one supervision sessions with the practice learning facilitator."

Table 7.9: What was less useful about the combination of group and individual supervision model?

Themes	Frequency
- Time pressures for students …………………………………..	8
- More individual supervision with the practice learning facilitator would have been helpful ……………………....	8
- Too structured, not student centred …. …………………….	7
- Lack of knowledge base in some link supervisors …………	6
- Issues between group members that came with them from RGU acted as blockers initially …………………………..	1
- Group supervision allows students to hide and not fully contribute	1

"Sometimes, group supervision was used to point out weaknesses in individuals."

Table 7.10: Further comments or suggestions in this area

Themes	Frequency
- It is important to get a balance between individual and group supervision	11
- In those weeks in which there was supervision with link supervisors, group supervision, and one-to-one supervision with the practice learning facilitator the student felt over-supervised …………………….……………….……	9
- Clear boundaries between link supervisors and practice learning facilitator must be set …………………………	6
- More individual supervision with practice learning facilitator is needed ……………………………………	5
- The pattern of supervision should be based on the student's needs, the model should be more student centred	2
- In rural settings, be aware of travel factors ……………….	2

"I think the group supervision should be given in addition to individual supervision, not in place of it."

Findings: As table 7.1 shows, a majority of respondents (54.8%) rated the frequency of individual supervision with link supervisor as "to a great extent" adequate for the student's needs. Nine participants (29%) rated it as adequate "to a moderate extent" and 2 participants (6.5%) provided negative feedback ("to a little extent" adequate). Frequency of individual supervision with the practice learning facilitator achieved lower scores, with only 41.9% of respondents rating it as "to a great extent adequate" and 45.2% of respondents considering adequate "to a moderate extent" (table 7.2).

Regarding usefulness of individual supervision, a very large majority of respondents (88.2%) rated individual supervision with link supervisors as "very useful" (table 7.3) whereas only 41.2% of respondents gave the highest score to individual supervision with the practice learning facilitator (table 7.4). Nonetheless, nine respondents (52.9%) consider that individual supervision with the practice learning facilitator was "useful" and only one respondent provided negative feedback ("not useful") in relation to this question (table 7.4).

Table 7.5 shows that nine respondents (29%) rated the frequency of group supervision as "to a great extent" adequate for the student's needs, 17 respondents (54.8%) rated it

as "to a moderate extent" adequate and 1 respondent (3.2%) rated as "to a little extent" adequate. Regarding usefulness, group supervision achieved slightly better results, with 44.4% of respondents considering it "very useful", 50% "useful" and just one response (5.6%) reporting negative feedback (table 7.6).

As shown in table 7.7, 14 respondents (45.2%) report that the balance between individual and group supervision was adequate, seven respondents (22.6%) rated it as "to a moderate extent" adequate and five respondents (16.1%) consider that such balance was inadequate. There was a high number of respondents (16.1%) providing a "not applicable/do not know" response.

Participants were also asked about useful elements of the integrated approach to supervision: enhanced support, guidance and advice from both link supervisor and practice learning facilitator, the ability to share learning experiences and peer support are the most frequent responses produced by participants (table 7.8). On the other hand, time pressures is the factor most frequently mentioned as less useful with respect to this approach to supervision. It is also indicated that more individual supervision with the practice learning facilitator would have been helpful (table 7.9). Finally, the suggestion most often given by participants (n = 11) refers to the importance of achieving a balance between individual and group supervision (table 7.10). Nine respondents reported that in those weeks (3 in total) in which there was supervision with link supervisors, group supervision, and one-to-one supervision with the practice learning facilitator, the student felt over- supervised (table 7.10).

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8. The role of senior managers, team managers and team seniors.

This section looks at the role of other professionals involved in the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model, like senior managers, team managers and team seniors. Several open-ended questions were raised in order to obtain information about the participation of such professionals in the project as well as suggestions for future practice.

Responses according the most frequent responses produced by participants are shown in tables 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4 and 8.5.

Table 8.1: What functions did senior managers perform in the placement?

Themes	Frequency
- Manage the co-ordination, promotion and delivery of student placements	1
- Facilitation, encouragement …………………………………..	1
- Willingness to provide learning opportunities ……………..	1

Table 8.2: What functions did the team seniors/managers perform in the placement?

Themes	Frequency
- Co-ordination and case-load management ………………………..…	2
- Link between the student, link supervisors and seniors/managers ...	1
- Acted as Quality Assessment control regarding reports …………..	1

Table 8.3: What was useful about the involvement of senior managers and team seniors/managers in the placement?

Themes	Frequency
- To support the practice learning facilitator in identifying placements and making the initial contacts in Children's Services	1
- Support by senior social workers to the project ……………….	1
- Ability to provide a range of learning opportunities ………….	1

Table 8.4: What was less useful about the involvement of senior managers and team seniors/managers in the placement?

Themes	Frequency
- Sometimes students felt over-supervised by several senior social workers in the absence of their link supervisor ……	1

Table 8.5: Further comments or suggestions in this area

Themes	Frequency
- Team seniors and team managers could be encouraged to take students …………...........................……….	1
- Senior managers should support all those staff involved in practice learning and contribute whenever possible to the creation of a learning culture	1

Findings: In relation to other agency members such as senior managers, team managers and team seniors, respondents have highlighted the importance of such roles in supporting staff members involved in practice learning as link supervisors. Nonetheless, as the above tables show, very little feedback on this area was provided by participants. Therefore, it would be desirable to gather more evidence in relation to this aspect of the project before any generalisable conclusion can be drawn.

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9. <u>Access to Information Technology</u>.

Two open-ended questions were formulated to participants with respect to student access to information technology during the placement. Responses according the most frequent responses produced by participants are shown in tables 9.1 and 9.2.

Table 9.1: How did access to IT facilitate the student's learning process?

Themes	Frequency
- Access to E-mail facilitated transfer of material …………….	12
- Initial training as part of the agency induction was helpful …	6
- Not all the students had instant access to computers …………	5
- The student did not have Internet access ………………..……	5

Table 9.2: Further comments or suggestion in this area for future agency-based practice learning

Themes	Frequency
- All the students should have instant access to computers ……	6
- Students should have Internet access …………………………	5
- This area could be improved by providing IT training to students (a combined training approach provided by the university and the agency) ………………………………	2
- It is important to develop this aspect	1

Findings: Table 9.1 provides some examples of how access or lack of access to Information Technology facilities impacted on student learning process. The most often reported response (n = 12) refers to how access to E-mail facilitated transfer of material. Six respondents consider that initial IT training as part of the agency induction was helpful. Some students lacking instant access to IT facilities (because they had to share a computer) and lack of access to the Internet are mentioned as issues to be improved for future agency-based practice learning (tables 9.1 and 9.2).

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10. <u>Service-user and carer involvement.</u>

Involvement of service users and carers in the student assessment process is another of the main features of the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model. Several closed- and open-ended questions were combined in order to obtain quantifiable data as well as further comments and suggestions about this feature of the project and how to improve it where necessary.

Tables 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7, 10.8 and 10.9 show the distribution of responses across the different response categories as well as the most frequent themes provided by participants.

Table 10.1: To what extent did service users participate in the student's learning and assessment process?

			To what extent did service users participate in the student's learning process and assessment?				
			To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a little extent	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	6	3	1	1	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	54,5%	27,3%	9,1%	9,1%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	1	2	1	3	7
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	14,3%	28,6%	14,3%	42,9%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	0	1	1	0	2
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	0	1	0	1
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	3	3	1	2	9
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	33,3%	33,3%	11,1%	22,2%	100,0%
Total		Count	**10**	**9**	**5**	**6**	**30**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**33,3%**	**30,0%**	**16,7%**	**20,0%**	**100,0%**

Table 10.2: Are these levels of service-user involvement adequate?

			Are these levels of service-user involvement adequate?				Total
			Yes	To a moderate extent	No	Not applicable/do not know	
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	7	1	2	1	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	63,6%	9,1%	18,2%	9,1%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	3	0	0	4	7
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	42,9%	,0%	,0%	57,1%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	1	0	0	0	1
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	7	0	0	2	9
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	77,8%	,0%	,0%	22,2%	100,0%
Total		Count	**19**	**2**	**2**	**7**	**30**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**63,3%**	**6,7%**	**6,7%**	**23,3%**	**100,0%**

Table 10.3: Advantages of service-user involvement in the student learning and assessment process

Themes	Frequency
- Importance of getting a holistic assessment; provides alternative perspectives …………………………..……………………	11
- Service users have the opportunity to feedback, empowerment	11
- Reinforces the idea of professional accountability to service users .	2
- Triangulation of evidence …………………………………	1
- Choice, rights	1

"This is what social work is all about."

Table 10.4: Disadvantages of service-user involvement in the student learning and assessment process

        <u>Themes</u>   <u>Frequency</u>

- Service users may have their own agenda, different from that
  of the student –particularly when working in statutory settings ….   11
- Ethical issues –power balance, vulnerability, etc. …………………   9
- Service users may not like social worker involvement ……………   1

"Students have to be strong enough to cope with feedback seeming to be negative or critical."

Table 10.5: To what extent did carers participate in the student's learning and assessment process?

			To what extent did carers participate in the student's learning and assessment process?				
			To a great extent	To a moderate extent	A little bit	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	1	1	1	8	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	9,1%	9,1%	9,1%	72,7%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	0	0	0	7	7
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	0	0	1	1	2
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	,0%	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	0	0	1	1
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	0	3	1	5	9
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	33,3%	11,1%	55,6%	100,0%
Total		Count	**1**	**4**	**3**	**22**	**30**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**3,3%**	**13,3%**	**10,0%**	**73,3%**	**100,0%**

Table 10.6: Are these levels of carer involvement adequate?

			Are these levels of carer involvement adequate?			
			Yes	To a moderate extent	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	4	0	7	11
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	36,4%	,0%	63,6%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	0	0	7	7
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	0	1	1	2
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	0	1	1
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	,0%	,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	4	0	5	9
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	44,4%	,0%	55,6%	100,0%
Total		Count	**8**	**1**	**21**	**30**
		% within Role in the demonstration model project	**26,7%**	**3,3%**	**70,0%**	**100,0%**

Table 10.7: Advantages of carer involvement in the student learning and assessment process?

Themes	Frequency
- Provides alternative perspectives; learning from carer's experiences ..	13
- Empowerment, carers have the opportunity to provide feedback	8
- Work in partnership ……………………………………………….	4
- Better assessment of student communication skills ………………….	1
- Getting a holistic assessment is positive … ………………………….	1
- Choice, rights, responsibility	1

Table 10.8: Disadvantages of carer involvement in the student's learning and assessment process?

Themes	Frequency
- Ethical issues –power balance, vulnerability, conflict of interest …	12
- Carers may have their own agenda …………….………………	3

Table 10.9: Further comments or suggestions in this area

Themes	Frequency
- For developmental purposes, it would be useful to get feedback from service users and carers midway and later in the placement, not just at the end ………………………………………………	4
- In Criminal Justice maybe ex-clients with nothing to loose could be involved - otherwise, they may fear social worker's report) ……………………………….……..	1
- Service users can participate in role-plays ………………….…	1
- Where service users and carers may have their own agenda, their feedback should be seen in the context of this …………….	1
- Develop ethical guidelines …………………………….………	1
- Be sensitive with service users and carers, give them choices …..	1
- It may be unrealistic to expect any more input from service users and carers than we are getting now ………………….……	1

"This area should be a mainstream of social work practice, not just an added part."

Findings: In relation to service user involvement in the student learning and assessment process, 10 respondents (33.3%) report that service users were "to a great extent" involved, nine respondents (30%) consider that service users were involved just "to a moderate extent" and five respondents (16.7%) report little service user involvement (table 10.1). Nonetheless, a majority of respondents (63.3%) think that levels of service user involvement were adequate (table 10.2).

As shown in table 10.3, the most often mentioned advantages of service user involvement in the student learning and assessment process are: importance of getting a holistic assessment and alternative perspectives (n = 11), and empowering services users by giving them the opportunity to feedback (n = 11). On the other hand, the

possibility that some service users may have their own agenda, different to the student's one (n = 11), is mentioned as one of the main disadvantages of this approach (table 10.4).

Regarding carer involvement, table 10.5 shows that only one respondent (3.3%) reported that carers participated "to a great extent" in the student learning and assessment process. Four respondents (13.3%) report that carers were involved "to a moderate extent" and three respondents (10%) report little carer involvement. A large majority of respondents (73.3%) provide a "not applicable/do not know" response, which suggests low levels of development in this area.

As table 10.7 shows, the most often mentioned advantages of carer involvement in the student learning and assessment process are: importance of getting alternative perspectives and learning from carer's experience (n = 13), and empowering carers by giving them the opportunity to feedback (n = 8). On the other hand, ethical issues such as power balance, vulnerability of carers and conflict of interest (n = 12), are the most often mentioned disadvantages of carer involvement (table 10.8). Finally, it is suggested that, for student development purposes, feedback from service users and carers are collected at mid-placement and later in the placement, not just at the end (table 10.9).

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11. <u>Impact of the integrated assessment process</u>.

In order to know the impact of the integrated assessment approach developed in the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model on the students' process of learning and professional development, participants were asked one open-ended question. Frequencies of responses according to the most frequent themes provided by participants are provided by table 11.1.

Table 11.1: Impact of the integrated assessment process used in this project on the student's learning and professional development process

Themes	Frequency
- Good to have different sources of information and evidence ……………………………………………	6
- Good step into qualified status …………………………	5
- Students felt over-supervised and watched ………………	5
- This experience will make students more accountable in their work with service users …………….…………..	5
- Now, students are more organised ………………………	4
- Useful in linking theory to practice ……………………..	4
- The student's learning has covered a range of areas in sufficient depth ……………………………………..	3

"The students see now integrated assessment as an important part of the way they learn and work within an organisation".

Findings: Six respondents mentioned that the integrated assessment process used in the project is positive in order to have different sources of information and evidence. Also among the most frequent responses it was highlighted that this experience will make students more accountable in their work with service users (n = 5) and that this is a very good step into qualified status (n = 5). On the other hand, five respondents reported that, as a result of the integrated assessment process, students felt over-supervised and watched.

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12. Student contribution.

Participants in the evaluation of the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model were also asked about the contribution that the students made to the agencies in which they did their placement.

Tables 12.1, 12.2, and 12.3 show the distribution of responses across the different response categories as well as the most frequent themes provided by participants.

Table 12.1: How would you evaluate the contribution of the student to the service provided by the agency?

			How would you evaluate the contribution of the student to the service provided by the agency?			
			Excellent	Good	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	5	6	0	11
		%	45,5%	54,5%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	4	3	0	7
		%	57,1%	42,9%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	2
		%	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Senior manager	Count	1	0	0	1
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	1	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	3	5	1	9
		%	33,3%	55,6%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**14**	**16**	**1**	**31**
		%	**45,2%**	**51,6%**	**3,2%**	**100,0%**

Table 12.2: How would you evaluate the contribution of the student to the agency's learning culture (knowledge, reflective practice, values….)?

			How would you evaluate the student's contribution to the agency's learning culture?				
			Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	2	7	2	0	11
		%	18,2%	63,6%	18,2%	,0%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	1	3	2	1	7
		%	14,3%	42,9%	28,6%	14,3%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		%	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Senior manager	Count	0	0	1	0	1
		%	,0%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	1	4	3	1	9
		%	11,1%	44,4%	33,3%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**5**	**16**	**8**	**2**	**31**
		%	**16,1%**	**51,6%**	**25,8%**	**6,5%**	**100,0%**

Table 12.3: Further more comments or suggestions in this area	
Themes	Frequency
- Course input needs to concentrate more in core skills ……….	1

Findings: Feedback in this area is positive. As table 12.1 shows, 14 respondents (45.2%) rate the student contribution to the service provided by the agency as "excellent", and 16 respondents (51.6%) rate it as good, with no negative response ("minor" or "poor"). Regarding student contribution to the agency's learning culture (knowledge, values, etc.), 16.1% of respondents rate it as "excellent", 51.6% as "good" and 25.8% as "satisfactory", with no negative response being reported (table 12.2).

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13. <u>The future: prepared for practice.</u>

In this section, the participants were asked about their views in relation to the levels of readiness of the students involved in the project to work as social workers after their placement.

Tables 13.1, 13.2 and 13.3 show the distribution of responses across the different response categories as well as the most frequent themes provided by participants as follows:

Table 13.1: How well prepared is the student to enter the profession of social work after the placement?

			How well prepared is the student to enter the profession of social work after the placement?				
			Very well	Sufficiently	Not sufficiently	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	0	10	0	1	11
		%	,0%	90,9%	,0%	9,1%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	3	4	0	0	7
		%	42,9%	57,1%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	1	1	0	0	2
		%	50,0%	50,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Senior manager	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	0	1	0	1
		%	,0%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	3	3	1	2	9
		%	33,3%	33,3%	11,1%	22,2%	100,0%
Total		Count	**7**	**19**	**2**	**3**	**31**
		%	**22,6%**	**61,3%**	**6,5%**	**9,7%**	**100,0%**

Table 13.2: How well prepared is the student to enter social work in the area of practice linked to the placement?

			How well prepared is the student to enter social work in the area of practice linked to the placement?				
			Very well	Sufficiently	Not sufficiently	Not applicable/do not know	Total
Role in the demonstration model project	Student	Count	4	6	0	1	11
		%	36,4%	54,5%	,0%	9,1%	100,0%
	Personal tutor	Count	5	2	0	0	7
		%	71,4%	28,6%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Practice learning facilitator	Count	2	0	0	0	2
		%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Senior manager	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Team senior	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		%	,0%	100,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%
	Link supervisor	Count	3	4	1	1	9
		%	33,3%	44,4%	11,1%	11,1%	100,0%
Total		Count	**14**	**14**	**1**	**2**	**31**
		%	**45,2%**	**45,2%**	**3,2%**	**6,5%**	**100,0%**

Table 13.3: Further comments or suggestions in this area

Themes	Frequency
- Opportunity for mock interviews were really helpful ………….	5
- RGU should promote more input of experienced front-line workers to better prepare students for practice …………………	1
- It could have been better. Extreme staff shortages were a hindrance …………………………………………..………	1
- Students could be taught much more about the needs of looked after children and adoption ……………………………………..	1

"I would give them a job: I have confidence in the process they have been through."

Findings: As table 13.1 shows, 22.6% of respondents think that the student is "very well" prepared to enter the profession of social work after the placement, 61.3% consider them "sufficiently" prepared and 6.5% "not sufficiently" prepared. Scores are higher in relation to the specific area of practice linked to the student's placement. Thus, 14 respondents (45.2%) mention that the student is "very well" prepared to enter social work in the area of practice linked to the placement, the same proportion of respondents consider the student "sufficiently" prepared and one respondent (3.2%) thinks that the student is "not sufficiently" prepared (table 13.2).

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14. <u>Other comments and suggestions.</u>

Finally, participants in the evaluation of the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model were given the opportunity to provide further comments or suggestions in relation to the project – in particular, about any topic or issue not covered in the questionnaire. Responses grouped according the most frequent themes provided by participants are shown in table 14.1.

Table 14.1: Other comments and suggestions.

Themes	Frequency
- Reimbursement of travel expenses is a major issue, particularly for those students in rural placements ………..	6
- Students should be paid for placements ……………………..	5
- Car parking is essential – RGU should cover cost of parking permit …………………………………………………..	5
- Student forum prior of group supervision helpful and supportive …………………………………………………..	5
- In rural placements, time travelling caused difficulties for some students, in terms of financial cost, time out of the placement and additional tiredness ………………………..………	5
- Amount currently offered per mile is too small ……………..	5
- RGU should provide guidelines on what it will pay for …….	4
- Benefits of a collaborative approach- 'shared responsibility' within the team and links between the agency and Higher Education Institutions …………………………..	3
- The agency-based practice learning model has had benefits for the agency such as promotion of service, possibility for future recruitment and the opportunity to question practice and systems ……………………………………….	2
- I found much of the detail of the questionnaire difficult to answer …………………………………………………	2
- 6 students is too many for the practice learning facilitator to have	1
- Seen as something new and worthwhile …………………….	1
- Project... 1	
- The costs of the model for the agency have been, basically, photocopying and administration costs ………………….	1
- It would be desirable to match student's resources with the nature of the placement (own car, travel distance, etc.) …..	1
- Specialised placements are very valuable for the final placement ………………………………………………	1

"I would not recommend that city students take a rural placement unless conditions can be improved.".

Findings: Student forum prior to group supervision is mentioned as helpful and supportive. However, two themes stand out among the comments and suggestions most often raised by respondents in this section: financial issues and difficulties

caused by rural placements. Firstly, a range of financial issues are commonly mentioned by respondents, namely, reimbursement of travel expenses, car parking costs, mileage, and the need for students getting paid for their placement work. Regarding rural placements, travelling long distances appears to cause difficulties to some students in terms of financial cost, time out of the placement and additional tiredness. It is suggested that RGU should provide guidelines on what it will pay for. Benefits of a collaborative approach –within the agency team as well as between the agency and Higher Education Institutions- are also highlighted.

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Limitations of the study

As noted above, a post-test only design, at the end of the programme, has been used for the evaluation of the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model. This research design is useful in order to collect formative feedback. However, since a post-test only design does not involve conducting a baseline measurement, it is not suitable to measure changes in knowledge, opinions or attitudes (Carpenter, 2005). Also, because the study does not include comparison groups, the outcomes shown in the present report cannot be compared with outcomes of different approaches. Finally, low response rate (45%) among link supervisors might be considered another serious limitation of the study. However, it is not clear whether socio-demographic variables among non-respondents are significantly different to those of respondents, so that conclusions in relation to this group might not be necessarily biased. In any case, caution should be taken when analysing the data reported by this group of participants.

Conclusions

1. A majority of respondents report that the project has been useful in allowing the student to integrate theory and practice and mention this outcome as one of the main advantages of interchanging academic and agency staff roles. It is suggested that more involvement in agency work of academic tutors who have experience as practitioners could enhance the model.

2. Placement preparation in RGU is generally regarded as useful in familiarising students with the structure and content of the placement. However, a considerable proportion of students consider it only moderately useful, which suggests that some improvements could be done in this area. High levels of satisfaction are reported in relation to other areas of placement preparation, with gradual incorporation of the student to the duties of the agency and availability of staff members being mentioned among the most useful elements of agency induction. On the other hand, providing students with too much information is commonly reported as one of the less useful aspects of agency induction.

3. Overall, the role of practice learning facilitator in the LEEP Project 1.3 Demonstration Model receives positive feedback, especially in relation to providing students with packages of service-specific as well as cross-sector learning opportunities. This function, along with the practice learning facilitator not being under the pressure of case-based work with services users, is seen as one of the main advantages of the role. Nevertheless, it is suggested that particular attention needs to be paid to establishing clear boundaries between the roles of practice learning facilitator and members of the staff involved in the agency-based practice learning process such as link supervisors.

4. Most respondents indicate that the practice learning facilitator provided students with learning opportunities across a range of agencies within the social work sector linked to the placement. Access to different agencies,

interconnected or linked to each other, helped students gain a wider perspective of services available when working with a specific service user group. The most frequent suggestion in this area refers to the need to achieve a balance between service-specific and cross-sector learning opportunities in order to benefit from the advantages of both approaches.

5. Regarding a team approach to agency-based practice learning, team members generally shared responsibility for the student's learning, development and assessment during the placement. However, in some cases a team approach to practice learning was accomplished only to a moderate extent. Established networks, information sharing and a strong team commitment to work together are cited as factors that enabled team members to share responsibility in this area, whereas dispersed teams in rural areas are mentioned as the main obstacle to a team approach to practice learning.

6. Although one of the principles of the model is to engage a number of staff members –link supervisors- in the student's learning and assessment process, almost half of the students report having just one link supervisor during their placement. Link supervisors were responsible for all aspects of case-based work, providing the student with day-to-day information and support as well as formal supervision/assessment through feedback. Establishing clear lines of responsibilities between practice learning facilitator and link supervisors was the most frequently mentioned enabling factor and staff shortages the main obstacle to supervision and assessment being shared by link supervisors. Access to different styles of work is an important advantage of having a number of link supervisors involved in agency-based practice learning whereas risk of the learning process being too fragmented is the most frequently reported disadvantage of the approach. It is suggested that a balance in the number of links should be achieved.

7. Individual supervision -with link supervisor and practice learning facilitator- and group supervision are generally viewed as useful by a majority of respondents. Also frequency of individual supervision with link supervisor is commonly rated as adequate. Enhanced support, guidance and advice from

both link supervisor and practice learning facilitator, the ability to share learning experiences and peer support are cited as the most useful elements of the integrated approach to supervision. On the other hand, time pressures is the factor most frequently mentioned as less useful. It is suggested that a balance should be achieved in this area, with more individual supervision with the practice learning facilitator and less group supervision. Respondents also mention that in those weeks (3 in total) in which there was supervision with link supervisors, group supervision, and one-to-one supervision with the practice learning facilitator, the student felt over- supervised.

8. In relation to other agency members such as senior managers, team managers and team seniors, respondents have highlighted the importance of such roles in supporting staff members involved in practice learning as link supervisors. Nonetheless, more evidence in this area is needed before any generalisable conclusion can be drawn.

9. Access to Information Technology facilitated the student learning process. However, some students did not have instant access to a computer or access to Internet, issues which –as reported by participants- need to be addressed in future agency-based practice learning.

10. Service user involvement in the student learning and assessment process was, generally speaking, moderate. Nevertheless, a majority of respondents report that such level of service user involvement is adequate. Getting a holistic assessment and alternative perspectives as well as empowering services users by giving them the opportunity to feedback are mentioned as the main advantages of service user involvement in the student learning and assessment process. The possibility that some service users may have their own agenda, different to the student's one is cited as one of the main disadvantages of this approach. Regarding carer involvement, a large majority of respondents provide a "not applicable/do not know" response, which might indicate that further investigation is needed in this area. Finally, it is suggested that, for student development purposes, feedback from service users and carers are collected at mid-placement and later in the placement, not just at the end.

11. Participants report that the integrated assessment process used in the project is positive in order to have different sources of information and evidence as well as make students more accountable in their work with service users. On the downside, some participants report that students felt over-supervised and watched.

12. Student contribution to the service provided by the agency and to the agency's learning culture (knowledge, values, etc.) receive very positive feedback and a very large majority of participants think that the students are, at least, sufficiently prepared to enter the profession of social work after the placement.

13. When participants were given the opportunity to provide further comments or suggestions, financial issues and difficulties caused by travelling long distances in rural placements were the themes most often raised.

14. In conclusion, while a majority of participants in the study report positive results, a number of suggestions are also provided as to how to enhance future agency-based practice learning.

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