

Involving Service Users and Carers in the Assessment of Student Observations

The importance of using direct feedback to evaluate the quality of practice, particularly for social work students is well known, indeed Universities require educators to seek feedback after each assessed observation of practice. We hope this guide will aid Practice Educators/assessors to gain quality and meaningful feedback from service users and that this feedback helps them to assess students against the PCF.

The Pan Dorset and Wiltshire Teaching Partnership aims to improve co-production and Service User involvement. Creating this document, we hope to make a small step towards meeting this aim. This guide has been co-produced by members of Wiltshire College Service Users and Carers Hub, Wiltshire Service User Network and Wiltshire Council.

"It should be the main way that people learn, how can they get better if they don't ask the people they are working with?"

Planning prior to the observation

Consider if this is an appropriate piece of work to be observed and feedback gathered? Crisis situations or unannounced visits are not recommended.

Has the Service User consented to the observation and giving feedback?

Ensure that you as educator have information about the service user and an understanding of their strengths and needs. Think about identity and communication needs. The Practice Educator will need to adapt their approach depending on the individual service user. For example, someone with Autism may struggle with open questions and questions about feelings. But if you ask them direct questions about the process you are likely to get more information.

The service users told us that it is essential for the student and the practice educator to plan for the observation. Ideally both the educator and the student would contact the service user to give them thorough information about:

1. Why observations of practice are important for students
2. What the student's identified learning needs are
3. What the social work role involves

Discuss with your student the importance of service user feedback and that they understand gaining feedback is a **learning tool** ie it's ok to get things wrong! The observation and feedback should be a positive learning experience. Students should speak candidly with service users about the importance of feedback prior to the observation.

QUICK TIPS

Enablers

- Prepare questions you might ask of the service user before the observation.
- Are they the best questions? Will the Service User understand them?
- Consider their experiences and identity when seeking feedback
- Check in advance if they will need or want an advocate, friend or relative present.

Barriers

- Service users not being adequately prepared by the PE and student for the observation
- Not acknowledging carers and their role.

Observation and Gaining Feedback

On the day of the observation check again that the service user is still happy for the observation to go ahead and they are still willing to give some feedback. If they would rather not give feedback you can suggest calling at another time that is more convenient for them or that they provide feedback via email or in writing if they would prefer.

Explain the purpose of asking for feedback how valuable it is to the student for learning and development. Positively framing feedback can help. Explain how the feedback will be used. **Some may need reassurance that there will be no negative impact on the services or funding they receive if they point out areas for development.**

At the end check that the service user is happy they have been able to

'The student must give permission to the service user to be critical'

say everything they wanted to, thank them for sharing their experiences and taking the time to give feedback.

Prompt Questions

1. Do you know why the student came today and what they were going to talk to you about?
2. What did it feel like to have (the student) come to your home today? How do you feel now?
3. Was this how the student usually behaves and acts with you?
4. How do you prefer to communicate? Do you think (the student) knows this?
5. Did you feel the student listened to you?
6. Did the student find out about you and your life?
7. Could the student have done anything differently to make this experience better for you?
8. Did the way the student asked you questions work for you?
9. Are you clear about what will happen next?
10. Did you talk about everything you needed to today?



QUICK TIPS

- It can be useful to discuss the service users prior experience of Social Work involvement and how this experience compares.
- Beginning with open questions can produce richer more detailed feedback e.g. how has it felt to have social care involvement?
- If you are not getting the information you need don't be afraid to change tack.
- Make sure the student is not present whilst you seek feedback so that the service user can speak freely.
- Observe non-verbal behaviour throughout, this will tell you a lot about the student's practice.

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