

BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR PRACTICE EDUCATOR ASSESSORS



About this Guide

This document has been developed for the purpose of offering guidance for the practice assessor role. It should be seen as complementary to the guidance provided within the [Practice Educator Professional Standards \(PEPS\)](#). This guidance has been developed by British Association of Social Workers (BASW) members in collaboration with employers, practice educators, practice assessors and Higher Education Institutions (HEI's). This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Look After Your Practice Educator guidance](#).

This document has been written with a clear commitment to challenge inequality and ensure an inclusive environment for learners and those supporting them irrespective of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion/beliefs or sexual orientation. We recognise that a diversity of people bring different ideas, histories, knowledge and culture, which brings great strength and improves the quality of the practice learning experience.

1. Terms and Abbreviations

Learning Provider - This will be the organisation that delivers the teaching and assessment of an accredited PEPS course. This might be an HEI (Higher Education Institution), an employer or an independent organisation.

Mentoring Sessions - The PEPS outlines an expectation that a PE Mentor should 'provide at least six supervision sessions to the Trainee Practice Educator' (BASW, 2022, p3) during PEPS 1 and 2. Within this document, we will refer to these as '*mentoring sessions*' for clarity.

Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSWS) - A registered social worker usually within their first year of employment typically undertaking the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

Practice Educator (PE) Assessor - A registered social worker qualified to PEPS 2 who will be responsible for assessing the Trainee PE against the Values Statements and PEPS Domains. Often, assessment and mentoring roles are undertaken by the same individual, typically referred to as the 'PE Assessor', but in some cases they may be referred to as the 'PE Mentor'.

Practice Educator (PE) Mentor - A registered social worker qualified to PEPS 2 who will develop skills and knowledge of the Trainee PE during the process of undertaking a PEPS course. As with the PE Assessor role described above, often assessment and mentoring are undertaken by the same individual.

Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) course - Assessed against the PEPS Domains and Values statements.

Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) - 'The framework for practice teaching and learning in England. It sets out nine common domains of capability that we expect to develop as social workers, and which others can expect of us. It promotes and underpins social work as 'one profession' across all specialisms and roles'.

Social work learner - The person subject to the support, teaching and assessment by the Trainee PE. This may be a pre-qualification learner or post qualification (e.g. ASYE).

Trainee Practice Educator - A social worker undertaking a PEPS course with a learning provider.

On-site Supervisor - Is responsible for the day-to-day support for the learner and will work closely with the PE. On-site supervisors are sometimes referred to as 'work-based supervisors' in some practice learning settings.

2. Practice Educator Assessor: Roles & Responsibilities

2.1 START OF PEPS TRAINING

Prior to undertaking the role of Practice Educator (PE) Assessor, a PE should:

- Be familiar with, and they themselves demonstrate, both the PEPS Domains and Values Statements.
- Have met the recommended threshold of at least five learners as outlined in 4.2.3 of the PEPS.
- Have met the currency requirements outlined in section 4.8 of the PEPS or have taken steps to 'refresh' their qualification (see section 3 below).
- Highlight any conflict of interest with the social work learner, on-site supervisor, Trainee PE with the learning provider as soon as this becomes apparent.

It is for the employer and learning provider to decide and agree if a PE meets the requirements outlined within the PEPS for the role of PE Assessor. This includes consideration of if the recommended threshold of at least five learners has been met.

As part of the role, PE Assessors are expected to:

- Complete a Learning Agreement with the Trainee PE to explore learning needs for the duration of the PEPS course. This should be completed prior to the PEPS course commencing or when the social work learner has started placement. This will include a discussion of any personal and/or professional issues impacting on the Trainee PE.
- Offer advice and guidance to the Trainee PE with regards to the induction plan for their social work learner.

2.2 DURING PEPS TRAINING

During the PEPS course PE Assessors are expected to:

- Support the learning of the Trainee PE and ensure there are adequate learning opportunities to meet the PEPS Domains.
- Ensure that the Trainee PE receives at least three mentoring sessions for PEPS 1, and three mentoring sessions for PEPS 2 to discuss progress. These should be recorded with minutes sent to the Trainee PE.
- Provide the Trainee PE written and verbal feedback on written reflections, observations and other assessment tasks, against the PEPS Domains and Values Statements.
- Obtain feedback on the Trainee PE from the Social Work Learner.
- Be a critical friend, drawing out the potential with the Trainee PE by providing timely feedback, advice and guidance.
- Discuss any concerns about practice education provided by the Trainee PE in the first instance
- Complete three written observations of supervision/teaching of the Trainee PE with at least 2 different social work learners takes place over the duration of PEPS 1 and 2.
 - Observations can be online or face to face but ideally two will be face to face.
 - Observed activities could include peer reviewed supervision, leading a group supervision or leading a teaching and development opportunity for the learner.
- Provide overarching responsibility for the social work learner and sign off assessment against the PCF depending on the level of placement at interim and final stages of the placement.
- Inform the line manager of the trainee if learning is disrupted (for the Trainee PE or social work learner) or there are concerns about suitability for practice education.
- Provide guidance on meeting the PEPS Domains and Values Statements should the social work learner not complete their placement (see section below on managing difficulties).

2.3 AT THE END OF PEPS TRAINING

At the end of the PEPS course PE Assessors are expected to:

- Verify learning and practice undertaken by the Trainee PE.
- Provide an independent assessment of the trainee for the purposes of the PEPS programme against the PEPS Domains and Values Statements depending on level of study.
- Confirm/endorse the decision of the Trainee PE in their assessment of the social work learner.

Key elements of the Practice Assessor's role	Stage 1	Stage 2
Reviewing Practice Assessor's Stage 1 report on the trainee PE and identifying developmental needs		✗
Reading the trainee's Practice Curriculum in order to gain an overview of what the trainee plans for the placement <i>(Trainee PE to provide to PE Assessor)</i>	✗	✗
Drawing up a learning agreement with the Trainee PE	✗	✗
Giving feedback on the Practice Learning Agreement, induction programme, direct observations and support and supervision offered to social work learner	✗	✗
Providing guidance and countersignature to the midway report of the social work learner	✗	✗
Providing guidance and countersignature to the final report of the social work learner	✗	✗
Providing face-to-face or telephone mentoring and support to the Trainee PE during the student placement and remaining in email contact as required	✗	✗
Undertaking a minimum of two direct observations (in person or virtual) of the Trainee PE	✗	
Undertaking a minimum of one direct observation (in person or virtual) of the Trainee PE		✗
Provide feedback to Trainee PE on next steps for development	✗	✗
Preparing a final report on the Trainee PE and making a Pass/Fail assessment decision	✗	✗

3. Currency

PE's need to have recent experience to perform their role effectively. To remain current, a PE is expected to support at least one social work learner every two years. According to the PEPS guidance, a social work learner may be someone undertaking a professional qualification in social work or post-qualified learning (e.g. ASYE, Best Interests Assessor, Approved Mental Health Practitioner).

A PE can also maintain currency through other practice education activities. Please see [section 4.8.1 on page 14](#) of the PEPS Refresh document (2022).

Lapsed PE's are those who have not been involved in practice education for two years. Activities can be undertaken to regain currency if this requirement has not been met. Please see [section 4.8.4 on page 15](#) of the PEPS Refresh document (2022).

In line with the [Practice Educator Professional Standards](#) (PEPS), all PE's are required to maintain the currency of their PE qualification which may be used as evidence of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for renewal of registration with Social Work England. Where currency has lapsed, activities may be recommended to the PE that will allow them to regain currency. The PE Assessor may be expected to supply evidence to demonstrate currency.



4. Currency Flowchart

When did you last support a Social Work Learner or Trainee PE?

Less than 2 years

2 years +

Have you supported at least one social work learner, or undertaken any other recommended activity from PEPS to maintain your currency?

Your qualification has lapsed.

To regain currency, contact your employer or learning provider, who can make recommendations in line with the PEPS refresh (BASW, 2022)

Yes

No

If you have supported social work learning within the past **2 years**, assessed a social worker learner or Trainee PE, you have maintained your Practice Educator qualification within the ([PEPS, 2022](#))

Act now!

Speak to your employer or learning provider about your currency and being a PE for the next academic year

5. Feedback

Feedback from a PE Assessor will play an important part in developing the skills of the Trainee PE and will in turn affect the standard of supervision, guidance and assessment being offered to social work learners.

The PE Assessor is expected, with reference to the PEPS (BASW, 2022), to provide feedback on the Trainee PE's approach to the teaching and assessment of their student. The PE Assessor's role is also one of a critical friend seeking to draw out the potential with the Trainee PE by providing timely direction, advice and guidance.

5.1 FEEDBACK ON DIRECT OBSERVATIONS OF TRAINEE PRACTICE EDUCATOR

PE Assessors are expected to undertake an observation of a Trainee PE on three occasions across Stage 1 and Stage 2 (BASW, 2022). Whilst the content of observations will vary, the suggested areas to consider for feedback during Trainee PE direct observations are as follows:

- How has the Trainee PE planned for the session?
- Has the Trainee PE given due consideration to social work learner wellbeing?
- Was there a clear review of actions from the previous session and actions for the next session?
- Has the Trainee PE demonstrated the functions of supervision: pastoral, accountability, case management, learning and development, organisational skills, using a theory informed approach, use of a reflection model?
- Has the Trainee PE demonstrated the PEPS Value Statements?
- Was the voice of the social work learner heard?
- Has the Trainee PE agreed the sufficiency and validity of evidence provided by the social work learner and made clear links to the Professional Capabilities Framework (BASW, 2018)?

PE Assessor should also aim to meet separately with social work learner to discuss:

- How did the social work learner find the session?
- How useful did the social work learner find any tools or exercises used within the supervision / teaching session?
- How has the Trainee PE addressed the individuals' learning needs during the sessions?
- How has the Trainee PE addressed issues of diversity during the session?
- How has the social work learner found the supervisory relationship with the Trainee PE overall?
- Is there anything else that the social work learner would have found useful?

5.2 PE ASSESSOR FEEDBACK IN MENTORING SESSIONS

PE Assessors are expected to provide six mentoring sessions over the PEPS 1 and 2 programme; three in stage 1 and three in stage 2. These provide an excellent opportunity to provide timely feedback on the development of the Trainee PE. The agenda and content for mentoring sessions may vary and will be contingent upon whether the Trainee PE is undertaking PEPS 1 or PEPS 2, whether the social work learner is undertaking their first or final placement, and the stage of the student placement. However mentoring sessions can offer opportunity to provide feedback on:

- How is the Trainee PE currently progressing against the PEPS Domains and Values Statements?
- Taking into account the diverse needs of learners, what are the Trainee PE's strengths and learning needs?
- Are there any areas of success or concern?
- What is the PE Assessor view of written work completed by the Trainee PE?
- How has the Trainee PE managed any difficulties with the social work learner placement?
- How has the Trainee PE applied guidance or direction from the PE Assessor?
- Actions agreed between parties and progress towards completion of the PEPS course requirements.
- How has feedback from the social work learner informed the assessment of the Trainee PE?

5.3 PE ASSESSOR FEEDBACK IN THE TRAINEE PRACTICE EDUCATOR FINAL REPORT

PE Assessors have an important role in the assessment of a Trainee PE and must give consideration to how they have evidenced both the Domains and Values Statement of the Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) (BASW, 2022). As such the PE Assessors report should give due consideration to:

- How each of the PEPS Domains have been evidenced.
- How the Trainee PE has demonstrated the Values Statements.
- Any factors that may have affected the Trainee PE's progress during the social work learners' placement.
- Areas of strength and areas for professional development
- How the Trainee PE has made use of the mentoring relationship for their own professional development.

6. Managing Disagreements

In the event of a disagreement between the PE assessor and the Trainee PE, in the first instance this should be discussed between the two parties. Where no resolution is possible, the employer lead from the Trainee PE's agency and the training provider should be informed, and a four-way meeting arranged. If no resolution can be made, disagreements should then be followed up using the agency and/or the learning provider complaints procedure.

In some cases there may be concerns about the quality of Practice Education provided by the Trainee PE's or a situation that has arisen on placement. In most cases these can be addressed within mentor sessions and should be seen as learning opportunities for the Trainee PE to enhance and improve their practice. Where a Trainee PE is assessed as struggling, the PE Assessor should contact the employer lead and the learning provider at the earliest opportunity. A four-way meeting will be held, to identify and agree an action plan and developmental support for the Trainee PE.

Where a Trainee PE assesses that a social work learner is struggling, or there are difficulties in the learning relationship, the learning provider programme procedures for a struggling learner must be followed by the Trainee PE with support from the PE Assessor.

There are some exceptional circumstances which may require intervention by the learning provider to prevent the breakdown of the placement and/or disadvantage to the social work learner. For example, where communication between the social work learner and Trainee PE has broken down, or where the commitment to the learning or Professional Standards (SWE) or [Code of Ethics](#) (BASW) is in question. In these cases, the matter must be brought to the immediate attention of the learning provider where the social work learner is located.

7. Acknowledgements

- BASW England
- Chris Short – Senior Lecturer in Social Work (with practice learning), University of Bedfordshire
- Kristy Regan - Practice Learning Co-ordinator, Senior Lecturer in Social Work, University of Sunderland
- Polly Sykes – Head of Social Work, University of York
- Sarah Brown – Staff Tutor and Regional Academic in Social Work
- Sue de Waal – Consultant Social Worker, West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership
- Wayne Reid – Professional Officer and Social Worker
- Everyone that contributed to local consultations, including attendees at the 2024 NOPT conference seminar

