Brief Guide

Practice Education Strategy

What is a Practice Education Strategy?

A Practice Education Strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve and embed a long term and sustainable approach to planning for social work qualifying placements overseen by Practice Educators.

What is the purpose of a Practice Education Strategy?

The purpose of this would be to bring all the provisions of practice education into one comprehensive strategy for the whole organisation.

This would be achieved by:

- Developing a commitment with senior leaders to provide an optimum number of quality placements, aligning with the recruitment needs for newly qualified social workers
- Providing clarity regarding the value of social work placements for the organisation in terms of workforce planning and the development of a learning organisation
- Determining the proportion of placements within the various service areas across an organisation and identifying requirements for practice educators
- Collaboration with HEIs and Social Work qualifying providers to determine demand for placements
- Recruitment and retention planning for practice educators, ensuring sufficient appropriately experienced and capable social workers are supported to train and retain currency as practice educators.
- Ensuring quality assurance systems are embedded within practice education

Who is involved in developing a PE Strategy?

For a PE Strategy to be successful and support the implementation of long-lasting change with maximum impact across the organisation and workforce it needs to include;

- Senior Leadership Team
- Principal Social Workers
- Workforce Development

What are the components of a PE Strategy?

- Strong senior management leadership regarding embedding the PE Strategy
- Champions for practice education at all levels within the organisation
- A whole team approach to student placements and the value they bring to the team by providing a joint up approach to offering their support in the learning process
- Development of collaborative relationships with HEIs to promote good practice and an understanding of the number of placements required
- Understanding the range of placements available across all areas of the organisation to support placement needs
- Quality assurance of placements using QAPL or similar, ensuring that there is a feedback loop to inform an individual PE's development needs and organisational support and CPD for PES
- Opportunities for Practice Education training and refresher training (PEPS Refresh 2019) to be made available as required and ensuring appropriate resources are accessible as needed
- Communities of Practice/learning and support groups available for practice educators
- Ensuring a stable network of practice educators across the workforce with Practice Education linked to strategies for recruitment and retention
- A comprehensive recording system to identify the number of practice educators and placements across the organisation taking into consideration:
  - those that are "active" and "inactive"
  - the assessment of practitioners completing their PE1 and PE2 and the potential impact on the number of PE2s that are then available to assess students

Reviewing and monitoring a PE Strategy?

- A PE Strategy should be reviewed regularly in order to ensure that it is still having a positive impact within the organisation
- Regular reports based upon hard data will enable effective planning cycles for training, recruitment and practice learning
- There should be a correlation between the number of placements required and the number provided as well as consideration of the number of practice educators within an organisation able to support students and the enrollment on PEPS programmes to train the next cohort of PEs.
- Consideration and analysis of the ways in which practice education is organised should be included when reviewing a PE Strategy. This can include the use of student hubs, oversight PEs, specialist and semi-specialist support mechanisms.

How to measure the impact of a PE Strategy?

- There are enough placements to meet the requirements as a learning organisation which align with future recruitment needs
- Information systems are in place that support the ease of sharing complex data in order to support organizational and regional workforce planning
- Positive feedback from students, PEs and Team managers so that the experience is seen as valuable
- Students on placement within your organisation wish to progress to the ASYE programme
- These students are subsequently viewed as suitable candidates for the ASYE programme
- Through this training PEs have developed significant and transferable skills that support their progression within the organisation.
- An increase in active PEs and a decrease in inactive PEs

One Minute Guide

Practice Education Strategy

Area of focus	Consideration
Organisation *What measures can be implemented at an organisational level when implementing a PE Strategy*	− Strong senior management leadership regarding embedding the PE Strategy − Champions for practice education at all levels within the organisation − Developing a commitment with senior leaders to provide an optimum number of quality placements, aligning with the recruitment needs for newly qualified social workers − Providing clarity regarding the value of social work placements for the organisation in terms of workforce planning and the development of a learning organisation − Analysis of the ways in which practice education is organised. This can include the use of student hubs, oversight PEs, specialist and semi-specialist support mechanisms. − A whole team approach to student placements and the value they bring to the team by providing a joint up approach to offering their support in the learning process − Development of collaborative relationships with HEIs to promote good practice and an understanding of the number of placements required. − Determining the proportion of placements within the various service areas across an organisation and identifying requirements for practice educators − Collaboration with HEIs and Social Work qualifying providers to determine future demand for placements − Regular reports based upon hard data will enable effective planning cycles for training, recruitment and practice learning

Practice Educators *How can a PE Strategy be used to support PE's in their own development, how they are supported and how they support students*	− Opportunities for Practice Education training and refresher training (PEPS Refresh 2019) to be made available as required and ensuring appropriate resources are accessible as needed for all PEs − Through this training PEs have developed significant and transferable skills that support their progression within the organisation. − Communities of Practice/learning and support groups available for practice educators − Ensuring that there is a feedback loop to inform an individual PE's development needs and organisational support and CPD for PEs − Ensuring a stable network of practice educators across the workforce with Practice Education linked to strategies for recruitment and − Ensuring quality assurance systems are embedded within practice education
Placements *What can a PE Strategy add to placement opportunities available within an organisation*	− Development of collaborative relationships with HEIs to promote good practice and an understanding of the number of placements required − There should be a correlation between the number of placements required and the number provided as well as consideration of the number of practice educators within an organisation able to support students and the enrollment on PEPS programmes to train the next cohort of PEs. − Providing clarity regarding the value of social work placements for the organisation in terms of workforce planning and the development of a learning organisation − Understanding the range of placements available across all areas of the organisation to support placement needs − There are enough placements to meet the requirements as a learning organisation which align with future recruitment needs − Quality assurance of placements using QAPL or similar, ensuring that there is a feedback loop to inform an individual PE's development needs and organisational support and CPD for PEs

| Information systems

How information sharing systems can be utilised within a formal PE Strategy.	− A comprehensive recording system to identify the number of practice educators and placements across the organisation taking into consideration:
	
	    ▪ those that are "active" and "inactive"
	    ▪ the assessment of practitioners completing their PE1 and PE2 and the potential impact on the number of PE2s that are then available to assess students
	
	− Information systems are in place that support the ease of sharing complex data in order to support organisational and regional workforce planning
	
	− Recruitment and retention planning for practice educators, ensuring sufficient appropriately experienced and capable social workers are supported to train and retain currency as practice educators
	
	− Ensuring quality assurance systems are embedded within practice education
	
	− There are enough placements to meet the requirements as a learning organisation which align with future recruitment needs

Measuring Impact

How can the impact of a PE Strategy be monitored | − A PE Strategy should be reviewed regularly in order to ensure that it is still having a positive impact within the organisation

− Positive feedback from students, PEs and Team managers so that the experience is seen as valuable

− Students on placement within your organisation wish to progress to the ASYE programme
− These students are subsequently viewed as suitable candidates for the ASYE programme

− PEs have developed significant and transferable skills that support their progression within the organisation.

− An increase in active PEs and a decrease in inactive PEs |