

# Supporting collaborative and reflective work-based learning opportunities

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## Background

The following five tips emerged from an evaluation of approaches supporting collaborative and reflective work based learning opportunities in work place settings where the one children's workforce is still emerging. A new foundation degree (Working with children, young people and families) was the vehicle for this evaluation. A work based learning approach to role and practice development is one that is recognised by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC). This helpsheet offers some pointers for HEIs supporting work based learning in partnership with employers and employees (in this case children and young people workers). A full copy of the project report informing the recommendations made in this helpsheet is also available from [www.swap.ac.uk/projects/a-z/0809/icsnewroles.html](http://www.swap.ac.uk/projects/a-z/0809/icsnewroles.html)



Introduce the objectives and nature of work-based learning at student recruitment interviews. In most cases the student was the driver in seeing the relevance of the programme to the integrated children's workforce. It is the student who sets up a work-based learning agreement with a work-place mentor. Clear and concise guidelines about both the aims of the programme and the nature of the work-based learning relationship will help them establish an appropriate relationship from the start.



Clearly introducing the nature and objectives of work-based learning to both mentors and students as early as possible in the programme and preferably at induction will help to set the work-based learning relationship off on a sound footing and encourage a partnership approach to learning. The importance of both students and mentors receiving the same briefing at the same time was a strong recommendation from this project



Encourage the students to view the entire programme as a holistic work-based learning experience and to share the outcomes of their learning from all the modules with the workplace and to discuss their module assignments with their mentor while they were working on them. Assignment tasks should be designed that benefit the workplace, where clear links between learning and practice can be demonstrated



Hold regular, face-to-face, mentor briefings/support group meetings where the principles of effective work-based learning can be re-inforced together with exploration of the aims and purposes of the learning outcomes for the one children's workforce and the sharing of good practice. Through these group meetings, encourage 'experienced' mentors to 'buddy' those less experienced to encourage networking and support between group meetings.



Establish the preferred mode of communication with mentors as early as possible and review this regularly. In our case, an email group has proved to be a useful way to send out 'alerts' to mentors about policy developments and milestones within the student programme. A quarterly 'digests' newsletter is proposed for the academic year 2009/10 to be posted out in hard copy.

## Related resources

SWAP (2009) *Report: Integrated Children's Services in Higher Education (ICS-HE). Evaluating practice to support learning for new roles.* [www.swap.ac.uk/docs/projects/icsnewroles\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.swap.ac.uk/docs/projects/icsnewroles_rpt.pdf)

University of the West of England School of Health and Social Care (2009) *Work-based learning guide* [www.swap.ac.uk/docs/wrkbaselearn\\_guide.pdf](http://www.swap.ac.uk/docs/wrkbaselearn_guide.pdf)

University of the West of England School of Health and Social Care (2009) *Work-based learning contract* [www.swap.ac.uk/docs/wrkbaselearn\\_contract.pdf](http://www.swap.ac.uk/docs/wrkbaselearn_contract.pdf)

Higher Education Academy (2008) *Integrated Children's Services in Higher Education : The Children's Workforce Agenda in HE Briefing paper* <http://icshe.escalate.ac.uk/1816>

Higher Education Academy (2008) *Integrated Children's Services in Higher Education: Project Summary* <http://icshe.escalate.ac.uk/1819>

Higher Education Academy (2008) *Integrated Children's Services in Higher Education: Knowledge Review* <http://icshe.escalate.ac.uk/1822>

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