Principles
• A flexible and student-centred approach to gaining practice experience
• An approach that is based on real individual needs
• An approach that develops a person-centred approach to individual support
• An approach that allows students to follow through an entire intervention without interruptions caused by the end of placements
• An approach that develops the skills required of the learning disability nurse in the 21st century.

The model

Broad stages
1. Transition into individual-led practice
2. a) Individual-led practice getting to know the individual
   b) Working with the individual on specified needs
3. Disengagement

Individual-Led Practice

PHASE I
The purpose of the first 12 weeks is to help the student move from their current experience of practice placements into the more flexible approach typical of individual-led practice. The student will do this by achieving the following:
1. A broad orientation of learning disability services in a defined geographical area
2. Developing an understanding of the range of services and service providers involved in the lives of people who have a learning disability
3. Developing their professional network in support of their work in individual-led practice
4. Beginning to understand the breadth and complexity of the needs of people who have a learning disability
5. Identifying individuals the student may want to work with in the future and why
6. Developing the student’s relationship with their supervisor and an understanding of how they will work together
7. Identifying potential mentors when any individual contacts are confirmed
8. Completing a networking and community profile workbook (N&CPW).

PHASE II
• Each student will work with 3-5 individuals at any one time.
• The duration of the students’ involvement will be determined by the individual’s need.
• The nature of their involvement should be informed by real needs. The articulation of these needs should be in ‘health terms’. A good framework is that of ‘Our Healthier Nation’ (DoH 1999).
• The student should ensure that during the course of their individual-led practice they work with a variety of individuals who have different needs.
• Learning experiences should not be repeated with different individuals, without being negotiated with the student’s academic supervisor.
• It is expected that students will replace the work with any one individual with a group-focused activity such as Healthy Living Groups or Health Promotion Groups.

Examples of individual caseload

Example 1
Individual 1 – a person with mental health needs; the focus is nutrition and healthy lifestyles.
Individual 2 – a person with physical and sensory disabilities; the focus is communication.
Individual 3 – a group of children attending the local nursery; the focus is accident prevention.
Individual 4 – a gentleman who has a mild learning disability; the focus is assertiveness.

Example 2
Individual 1 – a person with a mild learning disability; the focus is bullying.
Individual 2 – a person with physical and sensory disabilities; the focus is creating a sensory lifestyle.
Individual 3 – a group of adults attending the local day centre; the focus is healthy lifestyles.
Individual 4 – a lady who has a learning disability and a young daughter; the focus is helping her to teach her daughter to learn to read.

PHASE III Disengagement
This is not a precise time within the course but is the completion of each piece of individual work. Disengagement will involve a combination of the following:
• A clear write-up of work undertaken
• A clear handover of relevant information
• A clear handover of ongoing pieces of work or work emanating from the student’s intervention
• A specific end point negotiated with the individual and key others. The person should be involved in planning towards this end point.

Supervision
• Each student will have an identified academic supervisor, a practice supervisor (who will be a first level
registered nurse, learning disability).

- In addition, each student will have a mentor for each individual they work with.

- The academic and practice supervisor will be identified by the University. The mentors should be identified by the student and negotiated with their practice supervisor or academic supervisor.

- A mentor need not be a nurse but should be someone who has a good knowledge of the individual and sufficient knowledge and expertise to provide the necessary support.

- In some circumstances parents and service users can act in an assessment capacity. This should be negotiated with the student's academic supervisor.

The student should negotiate the frequency of their supervision meetings with both their mentor and practice supervisors. It is suggested that these are more frequent at the start of a given relationship. They should however be based upon needs.

- Supervision will also occur (bi-)monthly with the student, practice supervisor and academic supervisor.

The purpose of supervision meetings is as follows:

**With mentor**
- To discuss work relating to the individual
- To problem solve where necessary
- To provide support and guidance
- To exchange information.

**With practice supervisor**
- To discuss direction of work with individuals
- To provide support and guidance
- To ensure overall balance of individual work supports achieving all outcomes by end of Year 3
- To problem-solve
- To address development issues.

**With practice and academic supervisor**
- To manage overall effectiveness of the individual-led practice model
- To pre-empt difficulties

“I tried general nursing but never felt it was the branch for me. On my learning disability placement I just fitted in. You really feel that you can make a difference by trying to combat the stigma and ignorance attached to people with a learning disability. The facilities at York are very modern and provide very comfortable study surroundings.”

Nicola, learning disability nurse
To problem-solve
To discuss individual work
To discuss future options
Personal development
Integrate theory and practice
To complete student progress reports.

Negotiating individual work/individual contact
1. Individual referral made or student identifies the individual they would wish to work with. Permission acquired from the individual.
2. Permission of other key stakeholders acquired, if relevant. This may include gaining parental consent if the service user is under the age of 16. In situations where permission is not needed it is still good practice to share relevant information with key people.
3. At this stage it is also important to ensure access to relevant notes and information will be available to inform the work the student will undertake. Access to information should be on a need-to-know basis.
4. The student spends time getting to know the individual and identifying the piece of work to be undertaken.
5. In getting to know the individual the student will research the person’s life plan. On identifying a specific piece of work this needs to be put in the context of the person’s life plan before confirming this is a valid piece of work.
6. The student researches the work being carried out by other professionals and other workers to ensure there are no overlaps and no competing tensions.
7. Relevant information about the student’s role is shared with other people working with the individual.
8. The student informs these people of both their academic and practice supervisor’s names and contact details. The student may provisionally identify a mentor at this point and discuss with the person concerned whether they are able to undertake this role.
9. The student meets with their practice supervisor to discuss the proposed area of work and to identify/clarify who the mentor will be for that piece of work.
10. Student and the mentor agree supervision schedule and communication method.
11. Practice supervisor and mentor agree communication method and any joint supervision that will be required.
12. The student undertakes relevant personal research.
13. The student meets with mentor/practice supervisor to agree intervention plan.
14. Monitoring and evaluation are as per intervention plan and supervision meeting schedule.

Practice Continuous Assessment of Practice document (CAP)
The supporting evidence for the practice proficiencies in the CAP document is a fundamental part of demonstrating the student’s work in individual-led practice. For each individual the student links with it is expected that they keep a file which includes the following:
- A list of names and contact details of mentors and practice supervisors relevant to each individual
- A pen portrait of the individual
- Assessments undertaken with the individual
- A synthesis of the outcomes of assessment and the prioritisation of the data
- The intervention plan(s) for the individual. These should include clear aims or goals and criteria for success. These should be evidence-based and referenced
- Implementation notes
- Evaluation data
- Resources used
- Communication eg letters, minutes of meetings, etc
- Research articles/data, with a clear indication of how these were useful in informing the planned intervention.

In addition each CAP document should include:
- Critical analysis and reflection on the student’s skill development
- Clarity regarding which work is the student’s own and which is that of another member of the team
- All work should be signed and dated
- Witness testimonies and mentor signatures to support the student’s claims
- A clear distinction between work submitted previously and that not seen by the student’s academic supervisor
- The student’s assessment outcomes
- The sheet indicating whether the student’s practice supervisor feels they are satisfactory to progress to the next stage of the course.

Contact
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