

Coventry Children's Services



**Return to
Practice**
for Social
Workers

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Foreword

Thank you for your interest in our Return to Practice programme. Coventry is committed to attracting quality practitioners to our workforce. We now have an established Social Work Academy which offers an intensive supportive learning environment to newly qualified social workers. This also includes a range of new initiatives, for example our Aspiring Social Work Scheme and a new Apprenticeship Model that have broadened our recruitment and retention strategy to support local experienced children and families workers to progress into a social work career. The Return to Practice Programme will complement this portfolio reaching out to those of you who have qualified as a social worker but have been out of practice for some time and are now looking to reignite your passion for social work as a career.

Through the Social Work Academy there is plenty of support available. Your placement opportunity with our frontline teams will be complemented by support from the Professional Practice Educators, together with the opportunity to access our learning and development offer, to renew and enhance your existing skills. Coventry is highly committed to improving outcomes for children and their families and attracting enthusiastic and experienced practitioners with the right kind of support and encouragement to come back into this challenging and interesting profession.

Coventry Children's Services has a strong ethos of supporting all its employees to progress and reach their full potential. The career pathway for social workers from newly qualified through to advanced practitioners and managers is now in place. All learning opportunities will be underpinned by the need to meet our statutory and regulatory requirements and will be mapped against the Professional Capabilities Framework and Knowledge and Skills Statement. This will enable you to assess how your learning is progressing, support you in your registration with Social Work England, and securing a social work post in the future.

I wish you well with your progress back into social work and want you to know that the Social Work Academy is here to support you in your journey.

With Thanks

John Gregg

Director of Children's Services



Information about the Programme

Coventry's Children's Services are committed to attracting quality practitioners to their social work workforce. If you are someone who has previously qualified and practiced as a social worker and would like to rejoin the profession, we are offering a Return to Practice programme to support you in your professional learning and development journey.

If you have been out of practice for more than two years, the Return to Practice Programme will enable you to update your knowledge and skills so that you can meet the requirements for registration with Social Work England. We will provide you with an opportunity to complete a period of 'supervised practice', linking you with an experienced social work practitioner based in one of our busy front line teams where you will undertake a period of shadowing, observing and learning about current practice to update your understanding of social work with children and their families. This together with some private and/or formal study will form your updating period to refresh your knowledge and skills, you will then be able to meet the requirements for your professional registration.

You will be supported with coaching and mentoring from a Professional Practice Educator based in the Social Work Academy alongside an internal package of bespoke learning and development which will enable practitioners to meet the knowledge requirements for the Post Qualifying Standards (KSS) and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).

This handbook provides guidance around our criteria, the application process and how you will be supported to complete your learning programme.

If after having looked through this booklet you have any further questions, please contact:
Louise Shorthouse, Professional Practice Educator or Arin Sotoudeh, Recruitment and Retention Lead.

e-mail louise.shorthouse@coventry.gov.uk

e-mail arin.sotoudeh@coventry.gov.uk



What is the process?

Application Process

- ▶ Meet with the Professional Practice Educator for the programme to discuss what is involved and eligibility
- ▶ Identify number of supervised practice days you are likely to need and areas of development you would like to focus on
- ▶ Complete the Return to Social Work Practice application form, providing documentation to confirm identity and qualification
- ▶ Complete DBS check

Supervised Practice Experience

- ▶ You will be linked with an Experienced Social Worker or Senior Practitioner in one of our children's teams to undertake a period of supervised practice
- ▶ Draw up a Professional Development Plan with the Experienced Social Worker and Professional Practice Educator outlining what the supervised practice will include (see Appendix 1)
- ▶ Complete supervised practice period
- ▶ Supervision, Coaching and Mentoring will be provided through the Social Work Academy by a Professional Practice Educator
- ▶ Private study undertaken, and evidence gathered to produce a portfolio of learning
- ▶ Formal study undertaken through workshops and our Children's Services Learning and Development programme

Completion of evidence for professional registration

- ▶ Complete form for registration with experienced social worker's signature confirming you have completed your supervised practice days
- ▶ Professional Practice Educator to be countersignatory for private and formal study if appropriate
- ▶ Apply for registration

Once your registration is complete

- ▶ Apply for a social work post in Coventry Children Services through the Assessment Centre
- ▶ If successful, you will have the opportunity to meet with a Professional Practice Educator to plan your continuing professional development

Guidance on Returning to Practice

Social Work England requirements state that if you have had a break of more than two years from social work practice and wish to return to the profession, there is a self-directed process you can follow. Social Work England states that "It is your responsibility to make sure you have met the appropriate requirements and can practise safely and effectively within your scope of practice, in line with our standards."

Minimum Social Work England requirements

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/registration/restoration-guidance>

You need to update your knowledge and skills as follows:

0-2 years	Evidence of how skills, knowledge and experience have been kept up-to-date.
2 - 5 years	30 days of updating within 6 months of renewal of your registration where at least 15 days must be made up of supervised practice alone or both supervised practice and formal study
5 years and over	60 days of updating within 12 months of renewal of your registration where at least 30 days must be made up of supervised practice alone or both supervised practice and formal study



The updating period can be made up of any combination of supervised practice, formal study or private study. Private study must not make up more than half the period. This updating period must be completed within 12 months before the date you apply to come back on the register or within 6 months when you re-register.

Coventry is committed to making the programme and learning experience as meaningful as possible, tailoring the number of days in supervised practice to your individual needs. Our programme can work around your existing commitments in order to maximise the benefit to the updating of your knowledge and skills.

We can offer a period of between 15 and 30 days supervised practice with an experienced social worker, being flexible to provide you with the required time, depending on your previous experience and the length of time out of practice. This could be in addition to or inclusive of training sessions you may attend as part of our core training offer. In addition to the supervised practice you would also need to be able to evidence how you have met the requirements around private and/or formal study, to share with your Professional Practice Educator, who can then countersign the Social Work England form to confirm you have completed the updating period.

Still wondering if this is for you? Here are a couple of examples to get you thinking:

Example 1

When Frank completed his Social Work Master's Degree in 2012, he went to work in a voluntary sector mental health service and stayed there for five years. He then decided to take some time out and travelled extensively, so this meant his professional registration lapsed. He has been out of practice for two years, but really wants to refocus on social work in a children and families team. He has not worked in this kind of statutory setting and is worried that he will be at a disadvantage during the interview process. He would like to undertake as much supervised practice as possible in order to build his confidence.

Example 2

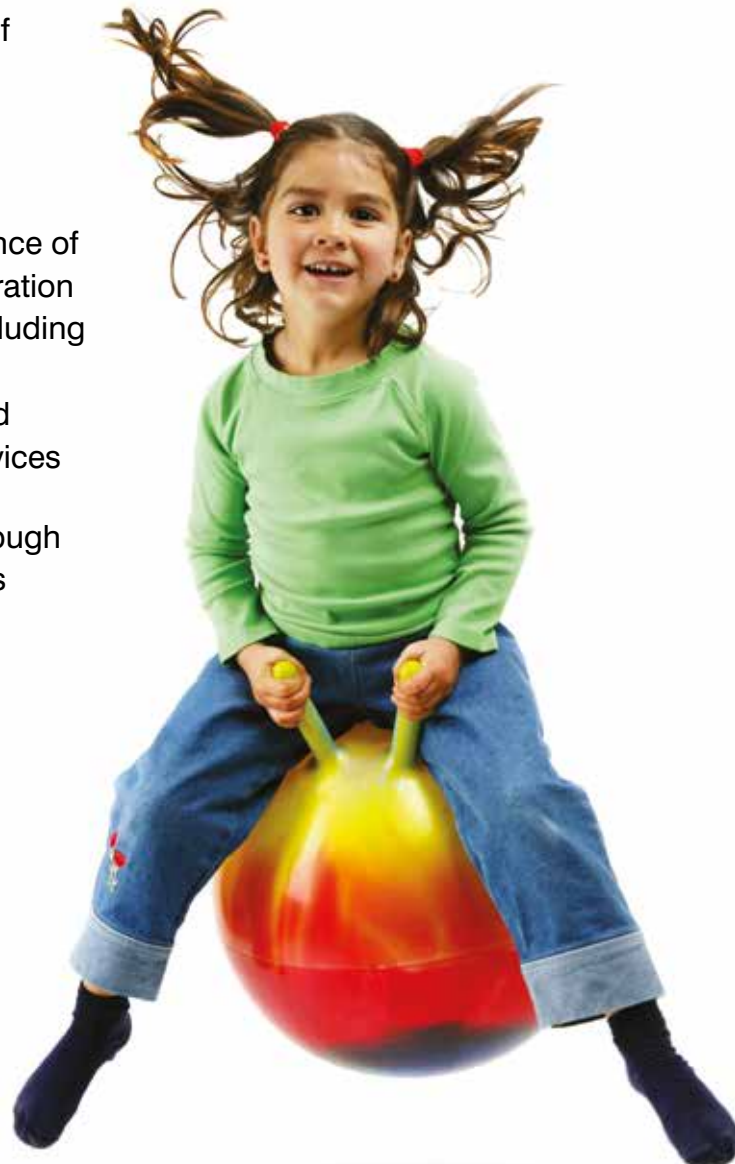
Surinder qualified ten years ago and was a registered social worker in a local authority until four years ago. At that point, she resigned from work in order to support members of her family with pressing health needs. For the last five years of her practice Surinder worked in a family placement team. She feels ready and excited to get back into practice and would really like the challenge of working with children and families. At the same time, she feels that her knowledge base may be out of date. She would also like to understand what the day to day work of a children and families social worker looks like now. Whilst she feels she has relevant skills, she would like to see how they can apply to this setting and start to critically evaluate her practice with an experienced practitioner again.

Learning activities and opportunities

Through early discussion with a Professional Practice Educator, we will aim to identify a team setting that will best meet your learning needs, linking you with an experienced social work practitioner who can provide you with a range of learning opportunities within their team. A Professional Development Plan will be drawn up with the support of your Professional Practice Educator from the Social Work Academy to help you to access the different parts of the learning experience.

Learning Opportunities:

- ▶ Shadowing social workers and other practitioners
- ▶ Observing practice and team processes
- ▶ Attending and observing home visits, direct work with families, Child in Need meetings, Safeguarding Conferences, Family Court Proceedings, Core Groups and Multi-agency meetings
- ▶ Contributing to Care Planning
- ▶ Opportunity to do some small pieces of work alongside a social worker
- ▶ Reflective supervision, coaching and mentoring under the guidance of a Professional Practice Educator
- ▶ Opportunity to share and review evidence of learning and development for re-registration
- ▶ Attendance at refresher workshops including Interview Skills
- ▶ Invitation to attend relevant training and workshops through the Children's Services Core Training offer
- ▶ Updating research and knowledge through access to books and learning materials
- ▶ Access to E-Learning Resources



Children's Learning and Development Training:

Whilst completing a period of updating practice, you will have access to some the Learning and Development portfolio for Coventry Children's Services which will be agreed within your Professional Development Plan. This is comprised of core and mandatory training alongside professional development and is mapped against the PCF and KSS for Children and Families social workers.

Some of the courses on offer include:

- ▶ Induction
- ▶ Safeguarding Awareness
- ▶ The Record Business and Chronologies
- ▶ Domestic Abuse Awareness / Domestic Violence Recognition and Response
- ▶ Exploring Cultural Sensitivity
- ▶ Child Sexual Exploitation
- ▶ Prevent Awareness
- ▶ Life Story Work
- ▶ Introduction to Signs of Safety
- ▶ Coventry's Safeguarding Children Partnership Inter-agency training at Level 1

Introduction to Safeguarding

- ▶ Corporate e-learning programme - including Information Sharing and Consent; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Access to courses will be tailored to your individual requirements, your level of experience and how long it has been since you have been in practice.

There is also an annual Practice Week which provides a host of exciting workshops on interactive and thought provoking topics.



Children's Learning and Development Training: Post-registration and Appointment Offer

Following on from the updating placement and successful registration with Social Work England, candidates will be encouraged to apply for a role within Coventry City Council.

Upon appointment there will be a 6-month formal programme that will include internal and external development opportunities alongside coaching and mentoring provided by the Practice Educator team within the Social Work Academy.

Learning and Development

An internal package of bespoke learning and development will enable practitioners to meet the knowledge requirements for the Post Qualifying Standards (KSS) and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) along with Coventry Children's Services Practice Standards.

Workshops will be offered bi-weekly and will include:

- ▶ Back to Basics – Social Work Skills Workshops
- ▶ Theory to Practice
- ▶ Understanding updated Legislation
- ▶ Completing Children and Families Social Work Assessments and Analysis
- ▶ Effective Recording
- ▶ Early Help and Children in Need; and Thresholds of Intervention (Right Help, Right Time)
- ▶ Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting
- ▶ Critical Reflection, Professional Curiosity and Hypothesising
- ▶ Direct Work with Children and Young People
- ▶ Signs of Safety

There may also be an opportunity for social workers to take the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) Assessment between months 6-12.

Coaching / Mentoring

Upon appointment Monthly Practice Educator 1:1s would be offered for 6 months. These would cover:

- Critical Reflection / Reflective Log
- Building Resilience
- Transferring learning to practice
- Group and Individual Supervision

In addition to this, there would be regular individual supervision provided by the team manager of the practitioner.

Roles and Responsibilities

Returner

- ▶ To take responsibility for your own period of updating, making sure you meet Social Work England's standards, drafting an appropriate Professional Development Plan in consultation with your experienced social worker and professional practice educator
- ▶ To actively engage in discussion with your experienced social worker and professional practice educator to identify your learning needs and objectives
- ▶ Take up opportunities offered by the Academy for updating knowledge
- ▶ Participate in regular discussion to critically reflect on practice and evaluate learning
- ▶ Maintain a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate learning achieved using a range of methods e.g. reflective log, notes from observations, courses and reading undertaken
- ▶ Adhere to the Data Protection requirements for Coventry, signing the confidentiality statement

Experienced Social Work Practitioner/Practice Supervisor

- ▶ To meet with the returner and support them to identify the skills and knowledge they need to update their practice safely and effectively in relation to the role to which they plan to return
- ▶ Identify how the returner's learning needs will best be met in your team and consider whether any time spent in other work settings would complement the returner's learning
- ▶ Provide a range of learning opportunities to be tailored to the returner's previous level of experience
- ▶ With the support of a professional practice educator draw up a Professional Development Plan which outlines arrangements and enables you to be fully supported in your role by the Academy
- ▶ To offer supervision to ensure the returner is accessing learning opportunities, offering support and guidance, to ensure you and the learner are practising safely and effectively
- ▶ The 'supervised practice' forms one part of the returner's period of updating their knowledge and skills. At the end of the period you will be asked to sign the returner's supervised practice form to confirm the number of days completed
- ▶ You may be asked to complete the updating Period Cover Sheet, this is something that can also be signed by the professional practice educator - see below
- ▶ In the event of any concerns coming to light about the returner's practice, advice should be sought from your link professional practice educator

Professional Practice Educator

- ▶ Consider returner's application and whether they will be eligible for the programme
- ▶ Identify a team to provide the supervised practice period with an experienced social worker
- ▶ Support the drawing up of the Professional Development Plan, enabling access to learning resources
- ▶ Provide reflective supervision and guidance around relevant reading and areas of study to maximise the returner's learning from their practice experience
- ▶ Validate evidence of formal and private study for the purposes of the Updating Period Form, providing the countersignatory where appropriate.
- ▶ To be the link person with the Social Work Academy, supporting the experienced social worker responsible for the returner to provide a good learning environment. Overseeing the returner's experience with Coventry and developing the programme

Role of Countersignatory

At the end of the updating period, the returner will require a signature on the Updating Cover Sheet confirming they have completed the required number of days. You do not need to physically supervise every day of the returner's updating period and you do not need to confirm that they are fit to practice. You just need to take reasonable steps to be sure that the returner has completed the number of days of supervised practice, formal and/or private study that they need to overall.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Returning to Social Work Practice Programme?

If you have been out of practice for two years or more, the Returning to Practice Programme will ensure that you have up to date knowledge and skills and can meet current requirements. If you have been out of practice for 2 to 5 years, you will need to undertake 30 days of updating; if you have 5 or more years out of practice, then 60 days of updating is needed.

Who is it for?

It is for anyone who successfully completed a social work qualifying course at undergraduate or post graduate level. You may have previously been on the register with the HCPC or Social Work England, and practised in a statutory or voluntary sector agency. However, for a variety of reasons you may not have registered and practised after qualification, or you may have been out of practice for the last two years. We understand that if you have been out of practice for a while, you may feel your knowledge needs updating, or you may want to build up your confidence again. We also recognise that you may have experience and skills that can make a vital contribution to the lives of service users and social work practice.

What does this updating comprise of?

Your period of updating focuses on knowledge and skills and will be made up of a combination of:

- ▶ supervised practice
- ▶ formal study
- ▶ private study

The exact content and the proportion of each of the above will be shaped by each returner's learning needs and objectives and will not necessarily require all three. However, private study cannot make up more than 50% of your required days.

What kind of assessment do I have to undertake?

This is not an assessed programme. You have already successfully completed a course and gained a social work qualification. The programme offers a combination of skills and knowledge updating, you are responsible for developing your own learning plan and gathering evidence for your own future career.

Do I have to pay a fee?

No – there is no fee for taking part in this programme and no cost to you. With the support we have provided for your learning and professional development and following your successful registration as a social worker, we would want to encourage you to apply for one of our social work posts through our Assessment Centre.

What kind of support will I get?

The Returning to Practice Programme is essentially a process that is directed by you, but with the support of an experienced social worker based in one of our teams. There is a professional practice educator to help you to identify your learning needs, organise learning opportunities and countersign your Social Work England Returning to Practice statement.





Professional Development Plan

This form is intended for electronic completion. Answer spaces will expand to accommodate text. It is recommended that you save copies each time the form is updated, observing also the organisation's data policy.

Return to Practice Learner's Name	
Address	
Contact details	
Telephone/mobile no	
Date and social work qualification obtained	
Host team	
Line Manager	
Experienced Social Worker/Practice Supervisor with overall responsible for Learning Opportunities	
Professional Practice Educator – link with Social Work Academy	
Proposed dates and arrangements for Supervised Practice period	

1. Experience and strengths:

Return to Practice Learner to identify your previous experience and strengths linking with PCF and KSS	PCF
	1
	2
	3
	KSS
	1
	2
	3

2. Learning Needs:

Return to Practice Learner to identify your learning needs linking to the PCF and KSS	PCF
	1
	2
	3
	KSS
	1
	2
	3

3. Learning Opportunities:

Experienced Social Worker / Practice Supervisor to identify learning opportunities and practitioners who may support within the team

Learning and development training and workshops candidate can access during the updating period

Learning materials to support private study

Arrangements for signing off updating period sharing of responsibilities between Experienced Social Worker and Professional Practice Educator

4. Regulatory Requirements:

Adherence to SWE Standards of Conduct, Ethics and Performance	
Agreement to Data Protection and Confidentiality policies	
Documentary evidence of social work qualification	
ID pass issued, to be returned at end of updating period	
DBS completed and seen by Team and Professional Practice Educator	
Signature of Return to Practice Learner	

4. Agreement summary:

Date of completion of agreement	
We confirm the arrangements set out in this agreement:	
Return to Practice Candidate	
Experienced Social Worker / Practice Supervisor	
Professional Practice Educator SWA	

5. Agreement review:

We confirm any changes made to this agreement	
Experienced Social Worker / Practice Supervisor	
Return to Practice Candidate	
Professional Practice Educator SWA	

Return to Practice

Confidentiality Agreement

1. I acknowledge that any equipment and information provided to me is the property of Coventry City Council and will only be used to support and inform my learning during my updating experience.
2. I will ensure that any notes taken to support my learning in relation to the work setting will be fully anonymised. There will be no identifying details of individuals the local authority is working with, addresses or other professionals' names involved in the casework.
3. I will read and comply with the City Council's information security and data protection policies and procedures in relation to: the use of technology, electronic and paper records, records management and confidentiality.
4. I will immediately inform my Practice Supervisor if I know (or know of from my personal life) service users I may be in contact with, so that they can determine whether it is appropriate for me to have access to information about them.
5. Under no circumstances will I access electronic or paper records relating to colleagues, family, neighbours or others whom I may know in a personal or Return to Practice context without authorisation.
6. I will only process Council/service user information where it is authorised by my Practice Supervisor and relevant to my learning, I will not disclose such information to anyone unless they have lawful grounds for receiving it.
7. I will always take care to ensure any equipment or records provided to me remain safe and secure. Information and equipment will always be kept secure, e.g. not left in vehicles etc.
8. I will not take copies and/or download information to any type of storage device without my line manager's permission.
9. I will promptly inform my practice supervisor and practice educator if I have any concerns about information governance and privacy rights.

I have read and understood the requirements set out above.

	Signature	Date
Returner		
Experienced Social Worker / Practice Supervisor		
Professional Practice Educator		

Important links:

1. Social Work England Return to Practice Guidance

This provides information about what you are required to do to be able to register or reregister with them

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/registration/restoration>

2. Registration Application form

This is the application form to rejoin the register complete with instruction on how to fill it in

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/registration/apply-for-restoration>

3. Social Work England Professional Standards

You should be familiar with these standards because to register you will be signing to say that you will keep to them

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards>

4. Professional Capabilities Framework

This is the current framework held by BASW which outlines the 9 domains you need to meet to qualify as a social worker.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/pcf-social-worker.pdf>

There is also a graphic fan which illustrates how the PCF develops as you progress through your social work career with increasingly complex domains for each level.

https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/pcf_fan.pdf

5. Knowledge and Skills Statement

The Department for Education updated the Knowledge and Skills Statement for child and family practitioners in May 2018, these provide the national assessment and accreditation criteria for social workers supporting vulnerable children and families following qualification.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/708704/Post-qualifying_standards-KSS_for_child_and_families_practitioners

