

The Service Quality Improvement Placement (SQulP): an innovative approach to placements for Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) students.

Placement Aims

For final year undergraduate pre-registration SLT students to:

- influence the quality of practice at client and service levels
- actively contribute to a service evaluation and produce a report for the service/organisation
- gain direct experience of quality assurance approaches within the workplace

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Speech and Language Sciences (SLS)

From Newcastle. **For the world.**

The Placement

Context

- Masters in Speech and Language Sciences (MSLS) stage 4 students
- An external placement - any organisation/setting/client group
- Innovative placement model in collaboration with placement providers
- Supervision provided by an HCPC registered Speech and Language Therapist
- Practice educators must commit to attend a training and planning workshop

Structure and Format

- 1 day per week, 11 weeks
- Breakdown between clinical and project work:
 - Clinical work: half a day per week*
 - Project work: half a day per week*
- Students are also expected to spend up to a maximum of half a day per week on project outside placement

Assessment

- The placement is assessed using the competency based Clinical Evaluation Report (CER)
- Assessment is based on evidence across clinical and project work
- Competencies underpinned by the HCPC Standards of Proficiency for SLT (updated September 2023)

The Service Evaluation Project

Design

Designed to answer the questions:

'What standard does this service achieve?' 'How useful is this aspect of the service?'

Intended to provide practical information to help decide whether a development or service should be continued or not.

Method

- Literature review
- Collection and analysis of data about service - audit of information/data, questionnaires, interviews, observations etc.

Outcome

- Statement/discussion of standard that 'service' is meeting
- Evaluation of standards in relation to evidence base
- Recommendations about whether to continue service/improvements etc.

Example Titles

'Development of a person-centred communication profile for all learners within an ASD Specialist Secondary Academy'

'Evaluation of current eating and drinking care plans within a Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy Service'.

'Service evaluation of the local anaesthetic vocal cord (LAVC) injection service at X NHS Trust'

'Evaluation of the patient reported outcome questionnaires used in Trans and Gender Diverse voice and communication therapy'

The Presentation and Report

Students present project findings to the service towards the end of the placement.

A report is produced by the students and submitted to the university.

The report includes:

- An Executive Summary (2-3 pages)
- Full report with literature support and critical evaluation (max of 3000 words)
- Appendix with full data/resources
- *The report is written for the service.*

Practice Educators and Services

Training and Support

1. In person workshop at university

Content

- Placement overview
- Service Quality Improvement Project overview
- Opportunity to discuss and shape project ideas with peers
- Clinical Governance Considerations
- Service Evaluation Report
- Timeline

2. Project Summary Form

- Submitted to university by practice educator
- Reviewed by university staff
- Feedback given – written and/or discussion
- Final project summary provided to student
- Opportunities for support during placement

Report Marking Process

1. Reports submitted by students
2. Blind marking by a member of university staff
3. Provisional mark & comments
4. **Comments from practice educator** (person who oversaw the project)
5. Second marking by member of university staff, with integration of any comments from practice educator
6. Final mark & comments

Practice educators do not give comments on written drafts prior to submission

Feedback

From Students

'My project was really enjoyable to do and I felt like I had really contributed something to the service'

'...this is the only placement where I had full exposure and integration with the wider MDT which was great as it helped me build my confidence in being a part of the wider MDT'

'I enjoyed the interesting question to tackle...learning that the methodology and the 'right approach' are not straight forward'

'I really enjoyed my project, in an area that I had not even considered but now have such a good understanding of the importance of it and feel quite passionate about it!'

'I was really surprised that I enjoyed the project as much as I did'

From Practice Educators/Services

'[this placement is] one of the ways we encourage our own staff to be involved in Quality Improvement methodology as part of their everyday work'

(Projects to evaluate a change made to our initial assessment process for early years children)...we had one student exploring how efficiently children with complex needs were assigned to the most appropriate team.....This project resulted in us updating our referral form and guidance to support referrers to provide more detailed information to support decision making'

(A project to evaluate recent CPD redesign)...this report was really useful to help us see how well the CPD redesign was being received in a more objective way than just us asking for feedback. The report also enabled us to tweak what we were doing in response to comments from staff'

'I find that these placements are great for digging into data we already have, gaining feedback from our staff as students are more removed from any practice/ changes that are being explored'

'...[opportunity to] dig into the literature and theoretical side of things to ensure practice is aligned'