


# A week in the life of AILEEN O'CONNELL

## PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT SOCIAL WORKER

Our role as Practice Development Social Workers has changed massively over the last few years as our workforce grows and our offer for career development increases. Here's just a brief look at what we get up to!



MONDAY



We're back from the weekend and it's not a quiet start for the PD team! First up, like every morning at 9.15am, I catch up with the rest of the PD team to say our hellos, connect and talk about the day ahead.

Next up, we've teamed up with Philippa Geddes who is our regional representative from Social Work England, to organise and deliver sessions to talk about the changes to the annual registration requirements for qualified Social Workers.

As a regulated profession, we must demonstrate our continuing professional development and a way to support our workforce is to hear it from the people in the know about what they're looking for and to dispel any myths around CPD! We've also got a great relationship with our CC Inform representative Katie who has been joining us in these sessions over the last couple of years. Katie gives us an update on anything new on CC Inform and how it can help us record our CPD.

It's also coming towards the end of the social work students time with us on placement so I'm heading out to observe a social work student completing a care needs assessment this afternoon. The students plan thoroughly for their observation and my job is to look at how they were able to implement their plan, including the use of models and methods, like the three-conversation model, in practice, how they reflect on their experiences and to identify any development areas for their future learning.

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## TUESDAY

Tuesday is huddle day for me as I get to join huddles within the patches I work. Our role within huddles is to support the lead and rest of the hub to implement the Make the Difference approach and to ensure that practitioners can make the most of huddle.

What I really love is hearing about all the good work that is going on as well as seeing and hearing how everyone within the huddle supports each other to achieve best practice!

Kindness  
MATTERS

Shortly after, it's time for the PD team huddle! Like huddles within the team, this gives us the opportunity to talk about some aspects of the role which we may need support on, including hearing different perspectives which I always find helpful. We also share good news stories of the work we've been a part of, or something we've come across which we think the rest of the group would benefit from too.

This afternoon, the PD team are meeting with Alex MacNeil to review how the sessions around Make the Difference are going as well as looking at what areas of practice we need to focus on next – this month we're looking at best practice in recording.

I really enjoy these sessions as it gives us all an opportunity to collaborate, to have an influence on future training and to determine how we can best support the workforce.

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WEDNESDAY



It's a busy one today as we're catching up with assessors, placement supervisors and line managers of newly qualified social workers on the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) programme, student social workers and social work apprentices this morning. This gives us a chance to catch up with the practitioners who are supporting adult learners, to share experiences and to share hints and tips on how to support them.

After that I'm attending an apprenticeship partnership meeting with the University of Gloucestershire where they talk about any developments within the apprenticeship programme, and this gives us and the apprentices on the course an opportunity to share our experiences and provide any feedback to support in the development of the programme. It's not just GCC there! The University's programme also includes apprentices from our neighbouring counties including South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire so it's interesting to hear their experiences too.

This afternoon I've managed to squeeze in two supervisions, one with a second-year apprentice and another with a social work student. These supervisions are a great opportunity to discuss how their training and practice is going, and my main role as their Practice Educator is to support them to make links between their learning around legislation, theories, and models of practice to the experiences they have 'on the job'.

I was worried when I started this role that I had forgotten or didn't know enough about theories and models however over time I have rediscovered this knowledge through research, practice and learning from others!



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## THURSDAY

This morning, I'm reviewing the progress of a newly qualified social worker on the ASYE programme as we are at the 6-month mark of the 12 month programme! Before the meeting, I review the social worker's portfolio which evidences their 2nd and penultimate observation of the year, feedback from individuals and professionals and feedback from their assessor on their practice and documentation.



I find it really interesting hearing how the newly qualified has progressed as well as hearing the challenges they've faced along the way and how they have navigated through this with the support of their line manager and team.

At the review, we finalise what their professional development plan is for the next 6 months and look at what opportunities would help them achieve these goals. They're coming up to over halfway now which is really exciting!

I met with the University of Gloucestershire yesterday and today I'm meeting with Warwick University to talk their apprenticeship programme. They do things slightly differently and we're working towards the 'contrasting experience' which they have in year 3 so we'll be learning more about that and what we need to bear in mind.

Contrasting experience is like a placement for our apprentices and it would take place in another team, where they can learn more about a different area of practice and can further develop their skills and knowledge. It's only 30 days so they will need to hit the ground running but they're more than capable of that.

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FRIDAY

In order to do our job effectively, we also need to develop our skills and knowledge and today we're attending the Anti Racism conference at the University of Gloucestershire.

This is an opportunity to engage in conversations about race, racism, and anti-racism to inform our practice and day-to-day lives. During the day, students and practitioners will have opportunities to network, interact and engage in workshops and listen to keynote presentations covering important issues impacting our practice, our relationships, our confidence, and our commitment to anti-racism.

We're really lucky in this role that we have access to great learning opportunities which we can attend and either recommend that the training is offered more widely or share the knowledge we've gathered with others if it's a one-off event.

Social Work is ever changing and it's our job to keep up!