

Upholding public protection

Reference: PS3-A Last Updated: 23/07/2018

All practice supervisors must ensure that the supervision and support they provide protects the public whilst helping students learn. This can be done by:

- ensuring that students are not placed with a person or in a situation that is outside of their capability without suitable support
- understanding and making clear that a person receiving care has the right to refuse having a student observe or participate in their care – consent should not be assumed but should be sought appropriately from people receiving care when students will be involved in their care observation or delivery
- serving as a role model for safe and effective practice in line with their professional codes of conduct (including the relevant codes as set by the regulator(s) for each profession)
- **raising concerns** about any impacts to public protection from student learning. This can mean risks to public protection from the student, but also any risks to people arising from the environment in which the student is placed, including if the practice supervisor has been asked to practice beyond their competence.

All practice supervisors who are registered healthcare professionals also have a responsibility to abide by the professional **duty of candour** as part of their role as a registered professional. Those who are not registered healthcare professionals would still be expected to raise any concerns immediately via the appropriate channels.

For instance, a maternity support worker might have witnessed poor working practices and culture and may therefore raise their concern with senior management; along with this they could also raise their concerns with the AEI that has their midwifery students placed in that setting. Students witnessing or learning in a setting where there are concerns on the culture and working practices is not going to be a suitable learning experience as this can perpetuate or normalise poor practice. By raising their concerns, the maternity support worker would also be demonstrating professional responsibility and accountability.

Prioritising safety is important not only for the student but for any patients they may come into contact with during their practice learning experience. Not only does the student have the right not to be put into an unsafe environment, but patients have the right to refuse to be treated or have their care witnessed by a student. The person being cared for must give permission for this to happen, and their consent to this must be informed and obtained in a timely and kind way. If they refuse to give their permission, that decision must be respected and not be questioned as to why, for example, they have chosen not to give permission.

When undertaking supervision of learning opportunities, the practice supervisor must always balance the needs of the student in undertaking learning opportunities to practise their skills with the need to protect the public. Not all students are the same, their learning experiences should be tailored to the stage of learning, proficiencies and programme outcomes. It is helpful to discuss previous learning and work experience, for example as a healthcare assistant or registered professional. Their approach needs to be student centred. Levels of competence and confidence should never be assumed.

As an example, if a student nurse has been attempting cannulation unsuccessfully, the practice supervisor should use their professional judgement to determine whether they should intervene, either because the student is getting overly flustered or because the patient is being caused undue pain, discomfort and distress. Communication and relationship management skills are vital to ensure that the confidence of the student is not

diminished, and the patient does not suffer harm, undue alarm or loss of trust in the healthcare provider.