# Troubleshooting

Social Work England sets clear standards that Social Work students must meet in order to a) progress with their studies and b) be awarded a license to practice. Clear evidence of the student’s ability to meet the set standards whilst on placement is required for a placement ‘pass’. In addition to this, students must demonstrate behaviour and values appropriate to professional practice.

Having a student on placement can be a very rewarding experience. You may, however, experience a situation where a student does not appear to be performing to the expected standards. You may have concerns that they will be unable to demonstrate competence at the level required to pass their placement. Sometimes there will be clear evidence to support this judgement. Sometimes, however, reaching a defensible decision relating to competence may be more difficult. Here are some questions that may help you to critically examine the situation and express your concerns as specific issues that can be addressed:

# Is it the placement?

* *Are the learning opportunities available to the student appropriate, varied and plentiful?*
* *Does the working environment meet the student’s learning needs? Have any reasonable adjustments been put in place?*
* *Are the rest of the team positive about having a student on placement?*
* *Have you considered any issues of discrimination or oppression that may be impacting on the student’s experience on placement?*

# Is it me?

* *Do you feel clear and confident about your role as a PE? Are you receiving regular supervision that focusses on your role as a PE? Are you providing the student with regular, structured supervision?*
* *Do you understand the learning needs of the student? Are your expectations of this student realistic and based on minimum required standards?*
* *What are the power dynamics in your relationship with the student? Are any transference/ countertransference issues creating barriers to learning? Are your past experiences having a negative impact on your ability to manage this situation?*
* *Are you assessing the student in a range of different ways? What does feedback from other workers and people with lived experience tell you about the student?*

# Is it the student?

* *Does the student have a good understanding of the placement and its requirements?*
* *Is the student motivated to learn? If not, are you aware of and supporting them to address any personal or health related issues that may be undermining their ability to engage?*

A relationship with your student based on trust and good communication relationship will be key to identifying and addressing the source(s) of the difficulties you are experiencing. Once you have identified the source of the problems it should become easier either to bring about some positive change or to provide evidence to support a decision that the student is not yet competent / suitable to progress.

**The Placement Tutor’s role is to support you and the student to resolve any difficulties you are experiencing on placement: Please ensure that you contact the Placement Tutor as soon as possible with any concerns, even if you aren’t yet sure exactly what the problem might be.**