

Intercalation, Transfer and Withdrawal Policy

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Section 1: Overview

1.1 Purpose and Scope

1.1.1 Children and families value consistency when it comes to having a social worker involved in key decisions in their lives. Transfer between local authorities, intercalations and withdrawal by participants before the end of the two-year programme can compromise the benefits felt by children in having a stable relationship in an otherwise often chaotic situation. Maximising the positive consequences and impact that a participant can have on children and families will be at the forefront of decisions about practice learning.

1.1.2 The purpose of this policy is to outline the circumstances in which intercalations, transfers and withdrawals may be considered and/or necessary, and to explain the associated procedures. It sets out the processes and procedures to be undertaken for participants at Year 1 and Year 2 on the Frontline programme.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 Deferral: Means a request that the application and/or place is deferred to the following entry year. The Recruitment and Admission Policy and Procedure sets out the provisions and procedures of how to submit an application and must be received prior to the first day of the Summer Institute.

1.2.2 Intercalation: Means an extended break from the programme only one request can be granted which will be for a maximum of one academic year, either at the request of the participant or by Frontline.

1.2.3 Transfer: Means a request by a participant to transfer from one Local Authority to another.

1.2.4 Withdrawal: Means leaving the programme and ending the participants registration with Frontline either at their request or if required by Frontline.

1.3 Responsibilities

1.3.1 The role of the Head of Region is:

- to approve, confirm and communicate decisions to participants
- to chair intercalation, transfer and withdrawal meetings
- to approve support arrangements for participants

1.3.2 The Relationship & Development Manager (RDM) acts as the first point of contact for intercalation, transfer or withdrawal requests. Their role is:

- to inform all relevant parties of intercalation, transfer or withdrawal requests
- to convene intercalation, transfer or withdrawal meetings
- to work with local authorities to establish the availability of suitable practice learning experience opportunities for participants
- to make arrangements for approved transfers

1.3.3 The role of the practice tutor (or dissertation supervisor in year 2) is advisory. Participants are encouraged to consult their practice tutor or dissertation supervisor for advice on the support they may require or of any potential implications of their intercalation, transfer or withdrawal requests.

Section 2: Policy and procedures

2.1 General principles

2.1.1 Intercalations, transfers and voluntary withdrawals are considered choices which may be considered in specific extenuating circumstances and are always deliberated on a case by case basis, when all other options and support mechanisms have been exhausted.

2.1.2 By accepting a place on the programme participants commit to complete the two years and to be placed in any of the regions within which Frontline works. Participants will be allocated to a local authority based on need. Frontline will consider participants' preferences, though due to oversubscription of some areas and the needs of the local authority and children and families, it is not always possible to meet these.

2.1.3 Frontline will not grant an intercalation of study to address academic failure unrelated to other circumstances.

2.1.4 Frontline may not progress an application of intercalation, transfer or withdrawal until proceedings are concluded under another Frontline policy. For example, Fitness to Practise Policy.

2.1.5 The two-year commitment should normally be fulfilled consecutively and without intercalation. If this is not possible and an intercalation is approved, it will be approved for a maximum of one academic year. Only one period of intercalation is permitted during your programme of study; a subsequent intercalation will not be considered.

- 2.1.6** If participants ‘withdraw’ from the programme in either the first or second year, they are terminating their place on the programme and will not be eligible to return at any point in the future. Participants are urged to discuss any concerns as early as possible with their consultant social worker (CSW) and practice tutor/dissertation supervisor.
- 2.1.7** A participant who withdraws from the programme immediately ceases to be registered or enrolled and the date of withdrawal will be recorded as such.
- 2.1.8** Participants who have submitted assessments during the academic year up to the effective date of the intercalation or withdrawal will receive marks for them.
- 2.1.9** No credit will be awarded for any partially completed modules at the point of intercalation or withdrawal. The modules are not deemed as failed and in the case of an intercalation the participant will retain the current number of attempts at the assessment elements for that module.

2.2 Transfers

Criteria: Year 1

- 2.2.1** Transfers in year one would only take place in the following rare situations:
- where it is agreed through a review meeting that a local authority is not able to provide a practice learning setting with adequate levels of support for participants; OR
 - where there are extenuating personal circumstances, which mean that the participant needs to move to another local authority.
- 2.2.2** The transfer can only take place providing:
- an alternative placement exists, and the local authority is able to accommodate the participant;
 - all other options and support mechanisms have been exhausted; AND
 - the transfer would not significantly disrupt the learning of other participants.

If, after reasonable attempts, Frontline is unable to find a suitable practice learning opportunity in another participant unit, the participant will be given the choice to re-enter to the following year where possible, or to withdraw from the programme.

Criteria: Year 2

2.2.3 Participants in Year 2 are employees of the local authority and transfers are only considered in situations where:

- there are significant and unavoidable extenuating personal circumstances which mean that the participant needs to move to another local authority or location;
- all other options and support mechanisms have been exhausted;
- the original local authority and Frontline have both agreed to the transfer; AND
- an alternative local authority Frontline partner can accommodate the participant, and the transfer is agreed with Frontline.

If, after reasonable attempts, Frontline is unable to find a suitable alternative local authority the participant will be given the choice to re-enter to the following year where possible, or to withdraw from the programme.

Notification procedures: Year 1 and Year 2

2.2.4 If participants experience a change in circumstances that they believe requires a transfer to another local authority, they should first discuss with their CSW (year 1) or line manager (year 2) at the earliest possible opportunity.

2.2.5 If the situation cannot be resolved, the participant should submit a transfer request form to academic.support@thefrontline.org.uk outlining the change in circumstances that necessitates the move, and provide evidence to support their case.

2.2.6 At Frontline we aim to ensure that participants are provided with a high-quality practice learning experience but realise on some occasions this may not occur. Frontline will make every effort to enable participants to stay in the local authority (such as provide additional practice tutor support to participants). Should the local authority environment remain un conducive to learning (for example the CSW is not providing the requisite levels of support) the practice tutor should email the RDM advising they recommend transferring the participant(s) to another unit, temporarily or permanently.

2.2.7 The RDM will convene a meeting with the Head of Region, the CSW/line manager, the local authority project manager and practice tutor (Year 1 only) to consider the transfer request or requirements. At the meeting the group will review:

- the participant's wellbeing and development on the programme;
- the extenuating circumstances and the extent to which they warrant the disruption the transfer will cause to children and families;

- the extent to which the circumstances have changed over time;
- the urgency of the situation;
- the timing of the request;
- whether there is a suitable alternative practice learning opportunity available for the participant.

2.2.8 Following the meeting the Head of Region will either approve or decline the transfer request.

2.2.9 In cases where a transfer request has not been agreed, the Head of Region will chair a meeting with the participant, their CSW/line manager and practice tutor (Year 1 only) to agree appropriate support arrangements and ensure the participant's opportunities for learning are maximised.

2.2.10 All transfers are coordinated and agreed by Frontline and in no circumstances can transfers be arranged by participants or local authorities.

When a transfer request or recommendation is approved

2.2.11 Frontline will make arrangements for a participant(s) to transfer to another unit (year 1) or employment opportunity (year 2) which, depending on circumstance may or may not be in a different local authority. In the unlikely event where an entire unit is affected in year 1, it may be necessary to disband the participant unit and move participants individually to other units. Frontline will aim to re-allocate participants within the same region wherever possible.

2.2.12 The RDM will work with local authorities to establish the availability of a suitable alternative practice learning opportunity, considering a number of factors, e.g. local authority, CSW and unit capacity.

2.2.13 In some cases five participant units may be created at the discretion of the Head of Region.

2.2.14 If a local authority welcomes a transferring participant, the RDM will arrange a meeting between the participant and the CSW, the new practice tutor and the local authority project manager. At this meeting the participant's Practice Learning Portfolio and Practice Development Plan will be discussed as well as their progress to date and the opportunities for learning. The reason(s) for their transfer will be explained as appropriate.

2.2.15 If the transfer is agreed following the meeting, the RDM will make arrangements for the transfer and support the participant(s) throughout the process. If the transfer is not agreed following the meeting, other practice learning opportunities will be sought.

2.2.16 If, after reasonable attempts, Frontline is unable to find a suitable practice learning opportunity in another participant unit, the participant will be given the choice to re-enter to the following year where possible, or to withdraw from the programme.

2.2.17 In the event that a transfer is approved due to personal circumstances, participants are responsible for the costs associated with relocating to the new location.

2.3 Intercalation

2.3.1 Frontline operates a system of intercalation so that participants are supported to complete the programme where possible. Participants are eligible for one intercalation only of a maximum period of one academic year, provided their request meets the below criteria and is approved by Frontline.

2.3.2 A participant may be granted one period of intercalation during the programme of study if they satisfy all of the following criteria:

- there are unforeseen and exceptional circumstances to the participant's circumstances. Significant health issues or substantial changes in personal circumstances are normally considered as grounds for an intercalation;
- the required length of absence is longer than Frontline could accommodate by other means;
- the participant agrees to the conditions of return and agrees a return date.

2.3.3 An agreed intercalation will normally be for both the practice and academic elements of the programme, therefore in Year 2 the request for intercalation must be agreed by the Local Authority as well as Frontline.

2.3.4 Participants should be aware that:

- they may, depending on the reasons for the intercalation, need to go through the suitability process again before returning to the programme;

- Frontline will set conditions of return which must be met before they can re-join (for example the requirement to re-join and complete the Summer Institute or at the commencement of stage 1);
- they normally cannot sit exams, attend classes or submit work when they have intercalated;
- they will not normally be permitted to re-submit completed assessments again on return;
- participants will not be classed as a “student” during their intercalation so will not be entitled to student benefits (e.g. council tax exemption);
- Participants should refer to Frontline’s bursary and financial guidance for possible financial implications of their decision.

2.3.5 A participant must submit an intercalation request form to academic.support@thefrontline.org.uk confirming the basis of their formal intent along with evidence to support the above criteria.

2.3.6 If a participant has already been provided with an approved intercalation any subsequent requests will automatically be declined.

2.3.7 Upon receipt of the intercalation request a Conditions of Return Agreement Meeting will be scheduled by the RDM for the participant to meet with a member(s) of the Practice Learning Team. The meeting will discuss and provide advice about the impact of an intercalation upon their financial and personal circumstances. The meeting will also confirm the conditions of return including the consequences of the academic requirements, which will be recorded on the participant’s file.

2.3.8 It is important for both the participant and Frontline to be confident that the participant is both fit and ready to return to the programme before the intercalation request can be progressed.

2.3.9 Frontline will normally liaise with the relevant Local Authority to confirm whether they agree to the intercalation period. Frontline may take the response from the Local Authority into account in deciding whether to approve the intercalation request.

2.3.10 Such conditions would normally involve the following:

- completion of any outstanding academic work;
- evidence of the participant's fitness or readiness to practice (e.g. medical evidence) to be provided prior to the return to study;
- the requirement to re-complete a stage of the programme (e.g. Summer Institute or at the commencement of stage 1);
- the requirement to attend a Review of Conditions Return Meeting;
- where appropriate, the requirement to produce a short reflective account (normally at least 500 words and no more than 1000) in preparation for return to study in which the participants indicates how they have kept up to date with social work practice during the period of time away and how the participant intends to ensure attendance requirements are met; and
- any other evidence that is deemed necessary for a successful return to study.

2.3.11 A participant is expected to attend a conditions of return meeting but if it is not possible for the participant to attend the meeting, it may be held in their absence. Following the meeting the participant will be informed of the agreed conditions.

2.3.12 Once the participant agrees with the conditions of return, these and the intercalation request form (alongside the supporting evidence) will be presented to the Head of Region who will meet with other members of the Practice Learning team to consider the application. The Local Authority will be asked to confirm the position for a request from a Year 2 participant.

2.3.13 The participant will receive the outcome in writing of the intercalation request form.

2.3.14 When an intercalation has been approved a participant will be required to attend a Review of Conditions Return Meeting. The RDM will initially contact the participant who is on an intercalation to confirm whether they intend to return or to withdraw. If the participant intends to return the RDM will invite them to the meeting, this is normally scheduled 2 months in advance of the due return date.

2.3.15 The Review of Conditions Return Meeting will normally be chaired by the Head of Region and involve members of the practice learning team. The meeting will review the necessary supporting documentation against the conditions of review and will enable to identify any ongoing support needs.

2.3.16 If the participant fails to engage with the process and requirements to attend the meeting, then Frontline will consider terminating their study.

2.3.17 If the participant does not meet the conditions of return to study the participant may choose to withdraw from the programme or Frontline will initiate the Fitness to Practise Policy.

2.3.18 A participant has no right to appeal the decision to not grant an intercalation request and has the option to request to withdraw from the programme.

2.3.19 A participant may submit a request for a review of the conditions of return, within 10 working days. The review will be conducted by the Delivery Director (or nominated representative), to see whether the conditions are reasonable and in line with the standards and expectations of the programme.

2.4 Change in working pattern during Year 2

2.4.1 Participants are employees of the local authority in Year 2, and as such they may discuss their working patterns with the local authority.

2.4.2 Where participants agree with their local authority to move to part time working during Year 2, the programme requirement to complete the equivalent of 24-months of full-time attendance in the local authority must still be fulfilled, and therefore takes longer to achieve.

2.5 Voluntary withdrawal

2.5.1 This policy applies to voluntary withdrawal from the programme, which is formally agreed and arranged by Frontline following receipt of a withdrawal request form. For withdrawal as a result of the suitability process or fitness to practise process, please refer to the respective policies.

Year 1: Summer Institute

2.5.2 Prior to the commencement of the Summer Institute an applicant who has a conditional offer may request that their placement is deferred to the following entry year. Please refer to the Recruitment and Admission Policy and Procedure for details of the process to be undertaken.

- 2.5.3 If participants think they may want to leave the programme, following commencement of the Summer Institute it is important to discuss any concerns with their RDM as soon as possible. The RDM will be able to discuss potential options and offer guidance and support in making the decision.
- 2.5.4 Withdrawal: Where a participant decides to leave the programme, they must submit a withdrawal request form to academic.support@thefrontline.org.uk
- 2.5.5 Exit Interview: All participants are expected to undertake an exit interview to help inform future recruitment and programme changes as necessary, as well as to provide a debrief on their experience.
- 2.5.6 Departure: Participants should make their own arrangements for departure from the Summer Institute.
- 2.5.7 Withdrawals will be confirmed in writing by the Head of Region.

Year 1: Once the practice learning has started

- 2.5.8 Before confirming their intention to leave the participant unit or the Frontline programme, participants must discuss this informally with both their CSW and practice tutor, who are committed to supporting them in the challenges and can help to consider potential solutions which might prevent withdrawal from the programme. Where possible, methods of additional support within the participant unit will be explored and implemented in conjunction with the practice tutor.
- 2.5.9 After following these steps, if a participant still feels they want to leave the programme, they need to submit a withdrawal request form to academic.support@thefrontline.org.uk
- 2.5.10 Participants should review their practice learning experience agreement and consider the needs of the local authority, the unit and the children and families they are in contact with when deciding a leaving date. Participants should consider being flexible and agreeing to a date that minimises disruption.
- 2.5.11 Participants will be required to undertake an exit interview. This interview will take place at a time and location convenient for all parties involved.

2.5.12 Participants should refer to the Frontline bursary and financial guidance for possible financial implications of their decision.

2.5.13 Withdrawals will be confirmed in writing by the Head of Region.

Year 2

2.5.14 Where participants decide to formally request a withdrawal from the programme they must submit a withdrawal request form to academic.support@thefrontline.org.uk

2.5.15 The RDM will share the participant's wish to withdraw with the team manager, local authority project manager, Head of Region, and Delivery Director (and any other relevant staff as necessary, from either Frontline or the local authority).

2.5.16 A meeting will be convened between the participant, their team manager, the local authority project manager, RDM and others (as relevant and as agreed by Frontline and the local authority) to understand the factors influencing the request to withdraw from the programme. This meeting serves to determine if there are alternatives to withdrawal that can be considered and pursued.

2.5.17 Where necessary, more than one meeting may be convened to address the withdrawal request, and participants are expected to attend any meetings that Frontline may call in relation to the request to withdraw.

2.5.18 The Head of Region will confirm withdrawal and will inform the participants of the outcome of their request in writing. Participants will be given a period of time to continue with or rescind their withdrawal request.

2.5.19 Participants withdrawing from the programme must honour the notice period and any contractual commitments stated in their employment contract with the local authority.

2.5.20 The RDM will arrange an exit interview shortly after the participant has withdrawn, which the participant is required to attend.

Year 2- Academic Component

2.5.21 Participants may request to withdraw from the academic component, but still complete the practice component in order to meet the requirements to become a fellow. The participant

must submit a withdrawal request (academic) form to academic.support@thefrontline.org.uk and follow the steps as per 2.5.15 onwards, as necessary.

2.6 Year 1 participant bursary

2.6.1 For information on how intercalations, transfer and withdrawals impact the year 1 participant bursary, please refer to Frontline's bursary and financial guidance.

Section 3: Relevant references

3.1 Frontline policies and documents

3.1.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:

- Attendance and engagement
- Recruitment and Admission Policy and Procedure
- Bursary & financial guidance
- Suitability for professional practice
- Exceptional Circumstances Policy
- Fitness to Practise Policy