



NATIONAL PRACTICE TEACHING IN SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVE

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

Welcome to the first edition of the National Practice Teaching in social work Initiative eNewsletter. I am delighted as project coordinator to introduce this new initiative and the NPTSWI team. I was appointed **project coordinator** in July 2021 of the **National Practice Teaching in social work Initiative**. This initiative is a collaboration of **6 HEI (Higher Education institutions)** providing social work education in Ireland. This post was developed by HEI Placement Learning Coordinators with funding from the **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)** in 2020.

The aims and objectives of this initiative are to:

- Create a **national website of Teaching and Learning resources** for social work practice teachers
- Develop a **practice teachers network** in collaboration with IASW
- **Promote practice teaching and support placements** within the profession

Currently we are hosting **online CPD events to support practice teachers** and those considering dipping their toe into the world of practice teaching!

COVID-19 has brought many changes in all of our lives, including how social work placements look. I would love to hear from you about your experience of practice teaching and any developments in your area to support student placements and practice teaching.

On behalf of myself and the NPTSI team, I would like this opportunity to wish you a happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

Best Wishes,

Lyn

✉ lyn.dorney@ucc.ie

MEET THE NPTSWI TEAM

WHO ARE WE?



LYN DORNEY

PROJECT COORDINATOR OF THE NATIONAL PRACTICE TEACHING IN SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVE.

Lyn is a professionally qualified, CORU registered social worker and holds a postgraduate qualification in practice teaching (social work). Lyn is an experienced tutor and practice teacher. Lyn teaches on the undergraduate social work course in the School of Applied Social Studies in UCC and has 18 years of experience working as a social worker across a diverse range of areas.

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BRENDA FEENEY

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR OF THE MA IN SOCIAL WORK IN IT SLIGO.

Brenda is also Practice Education Coordinator and Lecturer in social work. Brenda is a professionally qualified and registered social worker, with extensive experience in social work practice. Brenda has also worked as an Independent social work Consultant for Child and Family services, the courts and with CORU. Brenda is currently engaged in Doctoral studies at Queens University, Belfast.

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BREDA O'DRISCOLL

PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR FOR SOCIAL WORK AT MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY.

Breda lectures in professional development and practice learning. Breda is a registered social worker and has held social work positions in voluntary and statutory sectors (working with children and families, young homeless people, criminal justice sector in community and prison settings). Breda has held a number of senior management positions in businesses related to the health and medical sectors. Her current PhD research is on the impact of emotional labour on staff (health and social work) and in practice learning.

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ELEANOR KELLY

LECTURER AND PRACTICE LEARNING COORDINATOR ON THE MASTER'S IN SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME WITHIN THE SCHOOL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND SOCIOLOGY, NUI GALWAY.

Eleanor was a Principal social worker in a CAMHS service and has worked in social work for over 30 years. Eleanor completed her Masters in Systemic Psychotherapy in 2014. Eleanor's teaching and research areas of interest are practice teaching and learning and the continuing professional development of social work practice.

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MEET THE NPTSWI TEAM

WHO ARE WE?



DR ERNA O'CONNOR

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL WORK AND PRACTICE EDUCATION COORDINATOR AT THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL POLICY, TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, IRELAND.

Prior to joining the university Erna worked as a social worker in drug treatment and HIV services and a social work team leader in hospital-based social work. Her teaching and research interests include practice teaching and learning, health-related social work, reflective and relationship-based practice and transnational social work.

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PAULA SLAVIN

PLACEMENTS ALLOCATIONS MANAGER WITH THE PROFESSIONAL MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME AT UCD'S SCHOOL OF SOCIAL POLICY, SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Paula has 20+ years of experience in practice as a professionally qualified CORU registered social worker. Paula works with the Director of Professional Practice and together with the Senior Programme Manager form the School's Practice Learning Team. Paula is also an experienced UCD practice teacher and practice tutor.

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JOANNE ROSE

PRACTICE PLACEMENT COORDINATOR AT THE SCHOOL OF APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES, UCC.

A professionally qualified, CORU registered social worker since 2003 Joanne holds postgraduate qualifications in practice teaching (social work) and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Her research interests include social work practice teaching, placements and the intersection between academia and practice.

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SINÉAD WHITING

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL WORK AND PRACTICE EDUCATION COORDINATOR IN TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN.

Prior to taking up this role Sinéad worked as a social worker in the areas of child protection, fostering and adoption. Sinead's teaching and research interests include adoption within child welfare systems, experiences of adult care leavers, social work skills and practice teaching and learning.

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SHANE O'MEARA, SOCIAL WORKER AND PLACEMENT COORDINATOR, TUSLA



"Whenever practice teaching is mentioned I am brought back to my 22-year-old self-trying to work through the Masters of Social Work in UCC. I had an overwhelming feeling of "imposter syndrome", painfully aware of my limited life experience and how little I knew about the profession. I was exceptionally lucky to have two great placements. Both teams had a strong ethos and sense of responsibility to encourage and develop the skills of students. I experienced practice teachers and teams who supported, challenged, and facilitated my learning. Most importantly I was told what I needed to improve and provided with resources and opportunities to do so. I shadowed and learned from many workers, developing confidence and awareness of what good practice looked like.

Over the years I have supported many student placements in a variety of settings. As part of my social work role, I presently **coordinate student placements for the National Adoption Service in Tulsa across Munster, Connacht, and Ulster**. This entails liaising with colleagues across this area to encourage practice teaching and be a link for the colleges who seek to place students. Tulsa has placement coordinators within each geographical area. In conjunction with our I.T. department we also arrange computers and phones for students to assist their role. This became incredibly important for placements that were facilitated during the COVID restrictions where aspects of remote working and engagement with service users changed.

Practice teaching is essential for students.

It is their introduction to a profession that is becoming increasingly complex and difficult to succinctly describe. The quality and form of placements play a key function in the types of values, nature of practice skills and competence of the next generations of social workers.

Facilitating a student is very beneficial for practice teachers.

Students will ask many questions and truly the best way to learn is to teach. In the process either you make sense of your own practice or realise changes that could be beneficial. The experience can greatly enhance the practice teacher's knowledge and skills of developing the potential of others and managing issues that can arise. Practice teaching can bring additional time challenges but students can also play a role in assisting case work. Providing a social work service is demanding and no more so than during the pandemic. It is worth reflecting that when we were students the work was also demanding for our practice teachers. We all have a duty to show solidarity with the next generation of social workers by offering the opportunities we benefited from."



Organisations also benefit greatly by supporting students!

“In addition to the usual churn rate and need for new staff, a range of agencies and services will require an increase of social workers in the coming years. Supporting placements can be an ideal opportunity for organisations to provide experience and attract future employees. Placements can also improve the skills and capability of social workers acting as practice teachers, maintain a link with academia and improve the awareness of the agencies work.

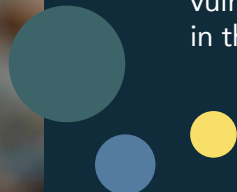
A key consideration for organisations is strategic planning when it comes to the frequency and support of placements.

It is unfortunately quite common that an ad hoc approach exists which waits for volunteers in a team or a request from a third level institution. We have much to learn from the systems of placement and training which exist in the medical field for nurses and doctors. Managers in social work settings need to take an active role in identifying, supporting, and valuing practice teachers in their teams.

Placements are not without their difficulties. Students will have various levels of capacity and awareness and practice teacher’s ability to explore these limits, provide direction and facilitate learning are crucial. The support of the college tutor is also key.

The benefits and learning for all parties far outweigh the challenges.

Most importantly it is a key gate-keeping process to ensure that the vulnerable people we serve encounter competent and safe social workers in the future.”





IN CONVERSATION WITH TRISH ENRIGHT, SOCIAL WORKER IN HSE

"I began taking social work students in 2014 when I was 6 years qualified. Since then, I aim to consistently offer UCC two placement opportunities a year. One of the main reasons I began taking students was because I had two very positive experiences myself whilst on my own placements. I was treated with respect, made feel part of the team and my prior experience was recognised and valued.

A student placement is an opportunity to discover what kind of a social worker you may like to become some day and in what kind of setting. It has been a great opportunity for me to promote the profession of social work in a hospital setting where other disciplines routinely offer intern placements. I think it is important to recognise the importance of creating a culture of learning in any organisation. In my experience, particularly in adult mental health there was significant discrepancy between how students had preconceived a mental health placement to play out and the actual reality. A lot of fear and negativity is often expressed in the media in relation to social workers and we as practice teachers have an opportunity to promote it positively to our students.

My experience of having students has been enormously rewarding.

Their contributions have been significant and highly recognised by other disciplines. It has helped define and provide clarity for them regarding the role of a social worker

which I believe is one of the most important things we do as practice teachers. In my experience and that of many social work colleagues, we as social workers can often spend a significant amount of time clarifying our roles and receiving inappropriate referrals. It is important that student social workers leave their placement with confidence and the knowledge of their role that enables them to clarify their role appropriately in any social work setting.

While there is a settling in period of shadowing in all social work placements it is important to ensure that a student has appropriate opportunities for learning and independent work.

Many students bring both valuable life and work experience that is important and is worth exploring.

In addition, other students come with no experience at all. As opposed to seeing this as a negative thing I like to see it as an opportunity to promote their first experience of social work as an opportunity of self-development. This usually involves a longer period of shadowing initially at the beginning of placement and gives the student an opportunity to develop a sense of who they are themselves, recognise their own values and beliefs and how this may impact on the work they will be embarking on. I have observed placements being a wonderful journey of self-discovery for students whereby their life experience has brought a depth and richness to the placement that they didn't expect themselves."



Practice teaching is our opportunity to give back

“We were all students once! But more than that I am passionate about promoting social work as a profession. I am equally as passionate about being part of a student’s training and journey in a meaningful way that not only gives them an opportunity to practice in each setting but also helps them discover who they are within that profession. Students bring far more to an organisation than what many realise.

I have never looked at it as additional work but as an opportunity for us all to learn.

I also believe we have a responsibility like other professions to ensure our future colleagues have the same opportunities to learn as nursing, O.T and junior doctor interns.

I always feel disappointed when I hear that a university is struggling to find placements and feel it should almost be a given that every department will offer at least one placement per term. Many will say they may not have enough experience themselves to take a student. In social work we are learning every day of our careers, we will never know it all and it’s ok not to have all the answers. Finding the answers with a student is often what is required for both the practice teacher and the student as our role is so broad. So, I suppose my message is give it a try. It is so rewarding and always lovely to meet your previous students as your colleagues down the line!”





CPD EVENTS: SAVE THE DATE!

National Practice Teaching in social work Initiative in partnership with IASW is running **ONLINE CPD Events** for practice teachers!

Events are **FREE** for non-members and members through: www.iasw.ie and **registration is open to all.**

Please note: Events will be open for booking 3-4 weeks before the event.



'Making the Most of Feedback' – Promoting Feedback Literacy in Student Placements

Wednesday 19th January 2022

9.30-11.00am

Dr. Erna O'Connor & Sinead Whiting, Trinity College Dublin

BOOK HERE



"All You Wanted to Know About Practice Teaching but were Afraid to Ask!"

Wednesday 23rd March 2022

9.30-11.30am



**NATIONAL PRACTICE
TEACHING IN SOCIAL
WORK INITIATIVE**

**WE ARE ENCOURAGING CORU REGISTERED
SOCIAL WORKERS NATIONALLY TO CONTACT HEI'S
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PRACTICE TEACHING IN 2022.**

We hope you enjoyed our NPTSWI e-newsletter.
If you would like to be included on our website, please contact;

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