



# NATIONAL PRACTICE TEACHING IN SOCIAL WORK INITIATIVE



An Roinn Leanai, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth

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# GREETINGS

I'm delighted to welcome you to the summer edition of the National Practice Teaching in Social Work Initiative e-newsletter. In this edition, at the end of year 1 of the project, we want to update you on work to date and keep you informed on the exciting work planned for the second year of this project. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) funded this project for a second year which allows us to expand on our work to date and continue to profile practice teaching within the profession of social work.

In the CPD corner of this edition, we hear from Cliona Murphy, CPD, officer with the Irish Association of Social Workers on the importance of continuing professional development for social workers and practice teachers. Details of the first National Practice Teaching Conference and other upcoming CPD events are also outlined here. Don't forget to save the dates!

In our Practice Education corner, we hear directly from students about their placement experience during COVID 19 and they offer advice to students on social work courses around the importance of having an open mind and enjoying their placements! We also hear from Mairéad Higgins as she reflects on the privilege of being a practice teacher. As society opens up, it is an exciting time for social work students as they contemplate upcoming placements and the learning opportunities that lie ahead.

We look forward to working with you in the coming year and thank you for your continued support. On behalf of myself and the NPTSWI team, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and yours a fun-filled, relaxing summer.

Best Wishes,  
Lyn

Project Coordinator, NPTSWI.  
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# 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 ATU 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

PROFESSIONAL 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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## UPDATES

- The National Practice Teaching Social Work Initiative is pleased to announce the first National Practice Teaching Conference, which will be held on the 2nd March 2023 in Cork, Ireland. We look forward to welcoming you to [UCC](#) for an in-person event.
- **In Year 1 we hosted a series of online CPD events in collaboration with the IASW. These were well attended by members and non-members of the IASW and attendance was from across organisations. We plan to continue to host these events in year 2 and we decided for these to remain online allowing for increased accessibility for busy practitioners and encouraging national collaboration and the creation of a network of practice teachers. See dates for your diary in our CPD section.**
- Over the past 12 months work has been ongoing to develop a website of teaching and learning resources for practice teachers. These resources will support you in your role as practice teachers of social work students. This website is in the development stage and we are excited to officially launch this in the second year of the project.

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### Educating for Practice Teaching in Social Work in the 21st Century

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Thursday 2nd March 2023  
More details to follow.

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# PRACTICE EDUCATION CORNER

## LARAH BRADY

### MSW GRADUATE, UCC




As a recent graduate of the MSW, I feel extremely grateful to have had two amazing placement experiences. As a student, heading out on placement can be a daunting experience, particularly with the added pressures of COVID-19 still looming. On reflection of my own placement experiences, I would say that building positive working relationships with your practice teacher and the team around you is the most important thing, as these relationships will provide you with more learning opportunities and will make the experience far more enjoyable. Through maintaining trust and open communication with my practice teachers I was able to address and overcome any worries or issues that arose throughout my placements, and it enabled me to engage in supervision openly and honestly. My practice teachers challenged me in ways that made me feel supported, respected, and valued which undoubtedly enhanced my learning and professional development. My time on placement not only enabled me to develop a number of key social work skills and competencies, it also provided me with the opportunity to develop my core social work values through critically reflecting on the type of social worker I want to be, and this is what I am most grateful for as I head out into practice.

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**My advice to students heading out on placement would be to fully immerse yourself in the experience and to be open-minded regardless of the setting.**

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Placement is rarely what you expect it to be and that is what makes it interesting. Lastly, be organised, make the most of the knowledge and insights that your practice teachers are willing to share, and ENJOY IT.







# CIARA, NIKITA, ROISIN & CARA MSW 2 STUDENTS, ATU, SLIGO.



In September 2020 we began our MSW journey amid a global pandemic. We each embarked on child and family placements in year one where we learned to develop social work assessment skills in an unprecedented way. Covid-19 restrictions prompted completion of assessments and interventions for some of us via WhatsApp and over the phone. Practice teachers were pivotal to our learning; encouraging us to pay close attention to micro-communications like facial expression and tone of voice, and helping us to find creative ways to capture the voice of the child.

Year two placements saw us engage in an array of practice specialties in adult services and medical social work. Weekly supervision with our practice teachers strengthened our understanding of the role of social work within the practice context and the challenges faced on teams, particularly where there may be only one social worker on a team. We were extremely lucky to get to experience such varied placements which supported us in developing our skills and competencies to ensure proficiency in practice. Our practice placements gave us the opportunity to develop skills and competencies in a reflexive, supervised environment so that once qualified we would feel confident in any social work role.

Our advice to MSW students embarking on practice placement is to come to supervision prepared. You'll get out of it what you put in. Take the opportunity to engage in formal learning opportunities throughout placement. This will really enhance your placement experience and will support your professional decision-making. But most of all, enjoy your placement. It's where the magic happens!



# MAIRÉAD HIGGINS, SENIOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER, HSE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, SLIGO



The Beautiful South's 'Song for Whoever' reminds me of launching into practice teaching with the names Kolb, Gibbs, Heuston, Ericsson, Jung, Tavistock, Fahlberg, Loughnane, Fook, and Rogers - our constant companions again, bringing to mind the late night/early morning gallop to meet a student assignment deadline! Working for the past three years with the social work masters students from the newly named Atlantic Technological University, I have learned a lot about social work practice and its theoretical foundations.

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## My experience of taking students has been very positive

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in work with clients, on the multi-disciplinary team and with outside agencies. Students bring curiosity to social work, questioning approaches, serving to challenge ways of working and encouraging more reflection. I find the social work identity is strengthened during student placements particularly on the MDT as there is a swelling and amplification of the role. Running groups becomes a much more feasible possibility with extra hands on deck. Even through pandemic restrictions, our enthusiastic, irrepressible students creatively worked on bringing people together, arguably when most needed, with the aid of technology during those incredibly isolated times.

I am advising on practice teaching from a very subjective stance after having three wonderful students, all with armfuls of life experience (a huge advantage in the job). I found the training in practice teaching and the supervision course offered by ATU invaluable in enriching the placement, and developing my skills, particularly in supervision and embedding theoretical approaches in practice.

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## Becoming a practice teacher is a serious opportunity to revise and reflect on social work,

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it provides new lenses on the work, and it introduces new research findings whilst encouraging reacquaintance with the foundation stones of social work. Essential to the successful placement is support from the team and management, and having access to a laptop, organisation email address and a phone for the student is also a huge addition. Practice teaching is a privilege. It is full of learning, analysis, co-working, group facilitation, reflection and most of all a real and tangible opportunity to contribute to the flourishing of social work practice contributed to by what the student and practice teacher learn together 'til my fountain pen runs dry' (Beautiful South 'Song for Whoever').

# CPD CORNER

## CPD – Support and Sustenance for your Practice

Recent changes to the CORU audit period for social workers has refocused the mind of many a social worker on their CPD portfolio. It is a requirement of registration to ensure that knowledge, skills and performance are of a high standard, up to date and relevant to practice, and to participate in continuing professional development (CPD) on an ongoing basis. However, the very real benefits of engaging in CPD are what motivates many to continue to plan, learn and reflect on that learning. Benefits include:

- Building professional confidence;
- Developing professional identity;
- Developing skills to document and reflect on informal learning - to make sense and meaning (particularly important for a profession that is both practice-based and an academic discipline);
- Better able to articulate what we do;
- Career planning & development.

Social workers work in high-pressure environments with complex, risky, emotionally charged workloads, leaving little time and energy to plan for the professional self. Surrounded by high levels of unmet need, distress and insufficient resources, it can be difficult to be proactive in finding and taking the learning opportunities that we need, to take the time to reflect on how learning changes our practice and impacts on the people we work with.

CORU view CPD as “the means by which health and social care professionals maintain and improve their knowledge,

skills and competence, and develop the professional qualities required throughout their professional life. CPD is an integral component in the continuing provision of safe and effective services for the benefit of service users”

When engaging in Professional Development Planning (PDP) the focus can often be on the knowledge and skills required to work in a particular context and/or with particular needs. But where is the social worker/practice teachers needs in all this? I’d like to share three questions you might find useful to refocus and re-energise your plan and engagement in professional development.

- What motivated you to become a practice teacher?
- What about practice teaching would nourish and sustain you?
- What about practice teaching uplifts you in your practice?

Making the time and space to take care of ourselves and to build on what we enjoy in our work is, I believe, an essential component of every social worker’s continuing professional development. Why not make it part of your CPD portfolio?

For more information on CPD and the requirements of registration visit the IASW CPD Resources (member only) section on [www.iasw.ie](http://www.iasw.ie) and [www.coru.ie](http://www.coru.ie)

Clíona Murphy, CORU Registered Social Worker SW003994  
Professional Development Coordinator  
Irish Association of Social Workers





# SAVE THE DATE!

Practice teachers conference!

**“Educating for Practice Teaching in Social Work in the 21st Century”**

More details to follow soon!!

**Thursday 2nd March 2023.**

## CPD Events

Events are FREE for members and non-members through:

[www.iasw.ie](http://www.iasw.ie) and registration is open to all. If you are considering practice teaching. We would love to see you! Please note events will be open for booking 3-4 weeks before the event.

The National Practice Teaching in Social Work Initiative in collaboration with the IASW is running ONLINE CPD Events for all practice teachers nationally.



### Responding to Racism in Social Work Practice Placements.

Thursday 17th November 2022: 12 - 2 pm

This event is a collaboration between the NPTSWI and the IASW Anti-racism Advisory Group



### TBC

Thursday 19th January 2022:

12 - 2 pm







**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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