

4TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE FOR SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH

Bozen/Bolzano 15 - 16 - 17 April 2014

Special Interest Group – ECSWR 2014

1) **Your name(s):** Dr. Jo Finch (UK)

2) **Title of the SIG:** Practice Learning (Field Education): Contexts, Challenges and Collaboration

3) Brief description of scope and aims of the group.

Practice learning is a central component of social work qualifying training throughout Europe (and beyond), albeit employing different models and methods. The aim of the special interest group is to develop:

- European (and international) discussion relating to the traditions, current practices and points of conflict and contention regarding practice (field) placements
- networks facilitating exchange and collaboration, leading to collaborative research projects
- conceptualizations of the future role of practice learning in changing political and practice contexts
- Identification of best practice in all aspects of practice learning across Europe.

4) **Any further relevant information you would wish to include:** I have had a long standing research interest in practice learning (field placements) which has been predominately focused around the issues that are raised when social work students are struggling or failing their field placements. My research to date has focused on why practice educators (field supervisors) find it challenging to fail students (Finch, 2010; Finch and Taylor, 2013); a comparative study of Italian and British practice educators experiences of working with struggling or failing students (Finch and Poletti, 2013); an exploration of tutors experiences of working with students struggling in practice learning settings (Finch, forthcoming) and most recently a mixed methods study of practice

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assessment panels' ¹ decision making in relation to students failing their practice placements (Finch, forthcoming). I continue to be interested in all aspects of practice learning and given its centrality and importance in qualifying social work programmes, I am really keen to link up with academics and practitioners across Europe (and beyond) in a constructive and creative way. My hope is, with like minded and interested colleagues, to generate something innovative, of significant benefit to the profession, as well as to generate a European evidence base.

¹ A UK specific practice. The panel often has both a quality assurance function as well as a quasi-assessment function.