

17-02-23

Participants:

Laura Chant, Ivellisse Velez, Sahana Lakshmi Venkatesh (student reps); Mary Mitchell (Programme Director); Will Rennie (Student Advisor)

Apologies:

Anne Spiers (PSWP2 Course Organiser)

Intro

- welcome and thanks from Mary to reps

Placement

- IV: a lot of people seem happy with how this is going:
 - this may be because of greater understanding of what placement is and how it works
- IV: one person fed back that caseload information had been contradictory
 - in this instance, practice educator (PE) reported as saying it's good to set boundaries and for student to tell link supervisor (LS) that she shouldn't have more than (approx.) 16+ active cases; however, link supervisor's position stressed a need to make up for time lost when they were on leave at start of placement and was keen for student to take on more cases to give them experience managing time
 - IV: this is an organisation about which there were some concerns – how can these be brought up while maintaining professionalism?
 - MM: two issues here:
 - conduct and ethics of placement, which should be brought up with PT immediately (students are required to do this, cc-ing MM and Avril McIvor)
 - management of caseload, which PE should negotiate with LS about. Student may use their PT to liaise with the link supervisor. It's not always the student's responsibility to manage how much casework they're taking on. There's a point where the PE, or student, should be speaking to PT re: feeling overwhelmed and limiting the amount of casework on that basis. Role of PT is to support student in such situations, or to have a conversation with PE reporting back about discrepancy of info between student and LS
 - SLV: regarding caseload, it would be good if this could be made a bit clearer in its difference from first placement
 - IV: we've talked about how these things should be brought up given that more students will be sent to this organisation
 - MM: if this is the only issue, bringing it up after placement is appropriate; if there are further issues, they should be brought to Avril's attention more urgently. Students need to act on this or risk jeopardising their own placement on grounds of not reporting ethical issues. Students shouldn't be put in a position where this decision has to be made.
- SLV: placements and casework are going well, but some students reported feeling a bit isolated from their co-workers in the placement environment – situation is one of not quite working together but (e.g. in casework allocation) more or less doing so
 - MM: student to speak to PE in first instance. If this is manifesting as bullying or similar, however, it should be raised beyond the PE.
 - SLV: knowing when to escalate it can be difficult.
 - MM: agreed. Cases vary, but it depends on how the student in question feels about it themselves. PE would still be recommended as first port of call.
- LC: MSW2 reps have also held a placement panel for MSW1s at which the 1s could ask questions about what it's like

- MM: could this be repeated next year?
- SLV: we've made contact with the MSW1 reps and have encouraged them to do the same. Have provided some resources to help them do this.
- MM: might be good to feed this back to the Practice Learning team.
- LC: it's *possible* that some of the students may not have been so willing to ask had they known this.
- MM: could you e-mail Avril, Rona and Anne to tell them what you've done and stress enthusiasm for it to continue next year?

Dissertation

- LC: some stress about strike days – which most students support – and the uncertainty about the availability of support in the final stretch when questions may need quicker answers as deadline approaches
- IV: will tutors still be available to read sections of dissertation?
 - MM: not on strike days, but they will be available when not striking. Tutors are also within their rights not to tell people when they're on strike. Students could write to the University outlining the impact strikes have had on them, despite expressing their support for the strikes. No discussion from MM's side about tutors not being able to read a chapter or section.
- LC: why is it that our dissertations are due much earlier than other programmes?
 - MM: to ensure there's enough time post-placement to allow you to complete it before June exam board. Aiming for November graduation actually also allows for wriggle room which would otherwise not be available. We want to give students the chance to submit for June so they can receive a letter confirming completion of programme.
- SLV: if we finish the placement component, would it be possible to gain certification for the Diploma so we can register as qualified Social Workers?
 - MM: yes in theory, but nothing is awarded before the exam board so it will usually be the case that the Dissertation will also be added for the full Master's. For this reason, it's not possible for students to start working as qualified social workers until coursework has been through the exam board.
- SLV: going back a bit, it was mentioned previously that a letter could be written to Edinburgh Council regarding statutory placements. Could this still be done?
 - MM: yes. If you could draft this, **MM (or, in MM's absence, George Palattiyil as Head of Subject) will look at it**
 - SLV: lack of clarity about statutory placements is affecting my future choices
 - MM: would recommend writing that letter. It's also frustrating for staff.
- SLV: we might send out a final feedback form after placement
 - MM: we want to do a programme evaluation ourselves too
- SLV: maybe we could organise a dissertation buddy system?
 - LC: we can talk about this after the meeting

Thanks

- MM: reps have set a high bar, for which thanks very much. It's been great to get to know you.