



CHAIR'S REPORT – 2016

“Enthusiasm is one of the most powerful engines of success. When you do a thing, do it with all your might. Put your whole soul into it. Stamp it with your own personality. Be active, be energetic, be enthusiastic and faithful, and you will accomplish your object. Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

ScOPT is a membership organisation for social work practice teachers and others involved in social work education in Scotland. We promote good practice, and represent practice teaching as a professional activity to bodies in Scotland that oversee, develop and regulate Social Work education. Our members work for local authorities, in the voluntary sector, higher and further education institutes, and increasingly as independent practice educators.

ORGANISATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL ISSUES

The year started with a reorganisation of the Committee for some key office holders.

At the last AGM, we adopted a new constitution that would meet the requirements for our adopting a new legal status as a Scottish Charitable Organisation (SCIO). The SCIO application process was completed in August. This new organisational structure gives us a much clearer legal and governance framework and will also open more opportunities for us to access funds. It also means the Committee are now trustees and consequently hold specific duties and responsibilities. Thanks to Moira Harris for all her hard work in making this happen.

We have been successful in gaining funding from various sources this year, including Learning Network West and the Social Work Educational Trust (SWET).

The Scottish Organisation for Practice Teaching (ScOPT)
is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
Scottish Charity Number SC046818

www.scopt.co.uk

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of ScOPT is free – and it connects you with a community of like-minded people, access to our website, regular updates about developments in practice education, and enhanced features on ScOPTbox. In addition, we run an annual conference, specifically aimed at practice education.

Our membership has always come from the length and breadth of the country, from Shetland to Stranraer. We've also welcomed some colleagues from England, Northern Ireland, New Zealand and the USA.

Membership continues to grow. We currently have 497 registered members – with 52 of those joining in the last 3 months.

We encourage feedback from members so we know we are on track – we need to know what we're doing is you want us to do. We're a small committee so we need to concentrate efforts where you need us.

ScOPTbox

If you haven't seen ScOPTbox yet, where have you been?

It is a curated practice learning library. Hundreds of resources have been recommended by practice educators – things that they have authored and are happy to share with others, or things that they have found useful and want to recommend.

In addition to those materials, ScOPTbox also offers hosted spaces for practice educators who wish to engage with students online, or to provide secure access to resources for their students. Hosted spaces for communities of practice are also available. These spaces could be used for online discussion, revision quizzes, assessment, evaluation, interactive case studies, reflective journals, a CPD/PRTL Register, certificates of attendance/completion, a repository of resources... and much more!

Since the launch at last year's Conference and AGM (November 2015) to date, we've had over 9000 public views of materials on ScOPTbox, and 129 people have requested accounts.

Comments on the ScOPT website after the announcement of its launch included:

- *Amazing – brilliant – I am so impressed with the ease of access and obvious thought that has gone in to considering what resources will really be helpful to practice teachers and educators! I will be spreading the word about ScOPTbox to everyone I work with!*

The SSSC Learning Technology Team emailed with a nice comment:

- *ScOPTbox looks great, it's really easy to find stuff.*

Twitter sparked several positive comments, some from as far afield as New Zealand...

- *It deserves to be widely used @Sc_OPT – congratulations on the initiative.*

ScOPTbox continues to thrive. We have talked about it far and wide – it has featured in workshops at national social conferences – the International Practice Teaching Conference in Belfast in April, Learning Network West's AGM in Glasgow in June, and JSWEC at the Open University in Milton Keynes in July.

We were successful in getting a large grant from the Social Workers' Educational Trust to run some free training workshops.

The first of these sessions was in Edinburgh in conjunction with Professor Viv Cree at the University of Edinburgh. 15 people attended from across Scotland. We received very positive feedback from the day in Edinburgh including a request to widen the training so that ScOPTbox can be utilised effectively. We are planning further training days in Dumfries & Galloway, and a joint day for Perth & Kinross and Dundee.

The Committee is undergoing a Train the Trainers session on ScOPTbox in December

Thanks to Jon Bolton for all his work on ScOPTbox.

Contact us if you are interested in a training day for your area or organisation.

THE WEB TEAM

The Web Team is a sub group of the main Committee. They really are a fantastic resource for ScOPT. They run the website and initially respond to all queries and ideas that come in, consulting with the Committee as needed. There is always someone on duty so the website is always active and responsive. Thanks to Jon Bolton, Moira Dunworth, Moira Harris, Fiona Mossman and Gillian Muir for their hard work and commitment.

THE COMMITTEE

The Committee has continued to show a steady commitment to the work of ScOPT, and is very active on behalf of the membership. We hold regular meetings and we have specific tasks shared out, such as membership, the SCIO application, finance, conference planning, the Web Team, and responding to requests to attend events and consultation events. We take every opportunity to promote the work of ScOPT and the importance and contribution of Practice Educators to social work education.

Through Fiona Mossman, we have been very involved in the discussions about what will now be known as the Scottish Practice Learning Forum – and a discussion about that is the focus of one of the workshops our 2016 conference.

We had a development day in Edinburgh in August - we desperately needed space to consider the SCIO application and plan for the future of ScOPT as well as consider our own development as a team. Ellen Daly from IRISS expertly and brilliantly facilitated the day. The Committee comes from all over Scotland, and this was an opportunity to work together to set our goals, focus on objectives, and plan improvements on how we could communicate more effectively with our members.

Some of us took the opportunity to visit the Edinburgh Festival afterwards where we saw the acclaimed play Villain. In a nutshell, "Villain" is a play inspired by real-life cases. It tells the story of Rachel, a young social worker who is vilified by the press and public following the death of a child. You can read our review on the website at www.scopt.co.uk/archives/2573

FUTURE PLANS

We have a number of plans for 2017 and beyond.

We have started a conversation with the National Organisation for Practice Teaching (NOPT) in England: obviously there are differences in social work education, regulation, policy and legislation between England and Scotland - but there are a number of areas that we feel collaboration could be useful.

As well as the ScOPTbox training mentioned above, we are considering other training events for members – we'll give you more information as soon as we've worked out the detail.

SUMMARY

ScOPT, and the Committee, have worked tirelessly and voluntarily throughout the year to promote good practice and represent practice teaching as a professional activity.

Social work and social work education continues to experience change. Everything seems to have changed this year – politics, government, finances, legislation, and policy.

The pace of change is the reason behind the theme for our 2016 conference: *Keep Calm and Carry on Practice Teaching – practical tools in a time of turmoil.*

The conference will be an opportunity to explore the challenges for practice learning in these transforming environments. Through the key note presentation and a range of workshops we want to explore and equip practice teachers with a diverse range of knowledge and skills as they champion practice learning in the future of social work.

Thank you for your support of the organisation. The Committee is very much looking forward to the next year as we continue to develop the work of ScOPT and represent you, our members.

Ros Surtees,
Chair
November 2016