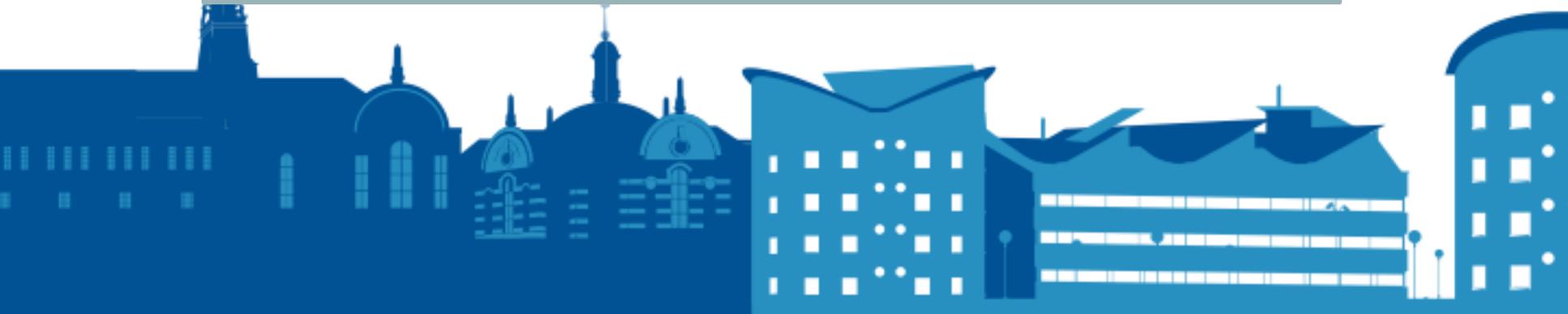


# Having “Courageous Conversations” with students struggling or failing in practice learning settings.



**SCOPT Conference 2016  
Glasgow**

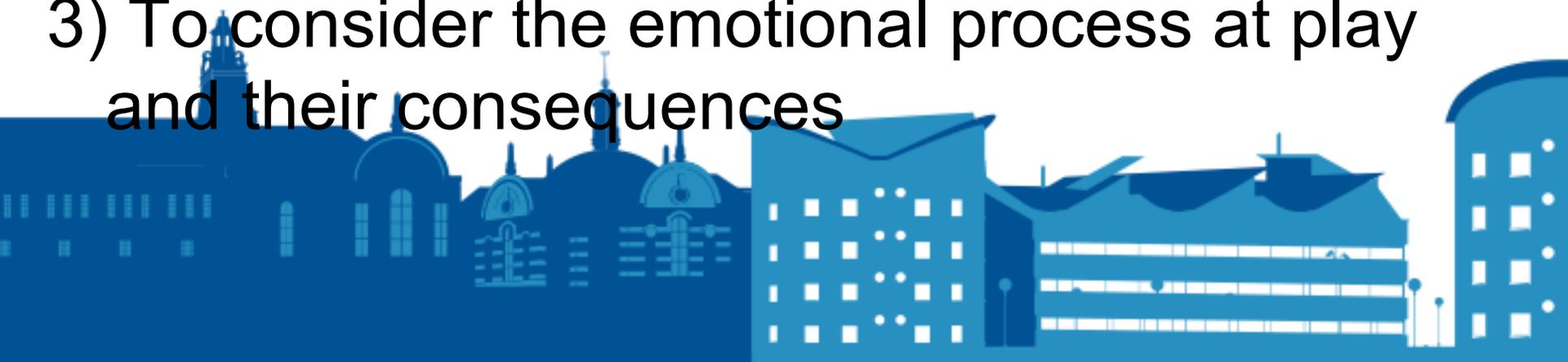
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# Aims of the Workshop



- 1) To understand the emotional challenges practice educators may face when working with struggling or failing students
- 2) To develop skills and confidence in having “courageous conversations” with social work students in practice learning settings
- 3) To consider the emotional process at play and their consequences



# BUT FIRST!!!!!! INTRODUCTIONS

## YOU

- **Name**
- **Where you work and role?**
- **Any experience of working with a struggling or failing students?**
- **Tell us a “secret” about yourself that no one else will know!**

## ME

- Social work educator for 15 years.
- Long standing research interest in all things practice learning - with a focus on failure
- Currently writing about social work, PREVENT and radicalisation (with David McKendrick).
- Former C&F social worker, play therapist and practice educator. I am a Secret Viking!!!



# Limited (but growing International and Multidisciplinary research base about the emotional impact



- **Bogo at al (2007) – failing students causes value conflicts for practice educators.**
- **Gizara and Forest (2004) – “I think that it’s an extremely emotional, gut-wrenching kind of experience...I don’t think it feels good on any level.”**
- **Basnett and Sheffield (2010) – experience of failing student a negative one**
- **Schaub and Dalrymple (2013) practice educators reported feeling stressed, isolated and did not feel supported.**
- **Finch (2010) found the experience caused range of challenging emotions**

- Practice educators felt under intense public and critical surveillance
- Felt threatened by students – possible implications if complaints made
- Lack of support from university and tutors
- Intense feelings of isolation contributing to feeling overwhelmed with situation
- Frustrated

- **Schaub and Dalrymple (2013) practice educators reported feeling stressed, isolated and did not feel supported.**
- 

**GUILT**

**ANGER**

**SHAME**

**ANXIETY**

**FRUSTRATION**

**STRESS**

**IMMOBILISATION**

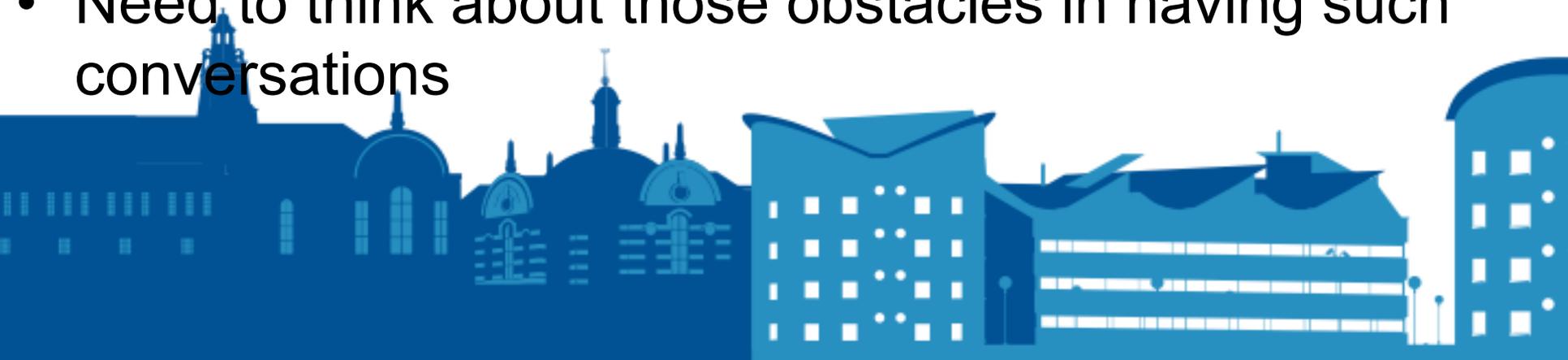
- Finch (2010) found the experience caused range of challenging emotions

# Courageous Conversations

(Beddoe and Davys, 2016)



- Or “saying it as it is”! (Jo Finch)
- Conversations associated with some sort of emotion
- Participants may feel ashamed, apprehensive, uncomfortable, angry & embarrassed
- Conversations may be conflicted by introducing different ideas, values or behaviours
- Conversations may cause conflict
- Need to think about those obstacles in having such conversations



# Role Play Time !!!!!!!



# Reflective Activity



- What did you find difficult/challenging about the role plays
- What range of emotions did you experience?
- Why do you think these emotions emerged?
- What did they tell you?
- What new insights has the exercise revealed between you and the “student”?
- Anything else?



- Conversations associated with some sort of emotion
- Participants may feel ashamed, apprehensive, uncomfortable, angry & embarrassed

# Emotional Processes



- Finch, Schaub and Dalrymple (2013) argued that practice educators were mobilised by persecutory projective processes...
- ...which immobilises thinking and reflection
- Compound failure – ignored initial misgivings and then internalised students failures as their own (ibid).
- Practice educators overwhelmed with students difficult of failure...
- And involves unconsciously own experiences of failing –
- Students previous failing issues may also be reawakened.



# Emotional Process



- Finch, Schaeffer and Dalrymple argued that persecutory processes

Which all can result in:

- 1) Not following the correct procedures
- 2) Burying head in sand and hope it gets better on its own
- 3) Doing too much for the student, i.e. rescuing them
- 4) Not addressing the concerns explicitly or in a timely fashion
- 5) Feeling angry and hostile towards the student or university

- ...
- Confrontation
- international
- Practice
- An
- Student

awakened.



# Emotional Process

Failing to Fail  
the student

Poor quality  
assessment reports  
which mean can not  
uphold fail decision

can result in:

- 1) Not following the correct process
- 2) Burying head in sand and not looking for solutions better on its own
- 3) Doing too much for the student, oversteering and rescuing them
- 4) Not addressing the concerns explicitly and in a timely fashion

Due process  
not being  
carried out  
(cant uphold  
decision)

Abruptly  
terminated  
placements

- Failing to Fail the student
- Poor quality assessment reports which mean can not uphold fail decision
- can result in:
- 1) Not following the correct process
- 2) Burying head in sand and not looking for solutions better on its own
- 3) Doing too much for the student, oversteering and rescuing them
- 4) Not addressing the concerns explicitly and in a timely fashion
- Due process not being carried out (cant uphold decision)
- Abruptly terminated placements

# Research Findings (Finch, 2010):

PEs who find the process of failing “easier”:



- Do not see the assessor/nurturer role as conflictual – can articulate their role
- Have a clear understanding of their gatekeeping role.
- Have clear expectations of a student, i.e. that they are a responsible adult learner with “their part to play”.
- Separation of student work from their work.
- Have a sophisticated understanding of the assessment process – go beyond tick box approach
- Use “feelings” reflectively to help understand and aid the situation.
- Understand that failing students are an inevitable “part of the job”
- Student failure not felt as PEs failure. (see Finch & Taylor, 2013)

# Learning Check



- **Write down three things you have learnt, thought about or reflected on during this session?**
- **Write down three things you might now do differently as a practice educator as a result of this workshop**
- **Any final thoughts or comments**



# Concluding Comments



- Working with a struggling or failing student is an emotionally painful experience.
- Student will be projecting difficult and challenging feelings onto you.
- But I would encourage you to be reflective and consider these feelings as a form of communication.
- Go forth and have “courageous conversations”



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