

Letter No 44



School of Education, Social Work & Community Education

Dean of School
Professor Yolande Muschamp

School Secretary
Julie Christie

LW/GB

30 March 2010

Laurie Matthew
Eighteen and Under
1 Victoria Road
Dundee
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Dear Laurie

Thank you for the time you gave me to discuss issues at Eighteen and Under earlier this week. I am impressed with the work your organisation is involved in and recognise the value of such a service to children and young people.

The purpose of my visit was to discuss the appropriateness at the present time of placing social work students within Eighteen and Under following an earlier meeting I had with you when three BA2 students expressed difficulties working in the agency. I am also aware there is an MSc1 student placed with you at the present time.

The three areas of concern I have are:

1. In relation to the level of complexity and potential ethical/practice dilemmas the organisation poses for social work students in practice.

I have discussed these dilemmas with the Directors of both the BA and MSc programmes, the Practice Educator for the current MSc student and the lawyer who teaches on our programmes. We are all of the opinion that because of the ambiguity of both the Child Protection and Confidentiality Policies of the agency, social work students could be put in an intolerable position.

In relation to the Confidentiality Policy, it states that appropriate action will be taken by the child protection workers (not named) if a child discloses any information about current abuse although what this appropriate action might be is not clear although it does state that the police would be the most appropriate agency to contact should action be taken.

In relation to the Child protection Policy, whilst this clearly outlines that contact with and liaison between agencies will take place, it is unclear in relation to timescales.

Specifically, if a child makes a disclosure of abuse to a worker within the agency, the agency may not report this to the police or social work for a period of time. If something in this time goes badly wrong, the agency and the student (even if their involvement was minimal) could be implicated which could have a detrimental effect on the future career of the student. We cannot knowingly allow students or the university to be exposed in this way.

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2. Due to the unclear position of Eighteen and Under in relation to Dundee City Council, we are of the opinion that the variety of and opportunity for inter-agency work is currently curtailed. Although you clearly identified other opportunities both in the UK and abroad, we are of the opinion that the lack of local opportunities to work with other agencies does not allow students sufficient opportunity to meet their required learning outcomes for the social work programme.
3. Finally, we have some concerns about organisation of student practice opportunities and would want to work with you in future to ensure that any students placed with Eighteen and Under had a robust programme of induction and supervision with a clear learning plan matched to the Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE) as outlined in the 'Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland'

Based on our concerns above, we have agreed to withdraw the current MSc student and cease to place further students with you in the immediate future.

We would be very happy to reassess this decision once your negotiations with Dundee City Council are clearer and through this process, if you do make any changes to your Child Protection Policy, we would hope to discuss possibilities to re engage with you.

Please be reassured that we hope to work with you again in the future but for the reasons outlined above are not in a position to do so currently.

I am happy to discuss this with you further.

Take care.

Yours sincerely



Linda Walker
Senior Lecturer/Practice Co-ordinator