

## **Experiencing technologies for learning: social work educators and students.**

Online communities have the potential to foster wider participation and facilitate improved community accessibility and inclusiveness thus contributing to sustainability and social justice agendas. The degree to which such communities can be seen as solutions is however one which continues to be fiercely debated. Levels of engagement and ethical considerations are two key areas for further discussion.

With the demise of SWAP it is perhaps a timely moment to focus on the usefulness of a new online open access resource SWAPBox and to view some of the materials hosted there as well as hearing about the experiences of social work educators developing online support for staff, students and practice educators within local virtual environments. The session will include a set of case studies from this year's funded projects as well as discussion of the wider benefits and challenges associated with e-learning environments and an invitation for those attending to use SWAPBox. The case studies will be drawn from this year's funded projects which began in September 2010 and are due to end June 2011. SWAPBox started in September 2010 and runs until August 2011.

SWAPBox – offers the framework for the session. It is a place where outputs and results of projects can be hosted and also a source of resources in its own right. The session will include a short demo of how to use SWAPBox before showcasing the following project outputs:

- Students as Mentors – Colleagues at the University of Lincoln have been evaluating the benefits of extra curricular activities (in this case student mentoring roles with young people). Come and hear about the project and locate the vodcasts which have come from the student experiences of mentoring. .
- Digital stories – Colleagues at the University of Huddersfield have been working with MSc social work students producing digital stories based on their first practice placement. Come and hear about the project and see the results.
- Pitstop. Colleagues at De Montfort University have been evaluating the effectiveness of interactive social media in improving the learning environment of social work undergraduates during placement. Come and hear their experience and engage in a wider debate about the value of online communities for social work education.

The primary aim of the session is to give delegates a taster of SWAPBox and its contents - emphasising open access to examples of technologies for learning and instilling confidence to create and share their own examples.