

Handbook for Practice Learning in Social Work and Social Care: knowledge and theory, 3rd edition.
Edited by Joyce Lishman

The 3rd edition of this text remains worthy of its place as a core text on any social work reading list. Updated to include significant changes in UK social work practice, it retains the core areas of knowledge relating to understanding social work and its underpinning approaches and theories; and models of assessment and intervention. It applies these to a contemporary context with acknowledgment of the challenges, risks and complexities facing social work students and practitioners within the current climate of financial crisis and its impact on inequality. For adult learning to be effective, it needs to be purposeful and the context is clearly explained and explored throughout this text. There is a clear emphasis throughout on what, why and how evidenced based practice can be developed and how we can evaluate the outcomes: did it work?

The book is divided into five sections: understanding; assessment; intervention; the context of assessment and intervention; and reflective and evidenced based practice. Section one: 'understanding', sets the context for the practice explored in subsequent chapters by providing a comprehensive update on current UK legislative processes, policy and theoretical frameworks such as attachment theory and psycho-dynamic approaches which form the fundamental principles of social work practice and how it is enacted. Heather Munro provides a particularly useful introduction (pp13-31) to legislation, clearly explaining a range of legal processes and sources of legislation from private and public law, constitutional principles, common law and judicial review and the differences between England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Whilst the section on European Union Law was written before the outcome of the EU referendum, the explanation of how EU law is applied by member states and the principle of supremacy of EU law over domestic legislation, will provide a useful context to students and practitioners seeking to understand the implications of the vote to leave the EU and the impact of subsequent negotiations on their practice.

Section two, identifies the purpose of different models of assessment and the roles social workers adopt such as gatekeeper, expert and problem solver. Subsequent chapters consider assessment in relation to children and risk management. Michael Sheppard's chapter (chapter10) acknowledges the current emphasis on not only assessing need but in showing the process by which a professional judgment and decision has been achieved: from reflexivity to process knowledge. This section is of significant value in enabling learners to understand both current practice and the context for it. Perhaps lacking in these chapters is a wider range and evaluation of specific models and tools of assessment for students and practitioners to use.

Section three provides the most substantial section of the text with 11 chapters, each providing an exploration of different interventions from cognitive behavioural work, task centred practice, crisis intervention through to the welcome inclusions of social pedagogy and personalization and self-directed support. These chapters provide an excellent introduction and overview of a range of evidenced based interventions and will enable students to expand their tool kit beyond a favoured few. The brevity of each chapter is perhaps an inevitable outcome of a text seeking to cover such a broad range of knowledge and theory but it is none the less, an excellent starting point from which students can go on to explore.

Section four seeks to provide a practice context for assessment and intervention with chapters addressing social work with children and families; interdisciplinary practice and working within the organisational context of social change. All three chapters provide a useful structural and historical context to contemporary issues and the impact on the current direction of social work practice. Providing this context will enable students to develop an understanding and appreciation of the evolution and fluidity of social work practice and their ability to actualise change. Given the current challenges and pressures in social work, it is perhaps not surprising that these three chapters cover child protection, the need for and challenges of interdisciplinary practice and working in the context of change. An added chapter focussing on working with adults and the complexities regarding capacity, divided health and social care budgets and managing risk, may have provided a more complete focus and context for this section.

The final and shortest section focuses on reflective and evidenced based practice and works well to draw the book to a close by focussing on the need and pressures practitioners face 'to make professional practice more accountable through ongoing scrutiny of the principles upon which it is

based'. In keeping with the approach of the book overall, these chapters focus as much on the why as the how; providing an interesting and engaging rationale of the need for reflexivity and evidenced based practice.

Overall, this is an excellent text for students and educators seeking to provide a context and understanding of the practice of social work and social care.

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