

Writing Analytical Assessments in Social Work (2nd edition)

Chris Dyke

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On receiving this book in the post, I was immediately encouraged by the author's biography, as written on the back cover: "Chris Dyke is a social researcher and lecturer with research interests in autism, the effectiveness of professional interventions, the risk assessment of violent offenders, and cognitive biases in assessment. He worked in residential care, local politics and charities before qualifying as a social worker in 2006, and worked for local authorities until becoming fully independent in 2015. He likes trying new things, challenging his own assumptions, and finding out he's wrong at least once a day." I felt this was a rather unusual description of someone's 'story' and it encouraged me to want to read the text with the hope and expectation that it would provide a refreshing perspective and had the potential to bring an otherwise 'dry' subject to life.

The title of the book was also attractive to me, as it does not claim to be a 'How to' guide, but rather to address the subject of 'writing analytical assessments' – I believe Dyke has deliberately chosen these words, as it is often in the *writing* of assessments and the *analysis* of material that social care practitioners may struggle.

On reading the text, I was not disappointed. Each chapter begins with a clear statement of its aims and objectives, and the reader is then guided through the material in a way that is accessible without being patronising, and directive without being prescriptive. There are plenty of examples which bring the material alive and help the reader to make connections with their own area of practice, and scenarios are presented which can be used for individual reflection or as part of supervision discussions. Each chapter ends with a clear summary of what has been discussed as well as a comprehensive reference section, which enhances the academic credibility of the text.

I am delighted that this review will be included in the special edition of the Journal which is focussed on Assessment and Decision-Making, as I feel Dyke's text makes a vital contribution to this fundamental aspect of social work and social care practice teaching and learning.

For those who are familiar with the first edition of the text, it is important to note that the author has written two completely new

chapters for this second edition, which cover the topics of ‘why assessment is important’ and ‘what happens after assessment’. In my opinion, these are welcome additions which significantly improve what was already an excellent book. This is a book which I thoroughly recommend to all social workers and those working in social care – be they still in training, newly qualified or with many years of experience as well as practice teachers, field educators and trainers.

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