

Developing skills and knowledge for social work practice (2nd ed.)

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Reviewed by Jenny Peddar

This book is aimed at pre-qualifying social work students and those undertaking the ASYE (the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment, usually the first year after qualification in England (Skills for Care)). It includes good background information that will be useful for all practitioners and Practice Educators. The authors link their work to the PCF (Professional Capabilities Framework) and the Knowledge and Skills statements used within England however the content of each chapter will apply in the wider community. As with many recent publications the content is larger than the book with numerous links to a variety of websites and a specific link to a sage site holding additional material/papers linked to the book. There is easy access to a vast amount of additional options with the opportunity for greater depth of learning. This book provides more links to direct research material than most. As an example, page 49 has many links to websites that would provide over an hour of viewing and reading about aspects of promoting personal resilience.

The book is split into three sections; core skills; skills and knowledge for assessment and intervention, and finally key social work theories and methods. Five new chapters have been added since the first edition. Two are in the first section covering resilience/self care and time management. The others are in section three covering narrative social work, grief and loss and social work activism. Each chapter contains models and theories, reflective activities and case study material which, alongside the access to web materials and videos will assist learners with a mix of learning styles and preferences. The core skills section covers communication, values and reflection with some more specific areas such as communicating with children. Part

two; skills and knowledge for assessment and intervention follows the ASPIRE model (Sutton 1999) with chapters related to the social work processes of interviewing, conflict management, writing skills etc. Part three covers selected theories and methods such as task centred practice, crisis intervention and groupwork.

Element of the book have been overtaken by recent events, as will have many other similar publications. As examples, the BASW Code of Ethics 2014, was rewritten twice in the last year linked to impact of the Covid pandemic on Social Work practice and the NHS has clearly updated its material on sleep, breaking the links included within the text. This will not make a major impact in terms of the usefulness of the book. The broken links may frustrate some readers but they suggest appropriate sites to find valuable information on these topics. Aspects that have gained importance during the pandemic such as vicarious trauma within the helping professions has been included in the book which will be able to support students and their Practice Educators during this and future crises. Within chapter 9 there is some discussion regarding the impact of working at home on personal resilience and self-care, a very important and difficult challenge during present working conditions which should be a focus for attention in any student placement at this time. A couple of chapters are more challenging to understand and seem to expect a much greater depth of pre-existing knowledge.

The addition of a chapter on Social Work Activism is interesting. It seems that Social Work has, on the whole, become very de-politicised over the years. This chapter covers aspects of more radical/political social work such as black Social Work action and anti-poverty campaigns, both very relevant over recent months with events such as the death of George Floyd and the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol. The reminder about the need for a DBS (the Disclosure and Barring Service, which checks for any criminal history of social workers and similar professional within England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) highlights some of the difficulties in balancing activism in practice.

Within practice placements this book will provide students with information around many of the tasks required of them and could be a focus for the more theoretical elements of supervision sessions. The various checklists (e.g. approaches to conflict management) will

support a student in managing the more challenging aspects of practice and can be used by Practice Educators to help them plan for these situations.

References

Skills for Care. Overview of the ASYE. <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Learning-development/social-work/asye-child-family/Overview-of-the-ASYE.aspx>

Sutton, C. (1999). *Helping families with troubled children*. Chichester. Wiley and sons.

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