

*Creative approaches to social work practice learning*  
Edited by Heidi Dix and Aisha Howells  
St Albans, Critical Publishing, 2022, 226 pages  
ISBN: 9781915080011 (pbk) £21.99

*Reviewed by Sally Scott*

### *Overview*

This is a clear and accessible guide, packed full of original and creative resources which can be used in a range of professions to support practice learning.

The book has eight chapters and follows the journey of a practice learning opportunity. The author/s of each chapter focus on a particular element of a practice placement. They include helpful tools alongside a brief explanation of the theories which underpin them. The contributors draw on their personal experiences and provide examples to show how they have used the resources in their practice. The chapters conclude with a summary of the key points and include pictures, photographs and a selection of poetry which brings the book to life.

In the opening chapter Claire Skilliter looks at ways of building effective relationships from the beginning of the placement. She shares visual tools she has developed as a supervisor and resources to help students evaluate their progress throughout their learning journey.

Chapter two addresses the challenges of practice educating in a digital world. Anna Wright includes checklists she has used to help both learners and educators develop their technical competence and encourage a learning culture in the absence of face-to-face working.

In the third chapter on anti-racist social work practice education, Garfield Hunt explains how he uses simple exercises to aid practitioners and students explore their individual biases and approaches to forms of discrimination.

Chapter four explores trauma-sensitive approaches to practice education and direct work. Caroline Aldridge showcases students' examples of creative timelines and chronologies using a variety of media which can be adapted to online learning.

The practice educator's role within a power charged relationship is explored in chapter five. Joint editors Heidi Dix and Aisha Howells

explain how we can use “practical remedies to engage with power constructively”

In chapter six Alison Taylor shows how story telling can be an effective tool to engage, understand and reframe narratives.

Nora Duckett shares anecdotes from practice in the penultimate chapter which illustrate how she uses different approaches to explore assumptions and develop professional curiosity.

In the concluding chapter Claire Skilliter returns to consider creative ways of supporting and managing endings in placement and in practice.

The appendices include a copy of each tool and are clearly laid out for easy use by practice educators or students.

### *Critique*

The book makes strong connections between theory and practice throughout. In each chapter the writers explain the origins of the resource they have developed, briefly explain the theories underpinning them and show how to apply it in practice. For example, Anna Wright explains how she drew on attachment theory to consider the importance of the team in providing a secure base for the remote learner and goes on to show how she applied a team checklist tool to encourage a learning culture in the absence of face-to-face working.

The authors have drawn on their own experiences and expertise to produce original resources to be used and/or adapted by students, educators and practitioners. Although the book focusses on Social Work, it has relevance to all those involved in practice placements in other settings and disciplines.

As its title suggests, the focus of this book is on creative approaches to social work practice learning. It is not a “nuts and bolts guide” to the process, structure and management of a social work placement.

I have found the tools helpful in facilitating group discussions with students and practitioners working in health, education and social work. Their versatility allows them to be adapted for face or face or remote supervisions. I have also used the written and visual resources to critically reflect on practice for my own continuing professional development.

This book is an enjoyable read and offers a fresh perspective on practice learning. It recognises that we do not all see ourselves as “creative” but shows how creativity can be cultivated with practice.

In summary, this is an accessible and versatile resource and useful

addition to a practice educator's library. It will appeal to those wanting to develop a wider range of strategies to support critical thinking and add more creative resources to their practice toolkit.

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