

*Student's guide to placements in health and social care settings:  
From theory to practice*

Edited by Simon Williams and Diana Conroy  
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*Reviewed by Sally Scott*

## **Overview**

The purpose of this book is to explore the theories underpinning student placements in health and social care settings. It includes contributions from writers with experience of hosting and managing placements across a variety of settings. Edited by academics Simon Williams and Diana Conroy to address the “theory practice gap” the book achieves its aim of “integrating academic and theoretical knowledge into real- world clinical practice”

The book has three parts which reflect the different stages of the student's journey (pre-placement, during placement and advanced skills) These parts are divided into 13 chapters which can be read consecutively or individually.

The first part of the book is concerned with the preparation needed before placement starts. The opening chapter looks at ways students can develop a “placement mindset” by preparing themselves mentally, emotionally and practically for placement and developing the critical thinking skills they will require to apply theory to their practice. The second chapter introduces models to develop a reflective approach to practice. The third chapter explains the importance of emotional resilience in managing the day-to-day challenges faced on placement and looks at strategies students can use to keep themselves physically and emotionally safe. The concluding chapter provides a useful overview of different models and theories which can be used to unlock anti-oppressive practice.

The second part of the book deals with issues faced during placement. The opening chapter considers the range of statutory, private and voluntary sectors that currently provide placements in health and social care and the following chapter explores the challenges that students may face in some of these settings. Chapter 7 draws upon theory to help

students make sense of their placement and includes helpful tools for managing their supervision effectively. Chapter 8 uses Bronfenbrenner's model as a framework to explore digital literacy. The concluding chapter debates theories underpinning the concept of self and how this applies to working in health and social care.

The final part of the book has four chapters about "advanced skills". The first looks at applying theories of interprofessional learning and working to achieve best practice. The next chapter considers ways in which students can involve others to improve the quality of their placement. The penultimate chapter looks at applying theories underpinning project management and the concluding chapter examines approaches to measuring and demonstrating impact in health and social care services.

## **Critique**

Throughout the book, reference is made to the theories underpinning practice teaching and learning. As Williams and Conway explain, "theory helps us understand the why and the how, giving understanding and context"

Contributors include practitioners, academics and carers who draw on their practical experience of working with students on placements across a range of health and social care settings. They explore some of the complex theoretical issues involved in the practice learning process in order to help students to take classroom learning into their practice.

I found the book easy to navigate. Bullet points are used to indicate what will be discussed in each chapter. Diagrams, charts and tables are used effectively to illustrate key concepts (for example, the historical development of the mixed market, models of reflection, functions of supervision). The book includes short quotes from students which illustrate the points raised and each chapter concludes with a summary of the main points and references used.

The theories in the book draw from the different disciplines providing health and social care (including nursing, social work and counselling) Some of the chapters make reference to legislation and the social structures that are particular to placements in the UK. However, the central issues such as developing emotional resilience, anti-oppressive practice and effective interprofessional working are relevant to

placements worldwide.

I like the way the book acknowledges the day to day challenges of working in health and social care. It draws on theory to examine the emotional impact of these on workers and introduces models of critical reflection to help students learn from the successes and challenges of placement in order to develop their practice.

I found this book an engaging and interesting read. The contributors offer a range of views and their different approaches and writing styles add interest and variety. Although it is titled as a student's guide, this is not a basic "how to" guide to navigating placements. The book's focus will appeal to students who want to better understand the connection between theory and practice. I think it would also be a particularly useful resource to practitioners involved in supporting students on placement and to teaching staff involved in practice learning.

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