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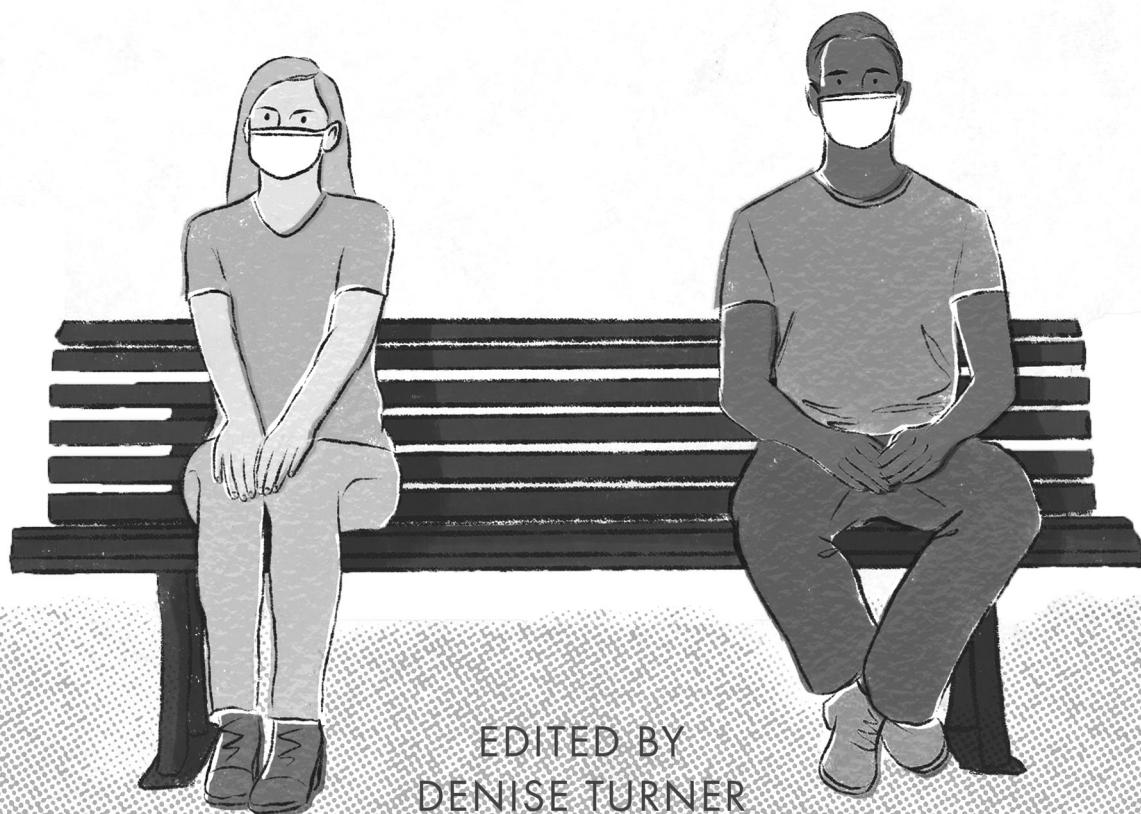
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EDITED BY
DENISE TURNER

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Meet the authors

Dr Ariane Critchley is a social work academic with a particular interest in how the profession meets families during pregnancy and in early childhood. Her doctoral thesis, *Quickening Steps*, focused on the understudied topic of pre-birth child protection and used ethnographic methods to make a practice-near study of pre-birth work. Ariane has also undertaken research in the area of adoption. Currently working as a lecturer, Ariane is a registered social worker with experience of child welfare and protection practice. She enjoys exploring creative methods in learning and teaching, and in knowledge exchange.

Cornelia Lange is a practice and learning lead in a London borough, who together with her colleague is responsible for the running of a bespoke student social work programme, and has worked in this capacity since 2016.

Cornelia's experience is built on working in children's homes across London for over four years before joining Education Welfare, where she spent seven years working in secondary schools. Cornelia then embarked on a career as a social work practitioner working with vulnerable children and young people in the Child in Care and Children in Need team.

Andrew Lorimer embarked on his social work degree somewhat later in life than most, after a successful career in social and supported housing. Now in his final-year placement in a hospital discharge team, he is looking forward to graduating in 2021 and embarking on the next stage of his learning journey. Andrew lives in south-west London and enjoys (Covid-19 permitting!) spending time with his children and grandchildren, walking and wildlife.

Robert Maynard qualified as a social worker in 1996 and has since practised in leaving care and children's services in London local authorities. He has also worked in the third sector for adults with substance misuse issues. Robert currently shares a lead role for practice education with children's social work students in a London borough. He is passionate about equalities and co-chairs like-minded employee allies and resource groups who champion diversity and inclusion matters in the workplace.

Marie Price is a qualified social worker and counsellor presently working as a senior lecturer at the University of Chichester. With a keen interest in bereavement, palliative care and end-of-life care, organising conferences on the importance of communicating about death and bereavement for children, people living with a learning disability or dementia became invaluable. She is currently working towards a PhD considering the role of supervision in palliative care. She is conducting research into the support social work students receive if they experience a bereavement during their social work training. One thing this pandemic has taught us is the need for support and social interaction.

Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh is a Senior Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Edinburgh where she has worked for the last ten years. Her research includes work on support to those with care experience, children's participation, decision making, empathy and social work education. Autumn is also a qualified social worker who worked in a range of children and family settings before coming into academia. She is currently the Programme Director for the PhD and MSc programmes but she also teaches across a range of courses including social work skills and methods.


Francis Sentamu was born in Uganda and has been residing in the UK since 2004. Francis is married with three children aged thirteen, ten and five years-old. Francis is currently in his third year of a BSc in Social Work at London Metropolitan University and is undertaking a placement in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. During the full lockdown, in March 2020, while in his second year, Francis and his wife contracted Covid-19. In this book, Francis shares his experience of the pandemic and the impact of the illness on his life and family as a whole.

Rachel Sharples began her social work career after having many different roles in care, support work and schools. Rachel had a successful career supporting SEN children in schools before embarking on her social work journey. Rachel is now in her final year of a social work degree and has landed a role in a joint assessment and discharge team in a hospital close to her borough. Rachel is looking forward to graduating in 2021 and what is to come in her next stages of her career in social work. Rachel lives in East London and enjoys the outdoors, nature, exercising, reading and travelling (prior to Covid-19).

Varsha Tailor is a business and wellbeing mentor who had to learn to live and work in a different way after a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. Professionally qualified and experienced in project management, beauty therapy and three languages, she now uses her lived experience of disability and immune illnesses to help raise awareness and understanding in those who don't get it and guides those who do, to live towards their values and beliefs for a happier life. She would describe herself as stubborn but those that know her will talk of her strength, resilience and vulnerable-honesty, which make her not only a great listener but also a great mentor and speaker.

Dr Amanda M L Taylor-Beswick is a social work academic and Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) registered social worker with a practice background in mental health and big D, small d, deafness. Amanda has a longstanding interest in how social work education prepares students for practice, and in particular preparedness for practice in a world that is fluid, emergent and increasingly virtual. Amanda has been developing, researching and writing about creative and experiential teaching and learning methodologies and digitalisation throughout her academic career. She has titles such as UK Gov Woman Leader in Tech (2018), JISC 50 (2015) and EDdTech 50 (2020) to her name and more recently was the academic consultant to the Digital Capabilities for Social Work project, in collaboration with SCIE and BASW. She is currently preoccupied with questions about how social work education facilitates the development of digital criticality in social work students and is engaged in various social science research projects, to which she brings a socio-technical lens. Amanda is also a longstanding board member of huslTa – the human services information technology association.

Dr Prospera Tedam is a social work academic currently based at the United Arab Emirates University in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. Prospera has previously taught social work for the Open University, University of Northampton and Anglia Ruskin University. Prospera's research interests are around anti-racist social work, culturally sensitive and inclusive practice and social justice, and she has published widely in these areas. Her practice expertise is social work with children and families.



Dr Denise Turner is an experienced, registered social worker and currently works as a Senior Lecturer in Social Work. Her research interests encompass digital practices and death, loss and bereavement. She was Chair of the Advisory Group for the national Digital Capabilities project for social work, delivered by SCIE and BASW and is interested in the positive challenges of digital media. She has authored a book on parents' experiences of the professional response to sudden, unexpected child death and is currently involved with research focused on bereavement and grief resulting from Covid-19.

Foreword

Ruth Allen

Introduction

Dr Denise Turner

About this book

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic has provided an unparalleled moment of global crisis, with the death toll at the time of writing standing at 528,000 worldwide. While in the UK much of the public discourse has centred on the 'heroes' of the NHS, social work and social care have also occupied a fundamental position, albeit one which has attracted less media and public commendation. In a bid to tackle the crisis, and following years of under-resourcing, emergency coronavirus legislation provided local authorities nationwide with the power to add an extra 8000 social workers to the Register, with many social work students also supplementing their education by taking practice-based roles.

Following the UK Prime Minister's speech on 23 March 2020, the entire UK population was mandated to stay at home and protect lives. In response, practitioners, service users, students and academics from across the social work sector have been forced to live and work in unexpected ways. Traditional routines and working practices have been disrupted by the lockdown and social distancing measures, propelling people with internet access into often unfamiliar online environments, while intensifying the digital divide. Against this backdrop, and despite the popular rhetoric of 'all in this together', the pandemic has exposed pre-existing social divisions; under-resourcing and social justice issues, with BAME populations, those experiencing domestic abuse, in poor housing, lacking digital access or experiencing mental health difficulties among many other traditionally excluded groups who have been disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of the virus.

Research by Community Care, conducted in May 2020, approximately two months after the UK lockdown began, found that social workers were struggling to respond to service users, with 77 per cent of respondents stating that they were not able to do their jobs properly, and a further 90 per cent suggesting that the pandemic had negatively affected service users. The survey also found significant dangers to well-being, where 30 per cent of respondents had experienced the serious illness or even death of a colleague, thereby intensifying pre-existing issues with discussing grief and bereavement and offering appropriate support (Turner and Price, 2020).

This book takes the significant historical moment created by the global pandemic as a starting point to explore issues at the heart of social work education and practice, which have been exposed by Covid-19, as well as capturing these as catalysts for future change. While many of the immediate impacts of the virus have intensified the pressures on the sector, 73 per cent of respondents in the research carried out by Community Care also identified positives which they wanted to maintain once the threat from the virus has finally abated. Many of these positives were linked to the flexibility offered by the internet, with many enjoying online meetings as well as seeing the choice and flexibility these offered to service users. Others also felt that relationships with both colleagues and service users had been strengthened by less formal but more regular online check-ins. Many of these findings echo those of the Digital Capabilities for Social Work project led by SCIE and BASW, which delivered its final outputs in March 2020, only days after the UK lockdown began. Jordan Wosik, an Expert by Experience who advised the project, published a prescient blog in September 2019, in which he almost anticipated the move to online working triggered by Covid-19:

In this day and age, we can shop online, vote, book holidays, book cabs, take out bank loans and even mortgages and order food. But contacting your social worker digitally can still be really difficult. Instead we have to take out time out of our day – including travel time – to go see the social worker which is hard when you have a full-time job or in full time school. The current arrangement makes service users feel like their time doesn't matter. But it doesn't have to be that way.

(Wosik, 2019)

In her Foreword to this book, Dr Ruth Allen, who led on the Digital Capabilities project, also identifies positive outcomes from the pandemic, suggesting that it has placed social work and social care at the heart of public and political thinking, as well as strengthening the multi-disciplinary working so crucial for effective outcomes.

As time moves on, and despite the enduring nature of the virus, much of the UK political and media discourse is still concerned with 'getting back to normal', although as winter arrives and the cases escalate on a daily basis, increasing local restrictions indicate the potential of a second national lockdown. Notwithstanding, it is clear that even once a vaccine has been found, or the virus finally abates, the effects will be enduring and that the past where normal once resided is now a '*foreign country*' (Hartley, 1953). As we move forward, we will all be entering a series of 'new normals' which will have to accommodate the seismic changes that have evolved during this exceptional historical moment.

Chapters in this book

Each chapter in this book offers a unique perspective on living and working during the Covid-19 pandemic and utilises this as a lens with which to interrogate particular aspects of social work education and practice. Significantly, contributors to the book are not all social work academics but also practitioners, students and users of social work services. They collectively offer a variety of perspectives and reflections on living through this historic moment and its implications for social work in the past, as well as moving forward into the future. Despite the individual lenses, what is striking about the book is that each chapter, authored independently, demonstrates common themes and thereby the connectivity that still exists despite the lockdown, social distancing and ongoing social restrictions. Most chapters conclude with reflective questions, which also identify common experiences and help to focus the content, as well as provoking debate and further deliberation.

Chapter 1 identifies and interrogates a theme which runs throughout each chapter, as everyone has been forced to interact with online technology in often unprecedented ways. As Jordan's blog for the Digital Capabilities project (SCIE, 2020) predicted, online technology and connectivity have been a life-line for many during the pandemic but have also intensified the digital divide. In her chapter, Dr Amanda Taylor-Beswick, an expert in this field and academic advisor to the Digital Capabilities Project, discusses digital education, methods and practices, focusing on the ethical implications of Covid-19 and the legacy it will leave behind.

In Chapter 2, Nicola Labuschagne and Gema Hadridge, both therapists at the acclaimed Anna Freud Centre, discuss their experience of working with and safeguarding children during the pandemic. The digital issues discussed in Chapter 1 are revisited here through a practice lens, which interrogates the impact of the pandemic on existing problems such as parental mental illness, domestic abuse and substance misuse, all exacerbated by school closures and social isolation. Disturbingly, as the chapter discusses, referrals to UK children's social care services dropped by a fifth during lockdown, rendering the safeguarding of vulnerable children an uphill task for social workers, as well as highlighting previous inequalities. Despite the magnitude of managing this situation, the chapter offers unique and sometimes humorous insights into digital practice interactions during this difficult time.

Despite the repeated media idiom that we are 'all in this together', in reality the pandemic has widened many existing divisions and in Chapter 3, Dr Kish Bhatti Sinclair highlights these through the experiences of refugee and asylum seekers. Drawing on early findings from an original study, the chapter demonstrates the impact of the

pandemic on unaccompanied refugees and asylum-seeking children and young adults, focusing on their unique combination of circumstances and the link to legal and cultural factors which serve to impact them in this time of global emergency. The chapter links to others in the book, through an interrogation of diversity and detriment, and also offers valuable lessons for practice moving forward.

Chapter 4 moves the discussion of diversity and inequality into a higher education context. Like the preceding chapter, the author, Dr Prospera Tedam, draws on findings from an ongoing research project into the experiences of Black African social work students during the Covid-19 pandemic in England. The chapter utilises the pandemic experiences of three female students in different English universities to critically explore Black African student expectations and argue that the positive aspects identified by one student should be considered normal. Finally, the chapter discusses the implications of the study for creating and maintaining anti-oppressive and anti-racist spaces within social work education and practice learning.

Staying on the theme of practice learning, in Chapter 5, Cornelia Lange and Robert Maynard, practice learning leads in a busy London authority, reflect on the pressures and the opportunities for practice created by the pandemic and how these may be integrated once the Covid-19 pandemic has finally abated. The chapter is experimental in format, combining 'water-cooler' conversations with the creative concept of 'un' words to describe the practice challenges of this unprecedented, unparalleled and unwelcome global situation. The chapter identifies and develops many of the themes which arise throughout the book, including the loss of physical 'water-cooler moments' with colleagues and the challenges and opportunities of online connectivity, as well as revisiting issues of equality and diversity.

Chapter 6 takes many of the themes discussed by the practice learning leads in the previous chapter, but explores these through the lived experiences of Andrew Lorimer, Francis Sentamu and Rachel Sharples, three final-year undergraduate social work students studying through the pandemic. The sudden move to lockdown, followed by social distancing and the return to campus teaching in some universities, have had a considerable impact on higher education generally. Social work students have also experienced particular issues, given the work-based nature of the training. The chapter discusses many of the challenges described in other sections of the book, linking themes of online connectivity to well-being, and showing how the authors went from 'surviving to thriving'.

Chapter 7 also links common themes which emerge throughout the book, including issues of ethnicity, oppression and exclusion. Varsha Tailor, an Expert by Experience, describes how, as a woman with a disability, the lockdown propelled her

unceremoniously into facing life indoors and without her usual routines and support mechanisms. Varsha's chapter illustrates the isolation and distress that the sudden 'stay at home' instruction caused, while offering inspiration; hope and guidance in moving forward.

During Covid-19, one of the myriad ways in which people have tried to maintain resilience is through connecting in different ways, via technology but also through creativity and greater proximity to nature. In Chapter 8, Dr Ariane Critchley and Dr Autumn Roesch-Marsh reflect in an inspiring discussion on the ways in which creative processes such as poetry can provide hope and a sense of community, as well as identifying their efficacy for social work education and practice once the crisis has finally abated.

In Chapter 9, Dr Denise Turner reflects on the ways in which Covid-19 has placed loss, change and bereavement at the hub of social work and social care. Drawing from Peter Marris' seminal book published in 1986, the chapter argues that the increased focus on risk management and the concomitant bureaucracy of recent decades has eroded some of the core values of social work. It makes recommendations for the 'new normal' once Covid-19 has eventually subsided.

Rigorous supervision lies at the heart of effective social work practice, and in Chapter 10 Marie Price draws from research on supervision in the context of end-of-life care. During the current pandemic, end of life has been a significant policy issue, with deaths disproportionately affecting care homes. This chapter explores the importance of supervision for allaying anxiety, including service user voice, and generally ensuring robust practice in social work and social care.

The book concludes with some final reflections on the chapters and considers how lessons from the pandemic can be used to positively enhance both social work practice and education moving forward.

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