

# SOCIAL WORK

## AN INTRODUCTION

EDITED BY

JOYCE LISHMAN

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companion  
website



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# SOCIAL WORK



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# ABOUT THE EDITORS

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**Denise Cromar** was born with cerebral palsy and has been in a wheelchair all of her life. In 2005, she gained a BA in Applied Social Sciences from Robert Gordon University. Denise has been a service user of many care organisations and services and has been involved in various types of volunteering in the social care and social work field.

**Jim Dressel** has worked as a manager with three organisations supporting adults with learning difficulties in the community. Since 2006 he has been a Social Work Practice Teacher at Robert Gordon University. He has supported final placement students in residential and fieldwork placements within local authority and voluntary organisations. The agencies he has worked with have focussed on children and families including youth justice and children with disabilities. He has maintained his practice skills as a counsellor with Aberdeen Counselling and Information Service. He has a particular interest in Transactional Analysis as a theory of communication and personality development.

After qualifying as a social worker at Robert Gordon University **Angela Duvollet** worked as a Manager in the mental health field. During this time she was also a lecturer and SVQ Assessor at a local college. Since 2002 she has been employed at RGU initially as a Practice Teacher and placement co-ordinator and latterly as a full-time lecturer in social work for the distance learning team, undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Angela has undertaken post-qualification training and has achieved Post Graduate in Higher Education Learning and Teaching and a Post Graduate Certificate in Research Methods.

**Fiona Feilberg** is Head of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and of Interprofessional Education (IPE) within the School of Applied Social Studies at Robert Gordon University. She has worked at Robert Gordon University since 1997 having had a varied professional history including working in a residential therapeutic community with young people, working with adults with addictions, managing a day centre for adults with a range of disabilities and undertaking a range of training and consultancy for teams, agencies and organisations. Fiona is joint-qualified in social work and in counselling and psychotherapy and draws on both in her teaching, consultancy and writing. Fiona has a particular interest in the psychodynamic approach to understanding individuals and to understanding and working within organisations.

**Iain Fisk** has been a lecturer in social work at Robert Gordon University since 2010. Previous to this he worked in local authority social work for 25 years at different levels and across several adult care user groups, including mental health, substance misuse and older people. He has a particular interest in issues around the use of compulsion for people lacking capacity or requiring treatment for mental disorder and is currently in the closing stages of a doctorate looking at the Scottish legal framework in this regard. Iain has also been a general member of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland since its inception in 2005.

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**Simon Gardner** has played a big part in the development of the inclusion movement and has been involved in a number of campaigns. Simon was a member of the Sutton Merton community health council and worked with the King's Fund evaluating services for people with learning disabilities in Hillingdon. Simon moved to Scotland in 2011 and is an active member of the service user panel at Robert Gordon University.

**Neil Gibson** studied on the PG Social Work course at Robert Gordon University in 2003. Upon qualifying, Neil went to work in the social work team based at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. After 2 years he went to work for the Criminal Justice Addictions Team, then moved into a senior practitioner position within Aberdeenshire's Adult Protection Team, before taking up a senior position at Aberdeen City Council within their Adult Protection Unit. Neil joined the teaching team at RGU in 2011.

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**Margaret Junner** had worked as a project leader in Records Management before becoming a full time carer. Margaret believes ardently in the importance of professionals working alongside carers, although her experience has been that professionals take this on board to different degrees! During her time as a carer, Margaret has undertaken courses in counselling, including a COSCA course. She has found these courses valuable and this has helped Margaret to re-evaluate her role within her family. Margaret is a keen plant and vegetable gardener, finding this a useful pursuit for de-stressing.

**Michael Maas-Lowit** started his career in social work in the early 1970s, doing voluntary work and work in residential child care. He qualified with a postgraduate certificate in social work from Aberdeen University and worked in psychiatric hospitals in England and Scotland, moving into social work education in the early 1990s. He has had a long-term interest in developing specialist education for mental health social

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**Claire Marsden** qualified as a social worker in 2005, after which she worked with individuals with drug and alcohol problems, those affected by someone else's substance problem, and children affected by parental substance misuse in community and residential settings. She has undertaken therapeutic and harm reduction work with women in the sex industry, and research for the Scottish Government into service access barriers for individuals from ethnic minority communities with substance problems. Claire joined Robert Gordon University in 2010 as a lecturer in Social Work and is currently undertaking a PhD investigating effective interventions for children affected by parental substance misuse in Scotland.

**Jeremy Millar** is a white middle class man whose experience of the punk era and fighting the destructive policies of the Thatcher years informed his practice across a range of residential care settings up until 2002 when he moved into teaching. The importance of being in relationship, empowering the voice of the 'other' and using the 'love' word are some of the key ingredients for positive group care. He has an Open University degree, a Diploma in Social Work and a MSc in Advanced Residential Child Care. Social work is a political activity!

**Steve Morrison** was born in Aberdeen. He studied English and Philosophy at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. After spending many years as a drone in the Civil Service Steve decided to change sides and become a Welfare Rights Officer for Aberdeen City Council. He has been a patients' Advocacy Worker at Royal Cornhill Hospital for Advocacy Service Aberdeen since 2008. Steve works mostly with people detained under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. Outside of work, Steve enjoys music, reading and running.

**Heather Munro** graduated from Glasgow University in 2006 with an LLB (Hons) in Law with German Language. She was awarded the Diploma in Legal Practice in 2007 and obtained an LLM from the University of Auckland in 2008. She completed her legal traineeship with a commercial firm in Edinburgh, and after qualifying she spent two years as a solicitor practising in public law before joining Robert Gordon University as a Lecturer in Law in 2013.

**Sharon Munro** qualified as a social worker in 1982 and joined the CELCIS team in Robert Gordon University in 2009. She has worked in both the statutory and voluntary sectors in a variety of roles spanning from basic grade practitioner to senior manager. The emphasis of her work has been either residential child care or working in services that support those who are at risk of or have a history of being accommodated and carry the ensuing vulnerabilities.

**Kirstin Parkes** qualified as a social worker in Scotland in 2000. Subsequent to qualification she worked in Criminal Justice Social Work fieldwork and management, and as a Multi-Agency Public Protection (MAPPA) Co-ordinator, as well as completing her social work practice-teaching qualification. Following this she held an Adult Protection Co-ordinator post. In 2010, Kirstin became a lecturer at Robert Gordon University, teaching a range of subjects including Criminal Justice Social Work and Social Policy.

Kirstin's research interests relate to risk, professional judgement and uncertainty, in particular exploring social work practitioner's constructions of risk and risk assessment in work with sex offenders.

**Tuck-Chee Phung** was born in Malaysia and has lived in Scotland for 35 years. He studied Fine Arts and History of Art in Malaysia, Scotland and the USA. Since qualifying as a social worker in 1989, Tuck-Chee has worked in the field of disability and been involved in training and staff development for the Grampian Social Work Department. Currently he tutors and lectures on the BA (Hons) Social Work course at Robert Gordon University. His areas of interest include cross-cultural social work, therapeutic practice and counselling. He returned recently to art after 27 years, using painting as a medium to explore personal narratives and cultural identities.

**William Rae** was born in Aberdeen in 1987. In his early years he lived with his mother, but as a result of family breakdown he was moved into care. William was a looked after child until the age of 16. As an adult William has lived in a variety of supported accommodation settings. At times William has experienced mental health problems and spent a period of time in psychiatric hospital. William is an active member of his community and has helped young people complete their Duke of Edinburgh award. At present he is vice-chair of a local Community Council.

**Mike Shepherd** is lecturer in Social Work at Robert Gordon University. Previous to joining RGU in 2007, Mike held various positions within the North East of Scotland Voluntary Sector before working in Criminal Justice Social Work at Aberdeen City Council. His main subject areas of interest include social work methods; social work in society; criminal justice social work; crime, criminology and the justice system; and law and policy.

**Anne Shirran** was formerly a lecturer in Social Work at Robert Gordon University until taking up her current post as a Practice Teacher in Children's Services with Aberdeen City Council. Since qualifying as a social worker, Anne has worked in criminal justice, both as a field officer and as a prison-based social worker, and latterly as team manager at HMP Peterhead. Anne was seconded as a Practice Learning Facilitator within Children's Services in Aberdeenshire between 2003 and 2005 as part of the Learning for Ethical and Effective Practice project commissioned by the Scottish Social Services Council.

**Sheila Slesser** qualified as a social worker in 1986 and began her career working within a social work court team. In 1987 Sheila moved to join a voluntary organisation in Aberdeen working with Deaf and Hearing Impaired People and remained there for over 16 years as a basic grade Social Worker, then as Senior Social Worker working within both a statutory and non-statutory framework. Sheila joined RGU in March 2004 and divides her role between course leading the Practice Learning Qualification (PLQ), lecturing and tutoring on the undergraduate BA (Hons) Social Work course.

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**Megan Todd** is a lecturer in social science at the University of Central Lancashire. Prior to this she lectured in sociology at Robert Gordon University, having completed an ESRC-funded PhD on community responses to lesbian domestic violence at Newcastle University. Research projects she has worked on include a British Academy project investigating educational capital and same-sex parenting and an ESRC-funded project researching into LGBT equality initiatives in local government. Research areas include sexuality, gender and violence. Megan has recently had chapters on intimacies and sexuality and health published in edited collections and has a textbook on sexualities forthcoming with Sage.

Initially working in residential care with young people and as a community worker in the North East of England, **Isobel Townsend** qualified in 1991. She worked as a probation officer for Teesside Probation Service in a variety of settings – community supervision, through-care, group work, prison-based probation and courts for nine years. Promoted to Senior Probation Officer, Isobel managed a busy Community Reintegration Team and subsequently jointly managed the Police and Probation Public Protection Team. From September 2006, Isobel worked as the Service Manager for Angus Council Criminal Justice Social Work Service. Isobel joined Robert Gordon University in 2009 as a lecturer in Social Work.

**Iain Turnbull** is lecturer in Social Work at the Robert Gordon University. He has worked in both statutory and voluntary sectors in a range of operational and strategic roles. These include lead officer for a drug and alcohol partnership, managing court services in criminal justice social work, working with people with acquired brain injury and supporting carers. His interests include social policy and interdisciplinary practice.

**Patrick Walker** is a senior lecturer and course leader at the School of Applied Social Studies and the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen. Before joining Robert Gordon University Patrick gained extensive main grade and managerial practice experience working both in children and families field work and also in young people's residential and secure services. Patrick's current teaching specialises in Child Care/Child Protection along with Social Policy. His research interests centre on interdisciplinary practice and education and he is a member of the Interprofessional Research Team at RGU and Aberdeen University.

# PREFACE

Social work is an interesting and varied profession with a rich and diverse history. The delivery of social work services in local, national and international contexts is dependent on a range of interconnecting factors that shape and define how social work activity takes place. At times social work focuses on supporting individuals and families; at other times it focuses on developing communities. Very often the focus is on the interaction between individuals and families and the communities they are part of. Social work is always about relationships but it is almost always about politics as well. Recognising that we are all affected by forces within and outside our immediate control is central to understanding what social work aims to do and what it is able to achieve.

To work effectively in the complex arena of social work activity, practitioners require significant skill, knowledge and expertise. Gaining, developing and honing relevant skills and understanding represents the core building blocks upon which social work education is founded. The overarching aim of this text, therefore, is to contribute to the process of assisting social work practitioners to develop.

Our objectives in writing this book were fourfold:

**To build knowledge** – Social work is underpinned by a broad knowledge base drawing on learning from a range of disciplines. In order to strengthen their effectiveness practitioners need to acquire a deeper understanding of service users' underlying issues and the context within which people live.

**To develop skills** – Many (arguably all) students embarking on social work education and training will identify a range of personal attributes that are beneficial when working with users of social work services. We are thinking here of attributes such as being a good listener, treating others with respect, patience and self-awareness. Where such attributes are recognisable then this is a strength; however, having certain attributes is not the same as developing skills to use those attributes successfully. Being a social worker is a skilled undertaking and understanding how to use and refine skills to their best effect is essential.

**To support the acquisition of tools for practice** – It would be erroneous to see social work activity as mechanistic or formulaic. Whilst in some disciplines it may be possible to apply a logic consisting of 'if X happens, do Y and you will get Z outcome' – such a logic does not particularly apply in social work. That is not to say social work is not evidence-based or that social work is not founded upon tried and tested approaches that offer ways of engaging with service users – it very clearly is!

Developing a range of tools to support ways of engaging and intervening with individuals, families and communities is important and, crucially, being able to use those tools flexibly is a necessary part of developing as a social work practitioner. Every developing (and indeed experienced) practitioner requires a 'tool kit' to draw upon providing options to consider when engaging in processes of 'helping'.

**To facilitate critical thinking around applying learning to practice** – Finally we wanted to provide some demonstration within the text of how knowledge, skills and approaches are applied in social work practice. Understanding the key issues in work with different groups of service users and how work might be approached should act as a critical sounding board for addressing practice issues. We do not seek to be prescriptive here but to be illustrative, with the purpose of encouraging critical engagement.

Joyce Lishman, Chris Yuill, Jillian Brannan and Alastair Gibson