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Editorial

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Editorial

This issue comes to publication in conjunction with the roll-out of the covid vaccine and the gradual re-opening of society. These developments bring hope and opportunity – not only for a return to how things were before but for how things might be better. Similarly, this issue spotlights challenges and dilemmas within contemporary social work and research practice, but equally these articles bring insights which offer the potential to shape improved practice through enhanced knowledge and useful reflection.

In the first article, Deborah James and Hellmuth Weich present a supervision model that they developed to support workers working in the aftermath of the Grenfell disaster, a fire in a tower block in London that was the worst peacetime fire in modern British history. Using Shotter's theory of dialogic action, they argue that changes in action arise from moments of dialogue between people that support the possibility of creating a meaningful framework to imagine a better way of life. This requires service cultures that are able to tolerate not knowing, can learn from failure, can provide space for the evolution of identity (self and other), generate change to the environment and explore the impact of those adaptations on evolution. Using auto-ethnographic inquiry, they present a narrative interview that they conducted and explore new realisations and shared meaning-making that arose through the interview.

Martin Smith, in the second paper, presents a poignant and moving reflection upon the nature of responsibility following the suicide of a service user. Such events can provoke conscious and unconscious processes for workers, including self-questioning and self-doubt that can be both rational and non-rational. He examines the arguments for and against him being responsible, drawing upon insights from a range of literary and cultural works, from Bob Dylan and T.S. Elliot to Shakespeare and Thomas Hardy. Smith draws upon psychoanalytic theory to explore the complex nature of suicide, including the possibility that acts of suicide and self-harm are acts of aggression. He helpfully shares advice that he once received from a supervisor that, as professionals, we can feel that we are more important in a situation than we probably are. He concludes that the issue is fraught, complex and multi-layered and we must tolerate the ambiguity and uncertainty that it entails.

The next article by Emma Maynard, Aaron Pycroft and Johanna Spiers presents findings from a phenomenological study of parents and practitioners of teenagers who misuse drugs. The study reveals tensions between risk-minimisation versus harm reduction paradigms and how these often reflect differences in approaches favoured by parents and practitioners. The article offers useful case examples to illustrate the effect of different approaches and the futility of conflicting approaches in efforts to help young people break free of addictive behaviours.

The fourth article examines the therapeutic benefits of nature-based activities. Drawing on an example of an 8-month long nature-based programme in a crisis shelter

in Denmark, Dorthe Varning Poulsen, Victoria Linn Lugum, Hanne Gro Djernis and Ulrika K. Stigsdotter discuss the efficacy of nature-based therapy (NBT) in connecting the individual with their natural environment in ways which can be therapeutically beneficial. This project identified benefits for service users and also for the staff involved in the project.

Drawing on a range of sources and utilising case examples, the next article by Ellen Katz, Siobhan McPartland and Jenna Rines sets out the distinctive characteristics as well as the interplay between skills and micro-skills in social work practice. As the authors explain, skills can be understood as the actions that are taken (what social workers do) and micro-skills refer to how those actions are undertaken. Each can contribute to understanding and reflecting on the other. Attention to micro-skills helps build an 'embodied knowing of practice', wherein the social worker becomes attuned to the physical as well as the cognitive elements of the practice experience, leading to enrichment of their awareness to self and service user processes.

In the penultimate paper, Phillip Archard examines the contribution of the psychoanalytically informed interview to social work research. Drawing upon his doctoral study, Archard examines the contribution of Hollway and Jefferson's free association narrative interview method to British psycho-social studies. Addressing the traditional criticism that psychoanalysis is apolitical and focusing on internal dynamics, Archard argues that psychosocial research can develop a more critical and reflexive engagement with psychoanalysis that moves beyond a reductionist psyche/social dualism to think about both together.

In the final paper, Beckler and Forbes explore the contribution of Bourdieu to psychoanalytic thinking. Drawing upon their doctoral studies that examined why workers enter into and remain within welfare professions, they use Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to consider the influence that upbringing, familial attitudes, social class and education has to bear on an individual's life choices. *Habitus*, Bourdieu believed, operates at an unconscious level without a deliberate attempt at coherence. They argue that Bourdieu's interest in how the inner world of the individual (*habitus)* interacts with their external worlds (field) and how this determines occupational survival demonstrate how he shares common ground with psychoanalytic theory.

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