Academic Paper

Making a Difference Again: How Using Coaching Enabled Children's Social Workers to Enhance their Practice & Fulfil their Vocational Aspirations

Suzanne Triggs ✉

Abstract

There is a dearth of empirical research and conceptual work on the application of coaching within social work. This research used focus groups and semi structured interviews to explore whether using coaching could equip social workers with greater confidence in their ability to make a positive difference to the lives of service users in a family support and child protection service. Using coaching to facilitate service users' own change agendas and self-determined goals transformed elements of social workers' everyday practice. The experience of co-creating transformational change through coaching positively re-connected social workers with their professional values and rejuvenated their vocational drive.

Keywords

coaching, social work, social workers, transformational, change,

Introduction

The role of the children's social worker as a helping professional is not an easy one, being:

> *"charged with entering the lives and moral worlds of families, many of whom have routinely experienced disrespect, and have longstanding histories of material and emotional deprivation"* (Featherstone, White & Morris, 2014, p. 1).

The work of children's social workers is wide-ranging, covering direct work with those who neglect their children, perpetrators of sexual, physical and emotional abuse and support to child and adult survivors of it. They may be based in a range of generic and specialist settings, from preventative family support services to specialist mental health, to teams that work with young people at risk of extra-familial harm such as child sexual exploitation, gang exposure and criminal exploitation. They

are also involved in services that support children and young people in residential care and foster care and the teams that work with the carers themselves. This complex and difficult work in which "each case presents a potential catastrophe" (Little, 2017, p. 117) is acknowledged to be emotionally demanding (Biggart, Ward, Cook & Schofield, 2017) and requires social workers to create relationships with those who may be reluctant to co-operate but are often mandated to do so.

Children' social work is typically delivered using methods of care, social support and advocacy, balanced – and oftentimes in conflict with – fundamental processes of control, coercion, instruction and judgment (Platt, 2008). The primary children's social work role is the assessment of children and families 'in need' and the investigation and protection of those deemed at risk of potential maltreatment or 'significant harm' (Department for Education, 2018). These dual functions of 'care' and 'control' serve as competing and enduring narratives within social work and increasing anxieties about institutional risk, audit (Harlow, 2013), targets and scrutiny (Bee, 2016) and have been implicated in the profession realigning itself towards practices that are risk averse and emphasise client control as opposed to client self-determination (Forrester et al., 2018; Hardy, 2015). Balancing such contradictory pressures can lead to social workers managing this tension by an exaggerated focus on bureaucratic guidelines, procedural knowledge and the upward delegation of responsibility, which limits and dilutes their responsiveness and the creativity of their interventions (Kirwan & Melaugh, 2015; Whittaker, 2011).

Despite the complexity of the role and this difficult backdrop many social workers do report their work as rewarding (Legood, McGrath, Searle & Lee, 2016) and they often have a deep connection to the job, which has been traditionally conceptualised as a role in which they could fulfil an altruistic drive to 'make a difference' to the lives of others. 'Making a difference' through being instrumental in transforming the lives of the vulnerable and socially disadvantaged repeatedly comes top of the reasons people draw upon when choosing social work as their 'other-directed' career (Children's Workforce Develpment Council (CWDC) & Jigsaw Research, 2008, Erikson & Price, 2017; Furness, 2007; Leigh, 2013; Radey & Figley, 2007; Stevens et al., 2012). It has been used repeatedly as a motivational message in national recruitment campaigns to attract people to the profession, (see the CWDC's 2009 'Be the Difference' campaign (COI, 2011). More recently, 'making a difference' is cited as a factor in 67% of social workers entering the profession (Johnson et al., 2019). 'Making a difference' therefore epitomises a potent and enduring cultural frame that has real meaning within contemporary social work and within the collective social work psyche.

The opportunities for social workers to 'make a difference' are frequently compromised by the dynamics between the demands of systems and the people whom the systems are supposed to support and help (Little, 2017). This, MacAlister argues, leaves the profession facing a stark choice: "do we want social workers as bureaucrats or as change agents?" (MacAlister, 2017, p. 161). The central focus of coaching is to help others to activate their intrinsic motivation and to discover choices and actions within their situation (Joseph & Bryant-Jefferies, 2008). The use of coaching therfore has the potential to support social workers to relinquish bureacratic and instructional practices which mitigate against them making a difference. This study seeks to contribute to the understanding of how coaching delivery is experienced by children's social workers and its effect on their capacity to feel like agents of change. It suggests synergies between the scholarship of both fields with the aim of enriching theorizing on the use of coaching within social work and situates coaching as a possible practice within it. It makes policy recommendations for the future education, training and continuing professional development of social workers and the potential role which coaching can play.

Literature Review: The Use of Coaching in Social Work

There are many parallels between coaching and the interventions social workers engage in with service users that indicate that coaching is a natural fit for social workers to use as an approach. Essentially, both use comparable supportive processes that cultivate self-understanding and awareness to effect behavioural and attitudinal change (Caspi, 2005). The potential benefits of using coaching within social work have only just begun to enter the margins of social work discourse and have mostly focused on coaching as a means to consolidate and promote knowledge and skills transfer from training into practice (Health and Social Care Board, 2014; Perrault & Coleman, 2004), or to improve the supervisory relationship in the profession (Harlow, 2013; Tsui, O'Donoghue, Boddy & Pak, 2017).

A handful of relevant studies do exist. In a study in the U.S., Burroughs and colleagues (2016) found that the social workers they surveyed considered themselves to be using coaching as part of other practice strategies, such as Motivational Interviewing and approximately half the social workers regarded themselves as already being coaches as a result. De Jong & Berg (2001) have also suggested that an approach that takes a 'not-knowing' stance and focuses on bringing clients' strengths and potential into their awareness can be used to co-construct co-operation with involuntary social work clients. Most relevant for this enquiry is a single, small-scale study in a UK state-run family support service (Moran & Brady, 2010) which found that using life coaching can have a positive impact on service users' self-efficacy. However, it concludes with caveats regarding the tensions between a service user's agency and their ability to make change happen in a context of structural disadvantage. This is an important point. Social work service users do not fit the mould of typical coaching clients and are more likely to be experiencing social disadvantage and deprivation. What service user coachees present as individual problems may in fact be social problems, produced as a consequence of their relationship with the adverse social structures in which they are immersed (D'Cruz, Gillingham & Melendez, 2007). Moreover, the resources and capacities of service users to realise change and construct meaning within oppressive surroundings that constrain choice may be limited:

> *"Under oppression the concept of choice may be prohibited by external coercion, or internally relinquished because of the internalisation of oppressive beliefs"* (Shoukry, 2016, p. 17)

The current study explores how social workers theorise their personal experiences of facilitating coaching with service users within their own situational context. It provides insight into an exceedingly under-researched area and addresses the potential of coaching relationships to enrich and shape the repertoire of social workers "wanting and needing to make a bigger difference" (Edleson, 2010, p. 38).

Methodology

Design & Data Collection

The research was constructed around a 'real world' flexible design which utilised two forms of data collection: focus groups followed by semi-structured interviews. This design accommodated the 'real world' compromises necessary when including social workers as participants due to their potential unreliability. The children's social workers involved in this study belonged to a service in which crisis intervention and unanticipated workload demands were commonplace and had to be prioritised over and above their commitment to any study. The focus group method thus offered "unique potential to combine structure and spontaneity" (Barbour, 2007, p. 40) in the research, taking in to account that individuals might drop in and out whilst ensuring that a cohesive, familiar

and regular group could still meet in their individual absences, without a major disturbance in group dynamics, which they could re-attend when their commitments allowed. Focus groups were also chosen as a method as they could provide a natural extension of a pre-existing group dynamic formed by the participants during 6 months of coaching qualification training which they had completed as a pre-condition to the study. Nine focus groups were conducted over a ten-month period whilst coaching with service users was taking place. One-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted when all the coaching sessions and focus groups were completed.

Social workers were matched to service user coachees via a simple infrastructure in which service users could volunteer for coaching directly through their existing social care professional. The service users who volunteered were thus not known to the coaching social workers and were not part of their existing caseload. In addition, the social workers were not allowed to know the chronology of any previous interventions. This had instinctively been viewed as a power advantage that could compromise the non-hierarchical nature of the coaching relationship and was a deliberate part of the design to help neutralise power differentials in the social worker/service user coaching relationship and to delineate it as different to the social work relationship.

Participants

This study involved two different sets of participants, which made up a purposive sample of a population of interest. The two sets of participants were:

- A pre-existing group of seven experienced children's social workers from different teams in a child protection and family support service in a local authority in the North of England. All the social workers taking part in this study had undertaken a one-off, certified foundation level training course in coaching, which had taken approximately six months to complete to enable them to deliver an agreed number of coaching sessions to a small selected sample of service users. Outside of the original study brief, the social workers who took part also used a coaching approach informally with service users on their caseloads, during new investigations and with colleagues.
- Individual service users (parents, carers and young people) accessing the broad range of services offered by a child protection and family support service in a local authority in the North of England who had volunteered to be coached by the social workers.

Analysis

Focus group and interview data from the social workers were combined into one data set and transcribed verbatim from audio recordings. The data was then rigorously analyzed using Thematic Analysis which incorporated a sequential six stage process to search for patterns of meaning within the data corpus (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic Analysis is viewed as having a particular value for applied research, as it enables the capture of what is important and compelling in the data and allows for data presentation that is accessible outside the narrow world of academia (Braun & Clarke, 2014). It was utilised as the present study is concerned with producing actionable outcomes and implications for the social work profession.

Findings

This section draws together three key themes relating to the differences in thinking and behaviour that occurred at the intersection of social work and coaching practice. The findings are data driven and are supported by interviewee accounts that expose how the social workers made meaning of their experiences of coaching. Pseudonyms have been given to each of the social work participants.

Theme 1. *I'm Not Here to Fix it*: Identification With & Disruption of Fixing

Social workers in the study collectively described their professional social work identities as 'fixers' - of situations, circumstances and people. This was referred to in the data as an innate and almost compulsive drive to help, which comprised of mending what was broken, restoring order and furnishing solutions:

> **Megan:** *as a social worker, we're driven to fix things, to put things right. For us to take over, take control and put back together I suppose like a jigsaw or a Rubik's Cube*.

This was a strongly held and ingrained feature of the mindset in which they engaged with service users as social workers. The social workers quickly identified that their fusion with a 'fixer' archetype needed to be suspended temporarily in order to coach. Instead of telling service users what the solutions were and then imposing them on their behalf, they needed to enable service users to find their own solutions. Accounts indicate that a heightened awareness of the urge to fix, epiphanies about its redundancy as a helping strategy, and the positive experience of its deliberate disruption during coaching resulted in the social workers breaking with fixing as their customary method of interaction with service users and colleagues.

Theme 2. *This is What We Came into Social Work to Do*: Fulfilling Vocational Aspirations

All the coaching relationships resulted in the social workers feeling like they had made some kind of difference to the people they were coaching. All animatedly described how using coaching had generated highly positive feelings of exhilaration, excitement and hope that enabled them to energetically reconnect with their original social work intent to help produce change in others:

> **Kathy:** *I came out, walking down the street and I felt really good. I felt, you know, like with a renewed, with a renewed energy kind of thing. I was like - I felt myself bouncing down the street cos actually, you know, something had worked, you know. I felt like I'd achieved something, something was going somewhere, you know - that there was - something happened.*

This extended to the belief that using coaching created opportunities for to them to reaffirm their original vocational values and aspirations as social workers:

> **Sophie:** *I think it's helped me, kind of go back to that a little bit almost, making a difference and, feel a bit more hopeful about maybe affecting some positive change sometimes . . . I almost feel a bit more hopeful about my own ability as a practitioner, to support families, to make positive changes that are lasting. It feels exciting, it feels like, doing something, a bit different. Um, it feels like, it's given me a way to align some of those ethics and values that I got in my social work degree.*

Paradoxically, *coaching* was described as the kind of practice the participants had come into social work to do. Danielle revealed that she didn't want the coaching sessions to end as they were such a source of fulfilment and professional satisfaction:

> **Danielle:** *I really enjoyed my coaching. I enjoyed the time that I went and did my coaching sessions, cos you came away feeling like this is what I always wanted to do as a social worker.*

The experience and feeling of making a difference to others was not one that happened frequently for the participants in their social work roles. For Ben, the feeling of making a difference when using coaching reminded him of when he had been a student thirteen years previously, which was the last time he could recall feeling so positive about the impact of his practice. Using a coaching

approach therefore produced a buoyant, rarely felt, sense of achievement, which re-ignited their motivation to have a transformational influence on others in their working lives.

Theme 3. Reshaping Child Protection Practice: The Coaching Contribution

Throughout the study all the social workers vocalised their enthusiasm for how coaching had enhanced their existing practice and recounted how they used their newly advanced communication skills to employ empathic listening and paraphrasing alongside the use of coaching language and questions. All were also able to describe the positive effect of using an intentional informal coaching approach spontaneously (outside of formal coaching sessions with service users) either to diffuse hostility in a difficult home visit or in a meeting. An example was cited of coaching being used to manoeuvre past defensive reactions and produce more collaborative responses with substance-using parents whose children were at risk of removal. It was also viewed as contributing to the accelerated progress of a very complex case and was valued as a technique to help colleagues open up and self-generate solutions. The strong view of the social workers, borne out in the data, was that coaching worked by helping people take incremental steps forwards in their lives which resulted in modest transformational change. It was repeatedly described as an approach that promoted confidence and positivity and that provided a means to move beyond stuck behaviours and unhelpful ways of thinking.

Paradoxically, despite agreement that coaching should be voluntary, young people and parents subject to court-ordered interventions were still considered in the mix of service users who could benefit from a coaching approach, as it was felt that the authenticity of interactions during coaching could lead to engagement that went beyond superficial requirements. Even if the outcome was fixed, using coaching techniques in mandated interventions and relationships was described with optimism due to the possibility that service users would feel that the process was fairer and more respectful, as social workers would be behaving as more empowering and anti-oppressive practitioners.

Reflecting on their lengthy social work training and the skills it had furnished them with, the social work participants found it lacking in practical demonstrations of theoretical concepts; such as how to empower someone or how to work with people in ways that increase their capacity to change without a 'fix' imperative. This is where they felt learning about coaching had something new to offer social work. Their deliberations concluded that the integration of coaching into social work education should go beyond qualification level and should be re-visited during career progression. The key motivation for training social workers in coaching was not only that they would have a more dynamic range of skills to draw upon, but that service users would have an increased sense of agency and control in the direction of change:

> **Megan:** *I think if we were to invest a little in training everybody I think cases would very, quickly start to come down, because we'd supported and coached people in making the right choices, as opposed to dictating what we think are the right choices for them. And that they would own the change of their life, as opposed to us dictating the change.*

Discussion

This section presents a critical discussion of the research findings within the context of existing coaching and social work literature.

Becoming a Social Work Coach: A Chance to Think & Behave Differently

The use of coaching, in this study, can be viewed as a pro-active attempt to respond to the challenge of integrating a new form of relationship-based practice into social work, whilst attempting to square it with the ideological contradictions of a safeguarding agenda. As a microcosm it illustrates the tensions facing social work nationally, as it jostles to stay true to its values in an organisational landscape threatened by the "anti-relational forces" (Cooper, 2010, p. 241) of performance management and inspection standards. Empirical research has demonstrated that it is not the practice tool, theoretical position or methodological doctrine that is important but the qualities and interpersonal skills that social workers possess and how they use them in relationships, that leads to improved outcomes in child protection (de Boer & Coady, 2007; Lee & Ayón, 2004; O'Leary, Tsui & Ruch, 2013). Shemmings (2017) believes that a renewed focus on enhancing capacities such as asking open questions, active listening and personal congruence are more likely to promote a beneficial working alliance. Improvement in these capacities can be distilled to what de Boer & Coady (2007) describe as a more humanistic style that "stretches professional ways of being" (p. 35) and a better use of *self* as relational resource when working face-to-face with service users (Ward, 2010). This study indicates that coaching practice cultivates the mindset and 'how to' skills posited by Shemmings as essential for richer human connections and more relational practice (Ruch et al., 2010; Wright, 2017).

The present study found that it is possible to transfer coaching skills - grounded in a philosophy that emphasises empowerment, assets and rights to self-determination - as a relational practice with parents and young people who are within the child protection system. Explicit skills such as empathic listening, playing back of accurate understanding and asking coaching questions such as 'what do you want?', were frequently used by the social workers during *informal* coaching to uncover service users' goals and attempts to align them with their statutory outcomes. During *formal* coaching these skills made up the constituent parts of a hopeful, agentic, helping relationship. As a result of coaching, the findings suggest, the social workers' practice became mediated through a different tone and was re-orientated towards a more relational interpersonal style that infused their professional roles. The findings are therefore consistent with the thoughts of Ruch (2005) about the potential of relational skills to help social workers overcome bureaucracy in their work. They also gesture towards the literature on practice with involuntary clients in children's safeguarding (Calder, 2008) and the work of Platt (2008) and Mason (2012), whose studies found that social workers' relational skills had a significantly positive effect in the context of formal child protection concerns.

Re-framing the 'Make a Difference' Mindset

Lakoff's Framing theory and work on metaphor (Lakoff, 2014) may provide a useful insight into 'making a difference' as a universal social work axiom. Lakoff is a cognitive linguist who describes frames as unconscious mental structures that influence how we perceive the world. They are ideas that shape how we act, the language that we use and our assumptions. As already outlined in the introduction, the enduring dominant frame in contemporary social work is the meta-construct of 'making a difference'. Usurping the dynamics of the motivational frame for social work and incorporating new terms to sit within the 'making a difference' frame is perhaps the starting point. As Lakoff counsels: "new language is required for new frames. Thinking differently requires speaking differently" (Lakoff, 2014, p. xiii). Coaching training and practice resulted in a dialogic change in the way social workers spoke to others, spoke about themselves and made sense of things in their personal lives. The story of their practice impact changed, and a wider conceptualisation of 'making a difference' was found in the modest transformations of service users.

This study theorises that inside the existing 'making a difference' social work frame there resides a rescuing 'hero' archetype, which is enacted through workers trying to 'fix' service users and situations and can result in very directive and task-focused practice. This is known as the 'righting reflex' in Motivational Interviewing:

> *"the desire to fix what seems wrong with people and to set them promptly on a better course, relying in particular on directing"* (Miller & Rollnick, 2012, p. 7)

The data supports the notion of such a reflex and indicates that the imperative of 'fixing' could run deep within the profession. Fixing is often communicated via social workers transmitting advice, telling and instructing. If fixing is viewed on a continuum of transmission-based behaviours, with rescuing at its extreme we can begin to see how this can become synonymous with 'making a difference' and can become absorbed within the social work identity. Coach Michael Bungay-Stanier summarises the rescuer's core belief as "don't worry, let me jump in and take it on and fix it" (2016, p. 138). The rescuing social worker, then, is the advice giver, the 'born fixer' of people who are 'broken', the one who takes over others' responsibilities and the one who is burdened and stuck if their fix doesn't work or their advice is rejected by the Victim. It is, arguably, a well-intentioned but unwittingly oppressive model for social work (Adams, 2003) that can be overwhelming for the fixer and prompts overdependence and emotional collusion (McMahon, 2010) with the helplessness of the person being 'fixed'. What is needed is a new frame for 'making a difference' within the social work profession, which does not rely on the transmission of fixing based behaviours for social workers' helping intent to be realised. Figure 1. presents an alternative, revised motivational frame, using some of the key elements of coaching, which social workers in this research used to help them feel like they had made a difference:

Figure 1. Hypothesised Motivational Frame for Social Work Using Coaching
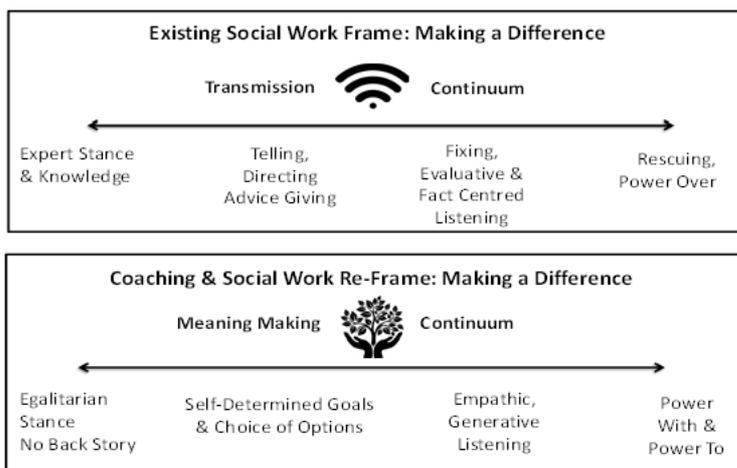
This model retains social workers' rhetorical attachment to the 'making a difference' frame, but the continuum is focused on social workers finding meaning in their work through co-constructing new meanings with service users. It is based on stimulating an 'I choose to' rather than an 'I have to' mindset (Hilton & Anderson, 2018) in service users to forestall psychological resistance and up-end transmission-based practices. This model also draws on the findings of Hussein et al (2014) who found that being able to put values (linking to making a difference) into practice was a key motivator affecting 280 newly qualified social workers' job satisfaction and intentions to stay or leave the profession.

The conclusions of Amabile and Kramer (2011,) whose research on people's inner work lives involved reading thousands of diary entries of knowledge workers is also relevant. They analysed workers' intrinsic motivation towards their work and discovered 'the progress principle', that making

even small progress in *meaningful* work is the single most important motivator. Amabile and Kramer's findings support the sense that social workers had in this study of making a positive difference when service users or colleagues had made only minor changes or had an 'aha' moment of insight. Thus, it is not the accomplishment of long-term, measurable social work outcomes or the rarity of major breakthroughs that make us feel confident that we have made a difference and that our work has meaning, but what Amabile and Kramer call 'the power of small wins', the softer outcomes (Adam & Green, 2016) that can "evoke outsize positive reactions." (Amabile & Kramer, 2011, p. 6).

Conclusions

This is the first study globally to explore the experiences of children's social workers engaging in coaching. The research has shown that using coaching provided a means for social workers to occupy an emotional space which is positive, hopeful and motivating to them. This revived social workers' confidence in their abilities and helped reboot their connection to the conceptual mainframe of the profession. Coaching approaches re-energised social workers' practice and enabled them to develop greater congruence between their values and their vocational drive to make a difference *and* making a difference through their practice. The research indicates that when social workers feel and practise *more like coaches* they can act as change agents and facilitate the positive difference they want to make in the world - even in adverse socio-economic environments.

The research infers significant applied implications for a social work practice that includes the development of coaching skills within the profession. It recommends that foundation coaching training should be integrated within social work education and continuing professional development programmes to help students and practitioners look beyond existing paradigms. This study addresses some of the identified shortcomings in the knowledge corpus and provides an exciting first step towards expanding the potential contribution of coaching into the social work profession.

References

Adams, R. (2003) *Social work and empowerment* (3rd edn.). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Adams, D. and Green, A.E. (2016) 'Soft spaces and soft outcomes: Experiences from city strategy on local partnership working and measures of success', *Environment and Planning A*, 48(8), pp.1514-1531. DOI: 10.1177/0308518X16642225.

ADCS (2017) *A country that works for all children*. Available at: https://adcs.org.uk/general-subject/article/a-country-that-works-for-all-children.

Amabile, T. and Kramer, S. (2011) *The progress principle. Using small wins to ignite joy, engagement and creativity at work*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press.

Barbour, R.S. (2007) *Doing focus groups*. London: Sage.

Bee, M. (2016) 'Targets, paperwork and scrutiny don't make us better social workers', *The Guardian*. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/social-life-blog/2016/apr/27/social-work-targets-scrutiny-paperwork.

Biggart, L., Ward, E., Cook, L. and Schofield, G. (2017) 'The team as a secure base: promoting resilience and competence in child and family social work', *Children and Youth Services Review*, 83, pp.119-130. DOI: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.10.031.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp.77-101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2014) 'What can "thematic analysis" offer health and wellbeing researchers?', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health Well-being*, 9(1). DOI: 10.3402/qhw.v9.26152.

Bungay Stanier, M. (2016) *The coaching habit*. Toronto: Box of Crayons Press.

Burroughs, M., Allen, K. and Huff, N. (2016) 'The use of coaching strategies within the field of social work', *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 10(1), pp.4-17. DOI: 10.1080/17521882.2016.1190981.

Calder, M.C. (2008) *The carrot or the stick? Towards effective practice with involuntary clients in safeguarding children work*. Lyme Regis, England: Russell House.

Caspi, J. (2005) 'Coaching and social work: challenges and concerns', *Social Work*, 50(4), pp.359-362. DOI: 10.1093/sw/50.4.359.

Children's Workforce Develpment Council & Jigsaw Research (2008) *CWDC social worker research*.

COI (2011) *Attract & support social workers. Insight development workshop*.

Cooper, A. (2010) 'What future? Organisational forms, realtionship-based social work practice and the changing world order', in Ruch, G., Turney, D. and Ward, A. (eds.) *Relationship-based social work: getting to the heart of practice* . London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp.229-243.

de Boer, C. and Coady, N. (2007) 'Good helping relationships in child welfare: Learning from stories of success', *Child & Family Social Work*, 12(1), pp.32-42. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2206.2006.00438.x.

D'Cruz, H., Gillingham, P. and Melendez, S. (2007) 'Reflexivity, its meanings and relevance for social work: A critical review of the literature', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 37(1), pp.73-90. DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcl001.

de Jong, P. and Berg, I.K. (2001) 'Co-constructing cooperation with mandated clients', *Social Work*, 46(4), pp.361-374. DOI: 10.1093/sw/46.4.361.

Department for Education (2018) *Working together to safeguard children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* . Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf.

Edleson, M. (2010) *Values-based coaching*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.

Erikson, M. and Price, J. (2017) 'Vocation and professional identity: social workers at home and abroad', in Webb, S.A. (eds.) *Professional identity and social work* . Abingdon, England: Routledge, pp.79-93.

Featherstone, B., White, S. and Morris, K. (2014) *Re-imagining child protection: towards humane social work with families (Vol. 47181).* . Bristol, England: Policy Press.

Forrester, D., Westlake, D., Killian, M. and et al, (2018) 'A randomized controlled trial of training in motivational interviewing for child protection', *Children and Youth Services Review*, 88, pp.180-190. DOI: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.02.014.

Furness, S. (2007) 'An enquiry into students' motivations to train as social workers in England', *Journal of Social Work*, 7(2), pp.239-253. DOI: 10.1177/1468017307080355.

Hardy, M. (2015) *Governing risk: Care and control in contemporary social work*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Harlow, E. (2013) 'Coaching, supervision and the social work zeitgeist', *Practice*, 25(1), pp.61-70. DOI: 10.1080/09503153.2013.775237.

Health and Social Care Board (2014) *Coaching and mentoring in social work – A review of the evidence*.

Hilton, K. and Anderson, A. (2018) *IHI Psychology of Change Framework to Advance and Sustain Improvement. White paper*. Boston, Massachusetts: Institute for Healthcare Improvement. Available at: http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/IHIWhitePapers/IHI-Psychology-of-Change-Framework.aspx.

Hussein, S., Moriarty, J., Stevens, M. and et al, (2014) 'Organisational factors, job satisfaction and intention to leave among newly qualified social workers in England', *Social Work Education*, 33(3), pp.381-396. DOI: 10.1080/02615479.2013.806467.

Johnson, C., Coborn, S., Sanders, A. and et al, (2019) *Longitudinal study of local authority child and family social workers (Wave 1)*. Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/824146/Longitudinal_study_of_local_authority_child_and_family_social_workers.pdf.

Joseph, S. and Bryant-Jefferies, R. (2008) 'Person-centred coaching pyschology', in Palmer, S. and Whybrow, A. (eds.) *Handbook of coaching Psychology*. East Sussex, England: Routledge.

Kirwan, G. and Melaugh, B. (2015) 'Taking care: Criticality and reflexivity in the context of social work registration', *British Journal Of Social Work*, 45(3), pp.1050-1059. DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcu151.

Lakoff, G. (2014) *The all new don't think of an elephant! Know your values and frame the debate*. Vermont, USA: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Lee, C.D. and Ayón, C. (2004) 'Is the client-worker relationship associated with better outcomes in mandated child abuse cases? ', *Research on Social Work Practice*, 14(5), pp.351-357. DOI: 10.1177/1049731504265833.

Legood, A., McGrath, M., Searle, R. and Lee, A. (2016) 'Exploring how social workers experience and cope with public perception of their profession', *British Journal Of Social Work*, 46(7), pp.1872-1889. DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcv139.

Leigh, J. (2013) 'The process of professionalisation: Exploring the identities of child protection social workers', *Journal of Social Work*, 14(6), pp.625-644. DOI: 10.1177/1468017313504380.

Little, M. (2017) 'People & systems: Reflections on the development of social work for children', *Journal of Children's Services*, 12(2-3), pp.113-121. DOI: 10.1108/JCS-09-2017-0037.

MacAlister, J. (2017) 'The end of false choices', *Journal of Children's Services*, 12(2-3), pp.158-163. DOI: 10.1108/JCS-07-2017-0032.

Mason, C. (2012) 'Social work the 'art of relationship': Parents' perspectives on an intensive family support project', *Child & Family Social Work*, 17(3), pp.368-377. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2206.2011.00791.x.

McMahon, L. (2010) 'Long-term complex relationships', in Ruch, G., Turney, D. and Ward, A. (eds.) *Realtionship-based social work*. Philadelphia, USA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Miller, W.R. and Rollnick, S. (2012) *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change* (3rd edn.). New York: Guilford Press.

Moran, M. and Brady, B. (2010) 'Improving self-efficacy? Reflections on the use of life coaching techniques among family support service users', *Practice*, 22(5), pp.269-280. DOI: 10.1080/09503153.2010.514045.

O'Leary, P., Tsui, M-S. and Ruch, G. (2013) 'The boundaries of the social work relationship revisited: Towards a connected, inclusive and dynamic conceptualisation', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 43(1), pp.135-153. DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcr181.

Perrault, E.L.J. and Coleman, H.D.J. (2004) 'Coaching within social work field education', *The Clinical Supervisor*, 23(2), pp.47-64. DOI: 10.1300/J001v23n02_04.

Platt, D. (2008) 'Care or control? The effects of investigations and intial assessments on the social worker-parent relationship', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 22(3), pp.301-315. DOI: 10.1080/02650530802396643.

Radley, M. and Figley, C.R. (2007) 'The social psychology of compassion', *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 35(3), pp.207-214. DOI: 10.1007/s10615-007-0087-3.

Ruch, G. (2005) 'Relationship-based practice and reflective practice: Holistic approaches to contemporary child care social work', *Child & Family Social Work*, 10(2), pp.111-123. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2206.2005.00359.x.

Ruch, G., Ward, A. and Turney, D. (2010) *Relationship-based social work: Getting to the heart of practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Shemmings, D. (2017) 'Future proofing child protection social work', *Journal of Children's Services*, 12(2-3). DOI: 10.1108/JCS-06-2017-0025.

Shoukry, H. (2016) 'Coaching for emancipation: A framework for coaching in oppressive environments', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 14(2), pp.15-30. Available at: https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/items/5d592ac5-2f54-4b23-bde2-8e279137f19f/1/.

Stevens, M., Moriarty, J., Manthorpe, J. and et al, (2012) 'Helping others or a rewarding career? Investigating student motivations to train as social workers in England', *Journal of Social Work*, 12(1), pp.16-36. DOI: 10.1177/1468017310380085.

Tsui, M., O'Donoghue, K., Boddy, J. and Park, C-m (2017) 'From supervision to organisational learning: a typology to integrate supervision, mentorship, consultation and coaching', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 47(8), pp.2406-2420. DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcx006.

Ward, A. (2010) 'The use of self in relationship-based practice', in Ruch, G., Turney, D. and Ward, A. (eds.) *Relationship-based social work*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Whittaker, A. (2011) 'Social defences and organisational culture in a local authority child protection setting: challenges for the Munro Review? ', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 25(4), pp.481-495. DOI: 10.1080/02650533.2011.626654.

Wright, C. (2017) 'Being more human - why children's social care should be more about people and less about paper-work', *Journal of Children's Services*, 12(2-3). DOI: 10.1108/JCS-03-2017-0010.

About the authors

Suzanne Triggs holds a PhD in coaching and social work. She is a coach, a registered social worker, a trainer and a visiting lecturer. Suzanne has spent nearly 30 years working in children's social care and has led many different projects in local authorities to improve social work practice.