

i Reflect

November 2020 • Edition 23

*Putting learning, development and good practice
into the heart of Camden Adult Social Care*



'Walking to a visit in Primrose Hill', photo by Martin Hampton

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Welcome to the latest edition of I Reflect. Settle back and enjoy the many reflective pieces that have been drawn together for this issue from a range of contributors: we have some regular and familiar writers as well as some newer voices. We also have our first audio article! We want to offer everyone the chance to contribute, so if you have a piece or an idea to share, please just email me at sally.nieman@camden.gov.uk. Please also get in touch with any feedback as your comments and views ensure that I Reflect continues to promote reflection, good practice and development in Camden Adult Social Care.

Sally Nieman, Professional Social Work Educator

Unity in Difference

by Shabnam Ahmed, narrated by different voices

I decided to trial something a little different for I Reflect and share an audio article for Black History Month. I want to thank all my narrators who have flavoured my article with their beautiful voices and accents, proving there is unity in difference. Our accents do not define us, then why are they often used against us, to judge us and to exclude us? We must disrupt this thinking and the action it leads to: in the words of Dr Prospera Tadam: “If we do not disrupt, we reproduce”. **Please listen here.**



Practice meets theory

by Marion Hicks, with Pamela Muyama and Tajul Islam

The social work degree apprenticeship scheme is funded through the apprenticeship levy, and 27 out of the 33 London boroughs, have been involved in developing a bespoke scheme with Kingston University. Staff from across Adult Social Care were invited to apply for the apprenticeship scheme. It was a perfect opportunity for practice to meet theory.

We went through a rigorous process of a written test and interview in Camden, before going forward to the next stage of the process, which was led by Kingston University, for another written assignment and academic interview. It was a challenging process and all of this was undertaken at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown when councils and staff were working hard to deliver services, and support their communities in challenging circumstances. A total of 60 social work apprentices started on the scheme on the 14th September, split into two study groups.

Pamela, Taj and I have worked in different teams across ASC: Pamela was in the direct payments team and has now moved to the Reviews team under Carol Hawthorne; Taj was working as an ASO in Locality West and I worked as an ASO in CLDS. We are all aware that this is a massive opportunity, and feel



lucky as we know we have many colleagues who applied who would have made excellent social work apprentices. It is great to be at the start of something that has the potential to change how Camden develops its future social workers.

What makes the social work apprenticeship unique is it is the first time that London boroughs have worked together to devise a scheme to develop staff to become social workers. The Social Work Degree Apprenticeship is a practice-based learning programme that combines on-the-job and off-the-job learning and development. It is an 80% / 20% split with one day a week of formal studying and four days of on the job learning and training. The scheme provides benefits for both employers and employees. For employers, it provides the opportunity to invest in, develop and retain current staff, especially staff who are experienced but where there are limited progression opportunities for staff who are not qualified or do not want to become managers. For employees, it is an opportunity to learn new skills and knowledge, to develop our practice and to put our learning to work straight away. In addition, we gain a social work qualification without the financial burden.

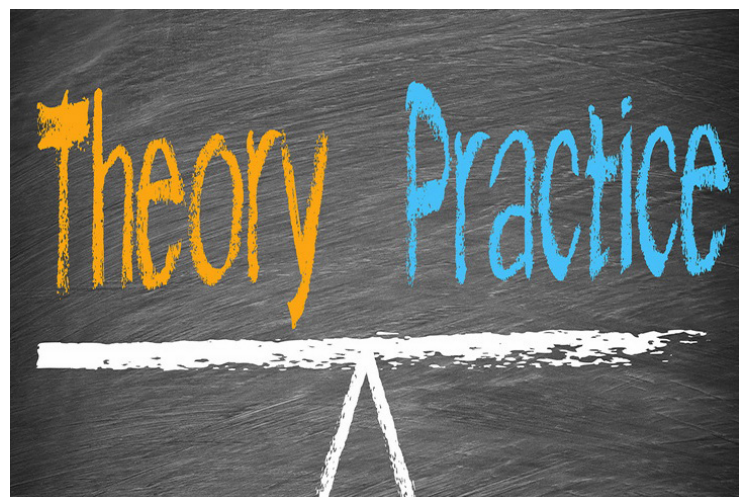
We all have our own personal journeys and reasons as to why we want to become social workers. In common with all of our colleagues across the council, regardless of role and team, is the desire to improve individuals' and families' quality of life, build on what individuals can do, and support individuals through strength-based practice.

Returning to study has been challenging for us all, finding time to study, juggling the demands of time due to family and work commitments. The greatest challenge has been due to Covid-19 restrictions. For the first two weeks, we had a block of classroom-based learning, but there is a mixed approach of online and classroom-based learning, which has been invaluable as several colleagues are shielding and would not be able to attend the campus. We are moving to fully online learning due to increased Covid 19 restrictions. Having spent two intensive weeks at Kingston University and got to know colleagues from other boroughs, it was clear that everyone felt nervous regarding the course. What has made it easier is that the three of us are in the same group and this has helped us settle in and share our experiences.

From talking with our fellow apprentices, what has been interesting is the commonality and differences between each council, how councils deliver their services, their challenges, and how equivalent teams and services are organised in different councils. We have been impressed by the depth and breadth of our fellow apprentices' skills, knowledge, and experience across adults and children's services. Most of the apprentices have decades of direct work as support workers, in team support roles, and managerial roles, as well as lived experience. The commitment and passion is evident in our group discussions and our class work.

As the scheme is new, there is a lot to get to grips with as it is not delivered in the traditional social work degree way. For the tutors, our managers and mentors, there is a lot to think about as to how to deliver the learning, apply it to work and adapt custom and practice to the new way of working.

What we have learned so far: there is a theory for everything, Kingston takes forever to get to regardless of where you live in London, and there will always be IT problems.
The journey continues....



Care and maintenance is your most productive work

by Tom Spencer



When I was starting out in local government, I used to get frustrated with the people saying, “we did that 10 years ago.” Now I think I am one of those people, and I’m ok with it.

This change has not happened overnight, but I became very aware of the shift when I read *How to do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy* by Jenny Odell and I noticed my own reaction to her description of our culture’s relationship to productivity:

“We inhabit a culture that privileges novelty and growth over the cyclical and the regenerative. Our very idea of productivity is premised on the idea of producing something new, whereas we do not tend to see maintenance and care as productive in the same way.”

I recognise this attraction for the new and different in myself, as well as in the organisations I have worked for over the last 15 years. There seems to be a common belief that to be successful we must innovate and change things. I am beginning to question how true this is, and whether we need to spend more time caring for and nurturing what we already have.

Our connection to place during lockdown has highlighted the value of maintenance in our lives, and the amazing and important work local councils do. We have noticed the value of someone cutting the grass in the park, collecting our bins or making sure a bar or restaurant is safe for us to visit. But these are stories we often do not hear about and these are not the jobs that lead to ‘success’.

Many of us may not be in a traditional maintainer role (I work in Learning and Development), but we can play a role as a maintainer and carer in our organisations. This requires going beyond seeing maintenance as just being about traditional ‘upkeep’ work and increasing the value of care and maintenance in all that we do.

Maintain what you already have (if you can!)

Austerity was brutal for local government and made the work of maintenance and care increasingly challenging, not just for our infrastructure but also for how we maintain people’s independence or support families to maintain healthy relationships. These challenges persist and we have to ensure that our attention is not only on what is seen to be ‘broken’ but also what is currently working and needs to be nourished and supported.

A recent report from the children’s commissioner recommended that the government “develop ‘a national infrastructure’ of children and family hubs that provide a gateway to wraparound support services.” This sounds a lot like the Children’s Centres that were closed up and down the country over the last 10 years. We cannot now say “let’s invest in Children’s Centres” because they are no longer seen as innovative.

The teams and services we do not hear from are often the maintainers, running great services quietly in the background. Waste and recycling collectors, environmental health officers, private sector housing inspectors, plumbers, electricians - there are so many. Can these areas of work be improved? Probably. Do we need to better understand what is working well and care for it? Definitely.

Maintain and care for the innovative ideas

In the same way that we neglect our infrastructure, we too often do not care for and maintain our innovative ideas. We know success is not a linear process but we are too quick to abandon ideas as soon as we are presented with a shiny new concept that has not yet disappointed us and promises to get us to the destination faster.

Turning ideas into meaningful change is mostly about hard work. When I joined HENRY in 2012 I was fortunate enough to work with the Public Health team at Leeds City Council which commissioned and ran the HENRY programme—supporting families to get the best start in life. Two key members of the team have cared for and nurtured the HENRY programme for over 10 years. It was in 2019 that the accolades for 10 years of hard work started to arrive and commissioners from around the country came looking for the answers to how Leeds had managed to start reducing childhood obesity. The ‘innovation’ in this instance was to stick with an idea, confident (or at least hopeful!) that with enough care and the right conditions it would flourish.

Celebrate your own maintenance work

Like everyone, I spend a huge chunk of my time doing maintenance and care work. Having 1-to-1s with my team, monitoring the budget, reading internal communications, responding to emails, making sure everyone has done their mandatory compliance training. These are all vital parts of my job but I often feel like I am missing out if I just do ‘maintenance’. It can feel like I am not proving my value or showing my true worth.

On reflection, the work we have done as team to support and maintain the wellbeing of each other is some of the most important work we could have done. We have done innovative work, especially thinking about how we support learning in a virtual environment, but it has been looking after each other that has felt the most vital.

We all do a lot of maintenance work. Do not begrudge it, celebrate it. Make sure you are bringing it up at your 1-to-1s (both as manager or as team member) and shine a light on the work of the maintainers in your team meetings and other forums. We are all the maintainers!



This is an edited version of a blog that first appeared in <https://medium.com/>.

Starting the conversation..

Over the next few weeks, Sally Nieman and Reetha Hussain are running short workshops to encourage staff to discuss and share their thoughts on the use of language in adult social care, both in conversations and when recording, and what its impact might be. We want to start the conversation about this complex area and consider some of the challenges. Feedback in the workshops should influence practice development and any additional learning resources or training we might need. Some of the questions we might want to consider in the sessions are:

- In what ways might language be a barrier to strengths based practice?
- Does changing words change practice?
- What is the effect of some of the words we use?
- Do we need to use different language for our recording and why?

The sessions are fairly small (up to 12), so come prepared to participate, think and share your views. You can book a place on the L+D Hub.



Schwartz rounds: a space to be human

by Sally Nieman

I recently took part in my first Schwartz round: 'Coping with Covid? Tales from the Frontline'. I had seen this online event promoted by Camden CEPN Training Hub (which provides multidisciplinary training, education and workforce development across health and social care). I signed up to experience a model of group reflective practice, which I had heard about mainly taking place in health settings, particularly hospice care.

In 1994, Kenneth Schwartz, an American healthcare lawyer, was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. During his treatment, he was struck by the human and humane responses he received from the health staff who looked after him. In the Boston Globe¹, he wrote about "the moments of exquisite compassion" from health staff, which he said "made the unbearable bearable". Before his death, he left a legacy to establish the Schwartz Center, whose aim was to help foster compassion in healthcare.

This was explained at the start of the session by Rini Patel, an Islington GP and the North Central London Lead. She carefully set the scene, explaining that Schwartz rounds are a safe reflective space for workers to process and sit with the emotional aspects of their work and talk about the human experience of what they do with others. She advised us all to take off the hat that asks 'how might this have been done differently' and rather to simply listen to someone else's story with kindness and curiosity.

The round has a clear format and these boundaries help to create a feeling of security and structure. For this hour-long session, three 'panellists' were invited in turn to share their story (for about 5 minutes) on the theme of 'coping with Covid'. The facilitator (in this case, Marina, a Clinical Psychologist and



experienced Schwartz facilitator) then invites the group to share their thoughts and reflections, encouraging the discussion to remain reflective and non-action focused. The panel are invited to add anything at the end of the discussion. The importance of confidentiality is stressed and we are reminded again to "listen and connect with a generous heart".

The three panellists – a GP practice manager, an assistant psychologist and a care home manager - shared their stories with the group. Two of them had been ill with Covid themselves at the start of the pandemic and they talked with honesty about the impact of their personal experiences on their professional selves. One panellist shared her experience of working on a closed ward with older people and the emotional impact of providing compassionate care to people disconnected from their families. So many common themes ran through these powerful stories: anxiety, fear, uncertainty and loss. It was a space to be honest, vulnerable and at times angry. And yet what also shone through was the importance of relationships, trust and compassion. The stories demonstrated the dedication of staff to support others, and acknowledged that staff need support themselves.



Through the discussion and validation by the group, a strong message came through that it is ok to find things difficult and that we can only do our best. As one participant said, 'we can be strong and struggle at the same time'. So much of what was shared mirrored the tenets of strengths-based practice, highlighting the importance of connections and how to maintain them.

Usually Schwartz rounds are held in person, often with tea and cake, and this was the first online Schwartz round, run on MS Teams. Whilst I am as keen as the next person to return to face to face contact, I do question whether I would have had the courage to join if I had needed to be in the same room as all of these people. In retrospect, I was really struck by what a safe and supportive space the facilitator created for the group of over 50 people. Much of this was created at the start with the thoughtful and warm introduction and 'settling in'. Despite such a large number of people listening in, the session felt inclusive and intimate. Some people spoke, choosing to put their cameras on, while others put supportive comments in the chat box, and were invited to expand on them if they felt comfortable to do so. Being able to listen to the stories and sit with the emotion in the safety of an online space certainly worked well for me.

Initially I had been interested in taking part in what I thought would be a novel experience. Yet I remembered that, earlier in the summer, I took part in a filmed group supervision² with some Camden colleagues for Research in Practice. We used a debrief tool, which is drawn from the idea of

Schwartz rounds. In a group of 5, we each talked for a few minutes about the impact of COVID-19 on our wellbeing, and then listened reflectively to each other and discussed what we had heard. I found sharing my experience and listening to others without the need to problem solve a really restorative experience. At the Schwartz round, I did not take part in sharing my story, but I valued the space in a busy day to stop and be human. It was a powerful and emotional experience which helped me to feel connected to others and appreciate the uniqueness of everyone's journey through the collective experience of Covid.



There is another Schwartz round planned for 3 December 2020, themed around Black Lives Matter. You can register using this link: <https://nclintegratedschwartzrounddec20.eventbrite.co.uk/> or email training@communitymatters.co.uk

¹ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/magazine/1995/07/16/patient-story/q8ihHg8LfynPA25Tg5JRN/story.html>

² <https://adultsdp.researchinpractice.org.uk/virtual-supervision-practicalities/>

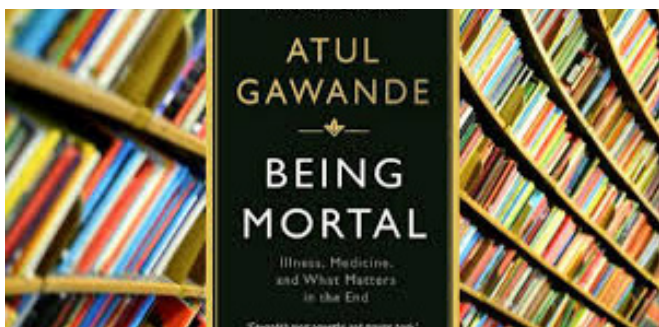
Being Mortal: what matters in the end..

by Meg Lyons

What makes a good life? This is question we often ask in Camden, in terms of supporting our residents and understanding what matters to them. I read a brilliant book, Being Mortal, and I wanted to share it because it has some wonderful lessons around ageing - an aspect of living that we'll all have to confront at some point, whether as carers for others or for ourselves. It also raises some wonderful examples of innovation and people who are driven by making the later stages of life as full and happy for people as they can be.

A few of the key lessons I'm taking away from the book include:

The importance of understanding what matters to people as they get older, and continuing to allow them as much opportunity to do the things that they like and enjoy (as opposed to just assuming they need to be kept safe, which is often a concern when the body and/or mind become less capable);



Recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach leads to frustration and resentment on the part of the older person; often institutions that are meant to support people end up stripping them of their independence, autonomy, and choice;

How we need to continually challenge our assumptions and not be bound by constraints that go against allowing someone to live a full life right until the end;

The importance of purpose for wellness: there are some great examples of introducing pets and plants to assisted living facilities (the book is set in America), which gave the residents something to care for – a purpose – and positively enhanced their lives.

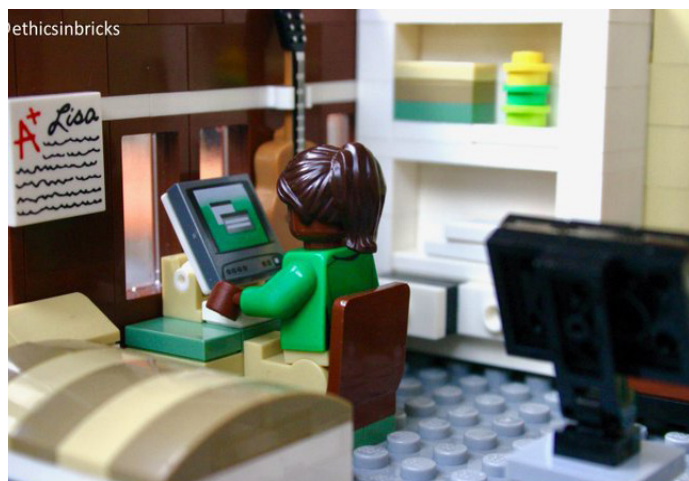
The book comes with a “have a tissue ready” warning; I was often moved to tears by the stories of loss, fading capability, frustration and frailty. But I have been incredibly encouraged and energised by some of the approaches and outcomes, and I’ve given more thought to what might be on the horizon as I consider the future years for my parents, neighbours, community and for myself.

I completely understand that a topic like ageing can and will be very personal – and that are not any “right” answers to complex societal and individual issues such as this one – but there are some useful lessons we can all take from this book whether for here in our work at Camden, or in our lives outside.

Life of an OT in Lockdown by Paul Faddy

I’m an occupational therapist based in Carol Hawthorne’s reviews team; together with David Odgers, I work with clients who either do need or may need two carers, and I also work with people in care homes. As we have gone into Lockdown 2.0, here are some reflections from first time round.

No doubt I was not alone in feeling all sense of time and perspective in tatters. Being unable to conduct home visits, I didn’t feel productive, until I read an Ethics in Bricks Tweet which put things in perspective, “You are not working from home; you are at your home, during a crisis, trying to work.”



A lot of OT work is direct client contact, involving observation, measurements and/or literally hands on transfers. Like everyone else, we’ve had to improvise through the use of technology (video, photos, various apps) and obtaining feedback from carers, family members or other professionals. Medequip continued to deliver throughout the lockdown, but all adaptations have been suspended. This is suboptimal, yet given humans are the vector for COVID-19, the council policy of no home visits except in exceptional circumstances is the right one.

I’ve only done a few congressionally-approved home visits to clients. I don’t miss the old rush hour commutes: strangers well within amygdala triggering personal space, confounding odours, inexplicable damp patches, or the elbow fight across the armrest. In comparison, catching the Tube during lockdown has been a delight, even accounting for wearing a mask and the risk of catching COVID-19, there are often less than five people per carriage.

A few months ago, I raided the OT cupboard in 5PS to get my PPE game tight. Maintaining dignity in a blue apron is not easy. Working with a mask also took some getting used to. It made me feel even

more socially awkward than usual. I imagined a mask might be a barrier to effective communication, yet a lot of our non verbal communication is done with the eyes, the proverbial “window to the soul.” The mask did come in handy on a visit when at one point the client, apropos of nothing, was outrageously rude to an OT colleague. The scene was so absurd I couldn’t help but smile, which the mask helpfully hid. Without a mask I would have had the professionalism (honestly) to suppress it, but it would have taken serious effort.

On one visit, my bladder was close to capacity. I didn’t dare ask the client if I could use her toilet. Not only was I unsure of the etiquette to do so in the midst of a pandemic, the client has severe OCD. Walking back to the tube station, I was tempted to find a large tree in Belsize Wood. I grew up in a small Australian village, bordered by a subtropical rainforest. I have zero qualms about going in the bush, but I had the (rare) good sense to worry about explaining a public urination charge on my DBS. Instead, I made a detour towards the Royal Free hospital, even though I was unsure how strict they are at the moment with the public entering the building. Luckily, on the way, detrusor muscle straining, I spotted the Cressy Road council offices and was relieved, both figuratively and literally, my ID allowed access. My tip for other front line operators: if you’re out and about and need the toilet, keep in mind the other council buildings around the borough.

Possessed of near mythical level of laziness, I found the Government advice to Stay at Home easy to follow. Stay(ing) Alert has proved far more demanding. My chronotype is an owl, so I appreciate not waking to the cardiovascular assault of an alarm, then rushing to work and needing a double espresso to ward off the inevitable afternoon wave of tiredness. During the first week, I developed back pain and RSI-type pain in my wrist from working on the sofa. I eventually set up a desk and have been pain free ever since.

I’ve missed jokes with compadres in the office and drinks on the canal, but I don’t miss the commute (see above) or paying TFL fares. I’ve finally begun to save, like adults are supposed to. I’ve enjoyed the change of pace from the usual Sisyphean grind and I’m grateful to still be in paid employment.

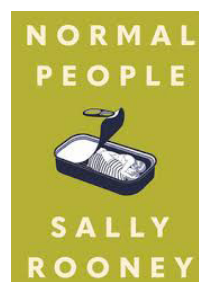
From a physical wellbeing point of view, I try to stick to a simple formula: sleep more, hydrate more, eat less, move more. Easier said than done.

During the lockdown I finally started yoga, which aids both physical and mental health. I follow Shona Vertue’s videos, to



improve flexibility and mobility. Like most of us, I’ve been spending more time seated, which can result in tight hip flexors, tight hamstrings and rounded shoulders. Yoga is superb for preventing those issues.

I’ve greedily devoured culture during lockdown, not just for the escapism but through mortal fear of boredom or maybe fear of being alone with my thoughts. So at risk of revealing certain weaknesses of taste on my own part, this is some of the culture I consumed during lockdown: I’ve finished *Humankind* by Rutger Bregman, *Full Dissidence* by Howard Bryant, *Red Birds* by Mohammed Hanif, *Origins* by Lewis Dartnell, *Brit(ish)* by Afua Hirsch, *Normal People* by Sally Rooney, *Doctor Aphra* comics and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou. I’ve just started Hilary Mantel’s *The Mirror & the Light*; I’m looking forward to seeing Mark Rylance reprise his role as Thomas Cromwell in the BBC adaptation.



Podcast wise, I’ve been listening to Chris Hayes’ *Why is This Happening?* and Dan Snow’s *History Hit*. There are so many great podcasts at the moment, but not enough time for them all, not even during Life in Lockdown. I sometimes tuned into the 5pm Government briefings, mostly because I was in awe of the shameless and unapologetically incompetent performances by a procession of ministers. It’d be darkly amusing if only it wasn’t so serious.

I don’t know if it’s because of the pandemic but sometimes I find myself fantasising about escaping this beautiful planet, our Pale Blue Dot as Carl Sagan calls it. I’m optimistic though, just as with other epidemics, in humanity being able to learn lessons about priorities, cooperate on a global scale, challenge the status quo and usher in ambitious change.

Finishing the ASYE in Covid times

by Yanille Zapata



When I started as a newly qualified social worker on my ASYE programme in September 2019, I never imagined I was going to be facing so many changes in such a short period of time. It all started with Covid-19...

The Covid-19 pandemic has produced unprecedented challenges to social services and society as a whole. We are experiencing things we have never experienced before, and this is bringing to us all, all kind of emotions and uncertainty. Since Covid-19 emerged in the UK earlier this year, I have found myself working in unfamiliar situations, in different ways, and in stressful and challenging circumstances. In other words, the usual way that we used to do things has been disrupted and this has caused a major impact on our lives.

In my case, an important aspect in managing the situation with Covid-19 was/is acknowledging that it will take time for things to go back to normal. As such it is easier for me to adapt when the government puts in place new law enforcement to control the pandemic from spreading or when having to work remotely in a completely different way.

I still miss the face-to-face contact with people and I find doing assessments over the phone more challenging than before, as I have to evaluate things in a different way. A way I was not familiar with. While restrictions are in place affecting my ability to have conversations in the same way as the pre-pandemic period, I have tried to work flexibly and creatively by taking advantage of technology, like video calls and MS Teams. The issue I encounter sometimes is that some of the older people I work with are not always comfortable with using this technology, and, as I have to base the outcome of my intervention on information gathered over the phone, this can be quite challenging. This is not the same as seeing the person and their surroundings, which offers so much information

about the person, so I need to ensure I get collateral information from other sources too.

Despite the above, I have continued to demonstrate a holistic person-centred approach, being mindful of the restrictions in place, and continued to work collaboratively with people, families and colleagues during this difficult time. I have been on a few home visits and made sure to use PPE equipment to protect those involved and myself. I have adapted to the changing work situation and I have tried to ensure that my wellbeing and emotions are maintained by trying to rest, eat healthily, and also seeking support from colleagues, my line manager and family and friends. I think that even before the pandemic there was a huge amount of pressure on staff and resources, so to look after and protect oneself emotionally, it is important to reflect on how I am feeling and coping.

And yes, of course, there are definite perks to working from home: the comfy loungewear, the endless snacks and the lie-ins, but the lack of office equipment can cause problems, mainly for posture. Deprived of proper office chairs and a desk fixed at the right height, many of us are suffering with back, neck and shoulder stiffness, which could cause serious problems in future.

Reflecting on all that is happening at the moment with Covid-19, I ask myself, for how long will I be able to keep up with so many changes and challenges and the pressure from working from home as a social worker under such circumstances. This brings me to think that when things are so pressured, it is valuable to be able to look at what we have done, how we have done it and acknowledge under what circumstances we have done it. Then we can feel proud of what we have done.

I would have never been able to finish my ASYE throughout this roller coaster without the support of wonderful people like my supervisor, line manager, team manager, ASYE Coordinator and team colleagues - to all of you, a big thank you.

22 months in the life of Deborah Gordon

by Deborah Gordon

In December 2018 I started at Camden as a maternity cover as Organisational Development & Learning & Development Lead Officer for Supporting People covering Adult & Children's Social Care, and Housing Support Services.

I must admit the recruitment and onboarding to Camden was very smooth and professional and I felt welcomed before starting with the email from the then Chief Executive and Corporate Induction on my first 2 days with working I.T. kit in hand.

On arrival to the Learning & Development Team I found out that my manager was going off on paternity leave and therefore I had to hit the ground running. This was good as I think I developed relationships with the team and managers much quicker and just got on with the job in hand.

Adult Social Care received a lot of my attention with something called 3 Conversations. Workstreams galore, lots of plans, lots of meetings and discussions. As an activist, sometimes I felt that I just wanted to get on with the work, but the impact of those workstreams has really helped to shape what we now call 'What Matters'.

One of the things I liked was not having to write lengthy word document reports and using powerpoint was a welcomed change. One of the main reports I wrote was a proposal for the Transformation Board in June 2019 which was successful in accessing funding for the What Matters Learning & Development project.

Strength based practice has come to life in so many ways. Some would argue that it has always been there. I think as a service it has led to an understanding of everyone having a common understanding of expectations and practice. One of the challenging areas will be the discussions around language which are soon to be had as everyone would have had very diverse experiences around language.

In February I was blessed to have my contract extended for 12 months to focus on What Matters

Learning & Development & the What Matters Coaching programme. In March, I had tried really hard before going on leave to make sure all the What Matters Coaching cohorts were all full only to receive emails when I was on the beach in The Gambia saying cancelled, cancelled, cancelled. What was I going to do now?

Unbeknownst to me, there was a lot of activity ahead to support the service in remote working from health and wellbeing, moving the learning & development offer to online bite-sized sessions and reviewing support around induction and the supervision policy, the list went on.

My only disappointment has been not been able to support the What Matters Coaching trainers to complete their trainers sessions with face to face delivery. At this point we do not know when face to face training will resume and will need to be creative in the meantime.



My experience of working at Camden is that valuing the workforce has been key. Everyone has a voice and I would encourage you all to use yours, especially if you have been hiding, as your idea may have a positive impact that you may not have imagined.

George Floyd's murder has had a worldwide impact. As someone who has led on equalities in another life, for me it is the practical actions that will make a difference. Adult Social Care is in the process of developing a Zero Tolerance of Racist Abuse against Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic support staff Memorandum of Understanding. I have been involved in this work and hope it will provide a framework for those who require it whether as a recipient of abuse, a manager who needs to respond or a bystander who witnesses abuse.

Reflecting on some of the work that I have done with different groups across the service are too many to mention. I would like to thank those of you that have responded when I have needed information, input, collaborative working and signed up to our valuable learning & development offer. Don't forget 'if you don't use it you will lose it'.

I guess one of the highlights that I will be taking away with me is the What Matters 1st anniversary event where everything just seemed to come together. Here there was much to celebrate, where participants sampled the wealth of knowledge, skills, and opportunities that colleagues had contributed to What Matters was magnified.

I have been really impressed with the resilience and adaptability of staff. Adult Social Care is a challenging area to work in with constant pressure from within the organisation as well as external drivers e.g. government, legislation. I guess for me that is one of the reasons I love working in the areas as things are never mundane and supporting people develop is one of my passions.

My contract ends on 31 January 2021 so I am currently looking for new opportunities.

I have been fortunate to work with wonderful, passionate and caring people during my time. Please keep up your enthusiasm and I wish Adult Social Care every success for the future as strengths-based practice becomes even more embedded as positive outcomes are delivered to residents of Camden.

Once upon a time in 5 Pancras Square... by Shabnam Ahmed

On 14 February 2020, love lit up the 11th floor in 5PS. The glitter was not the only thing that sparkled that day. There were over a 100 people that came together from all walks of life to engage in conversations about love, compassion, kindness and connection at the London Borough of Camden headquarters. The usual suspects who wave the flag of love and hope orchestrated the event (including me) and facilitated a space where everyone connected and contributed in their own unique way.



I know that another such event seems almost impossible for a long time, but I was reminded of this beautiful day by Tim Fisher, when he sent me the photograph (left) recently. Seven months later and he found a sparkle from that day at 5PS. This reminded me of a Khalil Gibran quote ***“Yesterday is but today’s memory, and tomorrow is today’s dream”***.

The last six months have unveiled insights that have resurfaced injustices and inequalities that have been in danger of complacency and acceptance for some time now. This is something we would explore at an event like this through open, honest, transparent conversation circles.

One of the beautiful rules for the event - we don't have many rules - is that we park our titles and simply come together as human beings, all different yes, but all equal. We may not all agree with everything that is said and shared but we trust that in order to truly connect inclusivity, professional love and professional kindness must prevail. We cannot expect to only connect with people who are only like us, we must widen our circle, and we must listen to those who are standing behind us. We must listen to those who appear to be at the receiving end of our services, our interaction. If we don't do this then we are merely pretending to connect.

When I think back to that day, I feel free, brave and accepted. These are emotions I have the right to feel every day, right? Emotions are energy in motion and there was something about the energy created in that room on that day which can only be felt not explained. When you take pause to have conversations about love and kindness, then you experience an energy so strong that it paves way for new emotions – confidence, strength and, most of all, hope. Several interpretations of love were shared throughout the day and I think we really expanded on the definition as well as added to the list of the different types of love originally shared by the Greeks. Someone even respectfully challenged the “love is to act” banner by saying sometimes love is *not* to act. We become so preoccupied with the state of ‘doing’ in life that we forget that an inaction is also an action. A conscious decision to remain silent or take pause is a form of communicating.

Another vivid memory from the day were the lyrics from people with lived experience of the care system, which echoed through poetry, spoken word and song. We discovered, from those often at the receiving end of a decision we make somewhere in an ivory tower, the impact of our decision on their life; we also heard that, what matters most, when we stand alongside those that are at a vulnerable stage in their life, is compassion. Their narrative hit the core and challenged us to really consider a rethink and reshape of the very systems we represent.

We were fortunate to have an unusual guest like Maff Potts from the #Camerados movement who spoke about kindness and how it improves our personal wellbeing. He shared his thoughts and the six principles of his movement on promoting friendships and connection. He shared acts of kindness should include asking someone to help you as this increases their sense of value.

Love simply showed up in abundance that day. Through tears and laughter and acts of sharing and caring. I also have to confess I was solely responsible for the love on the floor (all the confetti and glitter) but I do believe that everyone that came that day took some of that love home with them and certainly left their footprint with us in Camden.

