

Concerns of social care workers arising from COVID-19 pandemic

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New research from Keele University has highlighted the key challenges that workers in the social care sector faced during the first wave of COVID-19.

Social Care workers shared concerns that early responses to the pandemic, driven by short-term solutions, did not meet the needs of service users, and also expressed concern about the long-term impact of such changes.

The research led by Dr. Tom Kingstone, with Professors Lisa Dikomitis and Christian Mallen, from Keele University's School of Medicine, found stories of resilience and rapid adaptation among social care workers. However, there was a deep concern about how new ways of working would impact on service users, particularly the most vulnerable, and what the social work profession would look like post-pandemic.

The researchers interviewed social care workers from across the West Midlands region and discussed how they had adapted to the rapidly changing situation with the pandemic, and their views on new measures such as more use of technology and video consultations with service users.

Social care workers shared concerns about how to provide effective care while maintaining social distancing. They were also concerned about balancing their home and work lives, particularly how to maintain professional boundaries and practices when having to resort to video calling. Social care workers confronted new risks to manage and new kit (Personal Protective Equipment—PPE) to get used to. They also spoke of either making compromises or putting themselves at greater risk to maintain business as usual, and the authors have said future research is needed to keep track of these changes in the long term, post-pandemic.

Dr. Kingstone said: "It has been fascinating to hear from the social care workers who took part in this research. Their views and experiences have helped us gain a better understanding of the challenges they faced during the first wave of COVID. We hope this research helps to raise the voice of social care on this topic."

Professor Dikomitis added: "This social work research is part of our larger COVID-19 studies at Keele's School of Medicine. Our study results confirm that it is absolutely necessary to conduct qualitative and [social science research](#) that provides us with insights (stories of lived experience) on what the 'new normal' means for different groups in our society. An interview study is an ideal way to do this as it gives us context and explains the 'numbers' we are confronted with on daily basis."

The findings have been published in the *British Journal of Social Work*.

More information: Tom Kingstone et al, Exploring the Impact of the First Wave of COVID-19 on Social Work Practice: A Qualitative Study in England, UK, *The British Journal of Social Work* (2021). [DOI: 10.1093/bjsw/bcab166](#)

Provided by Keele University

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