

# Artificial intelligence in social work practice education. The potential use of Generative AI for learning

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**Short biography:** Clare Stone is a registered social worker and Professor in Social Work Education. Her doctoral thesis and published work, considers aspects of competence for social work practice.

## Abstract

This article is an account of a social work academic's first engagement with generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). The aim is to introduce this emerging and fast-growing technology to the social work community in order to promote a dialogue about its potential use for learning in social work practice learning placements. Examples are included to stimulate ideas and motivate educators to use generative AI for teaching and learning. The case is made that students and educators need to understand how to use AI responsibly and skilfully to be agile and equipped for the workplace of the future. Although AI can be useful, it has limitations and cannot replace human interaction which is a fundamental aspect of social work education in the workplace.

## Key words

Generative artificial intelligence; Social work; Practice education; Practice learning placement

## Introduction.

This article commences with a very simplified overview of AI before focusing attention onto generative AI which has the capability to create unique text. Within this fast-paced technological era, the landscape is rapidly changing, and social work education (like other disciplines) needs to prepare and future proof the workforce. Although there is hysteria that people can self-learn and there will be no need for teachers in the future; the case is made that AI cannot replicate the relational nature of learning which is an essential pedagogical approach within social work. Educators of social work students are encouraged to use AI within their practice to equip graduates to be competent and safe users. Examples are provided of how educators may use generative AI with social work students in the workplace, with the expectation that others will build upon these initial thoughts and this article kickstarts a discussion about and experimentation with AI. Although this article focuses on the education of social workers, the ideas and principles can easily be used by those from other disciplines.

## Artificial Intelligence.

In 2023 Artificial Intelligence (AI) became a much-discussed topic with warnings that AI could soon be more intelligent than humans, proclamations about the extinction of humanity, risks of election manipulation and a call for AI research to be halted (McCallum & Clarke, 2023). The film industry cited the use of AI as one of the reasons why Hollywood actors and screenwriters took strike action in July 2023 (Cabral, 2023). Manipulation of images circulated on social media and one such example is the picture of the Pope in a white puffy jacket (Vincent, 2023). Another example of the malicious use of AI is the video, also circulated on social media, mimicking the voice and face of Martin Lewis (the founder of the Money Saving Expert website). The deep fake video was described as ‘terrifyingly

convincing' and was concerning to Martin and his team because it was 'an attempt by criminals to steal ... money' (Shaw & Lekarski, 2023:no page).

The above are all illustrations of the potential negative or deceptive use of AI, which servers to remind us that anyone, including those in receipt of social work services or social workers themselves, could become a victim. Indeed, as will be explored below, there is concern that AI could even replace educators. However, AI is now so embedded within society we use and rely on it potentially without even considering it to be AI. Virtual personal assistants such as Alexa, Cortana and Siri; satellite navigation; spell checker; calculators; translation software; biometrics at airports; parking sensors on cars; models to forecast the weather or predict climate change; personalised recommendations based on a recent purchase or television/films viewed; chatbot applications on websites and even predictive text on a mobile phone are all examples of AI. These forms of AI typically draw upon existing data and although the output may appear personalised (such as satellite navigation rerouting your journey due to changes in traffic obstructions, chatbot answers to the questions you ask online to your energy supplier and recommended reading following your purchases online), they are algorithmically worked out through identifying patterns and grouping data. These types of AI 'can only perform a single task based on a programmed response, such as examining inputs, providing information, and predicting subsequent moves' (Kumar, 2021:3). Although defined as 'narrow intelligence' (Kumar, 2021:3) AI can be impressive and permeates many aspects of our daily life and work practice. It has also been effectively used for learning. One such example is the work of Niamh Armstrong who developed a chatbot to provide humanities students with a 24/7 space to ask digital questions. The chatbot provided bitesize learning with links to additional instructions and videos. She curated the digital support to align with degree topics and the assignment requirements, thereby scaffolding learning throughout the course (Armstrong, 2022).

Unlike the narrow intelligence examples above which draw on existing data, the new emerging subset of AI has the ability to generate data itself. Generative AI chatbots such as ‘ChatGPT, Bing and the latest, Co-Pilot integrated within the Microsoft’ Office suite (Chan, 2023:1) have the capability to create unique and ‘original content which feels like it has been created by a human’ (McCallum & Clarke, 2023: no page). The user can ask these chatbots to produce new text which it does in a matter of seconds making it a ‘fundamentally different user experience’ (Giannini, 2023:3). It is possible to generate many things including (but not limited to) new song lyrics, poetry, answers to exam questions, essays and knitting patterns. This is because this type of AI is a large language model (LLM) which is trained by drawing upon vast volumes of existing text and other data. LLMs consider individual words, sentences and ‘compare the use of words and phrases in a passage to other examples across all of its training data’ (Sargeant, 2023:no page). This enables the LLM to read a question and generate an original answer making it appear as though it has human like intelligence. LLMs such as ChatGPT can do this because through engagement with extensive amounts of online text it is ‘able to learn how to combine words in a meaningful way by itself’ (Sargeant, 2023:no page). The more data it draws upon, the more it learns independently without human guidance. This capability is referred to as a deep learning model or unsupervised learning (Sargeant, 2023). The unsupervised self-learning element, fuels concerns about the increasing capability of these Chatbots.

The generative AI chatbots are free to use and setting up access takes seconds. The user simply types an instruction into the command box, which can be vague or very specific, and the Chatbot generates unique text almost instantaneously. For example, the instruction ‘50 words opening address to a conference for young people, in the style of Donald Trump’ produced:

"Ladies and gentlemen, and all you amazing young people out there! Welcome to the most incredible conference ever, filled with energy and winning spirit. Together, we'll make this event tremendous, like nothing you've seen before! So let's rock this stage and create a future that's absolutely MAGA! Thank you all!" (OpenAI, 2023)

The chatbot remembers what it has created and can be instructed to redraft or generate new text with the same instruction. It can write an entire essay, then be instructed to generate text to look like a draft version and an essay plan making it look like the student has gone through the usual stages that are required to produce an essay.

Generative AI became a significant topic of interest in early 2023 in many sectors, and education was no different. There was growing concern that students would be using this software to create assignments and to cheat in exams. Research in the United States suggested that one in three university students had used a form of AI to complete course work (Intelligent.com., 2023). Attempts to catch students cheating became an increased activity within academic communities with some higher education institutions banning the use of generative AI (Chan, 2023).

The annual educational conference at the institution where I work hosted a workshop entitled ChatGPT: Knit me a duck! presented by Pam Pickles and Rachael Sterrett (Pickles & Sterrett, 2023). Each year they use a duck as a mascot for the Faculty of Science & Technology Careers Fair, and attendees are often given a plastic duck as a giveaway or competition prize. Ducks are the university's unofficial mascot due to the number that live on campus. During the past year, students rightly pointed out the environmental concerns with the ongoing practice of commissioning plastic ducks. This led to the idea that a possible student competition for the Science & Technology Fair 2023-24, would be for students to design a duck from sustainable materials. Rachael decided to try instructing the artificial intelligent generative technology ChatGPT, to produce a unique knitting pattern for a duck, as a possible way to create a new mascot.

The pattern was followed by Pam but the result was more akin to a banana with wings. The activity was repeated and in total ChatGPT was asked to produce 5 patterns with slightly different prompts given each time, for example a duck with three colours, and a duck knitted using more advanced techniques (knitting in the round and knitting with dpns). Each knitting pattern was followed by either Rachael or Pam, who are both proficient knitters.

Each duck was unveiled in turn and each reveal was met with laughter from the workshop participants (see image 1 Five knitted ducks). Most were recognisable as being duck like, but the hard-hitting message of the session was that if someone is not familiar with a duck, then each one could potentially be seen/considered as being a duck. However, those who know what a duck is would instantly recognise that each knitted duck was somewhat flawed. I was therefore excited to engage with AI software, to see what it would generate in terms of social work content.

Image 1 Five knitted ducks



I approached this activity in the hope that I could produce something as impactful as the malformed ducks. My objective was to generate text that would deter social work students from using such technology to cheat in their assessments. I visualised standing in a classroom pompously demonstrating the social work equivalent of Pickles and Sterrett's knitted ducks. My intention was to explain that they may generate text that they think is acceptable but unless they have done the guided work and learnt well, they will not know how inaccurate the generated text may be. They may, therefore, be under the illusion that they have an amazing duck when in fact they have generated a deformed duck without being aware. The message for students that I replayed in my head after the workshop, was about not using generative technology and instead to read the texts we recommend, work hard and generate all of the text yourself. I tasked myself with making time to put in some social work questions to ChatGPT so I could prepare for this future session with students.

However, before I had time to do this, I attended the plenary session of that same educational conference and The Student's Union shared their AI insights, and it turned the discourse around for me. The students clearly articulated the need for academics to embrace AI and teach students how to engage with it ethically and skilfully to ensure they are equipped for the workplace. They likened it to banning the calculator or word processor. It was the counter position, presented by the students, which led to me pausing, rethinking, reading around the subject and beginning conversations with other educators (social work and other disciplines).

Having worked in social work education in the United Kingdom (UK) for 23 years, it is my experience that cheating is not a big problem and social work students are continually reminded about ethical practice and professional integrity during their professional education. Exploring the expansion of information and communication technology and online education, Goldingay and Boddy (2017) reflect upon future proofing professional social work association guidelines and ethical codes. Although specific guidance can be useful (for example The British Association of Social Workers' social media policy) it is not feasible to produce guidance for every current or future method of communication, technology or learning. Therefore, it is my assertion that the profession ought to draw upon existing codes of ethics to frame conversations and judge conduct 'irrespective of the place or medium' (Goldingay & Boddy, 2017:217). In Britain the existing code of ethics already covers professional integrity requiring social workers to act in a reliable, honest and trustworthy manner (BASW, 2021). Social Work England's Professional Standards, also cover the unlawful or unethical use of technology (SWE, 2019). In addition to country specific codes, The International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers have agreed global standards for practice and education. The use of technology is covered in section eight of their global ethical principles and section nine



addresses professional integrity (IASSW, 2018). Therefore, globally there is ethical framing upon which social work can draw in relation to using and misusing technology. However, to ensure that individuals do not fall foul of the expected standards, it is essential that they engage with AI in the correct manner and are upskilled and prepared to enter technological advancing workplaces.

The key message here for social work education is not necessarily related to designing out the potential to cheat using generative technology, but one of acceptance of the need to do things differently. In an environment of significant advances in technological capability we cannot turn back the tide so we must embrace it and work with it. We need to carefully consider ‘the skills, outlooks and competencies’ that our education systems need to ‘cultivate’ (Giannini, 2023:4). We are educating at a time of technological revolution, so let us take this opportunity to revolutionise our teaching and learning to ensure future workplace readiness. We need graduates to have information literacy through understanding how to engage with a range of texts and sources of text. There is an opening here to commence from a place of trust in our learners and use AI to benefit learning and assessment rather than a place of mistrust, focusing resources on catching those who cheat.

**AI will not replace the social work educator.**

There is concern that AI may take over the role of a teacher because they are cheap (do not require salaries), do not get tired and are instantly accessible to the learner. However, ‘human teachers possess unique qualities, such as critical thinking, creativity, and emotions, which make them irreplaceable’ (Chan & Tsi, 2023:no page). Indeed, in social work education the human interaction is a key pedagogical aspect of the learning journey and essential within practice learning placements. There is a range of terms used for these placements and field education is commonly used outside the UK including for example in

Australia and the USA. For the purpose of clarity, the terms practice education or practice learning placement are used in this article to refer to the time that social work students spend in social work settings as part of their course. A Practice Educator is the social worker who oversees the placement and, outside the UK, Field Educator is the title often used for this person.

There has been much written about whether or not practice education is the signature pedagogy of social work education (CSWE, 2008, Earls Larrison & Korr, 2013, Wallengren-Lynch et al., 2022). This is because it is the time working alongside social workers and the users of social work services that is essential learning to prepare individuals for their future profession (Shulman, 2005, Crookes et al. 2020).

Placements enable student to practice skills, consolidate values and draw creatively upon their developing knowledge base whilst receiving individualised guidance from a Practice Educator. Chan & Tsi (2023) identify eight categories and 26 aspects that highlight the unique skills, qualities and experiences of human teachers that AI cannot yet replicate. Many of them relate directly to the pedagogy of practice learning in social works such as role modelling, human connection, cultural sensitivity, developing resilience, encouraging curiosity and critical thinking, and moral and ethical guidance.

The Practice Educator has a privileged position because they have time to get to know the learner and the opportunity to build an educational relationship. The Practice Educator observes skills and performance. They see the use of verbal and non-verbal skills specifically crafted by the student to be relevant to the situation and environment of the encounter with the users of social work services. They then provide tailored feedforward to enable the social work student to further refine skilful practice. This is the human advantage which AI cannot replicate.

Although the case has been made that workplace learning is essential for the education and training of social workers and the Practice Educator cannot be replaced by AI, AI may be a useful tool to enhance learning within the placement. Educators need to develop AI literacy and embed AI within pedagogy to equip students for ‘an increasingly AI driven workplace’ (Chan, 2023:21). We cannot reverse the development nor influence of AI, so let’s think about how we can use it to our advantage as teachers and to prepare students for a workplace that will increasingly use AI. What follows are some initial thoughts about how Practice Educators may use generative AI during practice learning placements with students. The activities suggested here are, as yet untested and Practice Educators are encouraged to give them a try by amending the activity to meet the needs of the learner and context of their placement. The aim of sharing these here is to stimulate ideas, encourage Practice Educators to use generative AI and above all to build upon these preliminary outlines.

### Generative AI to stimulate ideas.

Writer’s block is a phrase used when the writer does not know where to start or know what to write next. It is common to turn to journals, books, videos or talk to others to stimulate ideas, and AI can be another source of inspiration to help unblock the writer’s block. The Practice Educator could work with the student to identify a question, statement or set of instructions to input into the generative AI chatbot to create some potential useful text.

For example ‘why do older people hoard’ was put into ChatGPT and it immediately produced the following statement: ‘Hoarding behavior can be observed in people of all age groups, but it is often associated with older adults. There are several reasons why older people may be more prone to hoarding...’. ChatGPT listed these 7 reasons and each included a short explanatory statement: life experience; loss and grief; fear of wasting; perceived value [of their items]; decline of cognitive function; loneliness and social isolation; and the seventh

reason was anxiety and depression. A concluding statement drew attention to the associated problems with hoarding behaviour and the need to seek help (OpenAI, 2023).

Typically, artificially generated text by ChatGPT initially looks very good and passable, however, there are likely to be subtle errors, partial truths and often essential content missing. The educator and student can look through the generated text together and discuss the merits of it. They can consider how it may help inform their understanding of the case; what does it help explain in relation to the older adult they are working with, what does it not explain, are there areas/concerns that are not addressed within this text, what further questions do they have, how might this inform and guide their intervention, and so on.

It is to be noted that when ‘why do older people hoard’ was entered into ChatGPT for a second time, the seven reasons were broadly similar but phrased a little different. The ‘perceived value’ was presented as ‘economic factors’, ‘loss and grief’ became the ‘fear of loss’ and the word grief was not included. This example shows how each response is uniquely generated although substantially similar in nature. Running the query more than once may offer broader ideas to draw upon, unlock wider discussion and prompt more critical thinking.

There is also an opportunity to reflect upon the language used within the generated text and whether or not the phraseology and terms used are acceptable. Generative AI uses American spelling rather than English; note the difference above in ‘behavior’ (Americanised) and ‘behaviour’ (which is used in the UK).

Practice Educators can support students to seek ideas from generative AI and then together, critique and discuss from a range of perspectives. As noted above, a learning activity can explore what is missing or inaccurate within the text and should be approached in the same manner as platforms such as Wikipedia where the information presented cannot be relied upon. Wikipedia has become a place to get quick insight into a topic, but it is widely

accepted that it is not reliable and may include incorrect information. Although we may use these tools to stimulate ideas, learners and their educators must reflect upon the authenticity, credibility and reliability of the presented information.

AI to generate case studies, scenarios and vignettes.

Generative AI can create scenarios, case studies and vignettes which could be used in supervision, group teaching or peer group learning on placement.

The case study of Emma aged 14, was generated via the request to ‘write a 100-word case study about a child exploited through county lines’. The generated text outlined that Emma:

‘fell victim to the sinister clutches of county lines. Coerced into drug trafficking, she endured harrowing circumstances while under the control of a ruthless gang. Disconnected from her family and education, Emma's life spiraled into darkness until a multi-agency operation intervened. Social services, law enforcement, and charitable organizations collaborated tirelessly to rescue her’ [sic] (OpenAI, 2023).

Students could be asked to generate a case relevant to the context of the placement and rewrite it in a particular manner. For example, they can be asked to add a localised perspective, outline how the multi-agency work can be co-ordinated, identify the key stakeholders and what working together policies and practices could be drawn upon.

The case study of Mr. James, a 75-year-old vulnerable adult living alone with early-stage dementia was generated via the request to ‘create a 100-word case study based on safeguarding a vulnerable adult’. The case had family concerns and used phrases such as ‘empower his independence’, ‘cognitive stimulation activities’ and ‘reducing isolation’

(OpenAI, 2023). As outlined above with the county lines case study, students can be asked to expand on the generated text. They can identify the laws and principles that underpin the strategy to engage with the individual and how they may work collaboratively to protect and empower Mr James.

### Generative AI to plan an assessment.

The above examples are useful ways to develop knowledge and help plan strategies to inform interventions. Generative AI may also be valuable to help fine tune social work assessments. The key to doing a good assessment is to ask pertinent, sensitive and open-ended questions, and students may require assistance to formulate them.

ChatGPT was asked ‘what questions do I ask to find out if someone is anxious’ and it generated 10 questions of varying quality. The Practice Educator can support the student to critically engage with a similar list of questions to identify which could be used with a particular individual and which should not be used. Of course they can also role play to practice asking questions.

The student can be asked to explain why a question should not be used and encouraged to rephrase clumsy or inappropriate questions. For example the 10th question generated was ‘Have you ever sought professional help or talked to someone about your anxiety?’ (OpenAI, 2023). The Practice Educator can ask the student what they think about the question, and this can help the educator assess the students understanding and learning needs.

AI to generate a quiz and self-efficacy questionnaire.

Practice Educators continually assess students both formatively and summatively (Stone, 2018 and Stone, 2019). Quizzes are useful tools to assess a student's knowledge with a view to structuring future learning opportunities and identify their individual support needs. The Practice Educator can ask generative AI to produce a quiz relevant to that particular placement setting or context of the work.

These are two of the questions generated by ChatGPT following the request to 'produce 10 degree-level questions based on the Mental Capacity Act':

- Can you explain the key principles of the Mental Capacity Act and how they guide decision-making for individuals lacking capacity?
  - In what situations might a person be deemed to lack capacity, and what steps should be taken to assess their capacity under the Mental Capacity Act?
- (OpenAI, 2023).

The questions of course can be given like an exam to the student, but more engaging style quiz formats are encouraged in order that the student demonstrates their knowledge in a more relaxed and supportive manner.

ChatGPT was not very successful in creating a crossword based on the principles of the Care Act 2014. The questions were difficult to answer because they were incoherent or too vague, and it was unable to produce a useable answer grid/crossword template. It generated a reasonably formatted wordsearch based on the Children Act, however of the 12 words to search, a number were rather unusual i.e. 'mancip', 'them' and 'under' (OpenAI, 2023). Wordsearches are not being advocated here as an educational tool, but it is interesting to explore the capabilities of generative AI.

ChatGPT generated a reasonable 'self-efficacy questionnaire based on working with substance misuse' and gave instructions for participants to 'rate their confidence on a scale from 1 (not at all confident) to 5 (extremely confident)' (OpenAI, 2023). It produced 19

satisfactory questions and thanked the participant for completing the questionnaire. The questions rated confidence in recognising substance misuse and distinguishing it from 'other mental health issues', assessment, intervention and treatment, management of crises and relapses, and collaboration and referral. This type of questionnaire can be produced by a Practice Educator and given to a student in the early stages of the placement and repeated during the learning period (potentially more than once). Self-efficacy questionnaires are a powerful learning tool because the student can recognise their own growing competence and confidence; which can be transformational within their learning journey (Stone & Harbin 2016, Parker, 2007).

AI to generate templates.

With a simple instruction, generative AI can produce templates which may be useful to help structure emails, letters, notes or even outline methods to guide interventions with the users of social work services. The simple instruction to 'design a template for doing life story work' created a rather useful basic overview that could be used with either children or adults. It commenced with a few lines explaining that it is a reflective process to gather and record experiences, memories or significant events and included prompts to provide a brief outline of the purpose or goal of undertaking life story work (OpenAI, 2023). The ChatGPT template had twelve different sections to capture demographic detail, memories, education, life stages, challenges and coping mechanisms, achievements and proud moments, relationships, hopes and reflections. The structure has great potential use for students who may wish to use the principles of life story work. The Practice Educator can work with the student to refine the template, build on it, and ensure that it is appropriate to the specific situation of the person in receipt of social work service. They can then discuss how the



student might use the template with the individual to ensure that sensitive and safe practice occurs.

The instruction ‘a template to invite a professional to a meeting’ was a successful instruction within ChatGPT. The generated template did indeed explain it was a meeting invitation but also included prompts to incorporate the purpose of the meeting and the agenda. The language was professional, warm in nature rather than officious, and included appropriate salutations (OpenAI, 2023). This type of guidance can be of value to social work students particularly those who are less experienced with formal communication.

**Caution. safe use of generative AI in social work education is essential.**

From undertaking limited research to construct this article, it has become evident to me that there are many advantages in embracing this emerging technology. The above outlines some initial thoughts about how generative AI may be a useful tool within social work education. Practice Educators and social work students can generate products to stimulate ideas, evaluate and critically engage with the content. Students and Practice Educators are encouraged to experiment and consider how generative AI may be useful for teaching and learning within social work practice learning placements.

It is my experience that first time users of AI are initially impressed with the quality of the output; however, we must treat it with caution and be aware of some potential dangers. Usual academic conventions must be followed to avoid concerns of plagiarism (passing others work off as their own). Generative AI text is not quality checked and therefore not necessarily reliable. As will be explored below: using AI packages may risk breaches of confidentiality and the potential loss of our intellectual rights.

## How to reference AI.

Good academic practice of acknowledging the source must also apply when using AI. Students are acquainted with attributing the ideas and words of others through in-text citations and including bibliographic details at the end of the text or in footnotes and this must also apply when drawing upon the work of generative AI chatbots. The formatting of citation and referencing of text generated by large language models is perhaps less familiar than using author names and titles of books or articles.

Conventions will emerge in how to reference outputs from algorithms rather than human authors but, in the absence of university guidance, this formula (edited from Caulfield (2023) and McAdoo (2023)) can be used to assist students and Practice Educators:

- OpenAI is the author of the work/text,
- The date is the year of the version used to generate the text (the ChatGPT site will have a date at the bottom of the page),
- The title is the tool or model used, such as ChatGPT,
- LLMs typically use dates to identify the version of the model. Include the version used and enclose it in brackets,
- Indicate it is a LLM and provide the URL (think of this as the publisher and place published).

This is an example of how it will look in the bibliography using the APA referencing format:

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Feb 13 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com>

Intext citations will follow the usual convention of author and date, for example; (OpenAI, 2023) as has been used throughout the inclusions within this article.

However, because each generated text is unique and cannot be replicated even if the same terms/prompts are given, it is not possible for a second person to check the generated text being cited. It is common for academic staff to follow up the references that students

have included within their submitted work particularly when there is a concern relating to misrepresentation or when there are allegations of academic malpractice (plagiarism). It is therefore worth noting the sage advice from McAdoo (2003) to keep a copy of the generated text and where relevant include it within an appendix.

**Do not rely on the generated text to be accurate or appropriate.**

LLMs draw upon an ever-increasing amount of existing data. They pull ‘information’ from a range of sources and piece extracts together, to create an original new text. It does this without acknowledging the original human creators whose work has been chopped up, merged and repackaged. It presents an output within seconds and no quality control mechanisms are currently in place. As illustrated above, my colleagues experienced the challenges and limitations of the ChatGPT output when they generated knitting patterns for ducks: which were not reliable. McCallum and Clarke (2023) advise that not only can AI generate incorrect answers, but we must also be alert to bias, sexism and racism. Generative technology has the power to ‘project certain worldviews and ways of knowing and background others’ (Giannini, 2023:3). Of course, that can also apply to all text and data as the viewpoint of the author, commissioner of the report and target audience all influence the content and messages within. Within academia the tradition of peer review is practiced because it is seen as an indicator of quality scholarship. Academic texts such as books and articles are read by those with expertise in the same field and they act as gatekeepers with power to accept, accept subject to amendments or reject. Generative AI has no such quality control mechanism.

A note of caution when using AI to enhance and improve writing.

Disability services and learning developers, employed by universities, often recommend that students use software packages to help with sentence structure and grammar. Grammarly and Quillbot are commonly used AI packages in the UK because they are quick to install, free and more sophisticated than the tools currently built into Microsoft Office. Quillbot describes itself as a writing tool for paraphrasing, summarizing and to check grammar. It claims to improve writing, create original content and avoid plagiarism (Quillbot, 2023). Likewise Grammarly reviews spelling, grammar, punctuation, can offer clarity of language and offers a plagiarism checker (Grammarly, 2023).

Translation packages are another form of AI, and they are most useful to help us when we go on holiday or communicate with service users. However, most do not do direct translations for each individual word in isolation. Translation software such as DeepL (2023) change the structure of the sentences so they are not a literal translation. They are easy and free to use and offer the facility to drag and drop PDF, Word documents and even PowerPoints for translation. Such translation facilities can provide sophisticated outputs which are grammatically aligned to the language being translated into. Therefore, the quality and meaning may be substantially changed and the text may not be an accurate reflection of the student's ability to write in that language.

Practice Educators need to be aware of the guidance issued by universities in relation to the use of AI to enhance student work. Because there are new forms of AI emerging, it is not possible to produce a definitive list of what learners may or may not use. Therefore, consideration must be given as to why AI is being used to enhance the work. The tension here is that AI that helps with grammar is actively promoted to some students (for example those with dyslexia) and therefore a blanket ban is ill-advised. Students studying in a second language need to know to what extent they may use translation software; may they look up

the odd word or can they translate a few thousand words written in their native/first language?

It may be relevant for some specific subjects or assessment tasks to not permit the use of such enhancing software. Where it is permitted to use AI, it is good practice for students to save their assessment product/essay prior to using tools such as Grammarly (and clearly mark it with a date and relevant title) and then save a second version clearly marked to indicate that the version has benefitted from AI manipulation. The two versions can be subject to comparison to establish the quality of the work, the capability of the student and that the original work was not artificially generated/commissioned.

### Loss of intellectual rights.

In addition to being aware whether or not students are permitted to use AI to enhance their work, the wider implications of using AI must be considered. It was explained above that the generative AI LLMs draw on data to train themselves and use it to create new text for users. The text that is drawn upon will include work that has been subject to translation and grammar checking. When we engage with AI, we are adding to the extensive data that generative AI uses. I liken this to feeding the beast, because we are giving food (data) to sustain and grow this thing that is very large and outside our control. In the absence of regulation of generative AI, my advice is to not upload anything that is confidential in nature, that you do not want regenerated or wish to lose ownership of. Once work has been uploaded, or run through software, the author may lose the intellectual property right to that work. AI generated text does not come with authentic references to source materials, and AI does not attribute the knowledge to the original source. If a Chatbot draws from any of the content within this article and uses it to generate text for someone else, it will not be

referenced to me. I will have no control over how a Chatbot uses my work nor how it is represented going forward.

This also applies to any other data that may be seen or manipulated by AI. Educators may see the advantages of using AI for students to receive feedback on draft work and for AI to mark assessment products. However, not all academic institutions permit students to submit draft work with a view to receiving developmental feedback, so, using AI to do this would be in breach of their regulations. Although software can be developed to mark and grade assessments, because we are not fully aware of potential implications in terms of intellectual copywrite and confidentiality, careful thought is required. It is for these reasons why students must never use AI on any text that has the potential to identify the users of social work services, colleagues or other professionals.

Matching software, that is now being used by some universities, can identify as 100% matching to AI because the student has used a grammar checker or translation package on their work. Although the original text may have been authored by the student, they have added their text to the data that LLMs train upon. Therefore, the AI matching software recognises the text and indicates that the submitted assessment is identical to AI text. In fact, it is identical to the student's own work that has been translated or grammar checked, but as explained, any words that are given to AI are thrown into the training pot of LLMs and are not attributed back to the author. Students have been unknowingly feeding the beast and then facing allegations of committing academic misconduct (cheating). On a more positive note, the AI checkers do also identify students who have used AI to generate their assessment products and have breached academic integrity rules. If Practice Educators are concerned that students have misused AI or have any concerns about the authenticity of the student's work, they are advised to liaise with the relevant university.

## Identifying AI generated text.

Even when universities do not use software that has the potential to identify AI generated text (and indeed Practice Educators do not have access to them), there are clues within the work that suggest it may be an AI creation. I have heard educators say that they looked at the student's work and "something was a bit off" or they say, "it didn't look quite right". They appear to get these internal triggers which alert them to the need to interrogate the text more. AI typically generates text with Americanised spelling, the phrasing and language used may look unusual and different to the academic level of study of that student. Practice Educators will become familiar with the ability and written style of the student, and therefore language that is more sophisticated than expected will be noticeable. References and citations generated by AI are often incorrect, not related to the topic or given task, and in-text citations and the bibliography may not match. The content can be irrelevant and off topic. AI is not yet able to differentiate context, and therefore a word that has more than one meaning can be problematic. I have seen examples where inclusions appear amusing because they are so misplaced. For example, if the word 'environment' is included within the given prompt/question, text may be generated about climate change even if the topic is about creating a suitable environment for refugees.

Although there is a great deal of discussion within universities across the world about how assessments can be changed and written tasks structured in such a way to avoid the potential for academic misconduct, it is worth remembering that students who wish to cheat will find a way to do so. Old school cheating, such as sneaking notes into exams and commissioning essays are all still possible. Therefore, our energy and resources are best placed in educating students. We should inspire them to be deep learners, motivate them to be interested in the topic, critical thinkers and prepare them for the continual emergence of technology. Assessment and learning within the placement setting must embrace this

discourse. Practice Educators need to be aware that some students may misuse AI and attempt to cheat by suggesting the work is their own, but, above all, they must contribute to the education of social workers AI literacy by learning how to use such tools appropriately.

### Five principles for using generative AI in education.

Generative AI is a fast-paced emerging technology and currently there is little research to inform guidance and legislation. There are calls for governments to regulate AI but in the absence of this within education, the Russell Group (comprising 24 UK universities) has crafted useful guidance. Their five principles chime with the themes of this article and Practice Educators may substitute ‘universities’ for Practice Educators:

1. Universities will support students and staff to become AI-literate.
2. Staff should be equipped to support students to use generative AI tools effectively and appropriately in their learning experience.
3. Universities will adapt teaching and assessment to incorporate the ethical use of generative AI and support equal access.
4. Universities will ensure academic rigour and integrity is upheld.
5. Universities will work collaboratively to share best practice as the technology and its application in education evolves.

Russell Group (2023)

Therefore, there is an immediate need for Practice Educators to be upskilled to be able to become AI literate themselves and develop confidence to engage with it as a pedagogical tool. As Taylor-Beswick (2023) advises, it involves teaching with technology and also teaching about technology. Universities can offer training and workshops for educators to enable them to operationalise the five principles above. There is an opportunity to motivate educators to engage with generative AI and also advise about the associated university processes and procedures in relation to raising concerns about suspected misuse of technology. This is particularly relevant for courses like social work where academic



malpractice / cheating is linked to fitness to practice concerns due to the breaching of ethical standards associated with the profession.

## Conclusion.

AI has many uses in today's society: it is low cost, easy to use, time efficient and can have significant pedagogical value. Although this article has a leaning towards the education of social workers it is anticipated that the content will be of value to those from other disciplines. Educators need to support all students, including those who are training to be social workers, to use AI ethically and to become AI literate. Practice Educators globally, can support this endeavour by encouraging students to use AI on placement and a number of examples have been included within this article to stimulate ideas. Educators must not encourage lazy learners who are reliant on AI tools but instead nurture intellectual curiosity, stimulate new ideas, critical thinking and develop questioning practices. Although the exercises suggested here engage with AI, students must continue to engage with a range of literature, be able to discern the source and its credibility, then critically analyse and evaluate the content. The act of deciding what to write and the crafting of text is a learning activity which ought not to be underestimated in terms of its educational value. Warner (2023: no page) explains that 'writing is thinking' and 'writing itself allows the writer to explore the idea ... the notion that they've started with ... discover something new' through writing. We can encourage adding AI into our teaching and learning toolbox, but it should not be over relied upon or used to replace all other techniques.

Engaging with AI ought to be added to our pedagogy and I do not anticipate it replacing practice learning placements nor replacing the Practice Educator due to the human interaction which is essential within social work education. 'While machines may someday understand our morals and ethics, this day is not yet here' (Giannini, 2023:3).

Educators and students need to be aware of the advantages of using AI but also the risks as they develop an agile mindset and digital capabilities. Students need to use a range of AI tools to become confident and skilled but also ethically aware and consider ‘academic integrity, data privacy, transparency, accountability and security’ (Chan, 2023:22). The task for educators is to support learners in how to use AI, recognise what to use it for, when to use it and when not to use it so they are armed with knowledge, skills and the values that align to social work. To enable practice educators to adopt these pedagogical methods and to feel confident in supporting students to use generative AI, technology must feature in both the initial training of Practice Educators and in their ongoing professional development.

I hope that this article will motivate people to engage with AI for learning, or at least to engage in discussion about its use in social work practice education. Nissen sums it up nicely by concluding that generative AI ‘has incredible potential AND incredible risks. We’re all part of the same experiment. Eyes best wide open as we figure it out together’ (Nissen, 2023: no page).

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