



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Northumbria University's Annual Social Work Conference
2023:

*'Social work in times of crisis and disasters – working with
individuals and communities to enhance wellbeing'*

Friday 27th January, 09:30am-3:00pm GMT

FREE ONLINE EVENT

In recent times we have experienced a global pandemic, climate disasters, refugee crises, the impact of wars and a cost-of-living crisis, all of which impact on individuals and communities. This free online conference will provide an opportunity for practitioners, people with lived experience, academics and researchers from a variety of disciplines to come together to explore how social work can contribute to the wellbeing of people at these critical times.

Come and join us and be part of the debate

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Summary Programme

(the full version with descriptions, bios and room links can be found on pages 4-10 of this document)

09.30 Registration

10.00-11.00 Welcome

Dr Joanne Atkinson, Dr Justine Ogle

Keynote Speech

Disaster social work and curriculum in the Nordic context: Preparing for a precarious future

Professors Guðný Björk Eydal and Carin Cuadra

11.00-11.15 Break

11.15-12.00 Your choice of workshop

- | | | |
|----------|--|--|
| 1 | Living the future: Eco-social work in communities | <i>Hellmuth Weich, Karen Atkinson, Elisa Dias, Dan Baron Cohen</i> |
| 2 | Impact of water scarcity on the daily lives of the people who are living in the Gaza Strip | <i>Hatem Elaydi</i> |
| 3 | Wellness of Brazilian disadvantaged communities in times of disasters: who cares? | <i>Patricia Carla de Almeida e Souza</i> |

12.00-12.45 Lunch

12.45-13.30 Keynote Speeches

Deconstructing narratives of 'crises' and engaging into social work anti-oppressive praxis

Sofia Dedotsi

The role of non-government organizations dealing with disastrous floods in Pakistan in the year 2022

Sonia Omer

13.30-13.45 Break

13.45-14.30 Your choice of workshop

- | | | |
|----------|---|--|
| 1 | The challenges of poverty & food insecurity in school & community settings in the UK | <i>Pamela L Graham</i> |
| 2 | Children in Migration: A Crisis by Design?
Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities for UK Practice within the 'Hostile Environment' | <i>Nick Watts</i> |
| 3 | Northumbria University's Local Context: How we respond to crises and disasters in our communities? | <i>Chris Lowery and Jessica Corner</i> |

14.30-15.00 Plenary

What have we learned about social work responses to crises and disasters in the UK and what should be done about it?

Catherine Witt (Social Work England), Justine Ogle, Jack Nicholls, Chris Lowery

A note on joining virtual rooms

Access to this conference is via virtual rooms hosted on the university system. The links for the rooms can be found in the full detail programme below – we suggest copying and pasting them into your browser. Please come to the main virtual conference room for the start of the event.

The optimal browser through which to join the virtual rooms in which this conference will take place is Google Chrome. If you experience problems connecting, please ensure you have cookies enabled on your browser for the duration of the conference, and that you are using the most up to date version of Chrome.

In the event of any technical access problems, please contact Andy Lee from Northumbria University TEL team on 07912487339

Full Conference Programme

- 09:30 – MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM – **Registration**

Link:

<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/3f58f7951676458594f101d87ce2c1dc>

- 10:00-11:00 – MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM – Keynote Speech

Link: <https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/3f58f7951676458594f101d87ce2c1dc>

Disaster social work and curriculum in the Nordic context: Preparing for a precarious future

Professors Guðný Björk Eydal and Carin Cuadra

The Nordic countries share the legacy of the Nordic welfare model, emphasising universal social services. They also share emphasis on strong Emergency Management, even though the disasters that they have

encountered in last decades differ in nature. The presentation asks if and how disaster social work, with emphasis on social services, has been addressed as a part of the Emergency Management in the Nordic countries. Do the Emergency Management systems make use of the special competences of social workers?

Furthermore the talk will address the need for broad and encompassing approach to disasters, making disaster risk reduction a salient aspect of social work's contribution to sustainable development, ecologically, economically and socially. In order to achieve this, disaster social work has to become a part of the SW curriculum. It suggests a curriculum based on green social work that covers all phases of disasters: mitigation, preparation, response and recovery, and reconstruction. The presentation argues that social work's contribution to disaster risk reduction needs to encompass a strong long-term preventive perspective and develop resilience in social-ecological systems besides being engaged in the other phases of disasters.

Carin Björngren Cuadra is professor in social work at Malmö University, Sweden and affiliated to The Institute for Sustainable Development in Malmö. Her main field is the role of social work in disaster risk reduction, within contingency systems and crisis preparedness. She is currently involved in collaborative research on eco-social initiatives in local contexts exploring the "how" of sustainable development. She is also teaching at Malmö University.

Guðný Björk Eydal is a Professor at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Iceland. Her main field of research is family and social policy, but she also has conducted research in the field of disaster social work and did lead the project social services in Nordic countries in times of disasters. She has been teaching disaster - and environmental social work at the University of Iceland for decades.

- 11:00-11:15 - BREAK

- 11:15-12:00 – YOUR CHOICE OF WORKSHOP

- **Room 1 - Living the future: Eco-social work in communities**

Hellmuth Weich, Karen Atkinson, Elisa Dias, Dan Baron Cohen

Link: <https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/078cf73ce8c1402099e2294f47611588>

Social work practice in the UK is strongly guided by an individualistic focus on people, ignoring the ecological environment we live in. Ecosocial work recognises the interconnectedness of people and their environment. In the literature this is often suggested as a new way of thinking. Looking at many of the countries in the Global South, it has been a way of living for millennia, but ignored by the Global North.

The Global South have a wealth of knowledge of practice and can tell us about how our future will be because they are living with the consequences of environmental change.

In this workshop we want to invite participants to listen to the voices of people who are living the future and to consider how their reflections and journey apply to our practices. We will briefly explore the current context of practice in the UK, look at examples from the Global South and specifically listening to communities living in the Amazon. We will jointly consider how community work or communities of practice, ecological approaches and art-based practices can point us to a different way of thinking and working.

Hellmuth Weich is a lecturer in Social work and Guidance and counselling, having previously worked with children and families. Hellmuth has a keen interest in culturally appropriate practices and the way social workers are involved in, and prepared for crises and disasters, particularly the role of communities and developing community resilience in advance.

Karen Atkinson is a lecturer in Social Work at the University of Sunderland. She has previously held lecturing posts at the Universities of Glamorgan, Newcastle, Roehampton, Leicester and Northumbria, primarily in the fields of linguistics, media and Cultural Studies. Her teaching and research interests focus on inequality, oppression, ageing and communities. She has recent and direct experiences as a progressed social worker in a statutory local authority setting.

Elisa Dias is a founding participant of the Rivers of Meeting Project, born in Cabelo Seco Community. She is an AfroRoots Collective percussionist and co-ordinator of Salus medicinal garden project since 2016.

Dan Baron Cohen is a community performance educator, working and living in the Brazilian Amazon since 1999. His primary project 'Rivers of Meeting' is rooted in the African-Indigenous community Calebo Seco, Maraba City, since 2009.

- **Room 2 - Impact of water scarcity on the daily lives of the people who are living in the Gaza Strip**

Hatem Elaydi

Link: <https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/d4e57c137a5f4541a90cf0fca05dee32>

Gaza Strip is located at the south-eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea with area size totals 360 square kilometres and a total population of 2 million inhabitants. The Gaza Strip is considered as a water deficient and water-stressed region. It is mainly dependent on its coastal aquifer which is totally dependent on the annual amount of rain. The estimated water quantities drained from and supplied to the aquifer indicate negative current net effect on water availability in Gaza coastal aquifer. This led to deterioration in the quality and quantity of groundwater and sea water intrusion. The water problem coupled with daily of over 12-hours of electricity blackout impacted the quality of life where homes and schools lack running drinking water and water for daily use. The talk will highlight the impact of water scarcity on the daily lives of the people who are living in the Gaza Strip.

Hatem Elaydi, is a Professor of Electrical Engineering at the Islamic University of Gaza since 1998. He obtained his PhD, MSc, and BSc from New Mexico State University and Colorado Technical University in the USA. He has a research interest in higher education quality's assurance and governance.

- **Room 3 - Wellness of Brazilian disadvantaged communities in times of disasters: who cares?**

Patricia Carla de Almeida e Souza

Link: <https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/f64dc0fa929d44aca60c2b57ff205d61>

The aim of this workshop is to discuss relevant issues related to wellness of Brazilian disadvantaged community subjects in times of disasters. Even though the concept of wellness is related to a healthier life, including physical, mental, economic, social, cultural, spiritual and environmental dimensions, community members still face high daily stressful challenges, mostly during and after crisis – as the covid-19 pandemic. Instead of thriving, vulnerabilities stuck them subjectively and collectively on emotional survival mode, resulted from lack of psychosocial support and visibility for their local needs. In contrast, that chronic situation forces them to find collective practical solutions fostering creative local engagement and strength for at least survive during crisis. It is our hope that public policies include more than exclude the different community references and that the academic world could learn and respect those local experiences.

Patricia Carla de Almeida e Souza is an Independent Sensorimotor Psychotherapist; Post-Doctoral Researcher in Northumbria University, UK (2019-2022)/Disaster and Development Network (DDN) with the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences; She has a PhD (2015) in the Psychology Institute of Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and has been a Coordinator of Community local projects in Brazil since 2001.

- **12:00-12:45 - LUNCH**

- **12:45-13:30 – MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM – Keynote Speeches**

Link: <https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/3f58f7951676458594f101d87ce2c1dc>

Deconstructing narratives of 'crises' and engaging into social work anti-oppressive praxis

Sofia Dedotsi

More than a decade now, multiple and continuous 'crises' across Europe and beyond have had tremendous humanitarian and social impact affecting the most vulnerable populations. From the financial crisis of 2008 till today's cost of living crisis in a post-covid era, several welfare cuts, securitisation, and control have been implemented, 'deserving/undeserving' rights have been constructed, whilst the blaming game of 'individual responsibility' is on the rise. How is social work affected by the neoliberal 'crisis' narratives and how can enhance individuals' and communities' wellbeing? Using examples from ongoing 'crises', this presentation will a) debate 'crisis' narratives and their use for implementing more controlling and disempowering (social) policies and b) protest the urgent need for anti-oppressive praxis in social work based on Paulo Freire's concepts.

Sofia Dedotsi (PhD) is an assistant professor at the Department of Social Work, University of West Attica, in Athens, Greece. Her research interests lie in critical theories and analysis in social work, including anti-oppressive practice, social work education, migration as well as social policy.

The role of non-government organizations dealing with disastrous floods in Pakistan in the year 2022

Sonia Omer

Pakistan situated in South Asia and a home of more than 223 million people has been effected badly due to political, social and economic turmoil in the past years. The country is also at a very high risk of climate change and floods of 2022 have left the entire country in a stand still position. More than 33 million people have been directly effected in these floods whereas 1 million houses have been damaged. There is no end to disaster that has been witnessed in livestock's and agriculture sector as a greater majority of Pakistani people rely on their livelihood on these sectors. Despite of Scarcity of resources, the government of Pakistan stepped forward and helped the people in need. The international aid has also been of great significance in these difficult times. However the big relief was provided by the non-government organizations who work at grassroots level. They have systematically helped the people and have made long term plans in order to meet the needs of people in these testing times. The current study has investigated the role of leading non-government organizations who have made a positive change and have rendered some excellent relief activities to effected people. The study will investigate the challenges faced by these organizations while providing relief to effectees in extremely difficult circumstances. In Addition to that, the study will also put light on Pakistan being vulnerable to earthquake, extreme weathers, typhoons and floods due to climate change and stuck deeply in poverty, disease and unemployment, thus bringing further destruction in socio-economic status of the country. The current research is qualitative in nature. The study has used secondary data to know the disasters of floods and has also used primary data inform of key informative interviews with representatives of leading organizations to know of their perspective and activities on floods. Thematic analysis has been used to draw findings of research.

Dr Sonia Omer is currently working as Associate professor in Department of Social Work, University of the Punjab, Lahore Pakistan. She is a sound researcher and likes to write on gender issues, social policy and entrepreneurship, socio-economic development, population and demography etc. She is also a motivational speaker and talks on national television on different social issues. She has number of research publications

in higher education commission of Pakistan recognized journals and in impact factor international journals. Her interest in research led her to visit numerous developed regions of world where she participated in international conferences and presented her work. She can be contacted at soniaomer78@gmail.com.

13:30-13:45 – BREAK

- 13:45-14:30 – YOUR CHOICE OF WORKSHOP

- **Room 1 - The challenges of poverty & food insecurity in school & community settings in the UK**

Pamela L Graham, Connie Dalton

Link: <https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/078cf73ce8c1402099e2294f47611588>

Targets to eradicate poverty and hunger are at the forefront of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals given their wide-reaching impacts on health and wellbeing. Despite being one of the richest countries in the world, the UK continues to experience relatively high levels of poverty and food insecurity, which have been exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the continuing cost of living crisis. This workshop will focus on poverty and food insecurity amongst children, young people and families, and will discuss some of the work done in school and community settings to alleviate these issues.

Dr Pamela L. Graham is an Assistant Professor in Community Wellbeing at Northumbria University. She has particular interests in poverty, food insecurity and inclusion and has substantial experience of working with children, young people and families in school and community settings.

Connie Dalton is a Postgraduate Researcher within the Department of Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing at Northumbria University. Connie has expertise in Geography and Human Rights Law and is especially interested in food, human rights and policies. Currently, Connie is completing a PhD focusing on exclusions in school food policy.

- **Room 2 - Children in Migration: A Crisis by Design? Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities for UK Practice within the 'Hostile Environment'**

Nick Watts

Link: <https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/d4e57c137a5f4541a90cf0fca05dee32>

In recent times, there has been a focus on the 'crisis' of migration. This workshop will explore this 'crisis' in the UK as a deliberate action and series of policy choices focused on enforcing a hostile environment for migrants, which fuels harmful narratives against a backdrop of widespread human displacement (the real crisis) across the world. Drawing on a recent co-authored paper (Kerr and Watts, 2022), the role of social work in this 'deliberate crisis' will be considered, with a focus on the concept of everyday bordering and the co-opting, often reluctantly, of helping professions into the enforcement of migration policy. It will be argued that this is framed often as a necessary response to crisis. Opportunities for good practice will then be discussed, focusing on the theory and role of dissent and challenging, rights-first practice when working with children in migration. Kerr, C., & Watts, N. (2022). Against a bitter tide: How a small UK charity operationalises dissent to challenge the "hostile environment" for migrant children and families. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 34(3), 61–73. Retrieved from <https://anzswjournal.nz/anzsw/article/view/938>

Nick Watts is the co-Founder and Director of Together with Migrant Children, a charity that provides specialist social work, advice services and family support to children, young people and families in migration. Nick also sits on several working groups, such as the Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium and the BME and Migrant Safeguarding Advisory Group, working at a strategic level on issues impacting children and young people in migration

- **Room 3 - Northumbria University's Local Context: How we respond to crises and disasters in our communities?**

Chris Lowery and Jessica Corner

Link: <https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/f64dc0fa929d44aca60c2b57ff205d61>

The Northeast of England faces some new and emerging risks which can present as community disasters. Recently, the area has experienced knife-related murders of children, a cost-of-living crisis and a global pandemic. Questions have been asked about the extent to which social workers formed part of the crisis planning and response, and whether there are lessons to be learned from our international colleagues.

Are there lessons to be learned from any gaps? If social workers were to be involved at an earlier/deeper level, how might this have supported the communities better? Would a better response prepare communities better for future crises or even prevent them? These themes will be explored, drawing on real-life examples of local crises and our responses.

Chris Lowery has been a children's social worker since 2016. He has worked in London and the Northeast of England, acting as a consultant to students and newly qualified social workers. He now lectures in social work at Northumbria University.

Jessica Corner qualified as a social worker in 2019 and has worked in the Northeast of England in children's safeguarding teams. She is now a consultant social worker in a team designed to work specifically in local schools, guiding social workers with their practice.

- **14:30-15:00 – PLENARY – What have we learned about social work responses to crises and disasters in the UK and what should be done about it?**

Catherine Witt, Justine Ogle, Jack Nicholls, Chris Lowery

Link: <https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/3f58f7951676458594f101d87ce2c1dc>