

An introduction to leading with kindness and compassion in health and social care

2.7. Barriers to kindness and compassion

Accessible content of diagrams

Barriers to kindness in social policy

One barrier identified by Julia Unwin, who has carried out research on [kindness in social policy](#) offers a way of thinking about some of the contextual influences in society and organisational life that 'squeeze out' kindness and compassion in health and care work.

The powerful forces she identifies shape the lives and experiences of both patients, service users and staff in the health and social care system, and it can feel disempowering to acknowledge many (if not all) of them are beyond our ability to influence.

Unwin illustrates this using two sets of barriers: macro-economic and political barriers and processes and culture. Both of these barriers work in squeezing space for kindness out of public services and social policy.

Macro-economic and political barriers

- Big pressures on expenditure
- Challenged by mainstream and online media
- Audit culture
- Public hostility towards 'inadequate' public services

Processes and culture

- A culture of blame
- High levels of scrutiny and apparent accountability
- Professionalism
- Management of risk

Adapted from Julia Unwin (2018). [Kindness, emotions and human relationships: the blind spot in public policy.](#)