

04.08.21

Letter from SWU Advice and Representation Officers re SWU TUC Application

Attention SWU General Secretary

Dear John

Thank you for attending our team meeting last week, I hope you found it helpful. However, I was dismayed to hear that it has been alleged by UNISON that we are 'poaching' their members and feel I must put something in writing to you in response to these serious allegations that were offered to the TUC.

I was particularly concerned about this because we have always taken the line that we do not put any other trade unions down in any way; as far as we are concerned, we should all be 'on the same side' and as long as social workers recognise the advantage and need to be members of a trade union, then it doesn't matter which trade union they choose.

I was so concerned that I spoke to the whole team afterwards and have been assured that no-one in the team would make any attempt to 'poach' another trade union's members and they have confirmed that they all agree with the philosophy as stated above. We do get members joining us who have been with other trade unions before, but they usually say this is because they do not feel as well represented because they are rarely represented by social workers ie TU Officials who know what social work is, how complex it can be and what the pressures are for the profession. We do not turn them away, but do not actively encourage anybody to do this. It is also fair to say that sometimes our members themselves are so pleased with the service they have received from us, they say they are going to tell all their social work colleagues

about us and encourage them to join us. We can do little to prevent this, but again we would not actively encourage them to leave another trade union to join us.

We have also had members who are also members of another trade union and have been part represented by an Officer from that other union and want us to pick the case up when they become dissatisfied with the representation they have received. We would always try to discourage such a change mid-case. We have a different approach to that of some of the unions, but additionally it's not at all easy to pick up a case on which somebody else has been advising or representing and it is not something we would routinely do.

We have also had occasions when, say, another social worker involved in an action or a case, or perhaps a social work manager hearing the case, might decide to join SWU after seeing how we approach things and how much knowledge and expertise our Officers have, and again we would not turn them away, but it is entirely their own decision to do so.

I am confident that no-one in my team would behave in such an unprofessional, and anti-trade unionist way and I hope this goes some way to reassuring you of that.

I hope this helps, but please let me know if you have any other concerns.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lien Watts', written in a cursive style.

Lien Watts

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