



## **BASW style guide 2013**

**This guide offers BASW staff advice on any communication you may write or send on behalf of BASW, including consultation documents, articles, reports and other formal documents intended for publication.**

### **Introduction**

This document is aimed at helping all BASW staff involved in the production and dissemination of documents intended for public consumption to adhere to a similar approach in the use of language and style.

The aim is to ensure consistency throughout each publication, offering a more professional approach to documents distributed, or available, to a wide audience, from MPs to prospective members.

This document will change as issues emerge.

So, if you're unsure about something and it isn't covered in this style guide, please just advise someone in the Communications team and we will add it to the list, ensuring consistency in future on new and emerging issues.

Any problems or questions, please just email Joe Devo [j.devo@basw.co.uk]

## Fonts

Wherever possible, to ensure consistency in BASW output, please use the font type 'Arial' and the font size 11.

Main headers are in **Arial Bold**, font size 18pt and always centred – for example:

### **Arial Bold header**

Subheaders should be Arial Bold, font size 12pt, and ranged left – for example:

#### **Arial Bold subheader**

Templates

Templates are available on the server for each country

## The British Association of Social Workers

If used in a sentence, the 'T' should always be lower case.

### For example:

*Bridget Robb from the British Association of Social Workers ...*

## The Association

BASW can also be referred to as 'the Association', if it has already been mentioned in your document. Note that the 'A' is upper case.

### For example:

*A shock poll from the British Association of Social Workers today warned that cuts are putting lives at risk. The Association said...*

## BASW, SWU & other abbreviations

It is ok to use abbreviations, but you must explain what they mean first.

Don't assume that people know what you are referring to, even for many seemingly well-known terms. Once you have explained its meaning by putting the abbreviation in brackets ( ) directly after the word, you can use it throughout. You do not need to keep using brackets once the word has been explained to the reader.

### For example:

*A shock poll from the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) today warned that cuts are putting lives at risk. BASW said ...*

PSW and e-bulletins can use BASW throughout all news and feature items as the British Association of Social Workers will already be spelt out on the cover, in the contents and in the banner and logo at the top of emails.

- All non-BASW acronyms except those with which all social workers can be expected to be familiar, to be spelt out in the first instance with the acronym in bracket. So, for instance, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC), the

Care Council for Wales (CCW) and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) must always be spelt out for the first example of usage.

- Terms that people may believe are widely understood in social work – in Scotland, Mental Health Officers (MHOs); in England, Advanced Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs) – must be spelt out first time because they are not universally understood across the UK or even, in some cases, by non specialists or non social workers – MPs or others to whom magazines or literature is disseminated.
- There may be exceptions, which can be agreed – is CPD widely understood for instance? Does PRTL come into this category?

### Upper and lower case

Please try and restrict the use of upper case (capital) letters to proper titles, whether full job titles or the formal names of publications, organisations or events.

Upper case should be the exception, not the default approach.

So when referring to a specific Chief Executive, it is clearly upper case initials. When referring to such positions in a more general way, however, it should be lower case:

#### **For example:**

*The number of chief executives saying that their staff are lazy has tripled in the past year.*

Even examples such as ‘serious case review’ and ‘white paper’ should ordinarily be kept as lower case. The exception here is where they form part of a formal title. See the following examples:

Lower case [because it is a general reference to the concept]:

*The number of serious case reviews in England has escalated in recent years.*

Upper case initials [because it is a formal title]:

*The Serious Case Review into the Deaths of People in Exbury*

### North, East, South, West

Although the correct and standard approach is to use lower case for compass directions – north, east etc – there is an important exception to make in referring to particular areas of the country. As such, we are asking people to use upper case initials for broad geographical areas of the UK even though they may not always be proper place names.

This is simply because a number of parts of the UK are commonly and regularly used, and are identifiable to people – North Wales especially – so we feel these merit exceptional treatment.

#### **For example:**

*North West England*

*North Wales*

*Mid Wales*

*East Midlands*

Unlike the above list, the *West Midlands* in England is a proper place name, so automatically has upper case initials.

The use of 'eastern', 'western', 'northern' or 'southern' should remain lower case unless as part of a recognised name for a place.

### **Social work – lower case please!**

Clearly social work is an important title for us and indeed is a job title in some instances. However, there are two reasons why it needs to be lower case:

- It is usually used to describe a general profession rather than a specific title
- We use it a lot, so our documents, news articles, consultation responses etc will become cluttered with upper case letters. Where possible we try and use lower case letters as this reduces the text's fussiness and distractions.

#### **For example:**

*Social work is a growing profession.*

*The social work profession is growing.*

However, if someone is employed and has a job title of '*Social Worker*' then the use of upper case initials is appropriate. But only if it is a formal job title, not a general description of their role.

### **For example versus e.g. & i.e.**

The Latin abbreviations e.g. and i.e. are used a lot in English. It is preferred, however, to use the term 'for example' as this flows better and is less casual.

#### **Preferred:**

*Social workers told BASW they like a variety of training methods – **for example**, virtual learning, work-based programmes and kite-based opportunities.*

#### **Not preferred:**

*Social workers told BASW they like a variety of training methods – e.g. virtual learning, work-based programmes and kite-based opportunities.*

### **Job titles**

Job titles upper case BUT only proper job titles – for example, *Secretary of State for Education* is upper case as it is the proper title of the position but *education secretary* is lower case as it is not the formal job title.

### **References**

Where possible cite the organisation before the organisation, then the person's name. For example, *BASW's Chief Executive Bridget Robb*.

### **Percentages**

Please use the % symbol, NOT 'per cent', unless starting a sentence with a statistic, in which case per cent will need to be spelt out, as well as the number.

**For example:**

Both are correct:

*Among all respondents, 67% said they supported the abolition of cats.*

*Sixty-seven per cent of respondents said they agreed with abolishing cats.*

**Dates**

To avoid a clash of the day of the month and the year, state the date in numerals, followed by the month, followed by the year (where the year is referenced of course).

**For example:**

*14 October 2013* is correct.

*October 14 2013* is incorrect as the numbers are back to back and cause confusion.

Unless writing a formal letter and presenting the date in full, including the day of the week, please do not use 'th' 'st' or 'nd' after the day of the month.

So, at the top of a letter you might write:

*Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2013*

Apart from this, however, please write '14 October' and NOT '14<sup>th</sup> October'

**Times**

To reduce confusion, please use PM and AM with references to the time of day.

**For example:**

*The event starts at 4pm* is correct.

*The conference opens its doors at 10.30am* is correct.

*The event starts at 16:00 hours* is incorrect.

**Money**

To state a currency simply type the currency symbol and the sum in numerals. Please do not add additional noughts to round number currency totals.

**For example:**

*It costs £33 to attend the football match* is correct

*It costs £33.00 to attend the football match* is incorrect

**Single/double quotes****Double quotes**

Double quotes to be used to report both speech and extracts from a document.

Mr Naqvi said: *"I love fruit."*

Or the report stated: *"Fruit is wrong for Britain."*

### Single quotes

Single quotes to be used for speech or reported extracts WITHIN a speech or extract: "When I spoke with Mr Naqvi he told me she was 'heartily sick' of fruit."

Single quotes also to be used for references to words out of context or with unusual usage where usage may confuse a reader.

*It was clear that Birmingham was beset by a 'tick box' culture, which permeates local authorities.*

[increasingly a well used term but still one that is based on an assumed knowledge]

*What matters to me is what does 'lunacy' mean in this context?*

[the single quotes are to indicate that the meaning of the word is the subject of the discussion – not the general definition but what is meant by its use in a particular instance]

*'Action research' is a system ready to sweep the world ...*

[this term may not be familiar to people but is important to the discussion, hence the single quotes]

*This isn't about combining the noun 'action' with the noun 'research' but about a concept called 'action research'.*

[again, it is the fact the words themselves are the subject of the discussion]

Note, there is no need to over-use the use of these single quotes, or inverted commas. This, for example, is unnecessary and inappropriate:

*Robert said the 'internet' is a marvellous new invention.*

Unless the word is out of place or being used in an unusual location, these single quote marks aren't needed.

### Italics

Names of publications, books, reports, research papers, plays, television programmes and films should be written in italics. For example:

It was reported on BBC's *Panorama* programme last night...

Professor Plum's report, *Modern Jam Making*, highlights...

### Mr and Mrs

Refer to full name in first instance then Mr or Ms thereafter. For example, *Peter Jones... Mr Jones; Margaret Smith... Ms Smith.*

### Numbers

Numbers should be written out from one to ten and thereafter expressed numerically: one, two three, four... ten, 11, 12, 13, 14 ... etc

**For example:**

*The report made six recommendations but also outlined 12 reasons why the organisation should be abolished.*

If you have to start a sentence with a number, write it out, even if it is a number above ten.

**For example:**

*One hundred and seventy people told BASW that they like cheese.*

**Professors and doctors**

*Professor John Jones* for all instances, never *Prof Jones*.

*Dr Jamie Bell* is fine, no need to spell out 'doctor' in full.

**Punctuation inside or outside of quotes**

Punctuation should remain inside the quotation marks where it is a complete sentence or extract but should sit outside the close quotation marks where it is a single word or fragment of a sentence.

**For example:**

*"I have always wanted to leave Britain to explore new opportunities to eat cheese in other parts of the world."*

And with the punctuation OUTSIDE of the quotation marks:

*Bob said he was sick of Britain's limitations and wanted the chance to find out about "cheese in other parts of the world".*

**Common mistakes****Practice versus practise:**

Practice is a noun – e.g. John's work was an excellent example of social work practice at its best.

Practise is a verb – e.g. John has practised for years. He was the first person from Norwich ever to practise as a social worker!

**America Vs UK**

Ignore what your spell check tells you, standard English rarely uses a 'Z'.

**For example:**

*realise not realize*

*organisation not organization*

**& Vs and**

Unless referring to a double act, keep it to 'and' rather than '&'.

Cannon & Ball, or Farrow & Ball for the posher among you, but it should be *Shahid and Simon* or BASW and NSPCC when writing proper documents for external audiences.

## **Apostrophe**

“The apostrophe may be the most unstable element in the English language — unstable, that is, in the hands of those who don’t know how to handle it.” [George Bernard Shaw]

Put simply, the apostrophe is used mainly in two ways:

1. To show something belongs to something or someone.

### **For example:**

*This is Hayley's book.*

*This book is Hayley's.*

2. To replace missing letters.

*You can't (cannot or can not) have it.*

*Don't (do not) do that!*

### **Decades etc**

If you are referring to something that took place during a particular decade, the apostrophe is not necessarily required. So for instance, *90s* is fine, and *'90s* is fine [apostrophe here denotes missing '19' from '1990s'] but *90's* is not correct – the apostrophe is superfluous as it replaces nothing and there is no ownership to denote.

### **Conversely ...**

There is a good case for making an exception to the golden rule where the absence of an apostrophe creates confusion about the meaning expressed.

*Make sure you dot your i's and cross your t's*

*Please list all the do's and don'ts*

If you didn't use an apostrophe you'd have the word *'is'* instead of *i's* AND *dos* instead of *do's*.

In this rare instance it makes sense to use an apostrophe, largely because it isn't superfluous and does serve a clear purpose.

### **It's**

*It's* means *it is* or *it has*. There's no such word as *its'*.

### **S**

Just because a word ends in 'S', there is no need to automatically add an apostrophe. Ask yourself, is a letter missing or am I trying to show that something belongs to something? If not, leave the apostrophe out.

If you are trying to show that someone owns something and their name ends in 'S', add an apostrophe. You don't need to add a third 'S', though this is common in the US and Canada.

*It is Tess' book and has always been Tess' book*

*Some of Dickens' novels drew on themes familiar to social workers today.*

A popular term in our work is 'adult services'. This is the accepted term used by local authorities to describe social work with adults. This term is already a plural so it does

not require an apostrophe.

*Sue has worked in both children's and adult services, but says working for BASW is a far better way of life.*

### **Email footer/signature**

#### **For external emails:**

Use Arial 13pt, bold black and simply list your name, job title, the organisation's name and a phone number. The email is obvious from the mode of communication.

**Joseph Devo**  
**Head of Communications**  
**British Association of Social Workers**  
**07974 641520**



There has been an issue with long external email exchanges being accompanied by an ever growing list of chain of BASW logos at the bottom of the page, which is why we are asking people to include a logo in their signature, as above.

This also allows people to choose to use NIASW/SASW/BASW Cymru/SWU if they prefer, but ensures only ONE logo is used in an email.

The footer that automatically accompanies all emails sent from BASW to an external recipient will include corporate information, comprising:

#### **Visit our website at [basw.co.uk](http://basw.co.uk)**

16 Kent Street, Birmingham, B5 6RD. Tel 0121 622 3911

The British Association of Social Workers is a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England No. 982041.

*This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the sender.*

#### **For internal emails:**

The above rules are not applicable to emails sent internally. Staff should use discretion on whether identifying information may help others uncertain of your role, such as new staff, in understanding how the organisation works and each person's role in BASW.