



PROFESSIONAL Social Work

April 2022

The human tragedy

How social work is responding to the war in Ukraine

BASW
The professional association for
social work and social workers

Delivering Recovery from Childhood Trauma



Halliwell's Restorative Parenting Recovery Programme for Looked After Children:

- Delivers successful transitions to family placements within 18-24 months
- Is clinically-informed in every aspect of the child's lived therapeutic experience
- Improves psychological wellbeing through a tracked recovery process and measurable outcomes

"Our aim is to enable each placed child to recover from child trauma within 18-24 months"

Children placed in residential care tend to be those who have experienced early childhood trauma through neglectful or abusive parenting, have had multiple placement moves or disruptions, have suffered loss of relationships (some of which may have been positive and psychologically protective) and for whom the future is full of uncertainty (NICE PH28 2015). All these factors (real life experiences) are recognised as risk factors for future mental health. Children who have experienced physical, sexual and emotional abuse may present with a range of difficulties and behaviours (RCPsych 2017) such as: being aggressive or abusive towards others including bullying behaviour; being unable to concentrate or complete tasks; running away; finding it hard to make relationships; thinking badly of themselves.

Halliwell has developed the **Restorative Parenting®**

Recovery Programme to enable looked after children to recover from trauma. The concept of Restorative Parenting® is based on the idea of creating a reparenting environment to restore the psychological deficits which children have suffered through the trauma of abuse and neglect, separation and loss. It is a therapeutic, clinical and humanist-based programme that is achieving positive outcomes and changing the future of looked after children.

Restorative Parenting® ... is a model that focuses on the emotional, behavioural, social and developmental needs of the child... Its premise is that children grow and develop in the interactive, real world. Thus, for change to be meaningful, it must occur in the world, in the reality which the child experiences. To deliver this requires strategies and ways of helping the child reduce challenging behaviour and increase their quality of life

through teaching new skills and adjusting the child's environment in a way that promotes positive behaviour changes. Restorative parenting involves environmental, interpersonal and individually managed experiences matched to the needs of the child. Every day is a managed experience designed to create therapeutic opportunity and support the child to make positive choices (Robinson and Philpot 2016).

The programme has been academically validated by Manchester Metropolitan University. "It found the RPRP could be a particularly effective model for trauma informed care for

looked after children. Peer reviewed paper 24/3/21: Restorative Parenting Delivering Trauma informed residential care for children in care".



Contact us for free advice and guidance on our residential and education Restorative Parenting Recovery Programme. Telephone Alan Challinor on 0161 437 9491 / 07538 401593 or email referrals@halliwellhomes.co.uk

We hold free monthly CPDs on Restorative Parenting. Contact rachel.mcquitty@halliwellhomes.co.uk for details.

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From the Editor
SHAHID NAQVI



The peacemakers not warmongers will win through

What a difference a month makes... When I last wrote this column, war had not yet started in Ukraine. Since then, Europe's geopolitical landscape has shifted with repercussions for us all – and reverberations felt across the world.

The media has run out of adjectives to describe Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, or the brave resistance put up by the Ukrainian people.

So far more than three million people have fled the country and 6.5 million are internally displaced. It's a mass migration not seen in Europe since the Second World War.

The conflict is also a reminder of how fickle and transient peace can be and that our settled ordered lives can be shattered in an instant.

It was perhaps something of prophetic coincidence that the horrors unfolding in Ukraine happened in a month that also celebrated World Social Work Day.

For ultimately it will be the peacemakers, the conflict resolvers and the rebuilders who will be there working with people on the ground long after the warmongers have left the scene. And it will be the skills of professionals like social workers that will help communities heal from the trauma they have suffered.

While things may look grim today, social work gives us hope for a better tomorrow.

If you have a view on any of our editorial content or ideas for future articles contact editor@basw.co.uk

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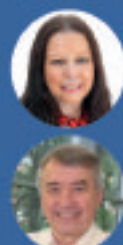
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NEWS

Bradford bake for Ukraine

Social workers, people using a community centre and students with learning disabilities in Bradford baked cakes to raise money for people fleeing war in Ukraine.

The fundraiser was the brainchild of Adam Pagett, a social worker with the Shipley Locality Learning Disabilities Team, and raised £421.

Adam said it was a reminder that Bradford is “one of the most diverse, multi-cultural, youngest and compassionate cities in the UK”.



In the wake of war our work as peacemakers will be needed

Social workers across Europe will “play a key part” in helping people affected by the war in Ukraine, the British Association of Social Workers has said.

The association warned the scale of civilian casualties is likely to be high with professionals having to potentially provide support for as many as ten million people fleeing the conflict zone.

In a statement on the crisis, BASW said: “War has a devastating impact on innocent people who pay the price of aggression with their lives, their homes, and their safety.

“This military conflict directly impacts the people of Ukraine, but it will have wider repercussions.

“People may be displaced and will need to seek refuge in other countries as a result. Social workers across Europe will also play a key part in supporting people in rebuilding their lives.”

BASW said help was also needed for social workers and other professionals on the ground in Ukraine.

“We ask for vital support for those working in social work, health and welfare services in Ukraine, many of whom will undoubtedly strive to keep humanitarian services available and support people least able to protect themselves during the conflict and its aftermath.”

The association added: “Our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine, including social work colleagues, those in health and welfare services, and all those who have loved ones in Ukraine who will be understandably deeply worried.”

Last month chief executive Ruth Allen wrote to home secretary Priti Patel expressing concern at the government’s slow and bureaucratic response to Ukrainians seeking safety in the UK.

The letter said: “To date, the government’s response to refugees from Ukraine has fallen short of what can be expected. The government must move much further and much faster in scaling up its responses to the refugee crisis.”

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) has warned of the huge human, social and environmental costs of the war.

It said: “Ukraine will result in death, destruction, more human rights abuses, large-scale refugee movements, and the traumatisation of people.

“Historically we have seen that land disputes on this international scale, apparently fuelled by the need for power and control, affect all our shared futures.

“A conflict of this proportion will also result in driving higher prices of key commodities throughout the world contributing to the increasing levels of poverty and exacerbating the climate change agenda. This affects everybody worldwide.”

The IFSW said the skill and experience of social workers in peacebuilding would be needed.

“We have learnt that a key ingredient in creating the space for people to listen to each other, overcoming people’s insecurity, and equipping them with confidence to re-establish trust, the basis of all good human relationships.”

See page 14

Profit concern in children’s care - CMA

The UK has “sleepwalked into a dysfunctional children’s social care market” where a shortage of places enables private providers to charge excessive fees.

The warning comes from the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) which also raised concern over the “financial resilience” of private equity-funded providers.

The CMA’s *Children’s social care market study* said a shortage of placements means children have to travel far from where they live. It calls for councils to be supported to explore bringing foster care back in-house.

However, it shied away from recommending a ban on private provision or putting limits on profits, saying this would “further reduce the incentives of private providers to invest in creating new capacity”.

Josh MacAlister, chair of England’s Independent Review into Children’s Social Care, endorsed the CMA’s concerns, adding money is “being drained out of the system” by the “market” in social care.

PSW online for full report

Mental health crisis warning

Psychiatrists have urged the government to wake up to the mental health crisis “engulfing the country” as a result of Covid.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists issued the warning after highlighting figures showing a record 4.3 million referrals to mental health services in England during 2021.

See page 16

NEWS

Social workers' role as 'change makers' can help save planet

Social workers are being urged to be activists and help avoid “total societal collapse” caused by looming “climate catastrophe”.

The stark message was delivered at an online event held by the British Association of Social Workers on climate change as part of its annual World Social Work Month.

Speaking at the event, Extinction Rebellion activist Zoe Cohen said: “We have to look ourselves in the eye. By 2030 it will be clear whether we have gone past the tipping point of irreversible catastrophe.

“We have two to three years to save humanity. We are running out of time and the window is closing.

“Now is the time to be really bold and really brave to use all our privileges. I would appeal to anyone to join us in the streets. Risk arrest.

“If you are in any position to take action please do that as well as influencing from the inside.”

Cohen called on BASW to agree a policy for members taking part in non-violent climate demonstrations and use its influence to ensure social workers are not penalised for doing so.

Last month a team of scientists on the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned the world only had a short time to act and that some impacts of global warming were already irreversible.

Without action, scientists believe pollution caused by fossil fuels is set to raise Earth's temperature by three degrees with a devastating impact to life.

Cohen highlighted the now regular occurrence of

extreme weather including last month's storms and flooding in the UK as warning signals.

“Apocalyptic” wildfires in Greece, floods in Germany and the Netherlands, extreme rainfalls in Brazil, floods in Australia and cyclones in Madagascar were other indicators that “climate breakdown” is already happening, she said.

Wars such as that in Ukraine so often had fossil fuels at their core and added to global warming, said Cohen. Climate change also increased the risk of “multiple breadbasket failure” plunging millions into food poverty.

“This is about our economies and societies now,” said Cohen. “It is not just environmental. We are talking about total societal collapse in 20 years.”

Lena Dominelli, a leading social work academic and activist on climate change, said the language needed to change to stress the urgency of the crisis.

“I think the very phrase ‘climate change’ puts people to sleep,” she said. “It means it is something that is evolving and not that serious.

“We need words like ‘climate catastrophe’.”

Dominelli also urged social workers, its representative bodies and trade unions to challenge policymakers and push for action.

“As social workers we do a lot of conscious raising. There are social workers in Extinction Rebellion. We just need to get that message heard.”

Vava Tampa, chair of BASW England, also underlined the role of social workers as “change makers” in avoiding climate disaster.

Looked after children's tips to profession

Don't “nag us”. Arrive on time. Take us to places without wearing your name badge. Be honest, even with bad news. Don't judge us based on our files and don't take it personally if we are having a bad day.

These were some of the tips to social workers from looked after children about how they want to be treated.

They were outlined at an online event titled ‘What makes a good social worker’ run by the Eastern Region Children in Care Council to mark Social Work England's week long celebration of social work.

Young people also highlighted examples of positive social work.

One said: “My social worker's visits are based on my needs not on processes.”

Another said: “My social worker listens to me and always looks at the situation from my perspective.”

High Court bid for teens fails

The High Court has rejected claims ministers discriminated against older looked after teenagers by extending care rights to children up to the age of 15, but no older.

Children's rights charity Article 39 which brought the case said this still left 16 and 17-year-olds living semi-independently in bedsits, flats, shared houses and hostels vulnerable and without sufficient protection.

But in his judgement, Mr Justice Holgate said evidence showed some 16 and 17-year-olds are “suitable for a very independent level of living”.

See PSW online for full report



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

‘Use your gut instinct. Don't do anything you are not supposed to do but do things the way you want to do rather than the way the book is written. Be yourself as much as you can.’

Advice to a newly qualified social worker from a member of the Eastern Region Children in Care Council

NEWS



Guide will educate journalists on the complexity of social work and provide principles for reporting

Responsible reporting of social work guide to stop vilification

A set of guidelines for the media when reporting on cases involving social workers has been drawn up.

It's been spearheaded by BASW members Rosie Meleady and Marie Roome who have both been on the sharp end of unfair press reporting themselves.

Last year PSW published an article by Rosie describing the negative impact on her and her family after being the only professional named in a newspaper's coverage of a tragic case despite her professionalism not being in question.

The senior mental health practitioner said: "After the article I was contacted by loads of different people who had been through something similar. Some had become ill or retired as a result.

"People were also worried that negative media would stop people coming to us for help if they saw us as damaging.

"We clearly will struggle to recruit to a profession where people fear they are going to be thrown under the bus when we are already doing a difficult job. So we thought we must do something collectively to support workers."

The guide is being funded by the Social Workers Union's campaign fund, with the Campaign Collective, a social enterprise organisation, commissioned to help develop it.

A draft document has been drawn up for consultation with key organisations and individuals in the sector with a final version expected this summer to be circulated to media outlets.

Simon Francis, who is leading on the project for the Campaign Collective, said he was keen to hear from other social workers about their experiences.

"One of the things we are interested in is having examples of what they see as inappropriate reporting and what they would have preferred to have seen," he said. "On the other hand, we also want any examples of where they felt the media had dealt with a difficult case well. We want to recognise that in the code too."

The guide will also educate journalists on the complexity of the social work role and includes principles for responsible reporting.

Media vilification and scapegoating has been an issue for social work for decades.

It was instrumental in the unfair dismissal of Sharon Shoesmith as director of children's services in Haringey, the authority where Peter Connelly – 'Baby P' – died. Last year England's chief social workers condemned verbal attacks on social workers following media reports on the trial of the killers of six-year-old Arthur Labinjo-Hughes.

Contact simon.francis@campaigncollective.org

Clinical focus in gender ID unit criticised

The number of referrals to the only gender identity service for children in England and Wales is outstripping its capacity to provide support, a review has found.

The NHS-commissioned Cass Review said a "fundamentally different service model" was needed.

Its interim report also questioned the "clinical model" emphasis of the Gender Identity Development Service within the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust in London.

It said treatment has "not been subjected to some of the usual control measures" expected when innovative new treatments are introduced.

The report said it was vital children and young people also had access to "psychological and social support". It claimed a lack of "open discussion" about gender dysphoria meant there was not sufficient guidance on the best assessment process.

'Shameful' bill is 'anti-refugee'

The Nationality and Borders Bill will make the UK "one of the most anti-refugee countries in the world", a humanitarian charity has warned.

The House of Commons last month rejected amendments to the bill by the House of Lords including the removal of clause 11 which creates a two-tier system, criminalising asylum seekers who arrive in the UK without official clearance.

Doctors without Borders described the rejection as "shameful" at a time "when the devastating impact of war and conflict is absolutely evident".

Have your say on Liberty Protection Safeguards

A 16-week government consultation on changes to the Mental Capacity Act's code of practice which introduces Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) has

been launched. The proposals aim to give individuals and their carers a greater say and extends safeguards to 16 and 17-year-olds in care. Concern, however, has

been raised that the reforms will lead to an increased workload for social workers with LPS extended across a range of settings.

See PSW online for analysis

ENGLAND NEWS



Seven per cent leap in vacancies to five-year high 'should come as no surprise', says Maris Stratulis

Covid toll cited as vacancy rate is on rise in children's services

The strain of working during Covid-19 was cited by the British Association of Social Workers as partly to blame for a seven per cent annual leap in vacancies among children and family social workers in England.

Social workers delaying retiring or moving jobs to continue supporting children during the pandemic were also reasons for the rise by the Department for Education (DfE).

On 30 September 2021 there were 6,500 full-time equivalent children and family social work posts vacant – equal to 16.7 per cent of the 32,502 total. That compares to 6,100 vacancies on the same date in 2020. The vacancy rate is the highest since 2017 when comparable data was first collated.

Sickness absences were also up from 2.9 per cent to 3.1 per cent, though this does not account for reduced capacity due to staff shielding or self-isolating.

The heavy toll of Covid has been highlighted in several surveys, including a study by the DfE itself.

Its ongoing analysis of retention and career progression found 60 per cent of children's social workers felt stressed by their job between September and December 2020, up nine per cent compared with November 2018 to March 2019. More than

two-thirds said anxiety, complexity of cases and workloads had increased as a result of Covid.

A survey by the Social Workers Union (SWU) and LBC Radio earlier this year found 58 per cent of 1,000 social workers said their caseloads were unmanageable. Most (94 per cent) expected referrals to increase as a result of the pandemic, with 71 per cent predicting to be "inundated".

A snapshot survey of 213 social workers by the Social Workers' Benevolent Trust last June found three-quarters emotionally and mentally exhausted.

Even before the pandemic, a working conditions survey by the British Association of Social Workers and SWU in 2018 found nearly 40 per cent of more than 3,421 social workers were thinking of quitting the profession due to stress and workloads.

Maris Stratulis, national director of BASW England, said the latest vacancy rate rise among social workers with children and families should come as no surprise.

"We know from our own members the huge impact Covid-19 has had and continues to have on social workers, not only professionally but personally."

The DfE said there are now "more social workers than ever" and average caseloads had dropped.

Link us to all schools to lift attendance

A social worker should be part of an integrated team of multi-agency workers linked to every school, BASW England said after new figures revealed one in five pupils across the country regularly fails to attend classes.

Research by England's Children's Commissioner estimates nearly 1.8 million pupils are persistently absent, missing more than ten per cent of school sessions.

A further 124,000 pupils failed to turn up for more than half of the last autumn term.

Children's Commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza said reasons included bullying, struggles with anxiety and other mental health issues and special educational needs not being identified or supported.

At the end of last year, an education committee of MPs spoke of more than 100,000 "ghost children" who had not returned to school since the pandemic.

BASW England national director Maris Stratulis said: "The amount of children missing from schools is concerning and we know it has increased since the pandemic. Having social workers as part of integrated teams, including education welfare staff and primary community mental health workers, attached to schools could make a difference in improving attendance."

See PSW online for full story

'Adultification' of strip searched black girl aged 15 was racist - BASW

The strip search of a 15-year-old Black girl on school premises highlights that the "reality of racism is ever present in our education, criminal justice and

other systems", BASW said.

The family of the girl are suing the school and the police. In a statement the association said: "The findings of the safeguarding

report cite racism as a factor in the unlawful strip search. It specifically notes 'adultification' as a key factor, in which Black children are perceived as older

than they are, and as a result are not afforded the protections and safeguards they would receive if they were white."

See PSW online for viewpoint

SCOTLAND NEWS

'The creation of a National Care Service offers a unique opportunity to reform and shape a new future for social work in Scotland'
- MSP Fulton MacGregor's motion on World Social Work Day



MSPs called upon to recognise 'critical role' of social workers

A motion about the importance of social work was put to the Scottish parliament to mark World Social Work Day as part of moves to urge MSPs to recognise and address the challenges faced by the profession.

The motion was put forward by MSP Fulton MacGregor, co-cenator of Scotland's newly-formed Cross-Party Group on Social Work.

Signed by more than 30 MSPs, it called on parliament to recognise social workers in Scotland and globally for the "invaluable contribution they make to supporting communities and the difference they make to the lives of individuals and families".

The motion also urged MSPs to acknowledge the "critical role of social workers, particularly during the pandemic" and the impact of high caseloads.

This, it said, was having an impact on the mental wellbeing of social workers "and their capacity to effectively protect adults and children".

The motion expressed concern that social work has increasingly being forced to focus on "high-risk crisis and statutory intervention rather than early intervention and prevention".

It was introduced in the Holyrood Parliament at a critical time for the profession, with proposals to create a National Care Service (NCS) having the potential to redefine practice.

The motion described the once-in-a-generation reform as "a unique opportunity to reform and shape a new future for social work in Scotland".

However, this would only be achieved with engagement from the profession, it stressed.

Alison Bavidge, national director of the Scottish Association of Social Work, said there was a need to "strengthen" the profession.

"Many social workers are telling us that they're feeling overwhelmed and struggling to cope, with several long-standing problems around caseloads and working conditions now exasperated by the pandemic," she said.

Bavidge called for a focus on intervention and time for social workers to build relationships.

The Scottish government is hosting a series of online monthly meetings for social workers on the NCS proposals which will be attended by SASW. To raise issues or attend email scotland@basw.co.uk.

Caseloads of social workers is put under scrutiny

The number of cases held by social workers is being investigated by the Scottish government.

It has commissioned Social Work Scotland to carry out a survey of caseloads. Findings

will be used to inform the development of the National Care Service and a new National Social Work Agency to oversee workforce planning, training, qualifications and professional development.

Minister for wellbeing and social care Kevin Stewart said in a letter to SASW that he hopes the findings "will lead to recommendations for protected time for development and learning".

'Unintended' risks in Covid bill - warning

SASW has warned proposals to extend virtual attendance in courts could discriminate against people without digital skills or technology.

It also warned MSPs to consider other "unintended consequences" of the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill that gives ministers new powers to respond to public health emergencies.

Responding to a consultation, SASW highlighted the impact of isolation on mental health; vulnerable adults and children not being able to access support services during lockdowns and the pressure on families and safeguarding risks during school shutdowns.

Caring worker wins mental health award

A social worker whose approach was described as "warm, caring and compassionate" was awarded the Mental Health Officer Practice Award 2022.

Meredith Ahearn, of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, received the accolade at SASW's annual Mental Health Officer (MHO) Conference.

She said: "I really admire the work all MHOs and all social workers have put into supporting our communities during the pandemic."

"It's been a multidisciplinary team and I know I never would have made it through the past two years without my colleagues in my Edinburgh team."



The professional association for
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SHAPE BASW, SHAPE THE FUTURE

Finance & Organisational Development Committee Vacancies

BASW needs to keep developing to ensure we are strong and effective for the future of social work. The Finance & Organisational Development Committee keeps our finances on track and also considers and recommends developments in terms of staffing, organisational structure, governance and new initiatives. As a member of the Committee you will be at the heart of ensuring BASW continues on its successful journey of development. The Committee reports to BASW Council with its recommendations.

Equalities and Diversity: BASW is committed to an action plan on equality, diversity and inclusion to make the Association's leadership more representative and diverse.

Eligible members from different backgrounds and identities, and any stage of career, are encouraged to apply. We aim to be inclusive and remove barriers to involvement based on age, disability, sex, gender/gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy/maternity, marriage and civil partnership.

APPLICANTS

Applications are invited for vacancies on this vital UK Standing Committee. Candidates should have some experience in financial, organisational development, business development or human resources management.

Successful applicants will serve on the Committee for two years and will be eligible to stand for election for a further two-year period.

Meetings take place four times a year by videoconference. There may be a requirement to hold additional short meetings from time to time. Travel and other reasonable expenses will be covered for any face to face meetings

Terms of Reference for the Committee and application forms can be found at www.basw.co.uk/jobs/work-with-us.

If you are interested in this vacancy please send your completed application form to governance@basw.co.uk by **the closing date of 25th April 2022**.

Please call 07925 306515 if you would like to speak to someone informally about standing for this Committee.



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Y gymdeithas i waith cymdeithasol
a gweithwyr cymdeithasol

An exciting opportunity has arisen for 5 BASW Cymru member positions on our National Standing Committee. We are looking to recruit a new Chair and Vice Chair, these can both be shared roles; 2 x committee members and 1 Student post.

ARE YOU passionate about social work and making a difference to the lives of vulnerable people? Committed to inclusivity, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice, equal opportunities and embracing diversity?

Interested in shaping and influencing the future work of the BASW Cymru Committee?

Keen to be an advocate for the profession through campaigning activity?

IF YES, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Please apply by May 6th 2022 and nominations will be posted on the BASW Cymru website (job vacancies section) with a closing date of electronic voting by June 12th 2022.

Candidates are elected for two years and can stand again for re-election for a further two-year period.

Travel and overnight expenses will be paid; there is additional financial assistance for the position of Chair.

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Ydych chi'n awyddus i fod yn eiriolwr dros y proffesiwn drwy weithgarwch ymgyrchu?

OS YDYCH, RYDYM AM GLYWED GENNYCH

Gwnewch gais erbyn Mai 6ed ed 2022 a chaiff enwebiadau eu postio ar wefan BASW Cymru (adran swyddi gweigion) gyda dyddiad cau ar gyfer pleidleisio electronig erbyn Mehefin 12fed 2022.

Etholir ymgeiswyr am ddwy flynedd a gallant sefyll eto i gael eu hail-ethol am gyfnod pellach o ddwy flynedd.

Bydd costau teithio a threuliau nos yn cael eu talu; mae cymorth ariannol ychwanegol ar gyfer swydd y Cadeirydd.

WALES NEWS

'Hosting Jimmy Carr in Cardiff is not consistent with our values of inclusion, tolerance and sanctuary'

Call to cancel comic's gig after racial insult to Sinti Gypsies

Social workers were among campaigners calling on a Cardiff venue to cancel a show by comedian Jimmy Carr.

The protest followed a joke by Carr about the genocide of Romany and Sinti Gypsy people during the Holocaust in *His Dark Material* Christmas special broadcast on Netflix.

The comic was due to perform at Cardiff's St David's Hall on 28 March. However, a letter sent to the venue signed by race campaigners including the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Social Work Association (GRTSWA), demanded Carr be removed from the schedule. Carr dismissed critics of his humour as "cancel culture".

The letter, signed by the heads of 14 organisations including BASW Cymru chair Neeta Baicher, says: "This shows a fragrant disregard of the impact and harm his words have caused and a blatant attempt to cast himself in the role of a victim."

"Wales has an ambition to become an anti-racist country by 2030 and is a declared 'nation of sanctuary' to all those, including Roma people, seeking refuge from discrimination and oppression."

"Hosting Jimmy Carr in Cardiff is not consistent with our values of inclusion, tolerance and sanctuary."

Protesters urged the venue to stand in solidarity with Romani and Traveller people, many of whom "have been indigenous to Wales for centuries".

Plaid Cymru said the show shouldn't go ahead without an apology from Carr.

An advert on St David's Hall's website advises: "Jimmy's brand new show contains jokes about all kinds of terrible things. Terrible things that might have affected you or people you know and love. But they're just jokes – they are not the terrible things."

"Having political correctness at a comedy show is like having health and safety at a rodeo."

The venue said it had been assured by Carr's management that he won't repeat the Netflix joke. It also said it would light the hall in the colours of the Romani flag during the performance.

Allison Hulmes, national director of BASW Cymru and co-founder of GRTSWA, said: "While we welcome their solidarity, St David's Hall cannot guarantee his words and should not be giving a platform to a racist who has caused such harm to a minority and oppressed community."

"This is not about 'cancel culture'; this about taking a stand against racism. We remind Cardiff St David's Hall of their duties under the Equality Act 2010."

Hulmes added: "We continue in our call to have the performance cancelled and will protest outside the Hall if this doesn't happen."

The show was due to go ahead as PSW went to press.

'Feelings of helplessness' - service users

Worries over the delivery of social services in Wales have been sounded by service users.

Academics across four universities in Wales produced a Welsh government-commissioned evaluation called *Expectations and Experiences: Service User and Carer perspectives on the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act*.

The original act set out to produce "transformative changes" across social service policy, regulation and delivery.

But service users and carers expressed frustration at the social care system, which could lead to "desperation, distress and feeling helpless". An absence of effective multi-agency working was the rule rather than the exception, with service users and carers wanting more say.

Some social services departments did not return calls and emails, respondents said, and some social workers lacked empathy, contributing to a sense of isolation. The experiences were described by report authors as "sub-optimal" with the pandemic, global pressures and growing demand all blamed.

Get the priorities right - chance to have say

Social workers and other professionals and families and young people who are in touch with services are being asked to identify their priorities for improving care and support.

Two surveys have been launched by Social Care Wales and Together with Health and Care Research Wales.

Findings will be used to identify ten priority topics for further research into how "strengths-based approaches" can be used to improve delivery of support.

Social workers and those they work with are being encouraged to complete the surveys.

Social Care Wales said: "We want to hear from a

wide range of people.

"The real-life experiences and views of families and social care practitioners are at the heart of this project."

The deadline for completing either survey is 14 April. Search for 'developing family support services' on the Social Care Wales website to complete the surveys.

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SOCIAL WORK WITH ROMANI AND TRAVELLER COMMUNITIES SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

LAUNCH EVENT ON WORLD ROMANI DAY FRIDAY 8TH APRIL 2022 (12-1.30PM)

As social workers, we are responsible for championing human rights and
challenging oppression and discrimination – the human rights of Romani and
Traveller families have been disregarded for too long and Romani and Traveller
communities need us to do our job and influence much needed change.

The Social Work with Romani and Traveller
Communities Special Interest Group (SIG)
has been set up to do just that. It is an
opportunity for social workers to come
together and stand in solidarity to bring
about fairness and justice for Romani and
Traveller Communities.

So, if this speaks to you and you're a social
worker keen to develop anti-racist social
work practice and address the devastating
impact of discrimination against Romani
and Traveller communities, please join us
at the launch event.



To book visit
www.basw.co.uk/events

BASW
The professional association for
social work and social workers

FORMAL NOTICE

SWU 2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FRIDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 2022

The 2022 Annual General Meeting of the Social Workers Union will be held
online and joining instructions can be found at www.swu-union.org.uk

As per SWU rules, the SWU Executive shall have power to make and provide a
provision for an AGM meetings to be held using electronic means, and to provide for
electronic communication for members, including facilitating provision for members
to vote and speak by appropriate electronic means.

THE TIMETABLE IS AS FOLLOWS:

29-7-2022	Deadline for receipt of motions
02-9-2022	Notice of any proposed amendment to rules given in writing to members
16-9-2022	Deadline for amendments to motions

Motions must be signed by 10 members and submitted to the
Executive Committee by the above date.

Amendments to motions must also be signed by 10 members.

Please visit www.swu-union.org.uk to register your attendance.

Entry to this event is FREE for SWU Members.

We are always willing to assist union members with the drafting of motions.
Please send an email to joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk for such assistance.
Motions should be submitted by email to joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk

Membership numbers must be stated and will be checked.

The Social Workers Union, Wellesley House,
37 Waterloo Road, Birmingham B2 5PP

www.swu-union.org.uk

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BASW NI call as Stormont apologises for historic abuse against vulnerable children in Northern Ireland

Enable us to build relationships to help stop future child abuse

Social workers should be given the time to develop trusting relationships with children to help better protect them, BASW NI stressed in wake of a formal state apology to survivors of historic child abuse.

Statements on behalf of ministers from all parties were read in Stormont last month apologising for the abuse of hundreds of children at Church and state-run schools.

It came in the wake of findings from the 2017 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry of widespread physical, emotional and sexual mistreatment at 22 homes and residential institutions between 1922 and 1995.

The inquiry recommended compensation was paid to victims, a permanent memorial created at Stormont and a public apology given.

A minute's silence was held for survivors during the session in Stormont.

Education minister Michelle McIlveen said: "Today we say that we are sorry. Whilst in the care of the state, you were made vulnerable. We did not ensure all our residential homes were filled with love and safety.

"We did not ensure these homes were all free from hunger and cold, from mistreatment and abuse. It was the state's responsibility to do that, and it failed you."

Health minister Robin Swann praised the "courage" of survivors who had told their story adding: "Systemic abuse should never have happened – we are truly sorry that did happen and we commit fully to ensuring that it will never happen again."

The inquiry heard from nearly 500 survivors of abuse at facilities run by the Catholic Church, local authorities, the Church of Ireland and children's charity Barnardo's.

Among them was the state-run Kincora Boys' Home in east Belfast.

Fiona Ryan, Northern Ireland's commissioner for survivors of institutional childhood abuse, said: "The fact that the inquiry happened is due to the victims and survivors themselves who fought to be seen and heard by an officialdom that was largely blind and deaf to the abuse they had suffered, to their anger and their ongoing pain."

Survivors were forced to fight a long campaign to get the state to recognise the abuse they had endured as children.

Carolyn Ewart, national director for BASW NI, said the apology was welcome but also long overdue.

She added: "The suffering inflicted on children and young people, whom the state should have protected, is unimaginable.

"Much has been learned in recent years and while systems and structures have changed beyond recognition, it is vital that social workers are, at every stage, awake to the needs of each child in their care.

"Ensuring this is the case requires social work services to be appropriately resourced so social workers have time to spend with children and young people, listening to them and building the relationships that are at the centre of making sure their best interests are upheld."

Social work's manifesto for May elections

A manifesto for social work has been given to all political parties in Northern Ireland ahead of the May elections.

The manifesto, produced by BASW NI, has five priorities it believes will improve the working lives of social workers and services for the people they care for.

They are to reduce bureaucracy; improve recruitment and retention; increase funding for social services; implement an anti-poverty strategy and for a proposed statutory duty of candour to apply at organisational rather than individual level.

BASW NI national director Carolyn Ewart said: "If delivered, our five priorities would ensure social workers are resourced and supported to meet the needs of people who use services."

BASW NI's first election hustings will take place on 6 April. See BASW's website.

Looked after children alert

Not enough is being done to support looked after children, Stormont's health committee has said.

The warning came in the wake of figures obtained by the *Belfast Telegraph* indicating 17 children died in care settings in Northern Ireland over the last five years.

A ten-year strategy for looked after children was launched in 2020.

Health committee member Colin McGrath said an interim report on implementation is needed.

IN FOCUS

Refugees at Home was there when the Syrian crisis escalated in 2015, and was there again for Afghans fleeing the Taliban in 2021. But Sara Nathan, founder of the charity which specialises in finding host families for refugees, says she has never seen anything like the public response to Ukraine.

She's calling on social workers to volunteer and help assess hosts – particularly in London and other major cities around the UK. Home visitors carry out initial assessments and meet host families, either in person or online, acting as a link during the vital first few weeks.

The government's Homes for Ukraine scheme saw 100,000 expressions of interest in its first day of operation.

But Sara is keen to point out that these are just that – expressions of interest. Meanwhile, her organisation has taken 8,000 firm applications from members of the public willing to go through a detailed process to become a host.

"There's a difference," she says, "because our process is quite serious and concrete, and involves references, confirming how many people live in your house, how many bathrooms, what languages are spoken.

"So we find ourselves in the position where we have 8,000 actual applications and not enough home visitors."

Refugees at Home currently hosts people from more than 75 countries, many of whom have fled war and persecution. Around half of volunteer home visitors are social workers, the rest made up of health visitors, occupational therapists, GPs and probation officers.

"We saw this on a smaller scale when the Taliban took Kabul last year," Sara continues. "We had 1,500 firm applications. But the problem was that the Home Office put all the refugees into hotels, and many of them are still there. So we could do nothing to help, despite having more than a thousand people signed up to our scheme."

Sara believes the government is aware the hotel debacle should not be repeated, and is at least trying to respond to the current crisis differently. She expresses some frustration at the speed of the

Helping to make a home for Ukrainians

The public response to the war in Ukraine has been unprecedented... and with applications to host refugees flooding in, **Louise Palfreyman** speaks to one charity putting out an urgent appeal for volunteer social workers

response: "As we don't know exactly what the government is doing, we have started hosting. We are already dealing with people coming over on Ukraine Family Scheme visa, where family in the UK hasn't been able to put people up and so hosts are needed.

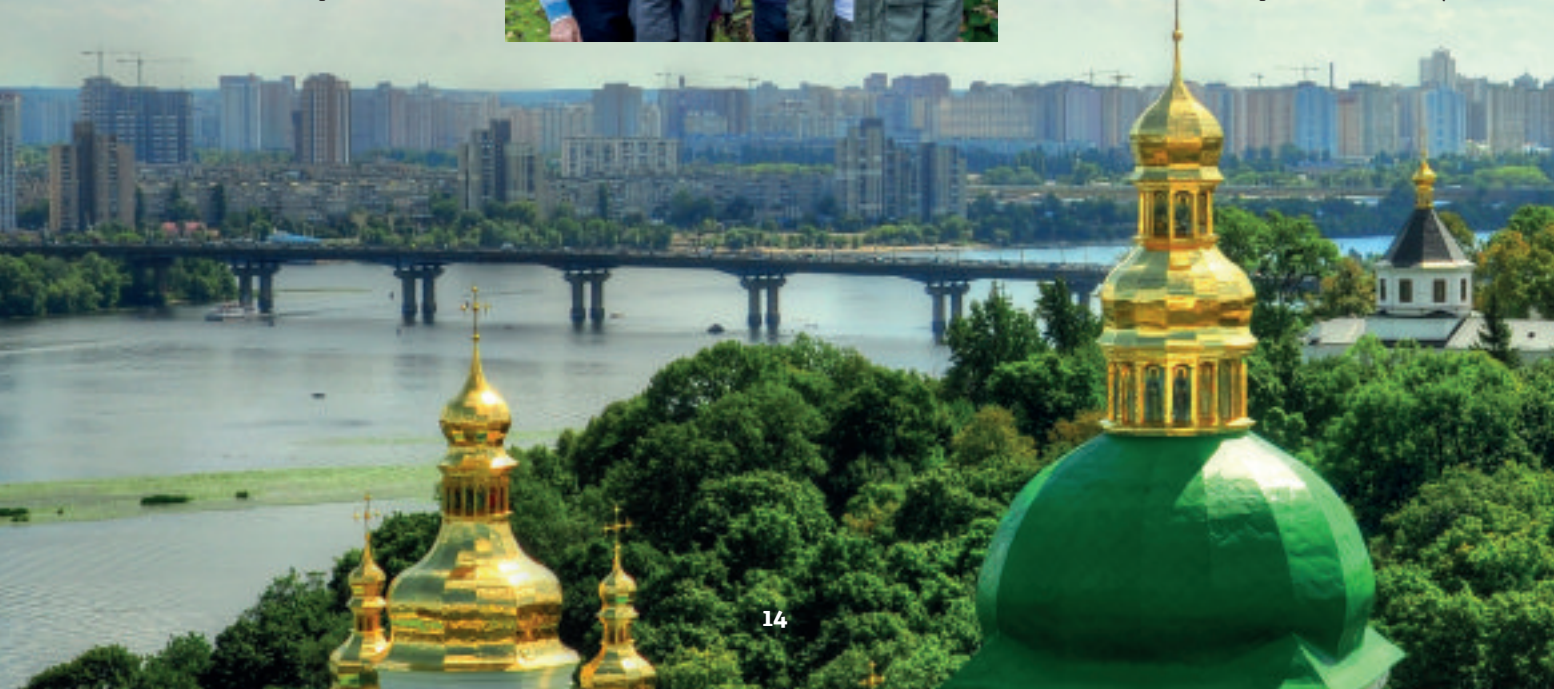
"In terms of other visa arrangements, we just don't know yet. I do think a visa waiver would be the best thing, as in many other countries in Europe."

Sara and Malcolm with their Refugees from Home guests

How it works

Concern has been raised whether non-statutory organisations supporting refugees are able to carry out the appropriate risk assessments and follow-up visits to ensure people are not exploited. Refugees at Home says it has a safeguarding ethos at its core that seeks to protect everyone involved. There are three basic questions at assessment stage:

- Is the accommodation as stated on the application form?
- Are all members of a potential host family



IN FOCUS

in agreement about hosting?

- Is the applicant clear that there will be no exploitation of the situation i.e. no rent charged?

Sara says: "It's crucial that everyone in the family agrees they want to host, and charging rent is not permitted."

Volunteer social workers are given a home visits handbook. A visit typically takes 40 minutes. They are informed when a host has been matched with a placement and often perform a follow-up call. There is also a buddy system so new volunteers can talk to those who are more experienced.

Becoming a home visitor

Marion Kafetz is a retired social worker who has carried out home visits for Refugees at Home. She is also a safeguarding trustee for the organisation.

"We tend to use social workers and health visitors as the main volunteer professionals. It's important to note you aren't going in as a social worker though – you are just using your transferable skills.

"In the first part of the visit, we look at the accommodation, going through a checklist to see if there's adequate space, a decent kitchen, a washing machine, smoke alarm, the quality of the bedroom..."

"I went to someone once who wanted to give up their living room as a bedroom. But they were intending to screen it off down the middle and still watch television in the evening, so that wasn't going to work.

"Sometimes there are other issues. There was a man who wanted to host but he was a bit unreliable in meeting up, and when I followed up a reference it transpired he had his own vulnerabilities with his mental health.

"We look, in the second part of the visit, at the relationship aspect of hosting – can hosts help with form filling, emotional support?

"Hosts need to understand that refugees see them as powerful figures and will be wanting to please the host.

"Hosts mustn't enter into any inappropriate relationships other than hosting. And in safeguarding terms, guests need a safe and secure environment. We look at whether there may be



Above, hosts Simon and Shoshana hosting Faraj from Syria and, below, host Lily with her Refugee at Home guest

trafficking risks, or other significant issues, and we look at hosts' motives too.

"We want to see all members of a host family during a visit, how they interact. Usually people have good motives. The thing to ask yourself after a visit is, 'Have I seen anything that gives me any reason to change my view?'"

Positive force

Sara is keen to emphasise the altruism at the heart of volunteering: "Our volunteers find working with us is different from normal social work. Where we differ is that we are going in on a positive.

"So often in their work, social workers are involved because something has gone wrong. With our organisation the problem areas are quite small. Plus, you are able to work from home, do as much or as little as you are able, fit it in at evenings or weekends.

"For social workers who may not have the space to host a family themselves, being a volunteer home visitor could be an ideal way of helping out. Many will be retired or on a career break and can offer more time than others, but even helping out once a week is

welcome. We are really keen to get on top of our applications as quickly as we can."

Having been a host herself on 27 occasions, Sara offers a final insight: "People feel very insecure and traumatised for a long time after they have fled their country. And often these crises don't end. Syria hasn't ended. Afghanistan hasn't ended.

"When people come to the UK, they crave community, connectivity, their own food and culture, people who speak their language.

"Schemes like Refugees at Home offer a much better solution than ending up in a hotel. You get the social capital of hosts, learning a new culture, being able to cook in a kitchen, and linking up with a wider refugee community. This is why we place emphasis on big cities. We don't want people to end up isolated. In London alone we have more than 1,000 applications to match."

To find out how to become a home visitor, visit www.refugeesathome.org/hv-application or call 0300 365 4724.



IN FOCUS



Mental health in troubled times

The outbreak of war in Europe has been sudden and shocking. And for social workers trying to support people with psychosis, it presents the threat of relapse in people already vulnerable after the pandemic. **Louise Palfreyman** spoke to AMHPs around the country...

Cases of psychosis are on the rise in the UK and now that another global crisis has erupted in Ukraine, the number of people in severe mental distress is expected to climb even further.

There was a 29 per cent leap in people referred to mental health services for their first suspected episode of psychosis in the year ending April 2021, according to NHS data.

Tom Pollard is a social worker within NHS mental health services and says that from a social work perspective, mental health problems are intrinsically connected to social experiences.

He believes social workers should be particularly alert to how world events such as the war in Ukraine can impact on mental health.

Tom explains: "People with mental health problems can often be socially isolated, so may not have had a chance to process these issues with someone else. Talking through these issues, and suggesting ways to find respite from the intensive media coverage may help someone to feel less overwhelmed by the scale and significance of the events that are unfolding."

The signs of relapse in people with schizophrenia and other psychosis-related conditions include feeling paranoid and under threat, seeing and hearing things, and holding unusual beliefs about the world.

Tom says: "Given how unsettling current world events are for all of us, the impact can be particularly profound for

someone who is already finding it difficult to make sense of the world around them and their place in it."

Keri Rennison, an approved mental health practitioner (AMHP) lead and social worker in the north east, agrees: "People with psychosis-related conditions can have an altered sense of perception and, due to intense media coverage, world events can become part of their reality.

"Their altered perceptions of world events can be long-lasting and continue even after the event has subsided."

Keri believes media coverage can hamper recovery. She too is expecting to see an increase in referrals: "The intense coverage by the media – and also what is accessible on social media platforms – could impede the recovery of services users who experience mental health difficulties."

Clara French works as an AMHP in the south of England, carrying out Mental Health Act assessments. She has seen first-hand how recent world events have had an impact.

"I saw a lady recently who hadn't been taking her medication, who was terribly worried about human rights abuses around the world, who had become delusional. We assessed her under the Mental Health Act, but I didn't make an application to have her detained, and initially that proved to be a positive because later she rang the office and said she felt we had been kind, and that she would consider taking her medication again. But she proved elusive and became increasingly distressed.

"Her delusions were very intense. Over the weeks she deteriorated, shouting in the street, getting banned from shops. I became part of her delusional system and there was no alternative than to apply for a section 135(1) warrant, assessing her in her home and bringing her into hospital."

Clara, like Tom and Keri, believes that exposure to rolling 24-hour news takes its toll.

"The rolling news cycle feels very immediate," she says. "It's very scary. It makes it feel very real and very frightening.

"One woman had completely shut herself away from reality,



from family and friends, and had formed an attachment to her GP, her safe person. She thought she was going to marry him. It was her way of coping with the world.”

Clara is worried that social work is losing its meaningful connections with people, connections that can be built over many years. Her long career in social work has seen her engage in ongoing therapeutic work with inpatients, their families, and outpatients.

It is this ongoing work that is now not so visible, she feels. Social worker colleagues talk about Care Act assessments, eligibility criteria, funding panels and Court of Protection work.

But for people with complex conditions such as schizophrenia, continuity of support in the community is extremely important.

The police can sometimes be the only consistent input people experiencing psychosis receive. Clara writes emails to thank colleagues who have been helpful, and finds she writes a lot of them to the police, who can be particularly sensitive when working with young people they pick up on S136.

Clara remembers how back in the 1980s she helped run a

drop-in club in London. “We held it from 7pm to 10pm on a Monday evening and it had a huge catchment area. Loads of people would come. It was a social club, effectively, but also a space where we could pick up that someone perhaps wasn’t so well.”

The atomised nature of modern life, with people increasingly living alone, means it’s hard, Clara believes, to pick up the early signs of psychosis.

“I worry that we don’t know what goes on so much now,” she says. The closure of local mental health wards has heightened the vulnerability of people prone to relapses, Clara believes. “These were friendly wards, wards people would actually want to go into, wards that would take people back, day hospitals, that’s what we are missing.”

Tom agrees, saying: “One of the major issues with mental health services is that it can often feel like people are only receiving attention and support when they hit a crisis point, due to levels of demand and staff capacity.

“It may be that current world events play a part in destabilising someone’s mental health, but services do not become aware of this until they have experienced a major relapse. Trying to ensure someone has wider social support beyond mental health services may help to mitigate the impact of negative experiences, but can also mean that services are alerted when someone is struggling and additional support is needed.”

Clara lists some of the additional support that has either closed or is under threat in her area: “There used to be a therapeutic community locally, which was great in terms of both the space – there were female-only wards – and the social element. Other places run as therapeutic communities, which helped a lot of people, have closed.

“We also have a very good ward at a local hospital that is currently threatened with closure and relocation.”

Despite the cuts to services and the closures, there is still good work out there, Clara acknowledges. “I’ve seen psychologists doing great work with young people, using CBT and DBT. And community treatment orders can be absolutely the right thing for some people in that they can come into hospital early and their condition re-stabilised to prevent a spiral of huge deterioration.”

But she concludes: “I sometimes find myself saying, ‘I need humanity...’ It’s something I think we may have lost.”

Clara is expressing her own views which do not necessarily reflect those of her employer or any other organisation

FACT FILE

- › Mental health services received a record 4.3 million referrals during 2021 according to the Royal College of Psychiatrists
- › There were 3.3 million referrals to adult services and 1 million referrals of under-18s in England
- › The NHS delivered 1.8 million consultations in December alone
- › 1.4 million people are currently waiting for mental health treatment
- › Hundreds of adults are being sent miles away for treatment due to lack of beds
- › The Royal College of Psychiatrists is calling on government to ‘wake up’ to the crisis
- › It wants commitment to a fully-funded recovery plan for mental health services and a long-term workforce plan

FURTHER RESOURCES

hearing-voices.org
carersuk.org
nationalparanoianetwork.org
rethink.org
samaritans.org
mind.org.uk

IN FOCUS



In a more complex world, we must get better at working with complexity

Covid-19 has underlined the ‘messiness’ of life. This, in turn, highlights a need for systems that empower social workers to use their skills and knowledge to support adults rather than just assess and care manage them, say **Gavin Butler** and **Hayley Eccles**

It would be hard to say that human beings are becoming more complex. But the inequalities and structural challenges they face and the changing technology and thresholds they have to interact with certainly appear to be.

Social work should be person-centred and dynamic, but our systems often aren’t. As the pandemic progresses, we are seeing the impact on our professional landscape: the effects of isolation, complex mental health problems, the long-term physical effects and economic consequences.

The 2019 document *Role and responsibilities: Adult Principal Social Worker (PSW)* sets out the responsibilities of the adult principal social worker (APSW). Among key responsibilities listed are to “advise the DASS [director of adult social services] on complex safeguarding cases” and “advise the DASS and wider council members on other complex and potentially controversial cases”.

‘Non-standard problems

Under the heading ‘Complexity’, the document sets out the main legislation and refers to “non-standard problems”. It is hard to quantify how much APSW time is spent on complexity but our experience is that it is significant, and complexity is increasing in volume, variety and severity.

To try to understand and describe the nature of the complexity we are seeing in social work with adults, we have to look beyond matters that might seem obviously complex but already have significant legal oversight.

For example, someone subject to a section 37 or section

41 of the Mental Health Act (MHA) might have needs that can be justifiably described as complex, but the case management and decision hierarchies are likely to be very structured.

However, a homeless person with substance misuse issues and a brain injury – especially where there is no local multi-agency pathway – may find a confused and uncertain professional approach to the assessment of their needs.

They are likely to be described as “not engaging” or as being closed to services as they did not attend a set number of appointments. We need to reflect on who defines the rules for engagement and what alternatives are available to the rules and boundaries for non-engagement.

Conversely, over-attendance is seen as problematic in some circumstances. Are 15 attendances to A&E not a sign that someone is engaging or seeking to be supported?

Examples of “non-standard problems” include young people approaching the age of 18 who have been in care, with significant interventions and restrictions from children’s services but who have no “physical or mental impairment or illness” and will often only meet one of the eligibility criteria set out in the Care Act (almost certainly ‘Developing and maintaining family or other personal relationships’).

The 2021 *Bridging the Gap* document from Research in Practice with Adults promotes what we might call a maximalist approach to the Care Act in these cases, using the wellbeing principle to protect people from abuse or neglect.

But that same act says that assessment follows from an illness or disability, often leaving practitioners to make case-by-case decisions, weighing up whether early investment is likely to

IN FOCUS

avoid or defer a more significant intervention.

Other “non-standard problems” include many issues now described as safeguarding: people at risk of radicalisation whose own vulnerabilities may be going un-assessed; people with acquired brain injury or who have a history of trauma; forms of exploitation like survival sex and cuckooing; an emergent diagnosis of personality disorder; rough sleepers with undiagnosed – but often severe – mental health problems.

Beyond that, we are seeing that to address issues around substance misuse, problematic relationships and homelessness means we also have to look at how we compensate for the engagement and stimulus that may have formed part of that lifestyle.

For example, during the pandemic, the ‘Everybody in’ initiative promoted increased engagement with homeless people sleeping rough. This promoted the mental health of many of these people and aided understanding of mental health systems and legislation to colleagues in housing and substance misuse.

The challenge to social workers in this setting has been to develop themselves *as resources*, rather than just assessing and care managing. Debates about forensic skills, therapeutic interventions, establishing small goals and doing more relational work have been refreshing and inspiring, but have also tested systems and practice calibrated so closely to the Care Act world of assessment, provision of care and review.

Risks and rights

Another area of work on complexity is people with autism and no (or a very low level of) learning disability. Again, workers have been challenged to develop skills in coaching and mentoring, in promoting technology, self-directed support and using community resources.

We have seen an increased level of debate about risks and rights, too, with social workers sometimes having conflict about the ‘gilded cage’ argument – for example women subject to awful abuse and exploitation who lack or have fluctuating capacity on care and support decisions.

Often these capacity assessments are very finely balanced, undertaken with individuals who have had little experience of positive relationships and minimal sex education, and informed by the ‘longitudinal’ view of capacity.

Perhaps we are more confident that we can make a strong case for a community Deprivation of Liberty order via the Court of Protection in cases like this to keep people safe. But we also know it requires sacrifices in other areas of their liberty.

It is probable that none of this is new human behaviour, and austerity and the pandemic are highlighting issues and clearing the fog that has been masked by a care management approach to social work which doesn’t always allow for messiness and complexity.

Are we recognising that as life becomes more complex, people are too? That as communities and systems we have to move, shape and respond to ever-changing landscapes; that we need to be more open to thinking and looking outside of rigid categories? Or perhaps we are just drawing more people into services, widening the net and thinning the mesh. Local, regional and national discussions around what ‘complex’, ‘non-standard’ and ‘potentially controversial’ mean would be helpful, perhaps with a view to drawing together



Hayley Eccles
and Gavin
Butler



some case studies and considering what statistics, analysis and policy development might help to enable the system to respond rather than react.

Local authorities have different escalation and decision support mechanisms that could be reviewed for effectiveness and then shared for reflection and learning. There’s a lot to welcome in these new challenges. As one very experienced social worker said recently: “It’s like social work was 25 years ago”. They felt a renewed sense of personal agency and investment in the work.

A new definition

To that end a proposed definition of complexity that lies beyond contextual, complex and transitional safeguarding could look something like:

Problems presented to adult social care that:

1. *Relate to issues outside a defined illness or disability and personal care needs immediately arising from them*
2. *Requires skills, knowledge and intervention from the social worker beyond assessment and care planning*

All this would require more engagement in co-production to develop services to address what we are trying to describe as ‘complex’, but many people might just experience as life.

We need to challenge ourselves to think outside the box and meet people where they are. If we continue to do what we have always done, we will get what we have always got, which has left some people outside and on the edge of communities looking in at a system they cannot reach.

Gavin Butler is an adults principal social worker with Cheshire West and Chester Council. Hayley Eccles is a social worker and head of adult strategic safeguarding at Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

**‘Are we
recognising
that as life
becomes
more
complex,
people are
too?’**

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When Amara Belmore contacted BASW's advice and representation service about her lived experience of racism as a Black social worker she was assigned Lindsey Huxtable-

Dowd to support her.

Shahid Naqvi spoke to them both about their 14-month fight for justice

Lindsey Huxtable-Dowd, a senior practitioner with BASW's advice and representation service, makes a startling observation: "My caseload is predominantly non-white and most of my colleagues have a similar experience."

Given that less than 30 per cent of social workers in the UK are non-white, this might suggest something is going wrong in the workplace.

Amara Belmore believes so. She spoke out about the way she felt she was being treated differently as a Black service manager with her employer.

"There had been issues raised prior to that regarding my relationship with team members, communications, a feeling that you get as a Black worker where you know you are being discriminated against," she says.

"It is a feeling, an experience, and just because I can't show you it, doesn't mean I haven't experienced it.

"Because unless someone is a blatant racist, they will never come up to you and say 'you Black this, or you Black that'. But it is the micro-aggressions, the manner in which they respond to you when you ask a question, the behaviour, it's those silent things."

Amara thought long and hard about raising her concerns. In the end, it was a sense of integrity and personal values that convinced her to.

"It is not an easy thing to do. You have to be extremely resilient. You go through so many emotions and no matter how strong you are you are affected in ways you probably thought weren't possible.

"I knew there were people around me going through the same thing on a daily basis but I wanted my concerns to stand on their own merit. I didn't want it to be a collective concern in case someone decided not to take it any further."

The response she got when she spoke out was one familiar to many Black and minority ethnic workers.

"It was, 'Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't realise' and 'Was I different?', which I would say is the typical response you get as a Black person when you raise the issue of racism.

'It is a feeling,
an experience,
and just because
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mean I haven't
experienced it'

"The answer is, yes, you were – the manner you spoke with me and dealt with me and the way I felt you managed me overall was very different to my white counterparts."

For Amara, this was structural racism writ large which could only be addressed at a systemic level. So she raised her concerns with the director of service.

Amara adds: "It was not a process I was prepared to go through alone so being a BASW member I picked up the phone and told them what had happened."

She was assigned Lindsey as her support worker before a meeting was arranged with the director of service. It was agreed that Lindsey would speak on Amara's behalf during this.

"I felt uncomfortable about that," admits Lindsey. "Amara, this very experienced service manager, was reduced to needing a white woman to speak on her behalf to another white woman."

Amara adds: "It helped to have Lindsey, though it was a sad thing to have her as a white woman represent my experiences as a black woman of racism in a white dominated society.

"There was that sense of voice entitlement. When I speak, I am not heard. But when my white counterpart speaks everyone pays attention."

A formal investigation was launched by bosses and Amara was moved away from her team. "It was othering,"

**'When I
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she says. “You feel like you are the naughty child. It was a very isolating position to be in.”

Amara and Lindsey suggested an independent investigator, who on paper seemed to understand the issues. In practice, it proved otherwise.

“There was no acknowledgement that this is what this person’s lived experience has been,” says Amara.

“It was spun around, which goes to the heart of the issue and the concerns raised about systemic racism and how that can be turned on its head and become about you, the individual, making the complaint. You are doing it because you are vexatious. You are doing it because there were performance issues.”

Lindsey pays tribute to Amara’s resilience and humour during a process that dragged on for 14 months.

“To watch Amara and her dignity and her bravery and her ability to manage all of those emotions and still turn up to work every day and still provide a service was a privilege.

“I just know she is a brilliant social worker but to see her doing it with such good grace and humour and to watch others behave the opposite to Amara was painful.”

Amara admits the process took a toll on her. “I can’t stress how difficult it has been to go down this road.

“You have a family, people around you say you are snappy, distant, not your usual self. It feels like a cloud

overhanging your head.

“It made me question my abilities because you get to a place where someone makes you feel like you can’t. When you start doing that you are in dangerous ground because that is when you start making mistakes.”

It was only when a new director was appointed that progress began to be made.

“He was able to pick up on what happened,” says Amara. “He read all of the paperwork and was able to see past that and make the right decision, to see the investigation hadn’t addressed what it was supposed to address and was tainted in the information provided.”

All Amara’s complaints were upheld and she was issued an apology.

However, Lindsey adds: “What worries me is that this all depended on personality. The things Amara describes that need to change are so dependent on people getting it.”

She believes the “injustice” of racism is “ten times worse” when it happens in social work.

“If social work can’t get it right, it is worrying because we are supposed to reflect on our attitudes and values, understand our internal drivers and look beyond the obvious to why we respond in particular ways to particular people.”

Amara believes spaces are needed in the profession to allow conversations to take place about race. She also thinks more Black social workers need to “put their head above the parapet” and speak out about their experiences.

“It is good the topic of race is on the agenda but we as Black practitioners have to take a step back and ask what are we doing about it? Because by not reporting it, it is not understood properly what people are experiencing.

“I appreciate people are scared of losing their job and being victimised but if we don’t start raising the issues things won’t change.

“Be prepared to fight for what is right. Remaining silent in a situation that you know is wrong is not going to bring about change.”

She also adds it is not enough for employers to just point to an equality, diversity and inclusion strategy.

“I don’t want a strategy, it is just a piece of paper. I want something tangible, what action will come, what are you doing?”

Lindsey, however, believes it should not be left to Black and ethnic minority social workers to speak out.

“Racism is a white problem not a Black problem and it requires white people to do something about it more than Black people because we are the ones that can affect change, we are the ones that can do things differently.

“It needs white people to accept that we are racist and not feel that is an accusatory term but a fact. And for white people to accept that they have a privilege by being white and remove the defensiveness.

“I have heard people say there is nothing worse than to be called a racist. No, experiencing racism is a million times worse.”

‘People are scared of losing their job and being victimised but if we don’t start raising the issues things won’t change’

IN FOCUS



After a British social worker won an employment appeal tribunal involving menopause, **Louise Palfreyman** takes an industry-wide look at how social work can improve...

Women social workers are regularly facing unsympathetic treatment and possible discrimination in workplaces poorly equipped to deal with menopause.

That's the consensus from three different experts regularly advising on employment issues.

Social worker Maria Rooney's landmark appeal verdict in a case involving Leicester City Council means menopause symptoms now have to be taken more seriously by employers.

So, what needs to change?

The union rep

Lisa Fitzpatrick, a trade union official with the Social Workers Union has herself navigated menopause. Working in a large office, with experience of 'thermostat wars', she knows how difficult broaching the subject can be.

Flexible working, adjustment to shift patterns, office conditions and general awareness are all important factors when managing menopause in the workplace.

"Menopause is hugely relevant to the advice and representation team," Lisa says. "Many of our members are women because of the disproportionate numbers in social work and social care. And many are older women."

"The TUC has done important work on menopause, producing a guide that states eight out of ten women experience noticeable symptoms and feel menopause affects their working life."

"One of the main difficulties for us is that social work is so stressful anyway. Largely, we find social workers aren't great at self-care. They tend to keep going, so many are overworked. Menopause is still seen as predominantly a private matter, not a workplace issue." But Lisa believes there are already many tools at the disposal of union reps, employers, managers, and other professionals supporting women at work.

"I've helped a woman recently going through the capability process where her performance at work is being questioned, who is also going through the menopause."

"The role of occupational health is important in terms of recommendations in the workplace – but of course, occupational health has to be aware of menopause issues and policy."

"We can also check managers' awareness of menopause, in terms of whether they respond to the issue being raised, whether they can talk sensibly about it. Many women are worried about speaking to their managers."

Lisa points out that employers have a duty to prevent workplace discrimination and to make adjustments to ensure women can work safely through the menopause.

Workers need reassurance that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets. And managers also need training to understand the issues.

The key to tackling menopause-related difficulties at work is to speak out early, Lisa advises: "If you approach us, we will discuss the issues with you and consider next steps. The Equality Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. So, menopause is a gender-related condition."

'Largely, we find social workers aren't great at self-care. They tend to keep going, so many are overworked'

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"If you are depressed and stressed, it can be hard to pinpoint. But with help from your GP and occupational health, you can think about how you are at work now, compared to how you were before."

"As a union we support individuals, but I would also encourage awareness-raising, getting policies in place, and getting women to come together on this. Menopause is such a core experience affecting your physical and psychological health."

You can contact the BASW Advice and Representation team by email at ARAS@basw.co.uk

The health expert

Dr Clare Spencer is co-founder of My Menopause Centre, a website and online clinic offering holistic evidence-based and personalised support.

Dr Clare says: "I regularly speak to women who are off sick, who have taken roles with lesser responsibility, who have reluctantly moved into sideways roles due to being perceived by colleagues as 'unable to cope', or who have given up work altogether – all due to the menopause symptoms they are experiencing."

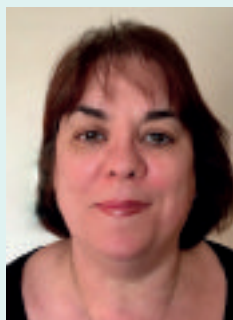
She cites lack of awareness as a major issue, from treatment options to workplace adjustments, adding: "Ageism in the workplace is also a huge issue. And together, these things mean many women lack the confidence to speak about what they are experiencing, or don't feel they work in a culture where it is 'safe' to do so."

"Then there's the symptoms and how they can impact. The hormonal changes of the menopause can act insidiously on performance and women's belief in their ability to perform."

"Many women don't recognise their symptoms are related to the menopause transition and employers may not see beyond these symptoms' external manifestation."

Pinpointing specific symptoms that cause issues at work, Dr Clare added: "Loss of sleep as well as hot flushes and night sweats and psychological symptoms – out of the blue anxiety, for example, low mood and uncontrollable tearfulness – can result in a vicious cycle, creating and then magnifying anxiety and stress, feeding low mood and diminishing confidence and self-esteem."

For Dr Clare, good menopause policy should include desired outcomes, including retention of employees; performance, helping women manage their symptoms; absence, in terms



From top Dr Clare Spencer, Lisa Fitzpatrick and Victoria McLean

of reducing sick days and an age-inclusive and female-friendly culture at work.

She says: "A good menopause policy will also include the actions necessary to deliver these desired outcomes. These include awareness-building, education, training, signposting, formal and informal support – menopause champions, for example, appropriate workplace adjustments, and metrics to assess what's working."

"And such actions should be understood by and involve men as well as women."

For more help and information visit www.mymenopausecentre.com

The career consultant

Victoria McLean heads up a career and coaching consultancy that advises organisations on employee retention, wellbeing, and engagement.

She views the social work profession as particularly vulnerable, saying: "Employers with an overbalance of women aged 45-plus are at risk, when you consider that one in four women experience severely debilitating menopausal symptoms and millions of women are leaving work."

Menopause policies in the workplace can help with retention, Victoria says, pointing to the fact that the women affected possess decades of experience: "At menopausal age, women are often in the prime of their career with a wealth of experience and expertise to offer. By failing to support them, organisations are deprived of highly valuable skill sets."

"In addition, employers lose valuable experience, knowledge and skills. More than that, if relations have truly broken down, an organisation may suffer reputational damage. It simply makes good business sense to retain someone with so much to offer. Also, why wouldn't you put support mechanisms in place to help your workforce, when the menopause affects so many?"

Creating a good menopause policy is all about engagement, advocacy and inclusivity, Victoria says.

"It's critical to have a robust menopause policy in place. It should be embedded and 'lived' in an organisation, talked about openly and transparently. When you're creating your policy, engage with and listen to views from your employees."

Employers can adopt further steps to support the workforce, Victoria adds: "Having a menopause committee creates advocates in the workplace. Training leaders – men and women alike – is another important factor. They need to know how to have supportive conversations."

"Putting practical adjustments in place, even small things, can be enormously beneficial. Providing access to information, coaching, and counselling, and offering workplace benefits that focus on health are also very worthwhile."

For more advice on employee engagement visit Victoria's website [City CV](http://CityCV)

FURTHER RESOURCES

www.tuc.org.uk/menopause-work

www.mymenopausecentre.com/knowledge/menopause-explained

www.cipd.co.uk/about/media/press/menopause-at-work#gref

MENOPAUSE: THE FACTS

- Nearly two thirds (59 per cent) of working women say menopause has a negative impact
- Women over 50 are the fastest growing sector in the UK workforce, according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- The average age for menopause is 51
- The average cost of hiring a new employee through a recruitment agency is around 20-30 per cent of final salary
- Executive positions cost 213 per cent of annual salary to replace
- Failure to support employees with menopause can lead to unfair dismissal claims and discrimination complaints

Getting to a better placement

After initial trepidation about her second student placement within a children's residential home in Scotland, social work student **Sara Hedley** describes a career-defining experience

I am a mature student, doing an Open University post-graduate degree in social work. I have come to the life of a student social worker via a nursing route.

I know this might be a bit like crossing over from the dark side, but it has been useful from time to time, even if I am accessed as a resource around medications and conditions. My knowledge is a little rusty, but it's strange what can be dredged from the depths of the memory.

This is my second and final placement on my student social work journey before assessment submissions and, hopefully, a graduation in the autumn of this year.

I live in a rural area and getting to my placement means a cross-country journey, mostly on A-roads, but at an altitude where in the winter snow is never far away. Vigilance is required during daylight travels for pheasant, and at night for deer. There's never a dull moment in my 100-mile round trip.

I am fortunate in having what is known as a sponsored place, and therefore a job is waiting for me at the end of this academic and practical voyage of discovery. Before I started on this placement, I was a happy bunny – I had a job I loved, literally about five minutes' walk away from where I live, a feeling of making a difference, and being made to feel welcome in my workplace and when I am working with people who have referred to our service (adults and older adults). I thought I was sorted, content in the knowledge that I was doing what I wanted to do, where I wanted to do it. My current placement covers what is known as the children and families section of our

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training, and there is a diversity of options available to get the required experience for this module. I was anxious about starting for various reasons, but primarily because it was so far out of my comfort zone and what I was familiar with.

I was told that this placement was in a children's residential home, and according to the information available online about it I read that they "work in a trauma informed way, offering therapeutic parenting experiences to the young people we care for".

Before my start date I went for a 'reccy' to ensure that I could locate the placement. My initial thoughts were that it looked 'normal'.

On hindsight, what was I expecting it to look like? In my head I had turned it into some sort of alien environment, such was my unfamiliarity around these services.

My mind went into overdrive about the placement, and in order to try and reduce this anxiety I planned a visit ahead of my start date.

If you can do this as a student, I can't recommend it enough. It ticks all those important boxes around the layout of the building, where you may spend most of your time, and where the toilet and the kettle are. So far, in my experience they have happily not been in the same room.

Visiting ahead also afforded me an opportunity to meet with my workplace supervisor, who from the very start made me feel relaxed and at ease. He ensured I had his contact details, that any special requirements I had were covered (yes, we are going back to the kettle) and that there would be no problems with meeting my educational/training needs whilst I was there.

I felt nurtured from the start, and this nurturing was echoed in all the staff, not only in their capacity to care about the young people living there, but for each other. The residential home is the epitome of a home environment

based on strengths and assets, understanding that we are all only human, and come with a variety of flaws, that we make mistakes, but should not be forever judged on these. It promotes dignity, recognises every small success, and absolutely takes a person-centred approach towards each young person living there.

As a student, I have felt protected, enabled, and gently encouraged. With such a safety net filled with goodwill, there was an invisible motivation for me to succeed, and I have felt my confidence grow.

The young people who live in the residential home have all experienced trauma prior to their arrival and this has taken different forms. These are young people with troubled and complex needs, and I am in the privileged position of having very little idea of what they are actually going through.

This does not mean I cannot empathise, but even more importantly – with support from my forward-thinking practice educator who challenges me academically and reflectively – I can begin to reflect around their distressed behaviours.

To say that this placement has changed me sounds like a verbose, grand statement, but it has – and those that know me can see this easily. Before starting, I had speculated that the time I was spending there was a means to an end.

I had planned to commit to the work, get my head down and qualify. That has all changed. I feel a moral and professional obligation to not disappear from the lives of these young people. My placement is only six months, but that is a drop in the ocean of time for them. I can see why they might struggle to invest in me.

As part of my role when I started, I was obligated to explain to the young people who I was, what I was doing there and how long I'd be there. They could so easily have dismissed me as someone transient, passing through, but they haven't. Neither the young people nor those that work there have taken that approach.

I am humbled by their generosity and compassion towards me. It is something those employed there have extended to anyone who comes within their sphere of working.

Before this placement I was focused on a career working with adults and older adults, living where I work, and the advantages this brings. I now find myself, at 52 years of age, feeling an almost overwhelming desire and need to work with young people.

I appreciate that the young people I am working with now may not all have a happy-ever-after story, but they may have a moment or two sometime in the future where I am remembered, where I perhaps made a difference, and it's those small unknown successes that I find I am focused on.

Therefore, my advice for all future student social workers is never, ever underestimate the power of a placement. Seize those opportunities and make sure you keep an open mind for the path your journey could take.

I can no longer say with any conviction that I know exactly what I am going to do for the rest of my working life. But I am now open and receptive to the idea of working with younger people, especially those who have experienced trauma.

'I feel a moral and professional obligation to not disappear from the lives of these young people'

Sara Hedley's placement is with the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Care Team in Aviemore

The art and science of INTUITION

In the early days of my social work career, I realised that textbooks and journals didn't offer me everything that I needed to make sense of what I was experiencing on a day-to-day basis in child protection and safeguarding.

I had several experiences that demanded I look beyond what I had read in textbooks, urging me to listen to something much less academically authoritative: my body and senses in complex and complicating scenarios.

In my first role as a social worker I was undertaking initial assessments. I had started working with a parent and child because of the introduction of a new partner who was regarded as a high-risk adult.

My manager and I visited the house to explain this to the parent, who agreed that the new partner would no longer be permitted to feature in their lives. Later that day the parent contacted me to explain that they believed the new partner posed little if any risk, and so I began child protection enquiries and the planning for a child protection case conference.

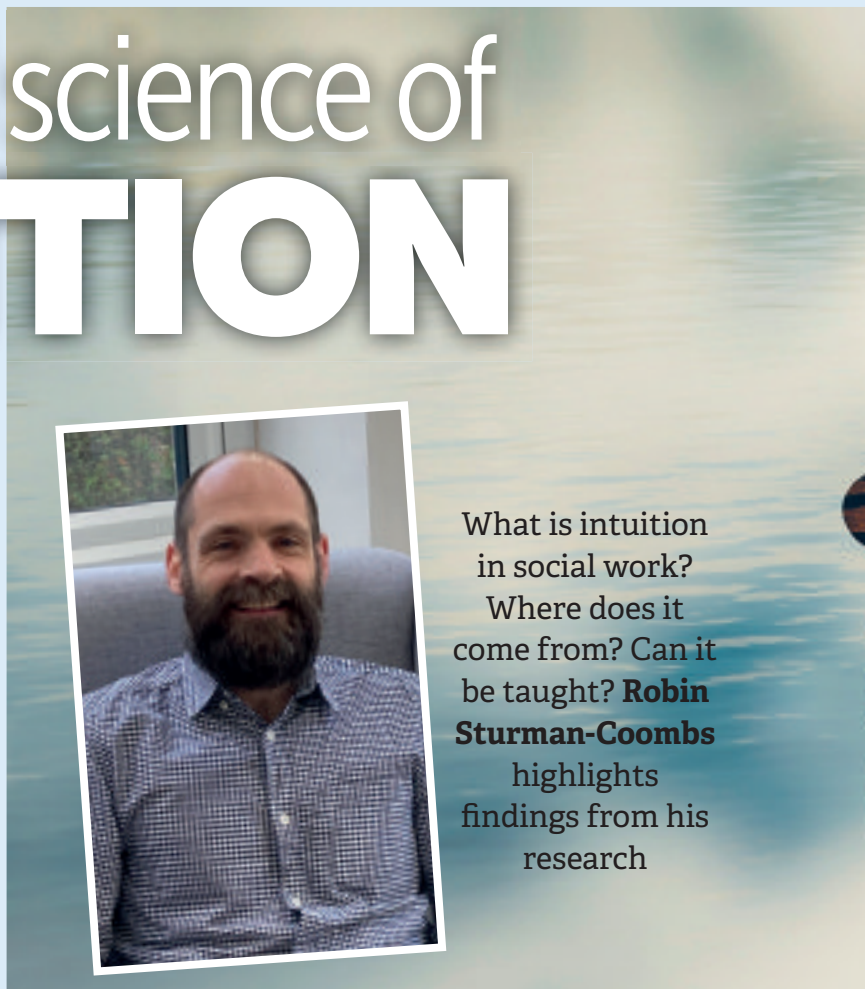
In the lead up to the conference I undertook several announced and unannounced visits to ensure the risky adult was not there. On one occasion I visited the property in the early evening to find the parent and child at home and was invited in.

I spoke with the parent and child about how their day had been and, again, explained what was happening and asked if they had any questions. There were no questions, but I was aware of an uncomfortable feeling, something that told me that things were not as they should be; something wasn't quite right.

I asked the parent if they had seen the new partner and was advised that they hadn't. The feeling, however, persisted. In pursuit of settling this feeling I asked permission to look around the house, to satisfy myself that the new partner was not there. The parent agreed.

I had a general look in each of the rooms but upon leaving the final room I noticed a cupboard. The uneasy feeling returned, compelling me to open the door. There, in the cupboard, was the parent's new partner. We were both somewhat surprised to see each other and I suggested the new partner leave immediately, which they did, without hesitation or resistance.

This story is not unique. There have been other occasions while working as a social worker in various



What is intuition in social work?

Where does it come from? Can it be taught? **Robin Sturman-Coombs** highlights findings from his research

roles, where people who were known to be high risk were found hiding in various places in the house. Each time, there was that same feeling and each time I would respectfully act on it, always being open and honest about my concerns.

To request to look around someone's house when they have told you that a person of risk is not there is a risk, given that our work is based on relationships. However, the anecdotal experiences tell me that as social work professionals we must never dismiss these feelings.

Fast forwards ten years and I find myself looking at this exact thing in my doctoral studies; the existence and role of intuition, how we as academics construct and teach this to students entering the social work profession.

There are some common beliefs that intuition is merely a 'gut feeling', a case of 'just knowing', an abstract concept that can't be captured, labelled or contained. Some dismiss this as unevidenced-based with no place in practice. I want to suggest it is a much more complex concept that relies on professional artistry and should be central within the teaching context too.

Intuition in social work education

Students entering social work are preparing for an important role in society: to improve the life chances and outcomes for those they work with, often in complex and high stress situations. They will need a wide range of knowledge, experiences and skills to become an effective

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practitioner. We know that intuition, while a complex and contested term, is a crucial element of thinking and acting within social work. It is located alongside 'known' theories, policies, procedures and models for intervening and working with children, adults, families and communities.

However, the abstract nature of intuition makes it an inherently difficult subject because it is an aspect of thinking and acting which cannot be observed. This is what makes it so fascinating.

There are many interpretations of what intuition is, influenced by individual professions, their values bases, the individual's value base, and the influence of wider socioeconomic and political factors.

However, as a general rule intuition is a 'below awareness' process of reasoning information, which is brought to consciousness, thereby allowing for rapid judgements.

Intuition has attracted a large amount of attention in social work and, to a lesser degree, the teaching of it within higher education.

Many believe it's a critical component of decision-making practice, therefore demonstrating the need for it to be nurtured within social work education.

Some express concern that social work has become so proceduralised by the need to achieve factual accuracy and certainty that notions of intuitive thinking and

reasoning have become side-lined both within practice and education.

In a world in which science is often perceived to offer objective universal truths and certainty, particularly so since the Covid pandemic, it's no wonder that intuitive reasoning is seen as potentially problematic. I see and hear this in my own teachings.

Developing intuitive reasoning

However, to quote social work academic Harry Ferguson, I believe social workers and students should have extended opportunities to learn about the "complexities of the self, their emotional lives, and what affects thinking". Indeed, there is a strong argument for encouraging social workers and students to sit with uncertainty, powerful feelings and impulses. I believe this to be critical in developing a student's intuitive reasoning.

The importance of nurturing intuition in social work education is reflected in many high-profile cases, most recently those of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson.

These cases clearly demonstrate the complexity of decision-making and acting in social work practice. When working in situations of known and unknown risk there is a need to recognise that knowledge comes from a range of sources, including intuitive cues. The key is how we nurture this.

While a focus on the methods of teaching intuition is important, so too is the role of the values that inform these methods, as well as how this affects our perception of what intuition is.

Lessons for education

The perceptions of students and academics of what intuition is will be influenced by their individual reality and their value base. All of this is important to consider when teaching such an abstract concept to students.

There are some important lessons for higher education in exposing students to all sources of knowledge, including giving voice to the unspoken. The initial findings of my research so far suggest that it would be useful for students and academics to consider several guiding principles:

- For students – the body and mind are a crucial resource for what might be going on
 - For students – to be mindful of where intuitions come from and critically reflect on your own biases
 - For academics – find, develop and harness the tools, skills and experiences to create opportunities to explore unspoken, intuitive cues
 - For academics – to install the confidence in students to trust that knowledge comes from a range of sources
- High-profile cases demonstrate the very real need for students to be taught about the art and science of intuition in social work practice. It is the merging of these that is crucial to the development of a more rounded, open, and holistic approach to practice, which will lead to better outcomes for all.

Robin Sturman Coombs is senior lecturer in social welfare, childhood, youth and families at the University of Northampton

'The number of emails I received daily was insane'

Olivia Fletcher on the challenges of being a team manager during the pandemic

I started working for a new local authority as a team manager within a child protection team at the beginning of the pandemic. I met my manager, colleagues and the social workers in my team over Skype (yes, Skype – we soon upgraded to Microsoft Teams).

Initially I was all for remote working – being able to be at home more for my family, not having to commute and the dog was getting a walk a day, sometimes even two!

Moving on almost two years, I made the decision to resign from my post and side-step out of management for at least six months to focus on my wider social work journey. There were three main aspects to me making this decision.

Firstly, in the absence of face-to-face communication I found myself being bombarded with information, demands and requests. The number of emails I would receive on a day-to-day basis was insane and would often leave me unable to complete tasks within the working day due to dealing with multiple events at any one time.

The local authority often felt as though it was in a state of panic, with relationships disconnected and detached – think a smaller scale and slightly different version of what was going on in wider society.

Furthermore, this was a different workforce that existed prior to the pandemic – social workers that had qualified during the pandemic were being appointed and this difference didn't seem to be well understood. There were few resources to support with what were essentially significant gaps in learning emerging within the workforce.

Secondly, the pressures relating to Ofsted and the Department for Education would often put social workers under immeasurable stress and I would at times feel unable to ease the impact of this upon the team, consigned to being simply one of the 'middle men' with little agency to effect change.

As is common in statutory social work, my team was newly qualified social worker-heavy. I was acutely aware there was an over-dependence on experienced staff to pick up complex work and I was having to direct newly qualified social workers to situations that they weren't skilled enough to deal with.

This inevitably impacted upon the service that children



and families were receiving, which at times felt incredibly oppressive and unfair. The vast majority of social workers were experiencing some level of anxiety and "overwhelmed" was a word I have never heard more than I have during the past two years.

I felt so insensitive and uncaring at times and have since spent time thinking about how we demonstrate that we care for each other and the families that we work with in social work.

Thirdly, having previously worked with student social workers and with studying outside of work, I am big on learning and development within the team. However, to slow down and take the time to unpick that worrying case through a reflective team discussion or to offer an additional supervision and emotional containment means that something else which is perhaps more measurable (i.e. will pop up on the next data pull) gets done at a later date. I will admit I am a bit of data geek too, but I've yet to meet a team manager who isn't.

The culture of the team had to adjust in line with the service and thinking space became less and less a feature of the team at a time when the team needed it more and more.

I don't think that this experience was particularly unique to my previous local authority. There were definitely some huge challenges to contend with and equally some valuable opportunities for personal growth.

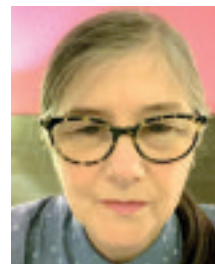
As we move out of lockdown I'm definitely more in tune with what I need to feel valued and effective in future roles. In the meantime, my needs are being better met in my current role as a child protection chair. Practice seems more meaningful and I'm working with another set of wonderful social workers.

I've also picked up some practice educator work so can get my learning and development fix – and my inbox is clear!

'I have spent time thinking about how we demonstrate that we care for each other and the families that we work with in social work'

RUTH ALLEN

BASW's chief executive on the war in Ukraine and the rising cost of living



In times of crises we need to be bold, brave and speak up

Writing this in the relative safety and comfort of London, my thoughts are particularly with colleagues and all citizens of Ukraine still in the throes of the Russian military invasion with all its horrors, and millions displaced across Europe.

Social workers, particularly in Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Moldova and Hungary, continue to welcome and support refugees at the border alongside non-governmental organisations, civil society groups and state services. They know, as do we, that social work's role starts in the heat of the crisis but continues for the long term. Millions of children and adults need to find safe and stable places, and access services and support now and for the as yet unknown duration of their displacement.

We have been adding BASW's voice to the pressure on the government to make routes to the UK from Ukraine easier and much more efficient. The people of the UK want to play a part in easing this crisis, not see the government extend its hostile environment.

My thoughts are also with colleagues and citizens here in the UK struggling with the highest cost of living rises for decades, including food, energy and other basics – and of course still dealing with this phase of Covid.

The UK Chancellor's spring budget statement did nothing for the poorest in society who are impacted by record inflation, set to rise further. He tinkered around the edges with small relief for low and middle income earners, continued to preside over a taxation regime that positively benefits high earners and those living on investments and chose to reduce government borrowing rather than invest in the fundamentals of a decent society, which is not only the morally right thing to do but the basis of social cohesion and resilience.

There are no bombs falling in the UK, but economic policies are worsening an unfolding humanitarian crisis of poverty in peacetime. The Resolution Foundation says absolute poverty (less than 60 per cent of the national median income) is set to affect almost one fifth of the population this year, rising from 11.2 to 12.5 million.

Social work practice is always directly affected by social, economic and political decisions, domestic and

'Social work is always affected by social, economic and political decisions

international. This is true across public services, but social work is often distinctively close up and engaged in the experiences of people most squeezed, harmed and at risk as a consequence of structural factors.

So soon after recognising how inequalities shaped the impact of the pandemic, we are seeing budgetary decisions being taken that will fall disproportionately on the same citizens who were most exposed to the worst of the virus.

We also recognise that many members will be affected personally by both the crises described above.

It is essential that as a membership organisation we use all our platforms to come together and communicate support, solidarity and ideas about how we can make a difference – to Ukrainian refugees coming to the UK; to the international effort to fund humanitarian aid and the pressure for the war to end; to social work practice supporting refugees and people affected by deepening poverty; to lobbying for government action that addresses 'levelling up' rather than widening the income gap.

Social workers in the UK are overwhelmingly women and statistics tell us that means more will be on lower incomes, will have responsibility for children, will be carers and may have obstacles to career progression.

We recognise the pressures on social workers of low incomes and in stressful jobs. BASW is here for you: a source of individual support through Advice and Representation and the Professional Support (coaching) Service; a source of peer support and collective professional endeavour through our groups, branches and committees; a source of professional development and inspiration through courses and events and a source of activism through our campaigns and initiatives for change.

When crises happen, it helps to focus on what we can do. BASW enables you to act on these crises facing us now – through supporting you in your practice, through speaking out, through providing opportunities to get involved in tangible relief actions (such as through donating or providing guidance to colleagues) and bringing real pressure to bear. As the Scottish Children's commissioner, Bruce Adamson, said recently, we must "be bold, be brave and speak up". It's a good slogan for the crises of our times.

VIEWPOINT LANGUAGE

Stop calling us service users - it degrades us

Tammy Mayes, a parent with lived experience of services, says language makes a difference – but adds it won't on its own fix a 'broken' system



Why is language important? Firstly, language is how people communicate. It's also how we build relationships. If you don't speak the same language it is hard to build relationships.

Why are names important? Names are important because it tells us who people are. You wouldn't go up to someone and say: "Hey nobody, how are you today?" You would call them by their name because names are important.

So why is it okay to call parents 'service users'? It degrades us, it removes our dignity, it is also disrespectful. We never asked for you to become involved with our families!

Changing a name will not change the fact the system is broken. It will not change that as soon as a family comes into contact with children's services we feel we are seen as another number, another case. We are deemed as being bad even with no evidence and, worst of all, we are called service users.

This term should be removed completely.

We are dismissed from being an important part in our children's lives. We get told by professionals time and time again that they are there for the children, not the family.

The name 'children's services' proves it. But us parents want what's best for our children too and we bend over backwards to do what children's services ask of us.

Yet services dismiss us. They dismiss the fact that we know our children, they dismiss the fact that we are part of the picture and regardless of whether you take the children away and remove our parental rights, it will never ever change the fact that we carried that child in our womb. We gave birth to that child and we will never stop being the child's parents.

So yes, while we believe the name of children's services does need to change it is not the most important part of things that need change.

A change of name will not change the fact that the system sometimes feels like it does not care about families. It doesn't care about how important family is to a child and that the trauma from having services

'There are so many social workers that want change'

involved is long-lasting, not just for the child but for the parents too.

What needs changing first is the language you use when talking to parents. The language you use in reports that children will read when they grow up. The way we interact with each other, not just for social workers but for parents too.

There are so many good social workers that want change. They want to build relationships with families and parents. Parents want to be able to understand in simple terms what is happening – and why. But they also want to be known as a parent. They want to be called by their name, not service user.

There needs to be respect on both sides, there needs to be relationships. The system must move from being an investigative one and go back to the ethics of what social work is.

What is social work? BASW's code of ethics says social workers work in communities with people finding positive ways forward in the challenges they face in their lives. They help people build the kind of environments in which they want to live, through co-determination, co-production and social responsibilities. Economic health cannot be achieved without social health.

Human rights and social justice are critical in any social worker's thinking and actions. The International Federation of Social Workers states ethical principles guides each social worker to challenge inequalities, discrimination in all its forms and empower people to be in charge of their lives, providing that they do not seek to harm or abuse people.

This brings me to my last point. Removing children from loving homes because they live in poverty or they are fleeing domestic violence goes against the ethics of social work. So before you get distracted with changing the name, bring the system back to its ethical practice.

Tammy Mayes is a parent with lived experience of services and co-chair of the Parent, Families and Allies Network

Part of the solution to the 'cliff-edge' of care

Sheila Lupton on why Independent Visitors should be statutorily provided to all children in care up to the age of 25



All young people in care in England and Wales have a statutory entitlement to be offered an Independent Visitor (IV).

While the IV role may be statutory in one sense, it is still completely optional, both for the young people joining the scheme and for their IVs, who give their time freely.

Young people in care have little choice over the many different professionals involved in their lives. However, the decision as to whether or not to have an IV is completely within their control, including choices about the sort of person they would like to be matched with what they want to do when they meet up together.

IVs offer young people a chance to build a relationship with an adult who is outside of the care system; a person just for them, who is interested in them, will listen to them, get to know them, spend fun time with them, care about them... and perhaps most importantly of all, stick with them over time, through thick and thin.

In a care system where many children experience changes of social workers or placement, a child's IV can be a constant person in their lives.

Many young people tell us they can't wait to leave care and strike out on their own, but having someone to turn to for practical and emotional support as an adult still matters a great deal to them.

While new legislation in 2018 saw entitlement to after care support extended up to the age of 25, there was no equivalent requirement for local authorities to provide IV involvement after the age of 18.

In an effort to avoid adding to the 'cliff-edge' of care, some IV services offer support up to the age of 25 as best practice. But most schemes are not sufficiently resourced to do so. The reality is that many IVs just keep in touch with young people informally after IV scheme involvement ceases.

Wiltshire Council's IV scheme wanted to find out more about what actually happens to the connection between IVs and care leavers once a match formally closes.

A longitudinal study undertaken this year looked at 29 young adults (now aged between 18 and 32) who had been matched from August 2006 for two years or more

'A person just for them, who is interested in them, will listen to them, get to know them'

and who had left the scheme as care leavers prior to August 2021 (a 15-year period).

The study found that over half of the sample group remained proactively in contact with their IVs, with some of the older matches having lasted very many years.

The care experienced adults in the survey spoke overwhelmingly of how they had valued the ongoing support and friendship of their former IVs. They described the role of their IVs now as being like a friend, brother or sister, aunt or uncle or grandparent or, in a few cases, even like a parent.

One care experienced adult, still in touch with her former IV and in her mid-20s, put in writing to her IV what the relationship had meant to her: "You are one of the most special people in my life. Since I was 13 years old you have been my rock through every obstacle I've faced.

"I can honestly say that there have been many moments I'm not sure I'd have gotten through without you. You've been like a second mum and a best friend to me."

For young people growing up in care and leaving care, IVs are uniquely placed to become part of a natural support network. They can help preserve the link between a young person's past and their future.

The younger a child is matched with an IV, the longer they will have to build their relationship before reaching the 'care cliff'. However, many young people in care still find themselves unable to access provision, despite it being a legal entitlement.

The National Independent Visitor Network's Right Friend campaign is championing the rights of all children in care, irrespective of postcode, to be able to access an IV. It is also seeking to extend statutory IV entitlement up to the age of 25.

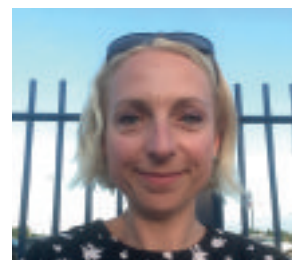
Sheila Lupton was manager of Wiltshire Council's IV Scheme for 16 years. She is a member of the National Independent Visitor Network and holds a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of East Anglia

Creating a decolonised social work curriculum

Jill Childs and Liz Clarke explain how Oxford Brookes University worked with Hope Africa University to create an anti-racist curriculum



Jill Childs above, and Liz Clarke



Over the last five years social work students and staff at Oxford Brookes University have been involved in an initiative to decolonise the social work curriculum, and to promote a genuinely inclusive learning community.

Initially our intention was to address the outcome and attainment gap between white students and minority ethnic students. This, however, has developed into a commitment to produce a curriculum that no longer privileges white Anglo-centric approaches to learning and practice but draws equally on models from the global south.

The approach really gathered momentum after we received some negative comments on social media about our early work. Namely, that a top-down approach of not involving enough students from ethnic backgrounds in the design of our work presented a non-diverse perspective.

Addressing these comments helped us to see students as core partners in developing the initiative.

Central to that partnership has been our development of the Global Majority Collective student group. Its attendance was incorporated into the curriculum to demonstrate the fundamental importance of creating a structure that in turn supported attainment of students from diverse backgrounds.

We also took on board learning from our previous mistakes when we hadn't acknowledged the complexity of the pressures of students' lives beyond their university experience.

As part of this, about 25 students met fortnightly to identify and prioritise anti-racist course development opportunities.

Students know that this is a confidential space to express themselves. As a result of advice from the group, our team has further decolonised content and assessment, and trained external contributors to our programme in unconscious bias and microaggressions.

The current leader of the Global Majority Collective commented that this has "opened a dialogue to create an anti-racist university experience. As a Black student I've

'Initially our intention was to address the outcomes and attainment gap between white students and minority ethnic students'

seen an implementation of many issues we reported".

We have been supported in developing our programme through partnership with colleagues from Hope Africa University in Burundi.

From this, we have explored the potential of concepts such as Ubuntu (I am because we are) and Ikibiri (solidarity) in social work education.

The importance of belonging for students in higher education inspired us to draw on ideas by the political theorist Achilles Mbembe around creating a place to inhabit.

Mbembe's work was used as a basis for developing strategies to achieve equity for our students. The model focuses on making time, acknowledging student needs, including age and other differences, such as educational and life experiences.

In working towards our goals the team have had to address a wide range of issues. These included:

- Reviewing our staff recruitment approach to ensure a range of different lived and practice experience amongst the staff group
- Reviewing our admissions process to ensure that we identify the specific learning needs of each student
- Engaging with the student group to challenge and develop the curriculum, with our Global Collective Majority Group's meetings and activities being structured into the curriculum
- Reviewing our teaching materials to include a diverse range of readings, theories, case studies and vignettes to aid student thinking. This has included a concerted focus on anti-racist approaches to teaching
- Reviewing our assessment framework and offering a creative range of assessment approaches
- Building a working relationship with, and learning from, Burundian colleagues and seeking to learn from indigenous social welfare practice

We intend to build on this to produce a fully post-colonial approach to social work learning and practice.

Jill Childs is principal lecturer and Liz Clarke is a senior lecturer in social work at Oxford Brookes University

KNOW YOUR HISTORY

This series of articles by **Polly Baynes** uses 19th century case files from the Cheltenham Charity Organisation Society (CCOS) to reflect on issues in contemporary practice

The violence of men

COS files record the death in 1895 of mother of five children Elizabeth Taylor in the Gloucester Asylum of exhaustion, having “long been suffering from melancholia brought on it is thought by her intolerable life with a drunken husband”.

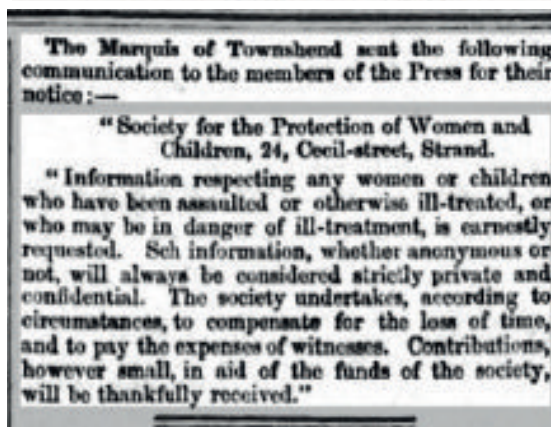
Some 30 years earlier, the high-profile case of Henry Wilkinson who murdered his wife in a fit of drunken, jealous rage had focused public attention on male violence and alcohol misuse.

In his summing up, the judge highlighted the work of the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, one of many organisations that can be seen as laying the foundations of social work practice and disrupting longstanding patriarchal relationships within families.

However, by the 1890s, there were still few options for women living with drunken or abusive husbands. The 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act allowed men to seek divorce on grounds of adultery alone, whereas women had to prove “moral turpitude or cruelty” in addition. Few working-class women could afford the court costs of divorce and their entitlement to maintenance was limited. They had limited recourse to criminal law but did call on the help of female neighbours if violence got too serious.

While many working-class mothers worked outside the home, their wages were too low to support a family. They were dependent on men not just to earn money but to bring it home – many were destitute through the father’s drinking or abandonment. Married women had only gained the right to own property in 1882 – until that time everything they owned legally belonged to their husband.

Marital conflict was sometimes acknowledged in the files of the CCOS. Mr Gill was roundly condemned by Roman Catholic sisters who provided a reference and could “say nothing good of the man, who ill treats his wife”. Mr and Mrs Paddon “lived very unhappily together” having made an “improvident marriage”. Mr and Mrs Lippett



Above, an illustration from TS Arthur's *Temperance Tales* and left, a 19th century safeguarding

madness in the family”. Mrs Court, who “was to be pitied”, described the family as “down a hole and cannot get out”. Financial help was provided to train one of the daughters for service as “she looks rather delicate and her father who is a very violent tempered man... makes this girl so nervous it is telling on her health”.

The recent report *Social Care: the Way Forward*, highlights the

continuing challenge of social work practice in response to domestic violence and the risks that our attempts to protect children can create for mothers, who can find themselves caught between a violent man and a system that threatens to remove their child.

It is interesting to note that CCOS worked with Mrs Court to keep her daughter safe before women were able or expected to leave violent men for the sake of their children. The gendered notion of capacity to protect had yet to emerge.

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Polly Baynes is a social worker turned history student and writer

COVID-19 pandemic

A specially commissioned chapter to accompany **Care in Practice**, Fourth Edition

Care in Practice

JANET MILLER
with Diane Scott, Wendy Milne, Jim Allison,
Leeanne Keegan, Richard Baker and Angela Freeman

Care in Practice: COVID-19 Pandemic
This chapter is a FREE resource which you can download at:
www.hoddergibson.co.uk/care-in-practice-additional-chapter
Content supplements the book 'Care in Practice' (Miller, J. 2019) and is especially applicable to people working or undertaking care and health qualifications in Scotland, but also has relevance to anyone working in a care setting anywhere. Topics include principles of practice, human rights, legislation, communication, positive care practice and learning and insights for the future.

HODDER GIBSON
LEARN MORE

Were you aware that BASW run an online Social Work Vacancies Jobs Board advertising SOCIAL WORK vacancies in organisations across the whole UK?

Do you have any involvement in recruiting SOCIAL WORKERS into your Organisation or Department?

The online Jobs Board can be found at www.basw.co.uk/home/vacancies

1 Use this Jobs Board yourself when looking for a career move

2 Recommend this Jobs Board to your HR Team when they are looking to recruit SOCIAL WORKERS



Social Workers' Benevolent Trust

Caring for those who care
Please make a donation

The Social Workers' Benevolent Trust (the Trust) is receiving an increasing number of applications from single-parent families where they have been left with large debts and possibly the repercussions of coercive or controlling relationships – a situation they have in common with many of the families they work with.

As the only charity dedicated to offering financial help to social workers and their dependants in times of hardship, help us to support your professional colleagues through such situations and other family crises or sudden emergencies.

We consider applications bi-monthly and make small grants to make a tangible difference, sometimes accompanied by advice of other sources of support. Applicants need to complete an application form – available online at www.swbt.org – if they wish to be considered for a grant.

HOW TO MAKE DONATIONS:

JUSTGIVING

Donations can be made at:
www.justgiving.com/socialworkers-benevolent-trust

STANDING ORDER

Download the form SWBT-Gift Aid and send to:

The Treasurer,
SWBT c/o BASW,
Wellesley House,
37 Waterloo Street,
Birmingham
B2 5PP

PAYPAL

Donate to: Social Workers' Benevolent Trust

LEAVE A LEGACY

www.swbt.org/how-to-donate/how-to-leave-a-legacy

BANK TRANSFER

Account Name: Social Workers Benevolent Trust
Sort Code: 08-90-01
Account No: 50358304

CHEQUE

Cheques should be made out to SWBT and send to:

The Treasurer,
SWBT c/o BASW,
Wellesley House,
37 Waterloo Street,
Birmingham
B2 5PP

More details are available on the website:

swbt.org

Charity No. 262889

REVIEWS

BOOKS

Art and poetry collection is a resource for social workers

Title: Marks of an Unwanted Rainbow**Author:** Paul Yusuf McCormack**Price:** £16**Publisher:** Kirwin Maclean**Website:** www.sioibhanmaclean.co.uk/publications**ISBN:** 978-1912130542

Paul Yusuf McCormack grew up in the children's care system in the 1970s and 1980s where he faced abuse of every kind. When he was 52, he started to express his experiences through art and poetry. This full colour book is a collection of 52 poems and many more pieces of artwork. Paul Yusuf was a foster carer and a creative trainer when he died in the early stages of the Covid pandemic. His friend Siobhan Maclean went on to complete the book which was almost at publication point when Paul Yusuf died.

Since receiving this book I have picked it up every day and read some poems and looked at the amazing artwork. I see something new each time I look and think about what could possibly be behind the words and art.

The book is a fabulous new resource to use with students and I will be encouraging each one to buy

a copy. It is my coffee table book, which is exactly what the author wanted it to be. This book will be my constant reminder of how potentially harmful words and labels can be.

It is a clear example of the importance of life story work and identity – we all deserve to know where we came from and understand our narratives.

The book contains narratives about each poem and ideas about how to use the contents as a learning tool in social work. There are several key themes within the poetry and artwork, including the impact of racism, the importance of being kind, hopefulness and the damaging impact of negative labels.

Sadly, Paul Yusuf McCormack was unable to see this book published but I, for one, am extremely grateful this book is now available.

Helen Sheppard

BOOKS

Intriguing book gives a window into where we have come from

Title: Call the Social**Author:** Julia Ross**Price:** £13.99**Publisher:** Best Books and Films**Website:** www.bestbooksandfilms.com**ISBN:** 978-0-907-63323-5

I was intrigued to read this book by Julia Ross, who is a colleague on BASW's Council. The book evokes experiences of social work and wider public services over 40 years from the 1960s.

Julia became a nurse in 1964 before qualifying as a social worker and starting her social work career in 1972. Her work took her from London to Scotland and back again, with the backdrop of constant developments in policy and practice.

Julia writes with clear-hearted honesty, sharing the humanity of social work encounters. The context of people's lives and of the work is richly brought to life. At times, the starkness of the social work role jumps out.

It is possible to see how the profession has evolved

and practice has developed over the decades. The contrast at times is striking. There are moments of creativity and of limitations that may not be possible now. There are also moments that absolutely resonate, and reflect the struggles and aspirations of the present.

Julia's personal and professional experience mirrors the ups and downs of the social work profession.

She writes about the struggles and about the value that she believes social workers bring.

It is important for us to understand the roots and story of our profession. This book provides a window into where we have all come from.

Gerry Nosowska

TV/RADIO

Insight into the need for connections

Split up in care: life without siblings
BBC Iplayer

Nearly half of children in care in the UK are separated from their siblings. BBC reporter Ashley John-Baptiste was one of them. Until his late 20s he didn't even know he had any brothers or sisters.

To find out why, he goes on a journey into the world of social work.

He visits Rosalyn, the kind and caring social worker who supported him between the ages of 15 and 18. She tells him families sometimes withhold information.

He meets student social worker Saskia who described losing contact with her two brothers when they went into care as like "taking the last bit of your identity away".

Debbie Bright, who has fostered some 200 children and appeared on reality show *The Only Way is Essex*, tells him more support is needed to help foster carers look after more than one sibling.

A visit to Derby's Staying Together Team shows the benefit of early intervention to prevent children going into care. However, its head of service is virtually in tears as she describes the impact of year-on-year cuts coupled with rising demand.

Some of the most moving scenes are from a charity in Scotland striving to keep separated siblings connected through regular get-togethers at a rural retreat.

A powerful documentary that presents social work well.

Shahid Naqvi

WORD OF ADVICE

How to avoid risk of compassion fatigue at work

Alasdair Kennedy's top tips on an ever-present danger to those working in caring professions

The Oscar goes to...

We have all been there, no one will admit it, but you're not alone. The home visit where you have tried everything to settle and improve a life. You've visited what feels like a 100 times and nothing improves. They talk and talk and you think: "I wonder what I am having for my dinner... I must buy an onion."

While all the time you have your 'I am listening intently' face on. Or worst still, you feel resentment. If this is you, you're officially fatigued of your compassion and you need to ask for help. Maybe it's time then to take a step back and adjust your working parameters. To think about you. As Kessler says: "To feel too much is dangerous, to feel too little is tragic."

Stop right there, thank you very much

As the recently deceased Meatloaf sang: "Stop right there, before you go any further."

You can say "No" to clients. In fact, some people need to hear No. The inability to say No is one of the hazards that can exacerbate the difficult nature of social work and cause compassion fatigue.

I spoke to a health professional recently who said 'revolving door' clients are called 'heart sinkers' in her work. She said: "You know you will be an hour-and-a-half out of your day, and then tomorrow they will be telephoning again to someone else about the same issue." By the end of the day the practitioner said she was exhausted.

My advice to her was, do not try to control outcomes or reactions or whether or not people take advice. If you don't know how to solve issues, then fine.

This will reduce your guilt too. Just being there sometimes helps just as much as managing the situation.

Bowled over by Bowlby

Attachment in social work isn't all about Bowlby but it has relevance to compassion fatigue. We often experience secure or insecure attachments with clients, especially in long-term teams. Writer and speaker Caroline Leaf suggests that if we switch off emotions compassion fatigue occurs. She says: "As you co-regulate with someone, the mirror neurons in their brain are activated, and this enables the person in the dysregulated state to literally 'mirror' your calmness." Now I hear you thinking, most of the people we work with have had dysregulated lives, cannot sustain relationships, or even have a calm discussion. But everyone's process and growth is different, so it's important to be understanding and supportive, and this in turn protects you.

Self-care sucks

I am not criticising self-care, although it's a bit over-used now in social work. But sometimes we do need to give ourselves a break. Pick something simple daily you can sustain for ten minutes which energises you. Read a chapter a day of a non-social work text (not just at bedtime). Have a 'power nap' in the day, even Netflix has its place or, I dread to say it, exercise. Simple and sustainable equals a habit.

Alasdair Kennedy is an interim social work manager and runs the popular Sociable Social Worker Youtube channel

LIVING IT

Reflections of a service user
by Jodie McLoughlin

'Interesting times', both at home and abroad

May you live in 'interesting' times! An old curse uttered, a promise for the future. Well don't we all certainly live in 'interesting' times at the moment? With governments preoccupied with war, oil, energy suppliers and international relations, as usual health and social care is barely a second thought. Disability doesn't even seem to be on the radar in the first place.

As disabled people, our rights have gone backwards markedly in the past ten to 15 years due to austerity, cutbacks and a weakening of equalities and anti-discrimination legislation. All but the most privileged of disabled people will have experienced this in some way. Then along comes Covid.

I don't think any of us are naive enough to think that Covid has magically disappeared just because the media lens has shifted away from it.

We currently have a cost of living crisis that is going to hit middle-class people as well. Simply put, the less disposable income people have to manage, the more they are going to struggle and get into debt, slip into poverty – or should I say further into poverty?

I've noticed the sting myself when it comes to increased food prices but like a lot of people, my main concern is energy bills. I don't particularly like hot weather but I hope that we at least have a decent and temperate spring and summer so that people don't freeze or require the heating to be on. Geopolitically it is more complicated than governments, including our own, refusing to tax billionaires and energy companies although that would certainly help.

Social work and other health and social care professionals, as well as looking after their own wellbeing, need to be wary of developing compassion fatigue, which I suffer from myself at times when running my mental health peer support groups. People are more and more desperate and I just do not have the answers for them, the resources to help them or the money. Plus my own health is poor at the moment, physically and mentally. I'm currently helping to care for my mum who has several chronic illnesses. I'm not religious at all so I don't pray but I hope that at least the DWP will leave us alone for a while and we get what we are entitled to.

My heart goes out to refugees leaving war zones created by rich men in gilded offices, but likewise it goes out to everyone else in the UK and everywhere who is struggling to pay excessive rent and pay for food gas/heating/petrol.

A SOCIAL WORKER'S **DIARY**

April, 2022

Well it's Ofsted fever! Night has become day, day has become night. Upper management are sending emails at the speed of light and tasks are endless and all labelled an urgent priority. The panic filters down from the top so that by my level we feel the pressure and are working endlessly, though aware of the pointlessness of losing our heads.

I am working evenings and all weekend. Feeling frustration where I had believed work was being completed only to realise this was not the case and then balancing the awkwardness of someone telling me they have done overtime they want me to approve only to be very aware this did not happen. My priority is the children and when I see work not being done I will be picking it up to ensure it is. However, I will be having some words...

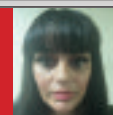
I am learning not to take some personalities and their overly rude manner as personal and how to manoeuvre the bridge from social worker to team manager. I realise that not all of us social workers appreciate the challenge and want the affirmation and support only. Tricky business.

Needless to say I am tired. I am also trying to understand the economic changes such as petrol increases, gas and electric and food prices and how we can all cope. I have to be honest that if I had not moved to agency I would be seriously struggling right now and panicking. When I was permanent, I lived month-to-month. Now I am better off, however, as agency I have to pay both the employee NI and the employer's NI.

This is due to go up in April which may see me no better off than I was when permanent except without the pension, holiday pay and sick pay.

I try to work on self-care, especially with the added stress I have felt on stepping up to management. I started mindfulness apps, more pampering such as baths and face masks and painting my nails, making sure I made time to have a coffee with friends and get out. I hope that we all pull together and lean on each other. Ofsted may be a trying time, however at the end of the day it is about investigating and rating and that rating should reflect the standards of the LA. Some LAs I have been in have provided two weeks protected time for social workers to get everything up-to-date for an Ofsted visit in addition to overtime. Maybe Ofsted shouldn't give us any warning and just turn up. It would also be good to stop being investigated by people who are not and have never been social workers.

STUDENT NOTES



Georgiana Ndlovu is an MSc social work student

Writing, meeting, studying and pitching

It's been another jam-packed month but so far I've enjoyed every minute of it. While I have yet to secure a final year placement I have made contact with a London-based forensic team and another mental health hospital.

Securing placements takes time and so many local authorities are struggling to place students thanks to a shortage of practice educators and the pressures of Covid 19. Thankfully, I am so busy with studies and other pursuits I am happy to be patient and focus my attentions elsewhere until the right opportunity presents itself.

Dissertation sessions with my allocated supervisor have begun and one of the critical processes is refining the subject and research question which I have been passionately exploring for months – loosely, the potential impact social workers might have on youth offenders' ability to refrain from offending behaviour and in turn help them rehabilitate into society. Answers on a postcard please!

I've learned a great deal by speaking to leading academics, conducting interviews and networking with youth offending teams, probation, social workers in the youth justice arena and other professionals to consolidate my questions and concentrate my reading.

It's a fascinating but challenging piece of work and I am setting

deadlines for each section of the dissertation and scheduling regular sessions with my supervisor to avoid burnout from this high-pressure piece of work that accounts for 60 credits of my MSc grade.

On top of my university schedule I've been keeping busy signing up for many of BASW's World Social Work Month events and am looking forward to taking part in a panel to discuss the perception of social work by the public and the media.

Elsewhere, I've been perfecting my pitching skills in order to present my idea for the London Metropolitan University Big Ideas Challenge 2022 – a student-led social work documentary I've initially called 'Inside Social Work' that aims to find out exactly what the press and public really know – and want to know – about social work and provide the answers.

Regardless of the outcome, there are talks of a potential pilot documentary or podcast in the future, which is exciting!

I've also been named a BASW student ambassador and will be sharing the duties and expectations of my new role in my future columns!

And finally I have been enjoying my other passion – writing – with my latest interview with an experienced forensic social worker available to view online now.



ASK DEREK

(He's been a social worker for considerably longer than eight years)

Why is it that whenever I book a week off it rains?

Susan, Birmingham

Derek says: It's either got something to do with your postcode or the gods are against you. I'd go with the former...

As a keen amateur botanist, I believe we have much to learn from the plant world. Indeed, we can look at people as plant-like in their need for roots, nurturing and compost in order to thrive. I am interested in developing this concept into a social work theory and would welcome any suggestions.
Jess, Evesham

Derek says: You had me until compost Jess. But I do think there's something in your theory. I for one am all for a regular watering down at the Kings Arms.

I used to think I was not such a bad person. But since starting my studies in social work I have come to the realisation that I am a privileged racist male oppressor. Is there anything I can do to redeem myself?

Barry, Essex

Derek says: Don't worry Barry, as an Essex boy I'm sure you are no stranger to prejudice and negative stereotyping. By the way, I need a man with a van – can you help?

As part of a leadership training programme I was tasked with asking those close to me to list things they feel I can do to improve our relationship. The trouble is some of them have taken this as an opportunity for a complete character assassination and I am now worried that if I read their comments

to the group I will be deemed unfit for promotion. What should I do?
Wendy, Monmouth

Derek says: The truth can hurt Wendy, so I would tell this so-called friend of yours to take a hike. PS for a small fee I provide a strengths-based rewriting service...

Social workers, as we all know, don't get the recognition they deserve. So I have awarded myself an OBE using a fake template. It's proved very effective when booking a table in restaurants and I would encourage other social workers to do the same.
Keith, Plymouth

Derek says: I'm not sure this is the kind of social work activism I can condone, Keith.

Email derek@basw.co.uk



Clare Classics

Megan, meet my new student Emma. Emma can't hear enough of my social work anecdotes, can you Emma?



Emma?



From Harry Venning's back catalogue of cartoons for *The Guardian* spanning a quarter of a century. The Clare in the Community Collection is available at www.clareinthecommunity.co.uk

ENGLAND VIEWS

Why social work must engage with reforms to the Human Rights Act



With everything that is happening on the world stage, and as we still contend with the very worst effects of Covid-19, it would be easy to dismiss engagement with the government's domestic legislative agenda as not a priority in the grand scheme of things.

However, I want to express why proposed reforms to the Human Rights Act matter and why you should care too.

Many protections to our human rights in the UK exist because of the Human Rights Act (HRA).

Social workers are often at the forefront when it comes to protection of an individual's human rights, with the HRA reinforcing and supporting many of the values practiced by social workers.

Social workers are regularly there to remind people of the rights they have and work hard to ensure they have access to services that can guarantee those rights are upheld.

But the Human Rights Act is bigger than just social work. At stake is the way human rights are protected within the UK. Campaigners fear the reforms will limit duties on public bodies to protect the rights of people and make it

'Social workers are often at the forefront when it comes to protection of an individual's human rights'

harder to win challenges in the courts. This matters, to social workers and everyone. We are already seeing the right to assembly and protest threatened in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill currently going through Parliament. It is vital we engage with policy reform.

The road so far has been a bumpy one. The government has already been criticised for launching a consultation on the HRA that did not come with an easy read version available.

The result of this was that despite the initial deadline for responses having already passed on 8 March, they had to extend it until 19 April for those that required an easy read version.

If you, or someone you know, requires an easy read version of the consultation then get in touch with the Department of Justice now at HRAreform@justice.gov.uk

If you're simply someone who cares, then write to your MP sharing why this matters to you and join efforts to protect our Human Rights Act and prove that our hard won rights won't be lost without a fight.

Josh Dixon, policy and campaigns officer, BASW England

NORTHERN IRELAND VIEWS

'Need to address the pressures facing social work could not be more urgent'



Last month BASW NI took part in health minister Robin Swann's Health Summit. Alongside leaders from across the health and social care (HSC) system we shared views on how HSC services in Northern Ireland can be rebuilt to deliver the best care for all.

Over the past number of years, waiting lists for elective care have reached lengths inconceivable to our counterparts in Great Britain, and vacancy rates in social work, particularly children's services, have spiralled. When I took up post with BASW NI in 2016 we were talking about the worsening pressures on social work. Sadly, we have now reached the point where social work, along with other HSC services, is in crisis.

Addressing workforce pressures is central to ensuring delivery of high-quality services. Vacancies in social work continue to prove problematic, with recent reports indicating vacancy rates of 50 per cent in Gateway teams. We have made the need to address social work recruitment and retention pressures in HSC a key priority in our manifesto ahead of the NI Assembly election in May.

While addressing pressures within the system is vital,

'Addressing workforce pressures is central to ensuring delivery of high quality services'

taking action against the factors which lead to people needing to access services is equally important. It was therefore welcome that during the summit the minister stressed the link between deprivation and poor health outcomes and called for a cross-departmental approach to what he termed "the extremely concerning" situation.

Our manifesto also includes a call for parties to support the delivery and implementation of an anti-poverty strategy. In December 2020, a panel of experts published a series of recommendations to reduce poverty in Northern Ireland to negligible levels. To date, an anti-poverty strategy has not been produced, nor is expected before the election.

As parties canvas support ahead of the election, I encourage BASW NI members to raise the asks outlined in our manifesto (see page 13) with candidates as they seek your vote on 5 May. The need to address the pressures facing social work could not be more urgent and we now have an opportunity to elect the representatives we believe will deliver meaningful change to benefit the profession and those who use social work services.

Andy McClenaghan, public affairs and comms officer

SCOTLAND VIEWS

Imagine social work as a universal service, not a crisis intervention one



When I think about the good work that social workers do under the great pressures they face, and the opportunity for real change in the way people use social services and social workers experience their work, I am excited and optimistic. What could social work feel like in the future?

Imagine if social work was a universal service where people could go as part of a one-stop-shop for the proposed Community Health and Social Care Boards. Multi-disciplinary groups of social care and support providers, commissioners, community health and social workers might all be based and working together. They could work from places that people go to all the time so they are accessible for a quick chat about life's challenges.

Community development approaches strengthen local voices and local activism is supported and empowered. Could we devolve budgets to neighbourhoods so that local teams and local people could use that budget where it will make the greatest difference to their community?

What could social work offer in this future? Could we do what we might call 'real social work'? That is,

support people before they reach crisis, balance our caseloads with early intervention and preventative work, nurture community relationships and initiatives. Not care management (an important element, but only one). Not only statutory, high risk, protection cases (part of what we do but, in reality, failure management). Not to have our professional assessments revised in the light of eligibility thresholds and budgets. We need to be able to do real social work.

The work we do can only be effective when it is based in relationship and where we use ourselves and our own time to support people when they need it. Not when they hit a threshold of eligibility that determines they are in crisis.

By definition, social work aims to minimise crisis and risk, trying not to intervene unless absolutely necessary. For many people using services and for social workers, this is not the experience.

I hope for a National Care Service within which social work is experienced as helpful and compassionate. If Scotland wants quality and effective social work, this is where we must start our vision for the future.

Alison Bavidge, national director SASW

'I hope for a National Care Service within which social work is experienced as helpful'

SOCIAL WORKERS' UNION VIEWS

Understanding your rights when going through disciplinary process



As a service we almost always recommend to our members that they engage fully with disciplinary processes.

This is because we know that members who engage with their employers through such process are more likely to receive a better outcome when they have involved themselves, no matter how difficult this is.

There may be times when employers take disciplinary action against employees in their absence, but this carries legal risks for the employer.

Employers can use a variety of methods to communicate with employees involved in a disciplinary process. Recorded delivery letters, emails, text messages and phone calls are often used to keep employees informed.

Organisations are often faced with employees that are unable to attend a disciplinary hearing, most often because of ill health.

ACAS's code of practice states that if an employee fails to attend a first meeting it is good practice for the employer to re-arrange the meeting to an alternative day

to give the employee a further chance to attend.

If an employee fails to attend without good reason, a decision may need to be taken but the employee's right to attend a hearing should not be ignored.

Employers should be wary of proceeding with a hearing in employee's absence without very good cause, as the right to state their case at a disciplinary hearing is considered as fundamental to a fair process.

They could offer alternatives such as a telephone hearing, a neutral venue, or even invite written submissions. However, this is often a poor second to being present, answering questions and stating the case fully.

If a hearing proceeds in the absence of an employee, they will still have the right to appeal the decision, and a full hearing could then be held.

If dismissal is the outcome, a full re-hearing should be conducted on appeal to correct any procedural faults.

Only on proof of an employee deliberately avoiding the hearing will a tribunal find in the employer's favour.

Kevin Waldoock, advice and representation officer



WALES VIEWS

Let's open our hearts and homes to the people fleeing war in Ukraine



What a month it's been. In BASW Cymru we started celebrations as part of World Social Work Month on 1 March with a community of practice for all social work students and social workers in Wales.

This session was facilitated by our ambassador, Dr Neil Thompson, as we considered and celebrated our identity as social workers and, more specifically, Welsh social workers.

The following day we were able to meet with various members of the Senedd to raise the profile of social work in Wales – it was encouraging to see such interest from those who lead our country.

Then as the month progressed, the reality of what was happening in Ukraine became much clearer with its invasion by Russia at the end of February.

The news reports were distressing. We were witnessing people leaving their homes and country in vast numbers. Tragically, some lost their lives in the attempt to flee to safety.

A month previously, these men, women and children were just 'normal' families doing what families do... and

then everything changed.

We may feel helpless in the face of these atrocities as we see the misery and hopelessness being experienced on such an immense scale.

I'm sure our immediate response is, how can I help? Well, there are many ways that we can do so. I'm reminded of the final words of our patron saint, St David: "Do the little things."

We may not be able to individually influence governments, but there are a host of ways we can show our support for the people of Ukraine. We can lobby government to do all it can to bring the war to an end; we can call for a speedy and safe passage to the UK; we can donate money, medicines, clothing and offer accommodation to those who need it, and we can pray.

Let's look for all those "little things" we can do for they amount to larger things when everyone responds.

Back in 2019 Wales became a nation of sanctuary. Let's open our hearts and homes to the people of Ukraine and offer them sanctuary here in Wales.

Meryl Williams, professional officer BASW Cymru

'We were witnessing people leaving their home and country in vast numbers'

CYMRU VIEWS

Gadewch i ni agor ein calonnau a'n cartrefi i'r bobl sy'n ffoi rhag rhyfel yn yr Wcrain

Am fis mae hi wedi bod. Yn BASW Cymru, dechreuwyd ar y dathliadau fel rhan o Fis Gwaith Cymdeithasol y Byd ar 1 Mawrth, gyda chymuned ymarferiad i holl fyfyrwyr gwaith cymdeithasol a gweithwyr cymdeithasol yng Nghymru.

Hwyluswyd y sesiwn hon gan ein Llysgennad, Dr Neil Thompson, wrth inni ystyried a dathlu ein hunaniaeth fel gweithwyr cymdeithasol ac yn fwy penodol, gweithwyr cymdeithasol Cymru.

Y diwrnod canlynol cawsom y cyfle i gyfarfod ag amryw o aelodau'r Senedd, i godi proffil gwaith cymdeithasol yng Nghymru - roedd yn galonogol i weld cymaint o ddiddordeb gan y rhai sy'n arwain ein gwlad.

Yna, wrth i'r mis fynd yn ei flaen, daeth realiti'r hyn oedd yn digwydd yn yr Wcrain yn llawer cliriach gyda goresgyniad eu gwlad gan Rwsia ddiwedd Chwefror.

Roedd yr adroddiadau ar y newyddion yn peri gofid. Roeddem yn gweld niferoedd enfawr o bobl yn gadael eu cartrefi a'u gwlad. Yn drasig, colodd rhai eu bywydau yn yr ymgeis i ffoi i ddiogelwch.

Mis cyn hyn, roedd y dynion, y merched a'r plant hyn yn deuluoedd 'normal' yn gwneud yr hyn mae teuluoedd yn ei

wneud ... ac yna newidiodd popeth.

Efallai ein bod yn teimlo'n ddiymadferth yn wyneb yr erchyllterau hyn wrth inni weld y trallod a'r anobaith a brofir ar raddfa mor aruthrol.

Rwy'n siŵr mai ein hymateb syth yw, sut alla i helpu? Wel, mae yna lawer o ffyrdd y gallwn ni helpu. Caf fy atgoffa o eiriau olaf ein nawddsant, Dewi Sant - "gwnewch y pethau bychain".

Efallai na allwn ddylanwadu'n unigol ar lywodraethau, ond mae yna lu o ffyrdd y gallwn ddangos ein cefnogaeth i bobl yr Wcrain. Gallwn lloio'r llywodraeth i wneud popeth o fewn ei gallu i ddod â'r rhyfel i ben; gallwn alw am daith gyflym a diogel i'r DU; gallwn gyfrannu arian, moddion, dillad a chynning llety i'r rhai sydd ei angen, a gallwn weddio.

Gadewch i ni edrych am yr holl "bethau bach" hynny y gallwn eu gwneud oherwydd byddant yn gyfystyr a phethau mawr pan fydd pawb yn ymateb.

Yn ôl yn 2019, daeth Cymru yn genedl lloches. Gadewch i ni agor ein calonnau a'n cartrefi i bobl yr Wcrain a chynnig lloches iddynt yma yng Nghymru.

Meryl Williams, swyddog proffesiynol BASW Cymru

'Gwelsom niferoedd enfawr o bobl yn gadael eu cartrefi a'u gwlad'

DIARY DATES

8 APRIL

Launch of the Social Work with Romani and Traveller Communities Special Interest Group
See advert page 12

13 APRIL

BASW NI CPD Seminar:
Neurodiversity as part of equality, diversity and inclusion

13 APRIL

Understanding Leadership for Wellbeing at Work
See advert page 44

14 APRIL

Students: Preparing your CV & applying for jobs workshop

19 & 26 APRIL

BASW England 80-20 Reflective Practice Seminars: Storytelling through graphic novels

25 APRIL

Reflective Writing for Students
See advert page 44

25 APRIL

Black Country Branch:
Understanding Moral Injury and its impact in social work.

26 APRIL, 31 MAY

BASW Professionals with Neurodiversity Special Interest Group meeting

27 APRIL

Social work with families who are homeless guidance - Launch event

3 & 17 MAY

BASW England 80-20 Reflective Practice Seminars: Parental Substance Misuse

4 MAY

BASW NI Community of Practice 'Neurodiversity as part of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)'

5 MAY

Fabricated & Induced Illness - Launch of Practice Guide
See advert page 44

5 MAY

Safeguarding Adults Level 4: Named Professionals Training

12 MAY

BASW Allies Series Webinar: Towards a Better Tomorrow

13 MAY

Revisiting Social Work Theory for Contemporary Social Work Practice
See advert page 44

18 MAY

Trauma Informed Practice Training
See advert page 44

18 MAY

BASW NI CPD Seminar: Creative approaches to therapeutic interventions

19 MAY OR 1 JUNE

Cultural competency, diversity and inclusion training for NQSWs
See advert page 44

24 & 31 MAY

BASW England 80-20 Reflective Practice Seminars: Improving family time for children in care

26 MAY

Students: Preparing for job interviews
See advert page 44

1 JUNE

BASW NI Community of Practice 'Creative approaches to therapeutic interventions in social work'

7 JUNE

Professional development and reflective supervision. Managing expectations and workloads
See advert page 44

7 JUNE

BASW England 80-20 Reflective Practice Seminars: Social work in pandemics

15 JUNE

BASW NI CPD Seminar: Organisational culture

16 & 17 JUNE

BASW UK conference, festival and AGM: A Social Work for the Future
See advert page 43

28 JUNE

BASW Becoming Allies in Social Work: Understanding LGBTQIA+ Inequalities - Focus Workshop: Moving away from stereotypes
See advert page 44

13 OR 20 JULY

The right side of regulation: Recording with care and critical reflection on learning
See advert page 44

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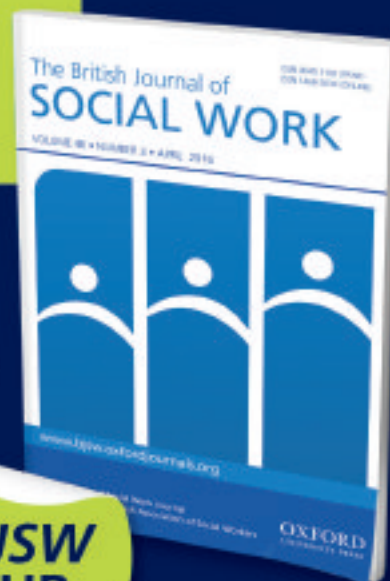
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This vibrant two day hybrid event is BASW's biggest event, attended by 100s of social workers from across the UK. This landmark event is led by the voice of social work for social workers and brings together a range of keynote speakers, workshops – plus a festival of enjoyment and wellbeing experiences.

About BASW UK social work conference and festival 2022

As we continue to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, we face a new era for social work – the prospect of living and working in a world with Covid, war in Ukraine and a humanitarian crisis across Europe, new government policies, new technologies and ways of working.

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Join BASW to look to the future and a new era for social work.

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Help us build social work's unique role with individuals, communities and society – to empower independence, further develop anti-racism work and promote equality, diversity and inclusion in social work, uphold human rights, and tackle injustice into the future.

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