



PROFESSIONAL
Social Work

July / August 2021

Childhood aspirations

Ten-page spotlight on children's social care

CommunityCare live21

BDC, London | 12-13 October

Community Care is delighted to announce that our flagship event, Community Care Live, will be returning as a face to face event on 12-13 October 2021.

Due to the remarkable work by all involved in the vaccine programme and the current positive roadmap we are excited to be able to welcome you all in person this October for what is sure to be another successful event filled with essential learning and networking.

We understand some may still feel uncertain as to what exactly the next few months will hold but we would like to assure you that the Community Care team and the Business Design Centre will be strictly following Covid-19 related government guidance to ensure we deliver a safe and productive event.

Event registration is **FREE** for all registered social workers, and other closely associated job roles, and gives access to two full days of free seminar sessions and access to the buzzing exhibition floor. Fees apply to attend the eight legal learning sessions.

Legal sessions this year:

From DoLS to the Liberty Protection Safeguards

Tim Spencer-Lane, lawyer specialising in mental capacity, mental health and social care law

Developments in NHS continuing healthcare

Morag Duff, Independent consultant specialising in continuing healthcare

The Mental Health Act: past, present and future

Tim Spencer-Lane, lawyer specialising in mental capacity, mental health and social care law

Understanding and applying section 20 of the Children Act

William Dean, barrister, 9 Gough Chambers

The Mental Capacity Act and the three Cs: Covid-19, case law and the code of practice

Alex Ruck Keene, barrister, 39 Essex Chambers

Kinship care and special guardianship

Caroline Lynch, principal legal adviser, Family Rights Group

The Care Act: wellbeing and human rights

Arianna Kelly, barrister, 39 Essex Chambers

Cross-border social work post-Brexit

Maria Wright, senior legal adviser, and Nadine Wesslowski, inter-country social worker, Children and Families Across Borders

Event Partner



Essex County Council

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SOMERSET
County Council

Registration
is now open
for Community
Care Live
2021

**Register your legal places
by 31 August 2021 and pay
just £24 +VAT per session
(price increases to £29 +VAT from 1 September).**

For full event details visit www.communitycarelive.co.uk

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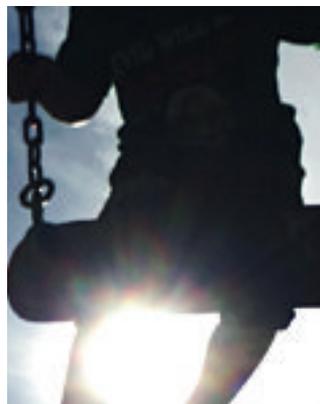


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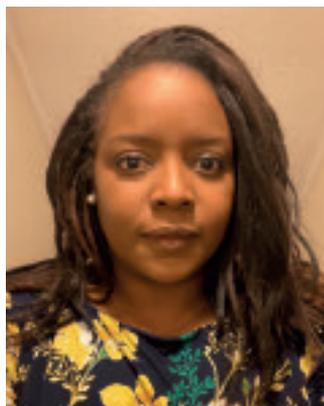


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From the Editor
SHAHID NAQVI



Care, rights and relationships we can all agree on

It's the nature of reviews to find fault. Hence the title of the interim report from England's review into children's social care, *The Case for Change*.

What reviews like this don't capture quite so well are the many times when the system gets it right, the countless daily moments of often life-changing care and support given by professionals.

But no one is pretending improvements aren't needed. This edition gives voice to those with experience of care. Some of it may be uncomfortable reading but in essence their message is one that social workers would agree with – the need for a greater focus on care, rights and time for relationships.

Whatever your view on the review – and there is vigorous debate around it – the report does identify the need for these elements in the system. And also for greater resource and recognition of the impact of poverty on children and family life. Its criticism of practice as risk averse and adversarial is broadbrush but perhaps less aimed at social work than the system it works in. And if you want an insight into this then read this month's entry from our social worker diarist on page 43.

The bigger question, however, is will the government address the root causes that too often create a need for social care – rising inequality and poverty?

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BASW
The professional association for social work and social workers

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

BASW

The professional association for
social work and social workers

British Association of Social Workers 51st Annual General Meeting

Notice to Members

The Annual General Meeting will be held on the **15th September 2021 from 3.30pm to approximately 6pm** with a break halfway through.

This is the annual meeting for all members where BASW reports to members on its work and members make decisions about priorities for the future.

Due to the ongoing uncertainty around risk for large gatherings, this meeting will be held online. This will also enable us to make the meeting as accessible as possible.

Before the meeting, there will be a short celebratory online event for members from 1.30-2.30pm and opportunities for networking between 2.30 and 3.30pm.

More information about how to book a place and how to join online will be shared soon.

We hope that as many members as possible can join us, whether this is your first time or you have been to all 50 previous meetings!

This is the OFFICIAL NOTICE for the meeting that we have to give according to our constitution.

NOTICE of the meeting was given in Professional Social Work in May 2021.

The Motions and Agenda
are available online at:

www.basw.co.uk/about-basw/governance/basw-agm

SWU

Social
Workers
Union

Call for Nominations SWU Executive Committee Northern Ireland Representative

The Social Workers Union (SWU) is the trade union dedicated to representing the interests of social workers and the social work profession.

SWU is now seeking nominations from members to fill a vacancy on its Executive Committee.

To stand for election a candidate must meet the conditions set out in Bye Laws 1.4 and 1.5 of the SWU rules, a copy of which can be found on our website.

The Executive Committee is made up of ten members, at least two members from England, at least one member each from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (national representatives) and up to five others (UK representatives). The Chair of the union is elected by the executive from amongst the representatives.

There is currently a vacancy for a Northern Ireland Representative. All candidates for election must be nominated by another member of the union. In the case of the National Representative from Northern Ireland, nomination must be by a member within the relevant nation.

When attending Executive committee meetings, committee members who are either in full-time employment, self-employed or Social Work Students are entitled to claim an attendance allowance to cover costs associated with taking time off from paid work, self-employed work, caring duties or social work studies.

SWU encourages applications from Students/Newly Qualified Social Workers and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) Social Workers who are currently under-represented on the National Executive of SWU.

Candidates must complete a nomination form. **The closing date for receipt of nominations is 5pm on Friday 30th July 2021.** The full timetable for elections and information regarding terms of office for each vacancy can be found on our website.

Completed nomination forms must be accompanied by an election statement of no more than 500 words together with a head and shoulders colour photograph in a TIFF or JPEG format. These should be sent via email to: joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk. Please note that nominees need to provide full contact details including a telephone number and email address.

Nomination forms and role descriptions are available from the SWU website or via email from joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk (0121 389 9248).

If you have any general queries about this process, please contact the SWU Administration Manager on 0121 389 9248.

NEWS



Social workers get blamed by media for systemic failings, finds study

Good news: it's a dream job. Bad news: media quick to find fault

Social work is portrayed as an enviable job by the media which holds those in it up to a “higher moral standard” and is quick to blame them for systemic failings.

These were among findings of a new report, ‘Social Workers Failed to Heed Warnings: A Text-Based Study of How a Profession is Portrayed in UK Newspapers’ published in the *British Journal of Social Work*.

The study, by linguistics expert Dr Maria Leedham, used computer technology to analyse nearly 1,000 references to ‘social worker’ in UK national newspapers between May and August 2019.

The results indicate a high proportion of negative instances (25 per cent) when compared to positive instances (six per cent). A further 69 per cent were classed as neutral.

Within the negative instances, more than two thirds (69 per cent) concern children, with only ten per cent relating to adult social work, and less than one per cent concerning mental health.

The largest negative classification was ‘failure to notice or act’, accounting for 43 per cent of all negative instances, supporting notions of a culture of blame. Only 16 per cent of negative mentions were for perceived ‘over-zealous’ interventions.

The study said TV, film and books tend to “feature social workers as well-intentioned but flawed characters, perpetuating inaccurate stereotypes.”

Dr Leedham said: “Social work is notably portrayed in the press as a dream job which is

immensely challenging, requiring dedicated, efficient individuals. This positive categorisation, however, has the negative consequence of any social worker failing to live up to this vocational ideal being quickly perceived to be inadequate and blamed for systemic failures.”

The research also found a “significant minority” of stories about people who happen to be social workers that had behaved badly in their personal life.

Dr Leedham said: “This suggests that the press tend to portray social workers as individuals who should be ‘good people’ in all aspects of their lives and who are held to a higher moral standard than the rest of us.”

The study says examining negative language in the press will “help journalists and the general public better understand the challenges facing the profession and reduce the tendency towards blame”.

Dr Leedham recommends unions, professional bodies and social workers engage with the media and present positive stories of the profession to “promote a shared understanding amongst journalists and the public of social workers”.

Meanwhile, the pandemic appears to have resulted in a new-found appreciation of social care jobs.

A survey by the Work Foundation and Totaljobs of nearly 5,000 jobseekers found the number of applications to the sector increased by 39 per cent in the first three months of 2021 compared to the same time last year.

See Ruth Allen’s column – page 36

Crisis showed importance of local networks

The pandemic helped show how naturally occurring community networks can safeguard children.

A government-funded report led by Professor Eileen Munro examined how social work at four local authorities adapted.

Most contact moved online, and this led to councils exploring new methods of staying in touch with families.

The authors state: “The research found a wealth of evidence that social workers were using networks in very creative ways, adapting to the restrictions of lockdown.”

Existing networks, such as extended family, neighbours and community members, were cited as “a potentially valuable resource for building safety”.

Use of networks is predicted to increase post-Covid.

Report: *What helps and what hinders in building safety for children using naturally connected networks*

Bid to protect workers fails

MPs rejected an attempt to give social workers the same protection from assault as emergency workers.

Labour tabled an amendment to the Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill that would have meant someone assaulting a social worker would be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, a fine, or both. This was rejected at Committee Stage and MPs voted to pass the bill without amendments. It now goes to the House of Lords for further scrutiny. Almost 14,000 people signed a BASW/SWU petition calling for a law change.

NEWS

Sajid Javid



Letter to Javid highlights the importance of social work

BASW has written to the UK parliament's new health and social care secretary Sajid Javid urging him to address "the biggest challenge facing the sector – social care reform".

The letter highlights a range of concerns including the impact of the pandemic upon the "forgotten frontline" of social work.

It underlines the profession's values in fighting oppression and calls for politicians to promote anti-oppressive, anti-racist standards.

Indirectly challenging criticism by former Tory education secretary Michael Gove nearly a decade ago that social work teaching at universities is too ideological and focused on social injustice, the letter says: "Social work education must also focus on oppression and anti-racism in our society and how this impacts everybody's lives. Not all groups of people are treated equally and that must change."

It urges politicians to tackle the causes of social crisis intervention such as poverty and ends: "Whilst the issues discussed in this letter are of huge importance, the biggest challenge facing the sector now is social care reform. Small changes will only amount to a plaster that will not achieve the significant change that is needed."

BASW also spoke out in the wake of criticism by public spending watchdog the National Audit Office (NAO) of the government's response to

the pandemic. NAO highlighted a need to be "clear and transparent about what government is trying to achieve" and for "clear and timely communications".

It also said the pandemic underlined the need for social care to be on an equal footing with health and to gather evidence from frontline staff on policy.

Last year, BASW chief executive Ruth Allen expressed concern that the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies consisting of 100 experts contained no social workers.

Responding to the NAO report published in June, BASW said: "The initial response [to the pandemic] fell far below the standard expected of government, especially in the lack of consulting with sectors and transparency with vital stakeholders in health and social care. Lessons must be learned.

"For example, as part of workforce pressures and coordination, the government must ensure the social care and social work sector is represented at senior levels.

"Consulting and engaging with groups like BASW could have saved money and time at the very start of the pandemic, rather than continuous changing of guidance based on public response and emerging evidence that was available at the start of the pandemic."

Human rights champion gets a gong

A principal social worker and human rights champion has been awarded an MBE for services to the profession in the Queen's birthday honours.

Rob Mitchell, adults' PSW at Bradford council, regularly challenges paternalistic approaches to social work. He also co-authored *Social Work, Cats and Rocket Science: Stories of Making a Difference in Social Work with Adults* and helped organise a Mental Capacity Act call to action in 2016, highlighting empowerment.

Also honoured was Andy Tilden, formerly director of operations of Skills for Care, and former Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, awarded an OBE and CBE respectively.

Vic Rayner, chief executive officer of the National Care Forum and Christine McLoughlin, director of children's services at Stockport council, gained OBEs.

Viewpoint – page 37

Three years to study poverty

A degree focused on the impact of poverty has been launched.

The Action on Poverty and Hardship Degree is being launched at Staffordshire University and will look at how deprivation and social inequality impacts on communities. It will encourage students to "give a voice to the marginalised and ignored members of society..."

● Deliveroo drivers are to be given training to spot the signs of domestic abuse, drug dealing and human trafficking.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'It is imperative that the review of Children's Social Care locates itself firmly within the need to 'build back fairer' otherwise it risks reinforcing inequalities in the lives of children and families' **Brid Featherstone, professor of social work**

NEWS

Social care snubbed as George Cross awarded to brave NHS

BASW criticised the government for ignoring social care after awarding the George Cross for bravery to the NHS.

It's only the third time the Queen has given the honour – awarded on advice from the Prime Minister – collectively rather than to an individual.

It was presented to mark the NHS's 73rd birthday and in appreciation of the efforts and sacrifices of workers in the service during the pandemic.

A letter signed by the Queen said the award was in recognition of the “courage, compassion and dedication” of staff, “especially in recent times”.

BASW chief executive Ruth Allen said the NHS rightly deserved the recognition but added: “There will be many equally dedicated and courageous workers in social care – who often work alongside their colleagues in health – that will be thinking where is our recognition?”

“Social care staff including carers, care home workers, domiciliary care workers, social workers, approved mental health practitioners and scores of other professionals have been working hard on the frontline in the battle against Covid-19 and taken great risks – tragically in many cases – to keep the population safe and supported.”

Allen said social care and social work are often “more hidden and less well supported nationally in policy, funding and public regard” than some other essential services. Part of the challenge for the sector was to “get visibility” for the “myriad workplaces and roles of social workers”, she said.

Allen added: “Social care and social workers – alongside the health service – are fundamental to the UK's recovery from this pandemic and we need to see this reflected in ongoing pandemic planning,



as well as the upcoming Autumn statement.”

The George Cross is the UK's highest award for gallantry and is usually awarded to individuals.

Only two other collective awards have been given since it was established during the blitz of the Second World War. The first was to the population of Malta in 1942 and the second to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 1999.

Labour and unions have slammed the government for only offering a one per cent pay rise to NHS workers. The GMB said: “If the government wants to mark this birthday they should support our campaign for a 15 per cent pay rise for NHS staff.”

Addressing inequality crucial to build back fairer

“Jaw-dropping” falls in life expectancy in Greater Manchester have been highlighted in a report billed as a template for the government's promise to level up.

Widening inequalities during Covid and the impact of a decade of austerity were blamed for growing health inequalities in the region and similar communities across the UK in a new report.

Called *Build Back Fairer in Greater Manchester: Health Equality and Dignified Lives*, it was led by Sir Michael Marmot.

He found the Covid-19 death rate in Greater Manchester was 25 per cent higher than the England average during the year to March contributing to the fall in life expectancy. Solutions outlined include additional support for early years sett and the mental health of young people; doubling the budget for preventing poor health outcomes; new standards for healthy living on employers and local authorities and more power to devolved regions to address inequality, backed by targets to monitor progress.

Another major report called for a “public health” approach to child welfare that targets “problems not people” after underlining the link between state intervention in families and deprivation.

The Social gradient in English child welfare services report found children in the most deprived neighbourhoods were 14 times more likely to be referred to social services than those in the most affluent. It also found neglect accounted for half of a 20 per cent rise in child protection plans in England between 2013-2020.

EU Settlement could be the next Windrush

BASW has called for a “supportive environment” and an extension of the EU Settlement Scheme deadline amid concerns thousands of EU and EEA citizens could lose rights, homes and jobs.

The deadline for applying ended on 30 June. Failure to do so can lead to loss of lawful immigration status.

More than 5.6 million EU citizens have so far applied, but there is a backlog of 400,000. There are fears many vulnerable groups, including children in care and children about to turn 18, may not even know they need to apply.

Earlier this year the Children's Society warned more than half of the identified EU/EEA looked-after children had yet to apply.

In a letter to home secretary Priti Patel, BASW chief executive Ruth Allen said: “Social workers have seen first-hand that there are significant obstacles in the way of ensuring that everyone who needs to sign up to the scheme has done so. The difficulty of accessing support and advice has been worsened by the disruptions to social care and other support during the pandemic.”

The letter points to other vulnerable groups, such as people without mental capacity, those with additional needs, Roma communities, people experiencing exploitation or abuse, and those out of touch with services who may not know to apply.

The government has indicated late applications will be permitted as long as they meet “reasonable grounds”.

See PSW online for more

ENGLAND NEWS

Children's social care review must avoid 'blame' narrative

BASW England urged the review into children's social care not to perpetuate negative narratives around social work.

The call came as the review published its *Case for Change* interim report setting out what it believes is wrong with the current system.

Among its findings is that children's social care in England is "bureaucratic and risk averse", citing as evidence a three-fold rise in section 47 investigations in the last decade that did not result in child protection plans.

The report says: "The review consistently heard from parents and families who came to social care looking for support but their experience of being assessed added stress to an already difficult situation without meaningful support being offered."

England national director Maris Stratulis said the report raised "fundamental issues about the environment social workers operate in, as well as social work practice itself".

However, she added: "While scrutiny of social work practice is welcome, the review needs to avoid reiterating a government blame culture and negative narratives around a workforce that has tirelessly worked before and during the pandemic to deliver support, compassion, kindness to children and families hand-in-hand with undertaking assessments and safeguarding investigations in challenging circumstances."

The report highlights underfunding in children's social work and acknowledges the link between social care interventions and poverty.

It says: "Anyone concerned with social justice who is working in children's social care needs to take responsibility for leading a system that has agency and power to tackle these inequalities."

However, Stratulis said the government had been "let off the hook" by the review for failing to mention ten years of austerity policies that had increased pressure on families.

She called for it to commit to a rights-based approach to children, recognise the value of relationship-based practice and understand the



System is bureaucratic and risk averse says report importance of social work.

In a foreword to *The Case for Change*, review chair Josh MacAlister says: "Our children's social care system is a 30-year-old tower of Jenga held together with Sellotape: simultaneously rigid, yet shaky."

The report says "anxiety in the system and a lack of knowledge" has led to an over-reliance on "proceduralised risk assessment".

Because of this, social workers too often lacked freedom "to follow their judgement".

It also criticised the fact that one in three social workers in children's services do not work directly with children and families as a "staggering misuse of the greatest asset that children's social care has".

See pages 21 and 45 and PSW online. BASW England's ten priorities: www.basw.co.uk/ircsc-priorities. BASW England's survey on the review: search 'Case for Change survey' on BASW's website

Racism survey is launched by regulator

England's regulator is asking social workers to complete two surveys to foster a better understanding of equality, diversity and the impact of racism in the profession.

Social Work England is joining a collaboration of social work organisations to launch a major anti-racism survey. In addition, it is asking social workers to help them build a more accurate picture of the workforce by completing new questions about equality and diversity at registration.

The anti-racism survey, led by the Anti-Racist Social Work Steering Group, aims to understand the prevalence, impact and general awareness of racism in social work. It comes in the wake of concern that people from black and ethnic minority communities are disproportionately represented at fitness to practice hearings and suffer discrimination on ASYE programmes.

The survey launches as Social Work England considers doubling the annual requirement for recording continuing professional development (CPD) for practitioners seeking to renew their registration. Previous research has found 60 per cent of practitioners lack time for learning and development.

In 2021 is it still 80-20? Admin vs direct work survey to test progress

BASW England is relaunching its 80-20 Campaign to find out where the profession stands on the balance of admin versus direct practice in 2021.

The campaign was launched

following a survey of members in 2018 which found too much time was being spent on administrative tasks.

The new survey seeks to assess progress towards reinstating

more direct relationship-based work with children and families.

BASW England said: "We know that therapeutic, reflective, relationship-based practice is the best way for social workers

to bring effective and positive change to vulnerable children and families."

You can tweet your support using the hashtag #8020campaign.

SCOTLAND NEWS



Black and ethnic minority social workers say managers fail to respond properly to racist incidents

Racism is rife against BAME staff but response to it is poor

Nearly nine in ten black and minority ethnic social workers in Scotland have experienced racism but when they report it managers are often “dismissive”.

Incidents range from harassment, name calling and unwelcome hair touching or comments about skin colour from service users, to being overlooked for promotion and having higher caseloads.

The findings come from a snapshot survey of social workers and social work students by SASW followed up by a roundtable discussion.

Of 97 respondents, all but three of 30 from black and ethnic minority communities reported directly experiencing racism. Of those who hadn't, one said they had witnessed it happening to someone else.

Those who reported incidents typically found responses from managers unsatisfactory.

One said: “It disappeared into a vacuum”. Another said: “I would not recommend this [profession] anymore as I have been victimised and harassed for my actions and my character has been exposed to all sorts of negative accusations to indicate that I was the problem.”

One respondent claimed managers “played it down, turned it on me”, while another said: “I have

been told on numerous occasions that it's just part of the job and that I shouldn't be offended.”

When asked what needs to be done to create more diverse and inclusive work and educational environments, training was the top answer followed by increased diversity among the workforce.

Issues raised at the roundtable event included a lack of black and minority ethnic representation among social work lecturers and leadership.

Concerns about emotional wellbeing were higher among black and minority ethnic students who experienced more difficulties in placements.

The report warns that racism can be embedded into work systems and despite social work's values base “we cannot assume that social workers are immune to the impacts of this”.

SASW's national director Alison Bavidge said: “The most striking thing is that when people report incidents they are not supported by employers.

“These are people's experiences and we need to make sure that all of our organisations respond in order to ensure people from diverse backgrounds are not effectively held responsible for their own safety and wellbeing and not made responsible for fixing the system.”

A community focus needed in drugs crisis

An extra £14.4 million to tackle Scotland's “drugs death emergency” was criticised by SASW for ignoring the root causes of the problem.

The government said the funds would help end a postcode lottery of treatment and are part of £50 million already spent this year with a further £250 million over the next five years.

The government's focus is on improving workforce capacity, treatment including rehabilitation, support services, creating partnerships, research and tackling stigma.

However, SASW national director Alison Bavidge said: “Where are the causes of problematic drug use being looked at?”

“It is about getting to the root causes – poverty, generational lack of opportunity, communities having self-respect and believing that they can have an impact. These are the things that enable healthy communities.”

Bavidge urged policymakers to recognise the role of social work in this space and the ability of social workers to make a difference.

“This is a call for community social work where relationship-based practice and working with other agencies enable communities to take charge, make decisions and have agency.”

Compulsory vaccinations for care home staff is not on the table

The Scottish government has “no plans” to follow England making vaccinations for people working in care homes compulsory.

The UK government's former health and social care secretary Matt Hancock said

making the Covid jab compulsory for staff at care homes in England was a “sensible and reasonable step” to protect lives.

But Public Health England warned workers who did not want to take the vaccine might

“vote with their feet” and leave a sector already facing a recruitment crisis.

The British Medical Association added mandatory vaccinations for staff would raise “new ethical and legal implications”.

BASW's Taught Skills – General



ONLINE MS TEAMS

Each session: Members £99 + VAT
Non members £149 + VAT
CPD 6 HOURS

- 13.7.21 **Revisiting Values for Practicing AMHPs/MHOs/ASWs Training**
- 14.7.21 **Utilising Systemic Family Therapy Tools in Safeguarding Children Training**
- 15.9.21 **Understanding Child Attachment Training**
- 22.9.21 **BIA Refresher Training**

ONLINE MS TEAMS

Each session: Members £29 + VAT
Non members £59 + VAT
CPD 3 HOURS

Stepping Stones Series with Siobhan Maclean – sessions will explore key aspects of the journey into social work following qualification. Hints and tips will be provided to support delegates through their journey at each key transitional period.

- 27.7.21 **Stepping Stones: From Student to Social Worker Training**
- 07.9.21 **Stepping Stones: Social Worker to Supervisor Training**
- 21.9.21 **Stepping Stones: Preparing for Placement**

BASW's Taught Skills Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers



- 29/09/21 or 20/10/21 **Managing Unseen Risk**
- 03/11/21 or 08/12/21 **Professional Resilience**
- 12/01/22 or 10/02/22 **Analysis into Assessment and Evidence-Informed Decision Making**
- 09/03/22 or 06/04/22 **Ethical dilemmas, legal literacy and professional discretion**
- 19/05/22 or 01/06/22 **Cultural competency, diversity and inclusion**
- 13/07/22 or 20/07/22 **The right side of regulation: recording with care and critical reflection on learning**

BASW's Taught Skills Programme for Practice Assessors



- 12/10/2021 **Professional development and reflective supervision, managing expectations and workloads**
- 07/12/2021 **Direct observations, gathering feedback and reporting progress**
- 08/02/2022 **Assessing the quality of evidence and addressing concerns**
- 09/03/22 **Wellbeing in the workplace and professional leadership**

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BASW UK Webinar Programme



Professionals in Practice Series:

- 14.7.21 **Agency Workers: Meeting your Registration Requirements**
Sponsored by Social Work Employment Service (SWES)
FREE WEBINAR

Success in Social Work Series:

- 22.7.21 **Voices of Diaspora Social Workers in the UK**
- 02.9.21 **SASW Conference: Learning from history: Domestic abuse in the post-war period**
BASW MEMBERS: FREE, NON-MEMBERS: £12 INC VAT

Full detail of all BASW CPD events available at: www.basw.co.uk/events

WALES NEWS



Social worker turned businesswoman Natasha Bray

Domestic abuse behind major rise in child protection cases

The number of child protection registrations in the Vale of Glamorgan has more than doubled in two years.

Latest figures in an annual corporate safeguarding report show social services registered 163 children (including siblings) after 94 child protection conferences in 2020/21, compared to 106 children the previous year, and 73 in 2018/19.

Only one child was deemed not to be at continuing risk of significant harm.

The report said: "There has been a significant increase in the number of initial conferences being held and numbers of children becoming subject to child protection planning."

Domestic violence is thought to be a major factor, according to Cllr Ben Gray, cabinet member for social care and health, who spoke about the issue during the cabinet meeting last month.

He said: "We have seen an increase in child protection numbers due to the pandemic, with domestic violence playing a significant part."

The council acknowledged the severity of the rise in child protection registrations, but said there was

not a direct link between pandemic restrictions on service provision and the increase: "This increase is reflective of the increased demand that has been experienced across children's services. Whilst Covid-19 has impacted on services there is not a direct correlation between limited service provision from our partner agencies and the increase being seen."

A shift to virtual child protection conferences during the pandemic had "not impacted" on the authority's ability to have appropriate discussions and make decisions, the report said. It had conversely seen "increased participation from parents who previously had not engaged within this forum".

Calls by concerned adults to a national NSPCC child welfare hotline have jumped by over 50 per cent over the course of the pandemic.

The charity is calling for the UK government to make extra provisions for child victims in its Domestic Abuse Bill that would legally oblige all local authorities to fund community-based recovery services for child victims.

Natasha turns trauma into healthy profit

A former social worker has become a businesswoman turning over millions after launching a series of health and weight loss programmes.

Natasha Bray, of Bridgend, was a single mum-of-one on maternity leave from her job with Newport City Council when she decided to take on a completely new challenge that led to a seven-figure business and a dream home.

She launched Guilt Free Health, channelling her psychology expertise with lived experience of bullying, assault and issues with eating.

"I was bullied all through school. I remember girls ganging up on me and kicking me in the toilets. The bullying was mainly about my weight. I was a size 16 and wasn't very healthy."

At 16, Natasha decided to lose weight, but developed an obsession with exercise. She lost her hair and her periods stopped. Even after university she struggled with a strict food and exercise regime.

Guilt Free Health was launched when she was 29, after having "miracle" son Jenson. Natasha, now 34, is launching a book which brings together 16 inspiring women from across the globe who share their own journeys through trauma, and healing.

Act to prevent a 'Winterbourne View' scandal happening in Wales

Organisations representing people with learning disabilities have urged the government to act to ensure there are "no Winterbournes in Wales".

The Learning Disabilities Consortium said this could currently not be guaranteed with people still being placed out of county and out of Wales.

A list of demands includes ensuring regulatory bodies map the number of people with learning disabilities in such facilities; a strategy for bringing

them back near their families and monitoring of access to advocacy services.

Horrible abuses at Winterbourne View were exposed ten years ago.

NORTHERN IRELAND NEWS



Public Services Ombudsman Margaret Kelly whose report into PIPs is highly critical

People are 'unfairly rejected' for PIP payments – watchdog

Thousands of disabled people could be missing benefit payments they are entitled to due to “systemic maladministration” by the government department responsible for them.

A damning investigation by Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman Margaret Kelly into Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) highlights serious concerns.

PIPs replaced the Disability Living Allowance in 2016 to support people who have a disability or are living with a long-term health condition.

They are administered by the Department for Communities with private sector contractor Capita carrying out assessments.

Based on a review of 100 cases where further evidence was sought, the watchdog found the process confusing, not customer-focused, misleading and inconsistent, with too many people having claims “unfairly rejected”.

It said the way the department gathered data threw into question the accuracy of its decisions. It added at least 21,853 payments made to claimants after appeal could have been awarded earlier.

Despite the importance of additional evidence, Capita only requested this in 25 per cent of cases.

On some occasions, information given on appeal came from sources previously highlighted by the claimant that were not contacted, yet this was described as “new evidence”.

Many claimants were told that health professionals they had listed had been contacted when they hadn't.

The investigation found a “lack of openness and clarity” in communicating with claimants.

Record keeping was found to be “poor”, with case managers failing to show how evidence was evaluated. Letters sent to claimants failed to adequately explain the reasons for decisions.

Kelly said: “Overall, all my investigation found systemic maladministration in how further evidence was used in the public decision-making process.

“In particular, claimants were often in the dark as to what evidence was required, and whether or not they were required to provide it. In fact, my inquiry found that the entire further evidence process was characterised by confusion.”

She added: “Too many people have had their claims for PIP unfairly rejected and find themselves in the position where they had to continue to challenge the department's decision before they got their benefit entitlement.”

She raised concern that those without the “wherewithal” to appeal were missing out on entitlements while those who did could find themselves waiting up to 18 months for a decision.

The report sparked a picket outside Capita's Derry offices. BASW Northern Ireland national director Carolyn Ewart said: “These findings are a shocking indictment on the treatment of some of our most vulnerable citizens. The government must act and act now to fix the system.” She added her voice to concern of the government's recruitment of Capita to administer the Troubles Victims Payment Scheme.

The government and Capita pledged to improve the system. There is currently a backlog of 6,000 appeals against PIP decisions in Northern Ireland. Some 30 per cent of all decisions are appealed against.

Football and social work manager MBE

A football manager who combined a sporting career with social work has received an MBE.

David Jeffrey played for Manchester United reserves team before becoming a football manager alongside a career as a social worker.

The 58-year-old is honoured for contribution to football and community relations.

He started out volunteering with a church youth project, rising to become a senior practitioner for older adults within the Belfast Trust.

In an interview with *PSW* in 2014 he said: “My mother refers to my social work as my proper job. It can be hectic doing both. But they do give a good balance to one another.”

Angela Reid, a social worker with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, also received a MBE. She was instrumental in keeping families connected to loved ones in care homes during Covid.

Northern Ireland's social work community mourned the death of Fionnuala McAndrew, former director of Social Care and Children at the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Board.

See *PSW* online for tribute to Fionnuala

How can we support you?

BASW NI has sent a letter to members asking them for feedback about the demands they face in their day-to-day practice – and what actions they want the Association to take to support them.

Email feedback to lindsey.bates@basw.co.uk



VOICES **from care**

In the wake of England's review into children's social care publishing a major document outlining what it believes to be wrong with the system, *PSW* hears from those with care experience as part of a ten-page special

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS

What do you wish people most understood about being in care?

Rona: That it isn't our fault we're there and that becoming looked after doesn't make everything better. The things that happen during our developmental years will continue to affect the way we think and behave for the rest of our lives.

Lucas: To never assume things and that it's okay to ask. That just because we are in care doesn't mean we don't love our families, even if we understand why we don't live with them. For me people couldn't understand that I loved my family but at the same time I was dealing with a lot of trauma. And that everyone's situation is different.

Teoni: My care experience personally hasn't been bad at all! If there was one thing that I would want people to know is that just because our parents may have messed up and are not perfect, we all mess up and make terrible mistakes. The things that have happened to me, I cannot ever hold a grudge against my mum and I will always forgive her and that's because she is a part of me and she has changed so much. Other foster children can be different and they don't want their family in their lives and this can be hard to listen to. Many children normally feel this as they grow older and understand why they came into care or what happened when living with family but like I said, family are mine so I could always be with my mum and the rest of my family without being awkward or making them feel guilty.

Tychique: That they're not all criminals. I know children in care and care leavers who work very hard for themselves and their families. We have to work harder because of our image.

Joanna*: I wish there wasn't so much of a stereotype. It wasn't my fault that I was there. My parents had died and yet I often felt like a criminal. I feel like there wouldn't have been much difference between a young offenders' secure unit to a residential children's home. Since leaving care I have tried to build my life back up by completing an apprenticeship, having a child of my own, and attending university, yet I still face prejudice from social services themselves. I have been struggling and fighting to see my brother who is in foster care and due to be adopted. There have been many inconsistencies from social services who have been unable to give me any answers as to why my contact is so minimal. I believe that when he is adopted my contact will stop completely, and that mine and my brother's relationship would be deemed more important if it were not for my care leaver status.

Were there things that worked well for you while in care and if so what?

Rona: My local children in care council truly changed my life. I finally got to meet other people who understood and wanted to hear about my experiences and opinions.

Lucas: When people did ask, 'What do you want' and really listened. The people that really listened and explained things. Even if my wishes couldn't be listened to, they explained why and would work with me to find a solution.

Together with children's charity Coram Voice, we asked five young people with care experience for their views about the system – what worked, what didn't and what needs to change.

Here are their responses

TO CARE



Teoni

Teoni: When I first came into care, I remember feeling very unsafe as I had no idea what was going on and how long this would go on for – I was aged four or five at the time so I don't remember all of it but the bits in life that are memorable, whether it's good or bad, just stick with you and it has for me. Going into care was partially a last minute decision. I went to a temporary placement with my sister and we grew up together. To this day I am currently living in my third foster home and hopefully my last. You get people thinking that being in care is always bad and to be honest it does cross my mind a lot and I do get emotional about the whole situation but then I realise that I have been brought up with many benefits like going on amazing holidays, home-cooked meals and just the simple things like going to school and meeting new people. So many things have worked incredibly well for me in care!

Tychique: Yes, football coaching which I still do now and college which I do now. I really did value education back then as I do now. It's a powerful tool. I want to be a teacher.

Joanna: When I left care I switched over from children's services to the leaving care team. The service has been much better, much more supportive, and continues to improve.

Overall, how did you find your experience of being in care?

Rona: I try to look at my time in care positively because I know I wouldn't be where I am now without it. Knowing what I know now I'm grateful that overall I had a very positive experience but that isn't to say there weren't some really difficult times.

Lucas: Mixed. I had some positive experiences and some

'It wasn't my fault that I was there. My parents had died and yet I often felt like a criminal'

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS



Lucas: Communication. Around subjects like our rights in care and the reasons we are in care. There were many assumptions made, particularly when we were older, that we understood everything. More conversation and communication would really help us have more of a voice.

Tychique: Moving from place to place and schooling. There was no consistency. I could have done better myself with learning how to drive earlier and maybe going to university quicker but time is still on my side. I am still looking to do these things now.

Joanna: I think that I should have been given the opportunity to attend a 'normal' school rather than one specifically for kids in care. I didn't get much of an opportunity to mix with kids outside of the care system due to strict rules around going out with staff rather than alone. If I were to go to a friend's house I had to get the parents' details for them to be contacted by the staff at my children's home. This was just too embarrassing as a teenager.

What do you think is the most important thing that needs to improve within the care system?

Rona: Young people need to have more autonomy over their own lives. We're expected to go off at 18 and manage adulthood when we have never had any control over what happens in our lives. Oftentimes the voice of the child is little more than an afterthought or a box at the end of a case note.

Lucas: Support for mental health before it gets bad. Most children and young people will have or be experiencing some trauma. More information about what support a care leaver can get, particularly to do with higher education.

Teoni: I feel like the main problem that affects me is the amount of social workers I get given. Over the past year or two I have had at least four different social workers as they leave to get either a position in a higher department or they find another job. I think that this needs to be looked into because this means we are telling them our stories and we talk over the same things to each social worker. I believe that this could improve the care system but I know it can't be this easy, I just want it to be recognised.

Tychique: To care. Social workers need to push all the people they care for to the best of their ability. Mentoring from young people would work well. Social workers need to get care for the children past the age of 25.

Joanna: There should be much more of a priority placed on facilitating and protecting the relationship of siblings. Finding a new family is usually the top priority to social workers, whether it be foster carers or adopters – this is barbaric and outdated. Placements, including adoptions, have an extremely low success rate. Siblings are forever, adoption and foster placements are, sadly, usually not. The education system also needs to change. I don't know how we are expected to manage on our own, often with no family support, with no qualifications or education.

*name changed to protect identity

very positive placements who I still keep in contact with. Ones that were home. I also had a number of difficult times, especially when I was older. I was turning into a young adult in a world where I didn't feel like I fully belong, working out relationships with family, friends, foster carers, always worrying about where I would live. I was a confused, angry young person and they were rough emotions to work through, at the same time as working through my life story and the things I had been through.

Tychique: I found it okay. I learnt a lot, received a lot of love and backing for my independence. It was interesting being an African young man in care. Looking back on it now, I was probably thought to have been very strong.

Joanna: I found moving around a lot very challenging. I missed most of secondary school so when I left care to live independently at 17 I felt like I had to completely start again from scratch. I never felt safe. We had different staff on shift all the time, including agency workers who I had never met and would never meet again. We also had different kids moving in and out a lot with a whole range of issues. I know this is unavoidable but it has definitely been a huge factor in the anxiety that I feel as an adult, especially at night.

Are there things that could have been done better and if so what?

Rona: When I was 13 I was told I was going into foster care and that was it. The next thing I heard was a couple of months later when a social worker arrived at my school telling me she was taking me to my new foster placement. I wish I could have been involved in my care plan so I'd have known what was happening and could have had a say.

Top: Tychique with actor Peter Capaldi

Above: Lucas

Coram Voice holds an annual creative writing competition to showcase the talent of children in care and young care leavers. PSW will be publishing some of their work online following an awards ceremony hosted by actor Peter Capaldi and former competition winner Sophia Alexandra Hall that can be viewed on Coram Voice's YouTube channel. The young people who have answered our questions are all former finalists in the competition.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS

A survivor of abuse while in West Yorkshire's Skircoat Lodge children's home, Chris Wild went on to be a social worker to try and make a difference.

By **Louise Palfreyman**

Fixing a BROKEN SYSTEM

Chris Wild was placed in care after the death of his father. By the time he was 13 he was off the rails.

As a young adult he struggled to come to terms with the serious and prolonged emotional, physical and sexual abuse he experienced and witnessed during his time in Calderdale's Skircoat Lodge children's home.

A turning point came when he found out the home had been closed following a damning NSPCC report. He also discovered the 'Boss Man' Malcolm Osric Phillips and colleague Andrew Shalders had been jailed for multiple counts of indecent assault against children.

By then he was in his 20s and involved in drugs and crime – and knew of 22 friends from his days in care who had killed themselves or died of overdoses. It was in their memory that he embarked on an NVQ Level 2 in social care and went back into his past, determined to bring about change, working in children's homes and the semi-independent sector.

Today, he is a passionate advocate for children's rights, an author of two books about his experiences and is currently working with England's independent review of children's social care as a member of the experts by experience group.



He explains why he will never stop fighting for a better system...

‘I recently had a meeting with the Minister for Children Vicky Ford, as she was keen to talk to me about semi-independent care. I told her how the problem of county lines and sexual predation is on the rise.

It's on the rise because we have a situation where it's a free-for-all where these houses are concerned – they are so open and available that dealers and paedophiles are just walking in and taking their pick.

And I can't comprehend how someone like Vicky Ford can sit there, without a clue as to what is going on out there. I don't understand why she is so shocked. I regularly go into dilapidated houses targeted by drug dealers. I take videos and send them to Josh MacAlister [chair of England's review

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS

into children's social care]. And he too is shocked.

Think about it. What if we had dirty hospitals, poorly run by nurses who weren't properly trained? People would die and there would be an outcry. And yet these kids are being exploited, are dying, and nobody cares.

With *The Case for Change* [the interim report from the review into children's social care], Josh MacAlister is not just looking at the past, he's looking at the present, and at potential solutions. And one thing we all agree on is that 16-18 providers should be governed by an independent regulator, like Ofsted but for the care sector. We need a completely new body.

One of the main factors is also resourcing, how central government puts the onus on local authorities to find the funding against a backdrop of austerity.

Why I went into social work

I took a conscious decision to be a social worker who is out there on the streets, talking to young people who otherwise don't get to speak out. These are kids who are 16 or 17 and who have addiction issues, trauma, mental health problems. They don't want to fight because they have become so desensitised. They don't even know they are being abused by a system that is supposed to be taking care of them. It takes me to point this out.

In terms of how all this affects me, I feel on the edge of a nervous breakdown a lot of the time. But I have an amazing wife, and I'm involved in all kinds of groups. Sometimes I come home from the things I see, and I break down. The other week I saw something so traumatic, I got home and cried and wondered if I could do this anymore. I struggle, but you have to find your own coping mechanisms.

The real heroes

I'm not a hero though. The young people I work with are heroes, like the girl I went to recently after I got a call from her mother. She was living in supported accommodation and her mother was worried about her. I went out there and found her in a state, with needles everywhere.

I told her I wasn't going to give up on her. And she yelled at me, "Why do you want to help me?"

"Because I have to," I said. "I have to help you."

I got her out and into better accommodation and afterwards I looked at her like a hero... because if I was her, I would be dead.

I don't see these young people as broken, or criminals. They are inspirational human beings, and the

fundamental thing about writing my latest book has been to leave people feeling inspired – these kids don't want your pity or sympathy.

This is the next generation of care leavers who can, and will, make a difference. If local authorities only nurtured the kind of talent some of these kids have, who knows what they would achieve?

The future of social work

The profession is on its knees. We are losing so many social workers. My friend and I recently reminisced about how social workers used to take you rock climbing or to the cinema. When I went out with my own social worker, back when I was 13, I thought, "This is an amazing job."

Now all they do is sit at a desk writing reports and analysing data. We have got to get social workers back where they belong, out on the streets. It's an amazing profession, and yet I think we are on the verge of a catastrophe.

In the next 12 months it could all collapse. I've actually made my peace with the system crumbling before it gets better.

But there is hope. We have the independent review. We have social media, which helps us expose corruption and cronyism. We have good politicians as well as bad ones.

Taking back control

I recently had a long conversation with the poet Lemn Sissay, and he told me he wasn't happy with how the care review is going. I asked him why and he said he expected more kids to be marching on the streets.

We talked about what we need to do to get these young people out there fighting for their futures. So many of them are traumatised and broken.

What we need to tackle most in these children is a matter-of-fact acceptance they are born into a world tainted with malevolence. We need more figureheads, more celebrities coming out in support, backing children's social care.

And we need this review. When I was appointed to help, I worried about how if it became another whitewash, I would be forever associated with that. But what I see in Josh MacAlister is someone who has opened the floor to everyone.

I wouldn't work with him if he was just another puppet. I won't conform to politicians and bureaucrats.

I told him, "I'm here to make a change, I'm not here to follow." Yes, he's on a big salary, but that's because it's a big job. And he is working hard. He is visiting children's homes and social workers.

When the review comes to fruition if we can just stick to it and push and push, we may just see it through...

Chris has published two books about his experiences: *Damaged* and *The State of It, Stories from the frontline of a broken care system*.



CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS

'What if someone had been there for me?'

Emily Vaughn lost her childhood to abuse and exploitation. A trusting relationship with a social worker could have made all the difference, she tells **Shahid Naqvi**

Emily Vaughn has not got much time for social services – or the police. She feels let down by them both. From the age of 11, she was transporting drugs across county lines. By the age of 14 she was being subjected to horrific sexual abuse and trafficked for sex. She was often truant from school, taking drugs, self-harming and clearly exhibiting signs of trauma.

And yet no one noticed or intervened. Today, in her 30s, she suffers from PTSD and flashbacks. She has written a no-holds-barred book about her childhood called *Enslaved* in an attempt to prevent other children suffering as she did.

She says: "I feel I was let down by services, completely failed by them. If anything happened to me now I wouldn't go to the police or social workers. A lot of people I speak to say the same thing."

Emily has been on the government's National Referral Mechanism designed to support victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. But she found it unhelpful and more geared to victims from abroad. The nine sessions of therapy offered to her by the NHS were "basic" and not enough to heal her deep wounds.

Emily's background is one of relative normality, with supportive parents. But things started to go wrong for her when she entered secondary school and was bullied. It was through a friend's stepfather that she got into county lines.

"I felt like such an outsider and it just felt like I was being accepted, like I was doing something good. I was only 11 and had just stopped playing with barbie dolls. I didn't understand what I was doing. I didn't understand drugs were bad."

Aged 14, she was expelled from school and had to attend college instead.

"I have school reports saying 126 missing episodes in a year. That's four months. Take away the holidays and I was only in school for two months.

"Why was I put in a college when I was 14 with adults? I was a child and put in a college with 18, 20 and 30-year-olds."

Her book is a harrowing account of a child's descent into a world of abuse and sexual exploitation that resulted in her cutting herself and contemplating suicide.

She recounts calling ChildLine with a friend when aged 16 because they were suicidal. She says the police came and "marched us home and gave us a telling off for wasting police time".

"I want people to feel really uncomfortable with everything in the book and I want them to know it is not unique. What happened to me is not a one off. I have friends in Rotherham and some of their stories are absolutely horrendous.

"I know the girls in Telford because I was trafficked to Telford and their stories are the same."

Emily had contact with social services but says she found the experience unhelpful. "I would be sat in meetings and social services would come in but they would never introduce themselves. So I never knew who my social worker was."

Whether things would have been different if someone had successfully engaged with her is something Emily says she thinks about a lot.

"What if that one person became a safe person you know you can disclose to, you can talk to and there is no pressure, no taking the control away – just having that someone to build up a relationship with and be trusted?"

"Sometimes social workers are the first person you come into contact with – you've got to build on that relationship. No child will say I am being exploited. It is up to that social worker to dig deeper and really investigate."

When she first disclosed her abuse two years ago Emily says she was scared social services would see her as a bad mother to her own daughter: "People said, 'Don't report it because social services will take your kids away.'"

Since then, however, she has befriended a social worker on social media. "I do have some compassion for social workers but with my friend I push her to do better. Sometimes she will say 'I have had a tough day'; I will say, 'That kid has had an even tougher day.'"

Emily's message to the profession is clear: "Social workers have a chance to really make a difference. Let that young person know you are there, they can come to you. Sometimes that is enough, that is all that child needs..."

Emily Vaughn is a pseudonym
Enslaved is published by Harper Collins

'I want people to feel really uncomfortable with everything in the book and I want them to know it is not unique'

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS

We said our goodbyes in a conference room

Angela Frazer-Wicks lost custody of her eldest two children to adoption due to domestic violence. She went on to have a daughter who has had no local authority involvement. She has a new partner and campaigns for the Family Rights Group. Recently reunited with her eldest son, she gave a powerful testimony about the need to reform Final Contact meetings at a BASW England Conference in June.

Louise Palfreyman reports

The first point I'd like to make about final contact is that we need to move away from calling it this.

It sounds like something out of a science fiction film; it lacks compassion, it lacks emotion, and I've not actually met a birth family yet where final contact was actually the last time they had some kind of contact with their child. I would prefer to call it Farewell Family Time. I think that's a lot more representative of what it is.

Time and place

My farewell time took place in a very cramped conference room. There was no thought put into whether the room was suitable, and it had actually been where the majority of family time with my children had been.

I had raised issues about the suitability of the room on numerous occasions, but no one really took any notice of

what I was saying. My children were five years old and almost 18 months. There was very little thought put into the fact that actually this was going to be not just my final memories with my children, but my children's final memories of me.

Having been reunited with my eldest son, he has memories of those times, of locations that just weren't suitable. I think that we need to think about how to make that process more child friendly and family friendly.

Staying in contact

We were told that we'd be able to write. So my son and I had a very long conversation about how we would be able to exchange letters – he would know that I hadn't forgotten about him, that I would be able to tell him that I was okay.

My son was aware that I was living in a refuge, and why I was living in refuge, and he was very concerned about my safety. We spent quite a lot of time during those final moments discussing how it wasn't the end, it was just the beginning of a different journey, of a different relationship, but that he would always know that I still loved him and that I hadn't forgotten about him.

But sadly, there hadn't been any prospective adopters, and so there couldn't be an agreement for the letterbox contact. I don't think the very young, newly qualified social worker who had been left to supervise told me this intentionally. I think she just didn't understand how it worked.

I had to fight for letterbox contact because I was very concerned that my son would think that I had forgotten him or broken that promise.



Angela Frazer-Wicks

Continued over the page

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS

From previous page

Do not cry

When I arrived, I was instructed not to cry, not to show emotion. I had taken cards and gifts, toys from my childhood. I desperately tried to put as much together into small boxes as I could, to continue that family link. I spent the beginning part of that session focusing on my own emotions, trying to keep them under control, rather than just making the most of the session, making the most of the time I had left.

And in the end I decided that actually not showing emotion and not showing my children, especially my eldest child, that I was very sad wasn't in their best interest. I thought that, actually, it was important for them to know that I was very sad, that I wasn't happy that they were leaving, that I was deeply upset that I wasn't going to see them anymore.

And so in the end I cried, and my eldest son cried, and I felt that by actually showing my emotion I gave him permission to show his. I don't think that made the situation worse, I actually think it made it a better memory. I'd much rather my son went on remembering his mum crying because he was leaving, rather than remembering his mum smiling and waving and saying everything's going to be fine.

Parting

The only way to leave that room was to walk through reception, and then down the corridor and out to the car park. I ended up carrying both my children through reception where there were other families sitting there. My five-year-old wanted me to carry him to the car. I think that was his last way of clinging on. So I had to walk through, crying, carrying a crying child and a toddler in front of people who I didn't know.

When I carried my children to the car that was waiting to take them away, and said my goodbyes and they drove off, I actually refused to go back to the building. I insisted that I left from there because I did not want to have to walk back through in such a distressed state with nobody to support me.

What next?

I went back to the refuge with no real understanding of how to go about arranging letterbox, or what to do with Christmas cards, birthday cards... this information just wasn't given to me. I wasn't given anyone named I could contact. I found myself calling, repeatedly, and nobody returning my calls because I was no longer an active case, I was no longer a parent. I was very much just left to try and figure it out for myself.

I found it very difficult to manage, having promised my child that I would write, then to suddenly find that I wasn't able to write, but I had no way of letting him know that it wasn't because I didn't want to, that it was because I wasn't able to.

The future of final contact

Since Covid, things have been changed to remote working, and I've been extremely saddened to learn of families who are saying goodbye via computer screens, who aren't being allowed that face-to-face moment because it is being deemed as too much of a risk.

We need to be very, very mindful, moving forward, that we don't fall into this trap of 'Oh well, actually Covid has made things easier, we can do things remotely, we can do things virtually.' I think we really do need to stop and think about the impact of that final session for the birth parent, and the impression it makes on the child, and the memories that child will take with them.

And irrespective of what the system may or may not think the birth family has done, the child is a complete innocent, and I think personally deserves better than a forced goodbye by a parent who has been told not to cry in a conference room and is then forced to carry a child to a car park.

I don't think it's difficult to see that lacked compassion and sensitivity.

Angela is a Trustee of the Family Rights Group (FRG), a charity that works with parents and families in England and Wales whose children are in need, at risk or are in the care system. She is also co-chair of the Cafcass Learning and Improvement Board, a member of the experts by experience group for England's Independent Review of Children's Social Care and a member of the BASW 80/20 Steering Group, which is campaigning to uphold relationship-based social work

Recognise poverty, invest in early intervention and free up social workers

England's children's social care review last month outlined what it believes to be wrong with the current system. Some of its analysis was challenged by BASW England

What the children's social care report said

The interim report, called *The Case for Change*, says in most cases families become involved with children's social care "because they are parenting in conditions of adversity".

But instead of receiving support, it maintains an "adversarial" system increasingly focuses on assessment and investigations.

Care "too often weakens rather than strengthens relationships" with children sometimes moved far from where they have grown up, separated from siblings, forced to move schools and experiencing "a revolving door of social workers". It suggests the state's role should be more focused on "enabling lifelong loving relationships for children in care".

The report says poverty can no longer be treated as the "wallpaper of practice", adding: "We have now reached a point where the weight of evidence showing a relationship between poverty, child abuse and neglect and state intervention in family life is strong enough to warrant widespread acceptance."

This, it says, calls for a new focus on child welfare inequalities: "Gearing central and local government to concerns about child welfare inequalities gives a different perspective to how children's services are resourced, delivered and measured."

Making clear a need for more funding, it says: "There is no situation in the current system where we will not need to spend more – the choice is whether this investment is spent on reform which achieves long term sustainability and better outcomes or propping up an increasingly expensive and inadequate existing system."

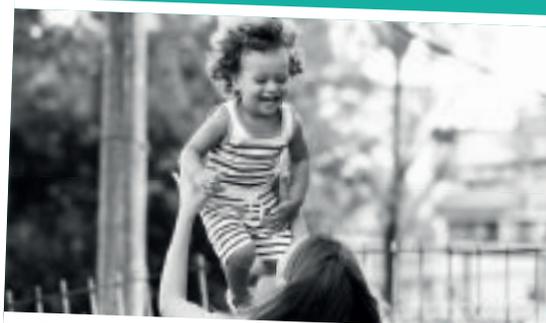
It adds: "When we consider the case for investment, it is important we do not only focus on the cost of services, but also the longer term cost of later life outcomes of children..."

While this is likely to advocate investment in preventative services, the report says there is currently a lack of "precision" as to what this means.

It puts forward a definition of "family help" as "high quality, evidence-led" support by skilled and trusted professionals providing support to keep families together.

When it comes to the workforce, the review calls for systems and organisations that "are happy to hold risk and consider complexity instead of defensively following process".

The Case for Change



The independent review of children's social care

independent review of children's social care

The report adds: "A significant proportion of social workers' time is currently absorbed by activity away from direct work with children and families... This is a staggering misuse of the greatest asset that children's social care has – its social workers."

The report calls for more to be done to incentivise experienced practitioners to stay on the frontline. It also acknowledges the need to address working conditions including high workloads, stress and poor working environments and a lack of diversity among managers resulting in high staff turnover and over-reliance on agency staff.

The report criticises the "market for care" and lack of "the right homes in the right places" and calls for an end to the use of unregulated accommodation for children under the age of 18.

It's particularly concerned about the wellbeing of teenagers who are increasingly coming into the child protection and care system – and a lack of accountability to keep them safe.

Greater use of "the huge national resource" of kinship carers should be made and parents who have had children removed should be better supported.

See basw.co.uk/resources/psw-magazine/psw-online/englands-children-social-care-review-acknowledges-impact-poverty

How BASW England responded

While welcoming the report's focus on the voice of care experienced people, BASW England said social workers also needed to be listened to.

It agreed with the report's recognition of underfunding but said the report lacked an "honest critique" of government, failing to even mention austerity.

Instead, national director Maris Stratulis said, the report focused on the role of social workers and local services rather than taking a "holistic national approach". She urged the review to avoid "reiterating a government 'blame culture'".

She added: "It is concerning that *The Case for Change* skims over a children's human rights-based approach..."

Stratulis also emphasised the importance of "relationship-based practice" and direct work founded on protecting rights.

See full response at basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/jun/case-change-review-childrens-social-care-report

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS

POVERTY ISN'T



NEGLECT

Tammy Mayes and **Omar Mohamed** have both had experience of poverty and social services. They recently gave their testimonies at a BASW England webinar

TAMMY

My name is Tammy, and I'm married with four children.

When we first had our boys we were made homeless due to no fault of our own. Social services housed us, eventually, but would only house me and the boys. It didn't matter that me and my hubby were married. They said he can look after himself. They sent me to a bed and breakfast away from all my family, away from my hubby, with two kids and a baby.

I had to leave the B&B at 8am in the morning, and I wasn't allowed back until 7pm at night. It was a nightmare. And that was my first involvement with social services.

For the last 20 years, we've had them involved on and off. There are some good ones out there that understand... but there are some where if life is not how they see things, then it is you, as a parent, that is in the wrong.

When our four children were little, we didn't have much

furniture or carpets – carpets aren't a must, but social workers think they are. The children were happy, fed and clean but the social worker put down we were neglecting our children then put in for a child protection meeting to remove my children.

We fought that and won. Just after that I went into hospital for a routine operation, but got Sepsis and went into a coma. I spent two weeks in hospital, an hour-and-a-half away from my home. My husband had to deal with four children, and me being really ill in hospital. Our boys had just been diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Not once did the social worker offer support, or arrange for my hubby or kids to come and visit.

More recently we've had four different social workers in three years. One of the social workers was really good. She came in and did not agree with the kids not knowing what was going on. You try not saying anything to your children when they keep asking you, why there is a social worker in their lives when nothing's wrong?

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS

They liked the new social worker straightaway, she got to know us as a family, she kept fighting to get our daughter with mental health issues the right support, but it kept falling on deaf ears. She was supportive of us all, not just the children. She supported us while we were struggling with stuff written in reports. She corrected them when there were errors in them.

Language is very important when dealing with families, because families read these reports and some of the wording used is degrading. It's also offensive – parents don't understand the jargon most of the time, it leaves families traumatized and they feel worthless and powerless, but parents aren't powerless. They are strong, with lots going for them.

Poverty shouldn't be shied away from, because even though we feel shame and guilt, the more people shy away from it and don't use the word and don't talk about it, the more it makes us feel that way. In our reports it was never written down that we lived in poverty, it was never 'We should be helping them,' it was always negative. And that's where all the stigma and shame comes from.

Just because you live in poverty doesn't mean that you're neglecting your children. You do everything in your power to protect your children, to fight the system.

Children need love. They also need to be seen as a family, not just children in need. Look at the strengths, the dynamics of a family and what a family needs.

You say you want to keep families together. Then keep families together by working for the family, not just the child. Yes there are families that do need to have their children removed, but don't go into each family looking for issues because often it's the system that is actually failing families.

Don't be afraid to stand up for those families where the system is against them, use your own judgment. Don't go on reports. Yes, by all means look at reports, but don't think everything is black and white, because no family is black and white. Go in looking to support the whole family and don't judge, especially if you've never been in their situation. Poverty is not neglect. Poverty is and always will be out of the person's control.

Tammy is an activist with ATD Fourth World which works in partnership with people affected by poverty and inequality

OMAR

When I was about 12 years old, I remember the whole family being evicted from our house. We didn't receive any kind of support, in terms of the housing system, and we moved into a privately rented converted garage.

I remember the mould, and the effect it had on my asthma and in turn, my school attendance.

I remember social workers on the phone, then my mother saying that they weren't going to come and visit the garage or tackle the fact there was mould because it wasn't a registered address. There was no push for support or anything like that.



'Children need love. They also need to be seen as a family, not just children in need'

The social worker was saying: "Why are you living in a garage? Move somewhere else."

One of the biggest failures in social work is that poverty is used to blame, to make that person feel like it's their fault they're in poverty.

I've seen that in my own lived experience. I find it extremely oppressive – it goes completely against anti-oppressive social work.

I think poverty aware, for me, is about the micro level – being empathetic and understanding how poverty has consequences and impacts on people.

Anti-poverty is at a macro level – taking actions that affect not just the people that you're working with, but also working with charities like ATD Fourth World, engaging with things like research, and the BASW anti-poverty practice guide.

We have to recognise that poverty is a social problem. It's a massive issue that needs to be tackled.

We do have really good social workers, but when we look at practice, especially local authority practice, I don't think that we see social workers wanting to treat poverty as a social problem, as a pressing issue.

As a child with lived experience I wanted my social workers to be non-judgmental and understand how poverty impacted on every social system I was part of. I wanted social workers to help me and my family understand poverty and explain any services available.

As a social work student, I want every social worker to be anti-poverty and to treat poverty as a social and political problem, and to fight the social injustice of poverty, if we really want to call ourselves a social justice profession.

Omar is a social work student at the University of Birmingham

The BASW Anti-Poverty Practice Guide can be accessed at www.basw.co.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/anti-poverty-practice-guide-social-work

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS

Steven Walker asks us to confront some uncomfortable truths

The impact of the pandemic and lockdowns were predicted to increase child abuse and domestic violence, and so it has transpired.

There were 22,251 recorded offences against children in 2020 according to police data, an increase of 3,000 from 2019 and compared to 6,611 recorded in 2010.

During the first half of 2020 there was an increase of 27 per cent in serious incident notifications, 119 children died as a result of child abuse and 153 were seriously harmed.

Child murders receive the highest media profile, especially where public services are involved in attempting to protect a child at risk of harm. We all remember the horrors of Baby Peter in 2007. The pattern over the past 50 years is a familiar one. A child murder receives blanket news coverage, official investigations are undertaken, politicians seek to blame and scapegoat, rapid ill-thought through changes to legislation or professional guidance ensues. Social workers

and others responsible for safeguarding vulnerable children have systems disrupted, procedures changed and government directives shift the emphasis of work with families to a more inspectorial rather than preventive mode.

In economic times of hard choices the more initially expensive options of family, psychological, and financial support are abandoned.

This lack of safeguarding and preventative measures has a direct impact as the prevalence of child deaths



Steven Walker

and child abuse in general inexorably rise, especially at times of financial hardship and unemployment.

The link between child abuse and poverty is contested by politicians, despite high quality research going back many decades indicating poverty as a risk factor in child abuse. There are currently four million children living in poverty according to government figures. You can add parental mental illness, poor housing conditions, unemployment, and drug and alcohol misuse as risk factors.

Yet there is another more disturbing thesis about why child abuse endures and is so resilient to government intervention. It is that child abuse has been hidden, excused, denied or covered up, and has been since the beginning of recorded history. There is a wealth of compelling evidence showing infanticide, incest, child sacrifice, pedastry and physical child abuse was normalised and part and parcel of ancient life. Even as civilization evolved, children lived short and brutal lives.

Throughout the Middle Ages, when childhood as a concept didn't exist, children worked as soon as they were strong



Children have been forsaken throughout history

enough and the 18th Century Industrial Revolution meant that children could be used as cheap labour in dangerous mills, mines and factories.

Victorian Britain was rife with child prostitution, with young girls blamed for spreading venereal disease among their wealthy 'clients'. In America in the late 19th Century legislation to protect children only passed because it was tacked onto laws to protect animals from abuse. Attempts to seriously protect children didn't happen until the beginning of the 20th Century in Britain but there was resistance to the idea of interfering in family life and the rights of parents to do what they wanted with their offspring.

In 1945 the death of Dennis O'Neill, who was killed at the age of 12 by his foster father, started to change the public's perceptions. This shocking event prompted the first formal child death inquiry in England, which produced the Curtis Committee Report recommending changes to child welfare services.

The work of a series of pioneering paediatric radiologists also helped drive concerns about child protection in Britain and America. Doctors in the mid 20th Century conducted research which utilised X-ray data to understand and to

'There was resistance to the idea of interfering in family life and the rights of parents to do what they wanted with their offspring'

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE FOCUS



make visible the injuries of physically abused children for the first time. It was paediatrician Henry Kempe who coined the term *Battered Child Syndrome* in an American professional journal in 1962 that captured international headlines. It was the first concrete evidence of routine child abuse within the family and alerted generations of doctors to the problem.

In 1973 the death of seven-year-old Maria Colwell led to the establishment of Britain's modern child protection system. Further changes evolved after inquiries into several other child deaths, including four-year-old Jasmine Beckford in 1984. Yet in 21st Century Britain the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and police research has exposed the scale of child abuse within state and religious establishments, online predatory paedophile activity, and everyday sexual harassment of schoolgirls.

It's astonishing to think that it was only in 1989 that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child was endorsed by most member nations, 6,000 years after the first evidence of child abuse was recorded. In the same year, The Children Act 1989 codified and strengthened existing law and regulations to better protect children from harm,

Children sold by their parents to work as chimney sweeps in the early 19th century

100 years after the first UK legislation offering limited protection.

The history of childhood is the history of child abuse; it has never stopped and there is still considerable denial about the scale of abuse and the impact it has on adult survivors. Child abuse runs through the fabric of our society still and predominantly occurs within families. It respects no class, wealth, gender, educational, cultural, ethnic or religious differences.

The government's review of children's social care in England is to be welcomed. Hopefully this latest review will match the expectations of professionals and parents concerned about the poor state of children's social care and the repeated failures of the existing system. But there aren't many votes in children's services, as cynical politicians will admit.

As this new decade begins, much work remains to be done to protect all children, and to do that society needs to acknowledge how children have been truly forsaken since time began.

Steven Walker is a retired principal social work lecturer, and author of *Children Forsaken: Child Abuse from Ancient to Modern Times* (Critical Publishing)

HARRY VENNING

HARRY VENNING'S LOCKDOWN 2020 SPECIALS

CLARE



Through his popular Clare in the Community cartoon strip in *The Guardian*, **Harry Venning** spent 25 years finding the humour in social work. Here is a selection of his personal favourites – plus a couple of new ones created during lockdown...

HARRY VENNING

in the COMMUNITY



IN FOCUS CONFERENCES

Reports from BASW England's annual conference and its student and newly qualified social workers conference held virtually in June

'A new language has entered our world'

Maris Stratulis



BASW leaders reflected on the most challenging 18 months in living memory for social work and the people it supports

The BASW England Conference opened with a minute's silence for the nearly 130,000 people who have lost lives due to Covid in the UK

BASW national director Maris Stratulis said: "I think it's really important that our thoughts

are also with bereaved colleagues, friends and families of loved ones who have died during the last 18 months, including BASW members.

"We pay tribute to all social workers, health workers and key workers across the globe, who have continually worked with

dedication, passion and commitment when facing one of the worst global health crises in our lifetime."

A "new language" has entered our world, said Stratulis, both from the pandemic and social movements, such as Black Lives Matter in the wake of the murder of George Floyd last year.

'We haven't yet decolonised'

A social worker in a community mental health team, **Vava Tampa** campaigns for black human rights. He answered the following questions at a session on human rights and ethics during the BASW England Conference

What examples of anti-racism do you see in social work that give you hope for the future?

BASW's Wayne Read is pushing forward conversations on racism and anti-racism practice in social work, but it's not part of social work training, or intervention or assessment. I ask people if they've had experience of police stop and search, if they have been a victim of racism recently. All of these we can raise in our assessments to ensure we are able to pick up on issues affecting black people's experience.

Do you think that social workers should have representation at summits and UN conferences, and how can we highlight anti-racism and the violation of human rights?

I definitely think talking to each other across the globe, sharing experience and practices or learning from each other's experience is crucial. So, organising conferences in which we can meet and exchange with people practising social work in South Africa, in Brazil or in the US or Australia would give us a broader

IN FOCUS CONFERENCES

“Racism, anti-semitism, discrimination, inequality, and oppression – it does exist, we know it exists, it’s real, and we must collectively challenge it in our behaviours and actions.

“A new language has also emerged during the pandemic – lockdown, quarantine, facemasks, self-isolation, PPE, test and trace...”

Stratulis added social work had changed with digital communication and working from home seeing “our work world and personal worlds collide”.

BASW England chair Andy Gill said a key question was, what will be the “new normal” for social work in the post-pandemic world? Debate was needed, he said, including getting the balance between “face-to-face relationships and virtual relationships” right.

Gill expressed concern about local authorities closing offices and getting staff to work from home to save money.

“That reduces the opportunity for social workers to do the things that they do well, which is around the need to come together as a team to chew the fat, to talk about particularly difficult cases or difficult experiences, to get that face-to-face mutual support and contact and advice.”

BASW chief executive Ruth Allen said there were many “policy contentions” in England to tackle, including around human rights, which needed a “strong and united” voice from the Association.

BASW chair Gerry Nosowska added it was currently a “really difficult time” for social work practice due to rising inequality and the pressure on the profession.

She added a “consistent, clear voice alongside people with lived experience” advocating for what people need to thrive was crucial.

Living experience of food poverty

At the BASW England Student and NQSW Conference, **Dominic Watters** talked about his lived experience of poverty as a single parent, arguing that an understanding of precarity and the role of food are integral to the future of social work

Dominic is a social work student raising his daughter on a deprived council estate. His book *Social Distance in Social Work* speaks to the marginalisation felt by people living in poverty from the rest of society and is reviewed in this issue of PSW.

He said: “The role of place and disadvantaged areas is a determinant in young people’s futures, and even in the wealthiest city where I live there are poor estate zones.

Recently at a parliamentary select committee, Professor Paul Bywaters stated a child living in one of the most deprived neighborhoods is ten times more likely to end up in the care system.

“Social work as a profession, in keeping with our professional capabilities framework and code of ethics, needs to look at food poverty more deeply than just as an economic issue. Food insecurity is the lived experience of food poverty. This definition is important as it speaks to the actual lived impact on a person’s life: how you play a role in society, your confidence, your ability to sustain relationships. And this is coupled with the challenges and uncertainties that poor

people already face. I would strongly argue that food is about more than just what we eat.”

Commenting on how social workers can equip themselves to advocate for people experiencing poverty and food insecurity,

Dominic said: “We need to be human first. We get very ingrained in the language, the politics, the statistics – we need to take a minute to step back and look a lot deeper.

“We should find ways to break down a lot of the power dynamics and, more importantly, we need to be advocates as well. We need to push policy that actually supports families and looks a lot deeper at the impact of poverty on families.”

He also warned against tackling food poverty by issuing nutrition advice, saying: “There’s a danger of making it a diet or ‘health kick’ focus, which really misses the point.”

Dominic, who prefers the phrase ‘living experience’ rather than ‘lived experience’, praised the BASW anti-poverty practice guide. He is critical of the welfare system and society’s attitude to those in disadvantage: “It goes back to the narrative of poor people being undeserving.”

Social Distance in Social Work is reviewed on page 41



Dominic Watters

perspective on some of the anti-racist practice which is being implemented across the world.

Why is the history of imperialism not understood better by social work professionals?

This is not unique to social work, it’s societal. People in Britain and across the globe have no understanding, no knowledge at all of imperialism and colonisation.



Vava Tampa

And people like me understand it because we still bear the scars.

Could you give a specific example of decolonising social work practice?

We need to train social workers to understand what colonialism was, its effects, and how it has shaped our society and shapes the experiences of black people in the UK and across the globe. And it’s also about when you are assessing, listen and validate the emotions; this goes a very long way.

Are you able to talk about your own experience of qualifying and practising in social work, including any discrimination and oppression?

Discrimination at work is a fact of life. I have experienced it on a personal level, and it’s hard. I think I became a better social worker, or a better mental health social worker, once I began to understand how my skin colour was essentially shaping my interaction with other people. It goes back to the key elements of decolonisation, about teaching, about understanding history. We just need to do better.

A local authority describes its journey to becoming an anti-racism organisation – see page 32

IN FOCUS

Problem gambling was an issue in the UK even before the pandemic. Amid reports of a crisis in online betting fuelled by lockdowns and ahead of a white paper on gambling later this year, **Stephen Miles** looks at the issues

On the face of it John appeared to be the picture of success: married with two wonderful daughters, a well-paid job and a house of his own. But beneath the surface lurked a very different picture – of a man battling a serious addiction to gambling that threatened to wreck his marriage and drain every penny of his finances.

Hooked on amusement arcades from a young age, John's gambling habit accelerated as he started a job and had more money to spend. The habit worsened when he started to work from home and was drawn in to the easy world of online gambling. As John put it: "You don't even see the money when you gamble online. You use your debit or credit card, and before you know what is happening you are placing higher and higher stakes and losing so much money."

Thousands disappeared every month and, after "another few years of lies and more loans", John ran out of money and confessed the problem to his wife. He then entered a period of treatment which allowed him to confront his problem. The decision saved his marriage. He now has a much more balanced attitude to life and has found other ways of dealing with the stress which was such a powerful underlying factor in his addiction.

John's gambling had left him with debts of nearly £60,000 and he is now paying this back over a period of 15 years. Gambling addictions leave a bitter legacy.

Sadly this is just one of many stories from the 340,000 'problem gamblers' in the UK. The Gambling Commission defines 'problem gambling' as: "Behaviour related to gambling which causes harm to the gambler and those around them. This may include family, friends and others who know them or care for them." Symptoms of problem gambling include: a preoccupation with gambling to the exclusion of everything else; borrowing money, selling possessions or not paying bills to fund gambling; having arguments with family and friends about money and gambling and lying about gambling and hiding it from others. Problem gambling is often accompanied by feelings of guilt, stress, depression, tensions within relationships and increased consumption of alcohol and drugs.

Unpacking the data on problem gambling gives a particularly bleak and disturbing picture. The British Gambling Prevalence Survey shows how those with the lowest incomes spend 12-14 per cent of their net incomes on gambling compared to only two per cent or less in more affluent groups.

Gambling clearly affects those who can least afford it. Moreover, there is a direct correlation between the



'Problem gambling is often accompanied by feelings of guilt, stress, depression... and increased consumption of alcohol and drugs'

location of betting shops and areas of high poverty, with more than half of the nation's 6,000 bookies in the UK's most deprived areas.

Operators say they make location decisions "on commercial grounds alone" and there can be no better comment on the parasitical nature of the gambling industry.

But when we come to age profiles, the data is startling. Statistics from a government gambling select committee show problem gambling is most prevalent in younger gamblers, with two per cent of boys aged 11-16 classified as problem gamblers; the only age group with a higher percentage of problem gambling is 25-34 year old men, at 2.4 per cent.

A nation where children bet away their pocket money through gambling needs serious self-reflection. Some of this is rather innocuous – placing private bets with friends or playing cards for money – and many wouldn't begrudge a young person using a fruit or slot machine in a family arcade or holiday park. But as in so many cases of serious gambling addiction, seemingly innocent gambling practices like this normalise gambling from a young age and instil a habit that can last a lifetime. In John's case the fun and bright lights of amusement arcades on family holidays established a pattern of behaviour which, on his own admission, led on to higher stake gambling, including online. But what is



'It's not the losing that's the biggest problem; it's the amounts that you can win'

most concerning is the more than quarter of a million children who gamble with a licensed operator, such as a bookmaker or online casino. In addition, three per cent of 11-16 year-olds said that they had played a UK National Lottery game in 2020. It is illegal in UK law for under 18s to gamble so the industry has some explaining to do. And much work needs to be done on education on gambling in schools.

The gambling industry has become highly sophisticated at being able to exploit rapidly developing digital technology with great success. Remote forms of casinos, betting and bingo now comprise nearly 38.6 per cent of the UK's gross gambling yield with a value exceeding £5.5 billion and this proportion is predicted to grow. The gambler is now just as likely to place a bet on a laptop, smartphone, tablet or other portable device as in a betting shop. Although location still has its place, gambling has moved from the bookies to the bedroom and the bus seat.

For a practice which, for some, is highly addictive, online gambling has made a bad problem worse. Anyone can now gamble 24-hours a day, seven days a week, and non-stop. Lockdown closed most high street bookies so there was a burgeoning of online sports betting and casinos.

The industry claims to have introduced measures to tackle problem gambling such as affordability checks

and a ban on the use of credit cards. Problem gamblers are also able to 'self-exclude', meaning they voluntarily block themselves from gambling sites and premises.

But there are still too many examples of punters encouraged to keep gambling through free bets and loyalty schemes. Valued customers are often given VIP status and, although affordability checks should be implemented, there have been several abuses of the system. Remarkably, those who have taken time out or self-excluded cannot be a VIP!

But the most sobering thought has to be that gambling firms make the majority of their money from the five per cent of accounts that accumulate the biggest losses.

The final comment comes from the testimony of a problem gambler who lost £350,000 in the grip of a gambling addiction that lasted over 20 years: "It's not the losing that's the biggest problem; it's the amounts that you can win." Smaller winnings would certainly go some way to tackling the problems of problem gambling.

The government has promised a white paper on gambling by the end of this year. It may be too late for those, like John, caught up in problem gambling. But hopefully it will provide a decisive solution to the pernicious effects of an industry where the house always wins.

'Lockdown closed most high street bookies so there was a burgeoning of online sports betting and casinos'

Dr Stephen Miles is a researcher and writer



ANTI-RACISM

'It's hard work to do and it takes time to see and feel change'

Steered by social work principles and values, adult social care workers spearheaded an initiative in their department to make Hertfordshire County Council an anti-racist organisation. Some of the team behind the drive explain how they did it

What are the first steps to creating an anti-racist organisation?

Take a clear-sighted look at the organisation. Be ready to consider that as racism exists in wider society, it's likely it's an issue in your organisation.

It's not sufficient to not be racist. Anti-racism involves activity and the need to critically assess, review, evaluate and revise organisational culture, internal practice, process and policy.

Look at the data to understand where your staff are in the organisation in terms of roles and progression. We completed a staff survey to understand people's experiences.

Listen to people with lived experience of racism and harness the contributions of white allies. We've held conversations in a variety of ways and spaces, sometimes using external facilitators.

Strong leadership at every level of the organisation is essential. Leaders need to engage with the whole workforce and lead the conversation about why anti-racist action is needed, setting out the intention to act and anticipated outcomes.

Take a system-wide approach using a supportive framework; social work departments cannot create anti-racist change without organisation-wide support.

Co-production of thinking and planning is key. Everyone should have a voice and ownership of the development of anti-racism.

Pictured: Liz Fergus, Ugonna Nwachuku-Rowell and Chi Nyasvimbo

What are the hurdles?

Acceptance – people are at different stages of recognition, understanding and acceptance of the fact that racism continues to be a problem and is present in social care.

Ownership – helping people see anti-racism is everyone's business and not just the business of those who have been the subject of racism.

Practicalities – making sure all colleagues, including those doing shift work and/or don't have routine access to laptops, can contribute ideas and shared understanding.

Apathy – some colleagues may not see that anti-racist work has relevance for them.

Fear – from people with lived experience, about sharing their experience and from people who are uncertain about the language to use and whether their involvement will be accepted.

Scepticism – from the workforce and those who experience racism that anything will change.

The lag – between starting to act and seeing change people are impatient for.

Scale of the problem – this may make people feel it is too big to tackle.

How did you draw up your anti-racist strategy?

We held workshops with colleagues across the organisation to understand issues, changes needed, and to prioritise.

We also held a staff survey and analysed HR data

'Social work departments cannot create anti-racist change without organisation-wide support'

IN FOCUS

on the seniority of staff of different ethnicities. We co-developed the resulting action plan with input from staff, our Diversity and Inclusion Board and our departmental management board. We view the plan as one that will evolve over time.

What was the initial response like from staff?

Mixed – people are keen to see change but there was a degree of scepticism. There was curiosity about what our anti-racist work would look like.

How has it changed the way you work and your working culture?

The tone of our conversations has changed. We're talking more openly about the existence of racism. We're finding the language to explain uncomfortable concepts. Where racism was previously talked about amongst black colleagues, the conversation has opened up to all. White people are acknowledging the limits of their understanding and experience. There are creative initiatives springing up across the organisation.

There's been widespread sharing of literature and other material to help colleagues understand the impact of racism, gain an insight into how to be an ally and create an anti-racist organisation.

Focus groups and workshops have recommended the integration of the Diversity and Inclusion agenda into daily work and embedding it into performance management. Teams have not waited for instructions but have initiated this as a change that can be implemented immediately. Many staff members have said that diversity and inclusion is now part of their supervision sessions, providing an opportunity to talk about matters relating to racism and discrimination.

How did you set about getting buy-in from senior management?

We had senior management buy-in from the start. Senior leaders, including our chief executive officer and director have made personal commitments to support this. They've been at the forefront, supportive of and unapologetic about the decision to make anti-racism a focus. Our (white male) director is co-chair of our Diversity and Inclusion Board alongside a (black female) colleague from an African background.

What kind of training did you have to put in place?

The council's Mentoring for Inclusion scheme was piloted with a number of our department's board members. We've held Thinking Space sessions about race with practitioners and started to have Let's Talk About Race workshops and conversations using a format developed by colleagues in adult care services (ACS).

Tell us about your Mentoring for Inclusion scheme

In this scheme, black and Asian members of staff become mentors to senior white colleagues. The aims are:

To develop leadership knowledge, behaviours and



Pictured: Tanya Moore (top) and Fehmida Cummins

'Many staff members have said that diversity and inclusion is now part of their supervision sessions'

Responses co-written by Ugonna Nwachuku-Rowell, social worker; Chi Nyasvimbo, co-chair of the ACS Diversity and Inclusion Board; Fehmida Cummins, HR business partner for ACS, Liz Fergus, ACS Diversity and Inclusion Project Manager and Tanya Moore, ACS principal social worker

competencies; to develop a strong connection between senior leaders and staff from diverse backgrounds; to provide opportunities for staff from diverse backgrounds to have exposure to senior leaders and influence policy, practice, and culture.

We think that by developing a rich understanding of different experiences, senior leaders will be better equipped to help break down barriers, change policies and practice and develop a workplace culture where diverse voices and backgrounds are valued. We've had very positive feedback from both mentors and mentees and are considering ways to expand the programme.

How has it made a difference to the way social work is practised in Hertfordshire?

The following is feedback from one of our black social worker mentors: "The mentoring for inclusion pilot gave me an opportunity to share my and other black colleagues' experiences, not only in the workplace but within the wider community.

"Sessions with my mentee have contributed to the implementation of new policies such as the Third-Party Harassment and Abuse Policy. This policy gives me confidence as a social worker to know that my employer will protect and stand by me if I feel harassed, bullied, victimised, intimidated, discriminated against in any way or feel treated in a less favourable way.

"The fact my employer has made it clear that it will not accept a person refusing care or a service from me due to my ethnicity or sex, and their zero tolerance of any form of racist or other discriminatory abuse or harassment whether from visitors, customers, clients or employees, is a laudable one which is beginning to make me more confident when going to work every day.

"Whilst the mentoring for inclusion pilot is still in its early stages, I have already seen some evidence of positive changes coming from the pilot. These include our adult care services director pushing forward conversations about anti-racism and proposed changes to internal processes concerning career progression."

What's been the biggest gain?

The biggest gain for those who experience racism is that the department and wider organisation have recognised that racism exists, and a commitment has been made to take anti-racist action to address the damage and harm racism causes.

What would be your top tips to any other organisation wanting to embed anti-racism within their workplace?

Recognise that the starting point is not the same for everyone. Commit sufficient resources to the work. Listen to the people with lived experience of racism, make it safe for them to speak and give them spaces to speak. But don't expect them to do all the work; enlist the support and energy of allies. Recognise that anti-racism work is complex, will evoke strong emotions, may be contested, is hard work to do and it takes time to feel and see change.

Remote working and increased anxieties

In the period immediately following the first lockdown in March 2020, practitioners struggled to ‘carry on regardless’, expressing acute uncertainty and anxiety at the pace of change. The rapid adoption of remote working left many feeling overwhelmed as new policies, revised protocols, and practices requiring the use of new IT infrastructures were introduced with little planning or preparation. We found this shift to remote working increased social workers’ anxieties. This was due to the loss of direct observation opportunities in conducting needs assessments, mental capacity assessments and estimating levels of risk. Working from home also raised concerns about the confidentiality of workers’ personal lives, particularly for those with caring and home-schooling responsibilities, with homes and families potentially becoming identifiable. This ruptured the psychological boundary that typically protects home as a private space away from the workplace, and isolated team colleagues who lost opportunities for informal support associated with co-location.

“Working from home has left me feeling isolated. Although the use of technology is brilliant, it just does not benefit me like face-to-face interaction does... I had to take five weeks off sick which left me feeling overwhelmed when I returned to the ever-changing service... I also find it hard to balance working from home with home schooling.”

Newly qualified social worker, Adult services

Increased ethical dilemmas

April-May 2020 tipped the balance of risks to make ethical dilemmas more challenging and had respondents questioning whether they were doing ‘proper social work’. Confronted with changing needs and risks, social workers faced ethical dilemmas in reconfiguring resources and adapting processes to maintain standards of practice and professional integrity to honour the rights of service users.

Some creative solutions to ethical dilemmas emerged in an effort to re-establish inter-agency collaboration, collegiality and team relationships. These included increased co-working of cases remotely, sharing of resources and virtual team coffee breaks. Relationships with service users were also strengthened in some instances, for example, through engagement in practical outdoor activities with children and young people walking ‘side-by-side’ rather than ‘face-to-face’ and taking advantage of technologies such as FaceTime to communicate with older people in residential or nursing care. These new forms of engagement re-defined relationship parameters and enabled better communication and subsequent support in many instances.

“A socially distanced walk in the park – I thought this would just be a chance to see my client and had said I didn’t expect her to share a lot in a public space, but in fact she seemed more relaxed, and shared some really key thoughts.”

Experienced social worker, mental health services

Three stages of social work during the pandemic

Last year BASW surveyed more than 2,000 social workers to see how they were responding to the pandemic. An analysis by the Social Work Practitioner Research Network picks out the main themes

Stress and burnout

As pandemic-related restrictions continued, survey responses between June and August 2020 revealed a clearer picture of increasing workloads, stress and risk of burnout.

By going beyond their established professional duties and shifting to remote working without access to the necessary training and support systems, social workers felt under pressure to be resilient. Of particular concern were increased risks to personal safety from initial shortages of PPE, increased workloads and the extension of working hours. For practitioners required to shield, or living with a shielding family member, the risk of stress and burnout increased further with little attention to the need for peer support and reasonable adjustments by management.

“Shielding, working from home since 18 March, no team meetings, no support, no weekly calls to update if I am OK or not. No updates on changes that are happening. Worse working period of my life, mental health has suffered.”

Experienced social worker, adult services

Lessons learned

These findings point to the value of:

- Developing creative practices that promote working in partnership with people using services
- Employers taking a collective rather than individual approach to resilience and promoting good practice focusing on minimising stress
- Building cultures of shared responsibility within teams and between agencies underpinned by transparent information sharing systems with training on how to use such systems

Written by Network members Catrin Noone, Vyomesh Thanki, Diane Wills, Evgenia Stepanova and Helen Charnley

This study was funded by BASW and the ESRC IAA. For the full report see www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/social-work-during-covid-19.pdf. The Social Work Practitioner Research Network is a partnership between Durham University and BASW. If you are interested in joining, email jane.shears@basw.co.uk

IN FOCUS



Past, present and future...

As celebrations to mark BASW's 50th year come to an end BASW chief executive **Ruth Allen** and heritage project co-ordinator **Gaby Zavoli** reflect on its ongoing legacy

Reaching 50 years is often a turning point in life. BASW's 50th anniversary Heritage Project has been a great birthday and a milestone for the association.

It's been personal, educative, celebratory and honest. In a very difficult year when we have adapted all activities to the virtual world, the project has brought people together in an atmosphere of warmth, creativity and curiosity. And it has really informed our commitment to a fresh and creative future, better informed by our exploration of the past.

We have heard many moving, brilliant personal stories from all five decades, many told for the first time, showing us there are many versions of history, many valued heritages. We have embraced diverse fields of practice, ethnicities, nationalities, ages, genders, political viewpoints. It's been vital for newer social workers and students to be central too, giving their perspectives on the past, present and future and expressing how the project provided a new sense of belonging.

Throughout the project, we have worked in collaboration with people with experience of using social work. Social work's history can only be told authentically if it is rooted in the perspective of lived experience of our services and encounters with us as professionals.

There is much more to do. We want to build ways to routinely capture, curate and learn from our heritage as part of our enduring culture.

We are designing a project which will focus on creating learning resources about social work's heritage, legacy and present, including for young people interested in social work as a career. We will build on the volunteering opportunities created through the project. And we will work more with our partners with lived experience of social work services.

We will also focus on public and political understanding of social work and how we are profiled in the media. Our future stories of social work must be imbued with better public understanding and partnership between social workers and the communities we support.

Ruth Allen

'We have embraced diverse fields of practice, ethnicities, nationalities, ages, genders, political viewpoints'

Pictured above: Signing of the Memorandum and Articles that created BASW on 24 April, 1970; happy 50th birthday wishes and BASW's offices in Birmingham

When we launched this project in February 2020, no one could have known what would happen next. Covid-19 struck and the world changed. We started to ask if you wanted to tell us how you were feeling, would you talk to us in webinars and write your thoughts down on paper?

Working from home started to feel a little less isolating as hundreds of members from around the UK contacted me with ideas and creative expression.

Last June, in the grip of the pandemic, we managed to hold a two-day virtual festival online supported by social workers, experts by experience – and even a few celebrities!

We not only celebrated the successes of BASW over the last 50 years and social work over 100 years, we also confronted the negatives of social work's past.

Heritage is about our uniqueness. It encompasses history, art, politics, poetry, life, and the vibrancy of culture and custom. Heritage captures and collates, it starts conversations. Heritage is about what connects us, what we share but also what distinguishes each person and profession.

History tells us we must question, celebrate successes while also facing our struggles and failures. It is about learning from the past to impact the future. The BASW Heritage Project has such a wealth of knowledge and diversity embedded in both the work we have done but also in the developmental aims for the future. Colleagues from across the UK have produced an array of powerful projects that will reflect BASW then and now for many years to come.

During the last 18 months we have all suffered sadness and loss. We have experienced happiness, celebration, support, and fulfilment – and throughout it all we have carried on.

I do not want to end this project with a goodbye but a nod to the next phase, to social work and to BASW.

Gaby Zavoli

RUTH ALLEN



BASW's chief executive on the need to recognise social workers' contribution

Thank yous are essential but won't resolve problems alone

As I write this, I am about to travel from London to BASW HQ in Birmingham for the first time since March 2020.

I haven't needed to go before in large part because of the fantastic work of colleagues who live closer and who have organised themselves brilliantly to protect and maintain our building, our technology and all the backroom services that have kept our show on the road.

I am looking forward to catching up, having a coffee and a natter. And I am looking forward to saying 'thank you' in person for all the efforts, adaptability and ingenuity colleagues and members have shown.

Tomorrow will be a significant, personal 'thank you' day for me – although like many others, I subscribe to the view that gratitude is not just for high days and holidays. The more you thank and appreciate others, the better and more motivated everyone feels, including the thanker. In troubled times, it's particularly important to seek out things to be thankful for. It helps get us all through and is a fundamental of human connection in a crisis.

It is no surprise then that the first national 'thank you' day on 4 July caught the imagination of millions. And the next day, the NHS received a really big thank you – a 73rd birthday present in the form of the George Cross, the highest civilian bravery honour from the Queen.

After all we have been through, and after the huge efforts made by so many, big gestures of thanks are important. NHS colleagues deserve it – and so does our sector.

A Queen's honour wouldn't be unquestionably appreciated across our sector or membership, nor all parts of the UK, and I am not advocating for it. But I do want more moments of limelight for social workers and social care, more instances of being recognised as first amongst equals and not an afterthought in a minister's speech (often hastily added by a decent, caring and savvy civil servant).

I want the media to show sustained interest and respect for what social care achieves and the wonderful people working in our sector. And I want most of all for this to be honestly and authentically rooted in the testimony that counts the most – that of the people we support.

Imagine if there were more accolades and big 'thank yous' for social care and social work success truly designed and

delivered by people with lived (and living) experience of valuing the support of social workers and social carers. This, coupled with the appreciation of colleagues who really know and love the inspirational people they work with.

We have social work awards across our four nations and BASW is involved in all of them and runs some. But one day a year is not enough. With a committee of members, I am currently looking at how BASW can create and be part of more, innovative and better recognition of social work across the UK, grounded in our ethics and values.

Having worked in the NHS for a decade, I often reflect how every sub-section of the NHS has a sparkly moment of celebration and thank you. We need our own range of appreciations for the diversity of what we do and who we are. Social work is one profession but made of a multitude of dedicated occupations and dynamic specialisms, many of which are hidden from public and media view.

And beyond 'thank you'

Recognition and thank you must mean something. They are nothing if the thanker uses them to cover up their lack of attention to fundamental things that they could help to be resolved – better funding, fair pay, health and safety, preventing crises in the first place.

A while ago, a minister with responsibility for social care somewhere in the UK was rather baffled by our call for better professional working conditions for social workers, saying, 'But they do the job because they care!' This minister did occasionally thank social workers and social care – and perhaps they even meant it in the moment. But they clearly thought social workers should take reward enough from the warm glow of endless altruism.

Dedication and going the extra mile in social work doesn't mean accepting exploitation any more than accepting the need to help people in crisis doesn't stop us trying to address the upstream injustices and inequalities that created them in the first place.

Thanks from people in responsibility must be accompanied by the proper use of their powers to ease difficulties and support staff. Our colleagues in the NHS know that as well as we do and we will stand with them to turn thanks into tangible, lasting respect.

VIEWPOINT VALUES

A force for good – why I celebrate social work

Upon being made an MBE in the Queen's Birthday honours, **Rob Mitchell** reflects on the award and what being a social worker means to him



I am really privileged to have received the MBE and consider it to be a celebration of our social work profession and not me personally.

I cannot recall one element of social work that I have been involved in that has been done in isolation or through my own work without the help of others. Everything we do as social workers is only possible with the support of many other people who support and enable social work to flourish. Admin staff, commissioners, solicitors, HR and finance colleagues are all part of making social work practice happen. I think this award is for those I have been fortunate enough to work alongside throughout my career – it just happens to have my name on but it's genuinely a huge team effort.

I am passionate about human rights-based social work. This approach to social work practice is built from the idea, proposed by the former president of family courts Lord Justice Munby, that we are servants not masters.

Our social work input, assessments and interventions should of course always be helpful. To do so, they must remain grounded in knowing that we will only ever be present as a small snapshot of anyone's life at a particular given time. That is rarely enough time for us to be able to form an initial relationship, let alone give us the legitimacy to make life-changing decisions merely backed by professional opinion.

People are the experts of their own lives and they receive better support when they are surrounded by those who love them. Our role is to wherever possible stand alongside them as a supporter, an ally and at times even an accomplice. As BASW's chief executive Ruth Allen once brilliantly put it, social work is about creativity, care and love – we stand with people in solidarity during the messy and difficult times of their lives. We then fade into the background as they rebuild confidence, and resilience to move on without our involvement.

I understand that social workers practice within the context of continuing narratives of concerns about social work as a profession. I recognise that, as a result, these are the most difficult of times to practice within. However, I think our approach needs to remain positive about the

'We are at our best when we celebrate good practice and challenge divisive political narratives'

profession and individual social workers' contributions.

This is essential if we are to make positive differences to the lives of the people we serve.

Through a positive vision for social work as an agent for human rights, we can harness our collective power to challenge the political climate we work in. United we have the potential to be a force for significant good, not least for the people we are in service to, but also in support of new colleagues and students who still choose to join what I believe is a brilliant profession.

We cannot, of course, allow ourselves to be in a place where in celebrating what is good in social work we fail to challenge the political agenda. As a profession we are at our best when we both celebrate good practice and challenge divisive political narratives.

The pandemic has exposed deep rooted social and health inequalities. The case for social intervention has never been clearer than now. Our new colleagues entering the profession as social work students during the pandemic are crucial to the future of the profession. They have had the most horrendously disrupted year of study possible and yet over the year they have self-organised, provided support networks for each other and I think have provided the profession with a bright light of hope, regardless of the route into the profession. They have been inspirational. As have frontline care workers, many of whom are on zero hour contracts and minimum wages, and unpaid family carers who kept the social care sector going over the last year, putting their health and safety second to those they support.

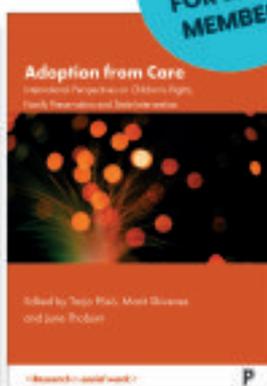
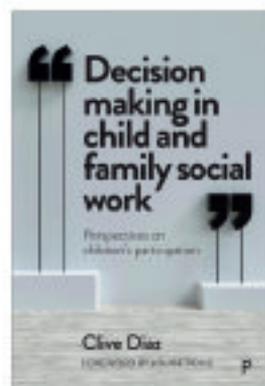
I started my career as a care assistant in a care home. I then moved onto home care, which I continued to do while training as a social worker. This award is dedicated to all those in the care sector.

As a global profession we adopted the phrase Ubuntu this year – I am, because we are. In accepting the award, I want to celebrate social work as a force for good.

Rob Mitchell is principal social worker for adults at Bradford Council

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Author David L. Jackson presents an opportunity to read about the historical context of life in a children's home during the sixties and seventies.

A Mother

★★★★★ **The reality of children's lives in a care system that doesn't care**

Reviewed in the United Kingdom on 27 December 2018

I picked this book up and could not put it down and read it within a day absolutely heartbreaking and hard hitting and sadly not a unique experience which makes it all the more hard hitting. It is told with frank honesty and the reader can capture the sadness and brutality of a childhood stolen and broken into a million pieces by the very system that was supposed to care for him. I hope those who were utterly devoid of humanity who abused Snowball and so many children have faced some form of retribution but what was hard hitting was the sentence after every page in the last chapter about a child in the care system has been abused while I read that part...sadly many children are still living this shitstorm and Snowball quite rightly points that out in a profound way. It's a must read - Read less

violence, fear, and intimidation, brought children to their knees, leaving them brutalised, cowed and in continuous fear.

This was childcare as no child should ever experience it. A stark, depressive, and oppressively dysfunctional system, that imposed perpetual physical suffering and mental hardship, upon its most vulnerable charges. It was a pernicious cycle of ritualised systematic abuse, inflicted on some of the most vulnerable children society could offer up. This was the environment that the author found himself immersed in during the 1960s. A system that lacked care, thought, and all things humane. A

Amazon Customer

★★★★★ **A "Must Read"**

Reviewed in the United Kingdom on 12 January 2019

This account of a child's suffering in our care system was harrowing. I shed tears for Snowball and cheered when he managed to outdo an occasion some of his tormentors, I await his next installment of his life as an adult.

..... This is a harrowing personal voyage into the 1960-70s childcare system as experienced first-hand by the author. It was a brutally horrific system, that made countless victims of the very children it was designed to protect. Vulnerable children who deserved and should have expected better. The horrific regimes, founded upon extraordinary levels of inhumanity, cruelty,

system where the imposition of brutal physical and sexual abuse had become normalised, legitimised, embraced and ultimately, forcefully accepted. This was life in a local authority home.

Amazon Customer

★★★★★ **Hooked from the first page.**

Reviewed in the United Kingdom on 5 December 2018

Easily one of the most, if not the most, compelling and inspirational stories I have ever read. The way the author recreates such a fascinating tale so vividly with words alone is jaw dropping. I have not been able to stop thinking about this book. I am an avid and religious reader but have found very few books that have gripped me as much as this book has. I am eagerly awaiting more.

- Read less

This was a life where a catalogue of daily horrors were inflicted for the personal pleasure of those charged with the care of this hidden, and often forgotten sub-culture of children who through no fault of their own, were forced to embrace these traumas, and endure a fight for their very survival.....

The book can be purchased on amazon:

www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1912183730 -

Social Media: @OYFtheBook (Twitter)

David is available for professional speaking events, seminars, conferences and online events.

Naming and shaming of workers has to stop

Rosie Meleady speaks from personal experience when she calls for the names of social workers to be withheld from media reports on court cases



The vilification and scapegoating of social workers is nothing new. It goes all the way back to the death of seven-year-old Maria Colwell in 1973 – a case which many see as providing a blueprint for the media and politicians blaming social workers when tragedies happen involving children known to services.

I recently had my own experience of this, which sadly shows that as a profession social work is still too often an easy target for unfair blame and focus when deaths happen.

I was attending a coroner's court hearing, a tragic case that was reported in the newspapers.

At the time of the person's sad death, she was no longer under the care of my team. I had only had one conversation with her and she had been referred to the appropriate health team several weeks previously. But it was solely my name and me alone that was quoted in the press, which had repercussions for both me and my family.

I took the most appropriate course of action as a professional and there has been no criticism made of my work. Yet during the hearing I was subjected to inappropriate questions by the family members, which the coroner did not control.

I have previously worked as a probation officer in a court team and as a court diversion social worker for 15 years and have been a judicial officer holder for nine years so was acutely aware that I was being treated unfairly.

That, in turn, probably influenced the press coverage that focused on me rather than the nursing manager who gave evidence after me and whose care the person was under. But this professional's evidence did not feature in the article.

I am aware I am not the first person to be in this position and strongly feel we need to speak up for what is right and not what is easy, even if it makes us feel uncomfortable and challenges the status quo. This situation has to change for a number of reasons.

Workers on the frontline are overworked because there aren't enough of us. We are under-resourced and have a recruitment and retention crisis across the board in social work and mental health.

'We must challenge discrimination, including when it is directed at us'

Incidents such as these undermine our professionalism and put people off coming into social work and mental health or indeed may prompt those in it to leave or seek early retirement.

So it is imperative we address this issue, otherwise who is going to want to put themselves and their family at risk of such public vilification?

Not only that, such negative publicity might put students off studying social work or mental health. Why, one might ask, would someone want to get themselves in debt to be put in this precarious position?

Most concerning of all is that negative publicity can also potentially prevent people from coming forward to use our services when they need help and support. If people feel we are of no use to them, or even worse, harmful to them, why would they reach out to us when they or their family members are struggling?

It is particularly a worry at this time, after a pandemic where a significant number of people's mental health has deteriorated.

Given the nature of our work and the repercussions of negative publicity and the impact this can have – not only on us individually but also on our family, wider services and the public – our leaders should challenge poor press standards when they provide misleading and unjustifiable information.

We must speak out positively about what we actually do as a profession, something which I know BASW can and does do. I would go further and strongly advocate that we campaign for the names of social workers and public workers in general to be withheld in court. It is unfair and dangerous – and benefits no one.

As social workers we should stand together and challenge discrimination in all its forms, including when it's directed at us.

The 'naming and shaming' of social workers can and does have negative repercussions on everybody in society, not just those within our profession, and it must end.

Rosie Meleady is a senior mental health practitioner

Stigma of care felt by those in our profession

Ian Dickson is helping to set up an association for care experienced social workers. He explains why it's needed



Social work contains care experienced people working invisibly alongside other colleagues. As social workers, they support people facing crises they themselves may have experienced as children. Their work may trigger emotions, but these won't be allowed to get in the way of their professional role.

Many people have an ambivalent attitude towards social workers. It is commonly believed it's social workers who take children away or make them live in places they may not want to live. Social workers gatekeep support and resources and can withdraw or refuse support to people who want it. Some even view social workers as the 'enemy'. The care experienced social worker may find that their own families or people they have grown up with treat them with suspicion, as though they have somehow betrayed their own kind and joined the opposition.

It is not only people in the community. Care experienced social workers speak of some colleagues who treat them as somehow different, less professional, less trustworthy or even more vulnerable. This is a form of the stigma most care experienced people will see in their lifetime, which at its worst can degenerate into discrimination.

In spite of such prejudices from within their own profession, the care experienced social worker is rarely a liability, nor need they be vulnerable. Indeed, they straddle the divide between social work and those it serves. They belong to both sides, and have insight into the needs and desires of both. As social workers, they share a vocation and ambition to support people. They understand the pressures, frustrations and limitations that social workers cope with every day in their work.

They also understand what it means to be a child in care, or a person struggling in life in need of support, and the daily trauma that coping with acute disadvantage can involve. They understand the critical importance of seeing and reaching out to the individual and not just another name on a heavy caseload. They truly feel the nuances and intricacies of their profession.

Few social workers consciously treat a care experienced colleague differently. Yet it happens routinely. For example, care experienced social workers are sometimes told not to

'Some are made to feel they are potentially a liability and must pass extra 'tests''

discuss their own care backgrounds with people they work with. Student social workers may be told by tutors not to discuss their care experience with their peers. The reasons for this may not be clear, but the message that their care heritage is something to be ashamed of is crystal clear.

Care experienced social work students speak of having to answer questions about their past from potential placements before they are accepted, questions others are not required to answer. Some are made to feel they are potentially a liability and must pass extra 'tests' before they are accepted; to demonstrate they are emotionally capable of coping with the stresses of social work.

They also face the challenges that all students face, but often heightened by isolation and loneliness without home addresses to return to between terms, or consistent adult figures to offer emotional or practical support. They manage this alongside the stigma and discrimination that are the constant companions of care experienced people. And they cope with it alone.

Social work is very demanding but for those with care experience, it can often be considerably more stressful by virtue of their care heritage.

Yet it seems that there is limited insight into the unique situation care experienced people in social work face even though they are found at every level of social work, from first year student to director. They make an enormous contribution to the profession and bring massively diverse experience, skills and creativity.

An association of care experienced workers in social work will seek to offer peer support and a helping hand to each other across the social work spectrum. It will offer a safe place to share thoughts and feelings amongst others who share their heritage. Such a group will act as a bridge between those who serve and those they serve, and as a lobby group for change. It will offer much to research and training. The question is not, "Do we need an association for care experienced people working in social work?", but rather "What took us so long?"

Ian Dickson is a retired social worker and a children's rights advocate who grew up in care

REVIEWS

BOOKS

A powerful cry of pain and anger from lived experience

Title: Social Distance in Social Work: Covid Capsule One

Curator: Dominic Watters

ISBN: 798517317438

Publisher: Social Distance Writers

Price: £9.99 (£5.99 Kindle)



This is an intriguing and unusual book which successfully identifies lessons for social work from the Covid experience. It offers a great introduction to the context and challenges of social work practice.

Dominic Watters persuaded some well-known professional leaders to write punchy, very personal reflections on learning from the pandemic. Woven throughout are raw and emotional accounts of lived experience, including mental health, old age, disability, children's services and poverty. Like the best social work, the book combines the personal and emotional with the social and analytical. Each contribution takes only minutes to read, with no footnotes or formal references.

The description of disadvantage and discrimination and the powerful analysis needs to be heard. A concluding chapter from the 'curator' could perhaps have summarised the change which

all authors say is needed. A repeated refrain is a call for change in social work. Yet is this the appropriate target? Most of the themes – gross inequalities, food insecurity, failures in social policy, lack of humanity in welfare systems – are championed in The Global Agenda for Social Work and World Social Work Days.

Changing the global environment needs more than analysis and slogans. We needed strategies for change. IFSW and others are working on this with many partners and the United Nations. This takes time, perseverance and commitment.

This book is a powerful cry of pain and anger erupting from lived experience. It deserves a wide audience. Together we need to describe the strategies to create the change we all so deeply know is essential.

David N Jones

Definitive guide to ethical and legal area of great complexity

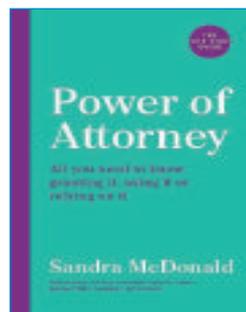
Title: Power of Attorney

Author: Sandra McDonald

ISBN: 978 1 78816 463 4

Publisher: Souvenir Press

PRICE: £11.99



Sandra McDonald was for 14 years the Public Guardian for Scotland, a title which has the ring of something of great power.

She was once asked: "Does it come with a cape?"

Sandra retired from the role and has taken the opportunity to write what I believe is the definitive guide to all things associated with power of attorney. It is a process and a procedure which requires most, if not all of us at a certain time in life, to consider whether we should grant or confer powers to others when failing abilities or incapacity require decisions to be made on our behalf.

It is likely that we will put this off until it becomes absolutely necessary, but by then it might be too late for you to legally authorise someone to manage your property and money or health and welfare.

However, for those who may be thinking about becoming a granter or donor (terms to describe the individual who confers powers on others) or indeed

an attorney, then I cannot recommend this book highly enough as the go to guide which covers every aspect of what is involved for those who embark on this ethical and legal journey.

The book details in easy-to-understand language exactly what you need to think about both as a granter and as an attorney. The complexities and anxieties which will occur to people are all well explained with excellent case examples to help the reader decide what will work best for them.

Given that the law differs in each of the jurisdictions, Sandra has addressed the situation as it exists in each part of the UK.

This is truly a nation-wide guide and should be essential reading for individuals and professionals.

As the sub-title of the book says: "All you need to know: granting it, using or relying on it". Given its aspiration then this book definitely delivers.

Ronnie Barnes

TV

Questions the role of prison

Time

BBC iPlayer



This three part drama should be compulsory viewing, raising major philosophical and practical questions about the role of prisons in modern society.

It shows a schoolteacher serving time after causing death by drink driving.

It highlights a wide range of inmates from hardcore criminals to the mentally ill, the inadequate, the illiterate and the likes of first time offender Mark Cobden played by Sean Bean housed in an outdated, insanitary institution.

The second theme covers a long-serving prison officer in charge of the wing keen to do his best for his inmates. When it becomes known his son is locked up elsewhere, the 'ruling criminal' has the boy severely beaten up. This is used as a lever to 'force' the warden to carry drugs and a mobile phone into the prison.

The series highlights a number of questions including what is justice, what is free will, and what choices do we have?

It also makes us ask who controls prisons, is it possible to ensure the physical safety of inmates in this setting and is there any hope of rehabilitating inmates in such environments?

Please watch it and think.

Francis Boylan

WORD OF ADVICE...

Have your facts, don't get angry and dress well

Alasdair Kennedy's top tips
on attending court

1. Courting disaster

Court is terrifying. No two ways about it, no matter how many times you go to court as a social worker. I was in 'virtual' court recently, which felt even more difficult. Virtual or physical, you will be nervous. Practise questions with colleagues, but curved balls will come your way. Never get angry. Court is adversarial. You are a professional so will stand up for yourself and back up your opinions with facts. But do not argue.

2. The Oscar goes to...

Ignore theatrics. Lawyers' techniques on cross-examination differ but may include interruptions, closed questions, multiple questions, hypothetical questions or indeed an attack on your qualifications and expertise. Keep calm, you have got this! Remember this old tip: when the lawyer asks a question, pause, turn, and answer to the judge. Also, remember what court you are in and check what to call the judge (sir or madam) or magistrates (your worship).
More info at www.judiciary.uk/you-and-the-judiciary/what-do-i-call-judge

3. Sunday worst

Dress well. Even with my virtual court visit I put a shirt on, but still wore my lockdown shorts and slippers. As they say clothes, like manners, maketh the person. Maybe I am old fashioned? But if you want to be taken seriously then dress like it – no dandruff or today's breakfast on your outfit.

4. Only the lonely

Do not talk to anyone you do not know while you wait outside the court. Lawyers lie in wait for those inexperienced workers who chat away

beside someone drinking a coffee. Before you know it, they are quoting you in cross examination. Earphones in, read a book, head down. If its virtual, talk about the weather but not the case until introductions are complete.

5. Remote control

Virtual court feels harder. It is difficult to pick up on the nuances of facial expressions and body language. You cannot tell if the reactions to your responses are positive or negative and there was more of an informality to the process. But do not fall into that trap of informality, stay professional. Lawyers will be able to have notes to hand, making cross-examination more robust and laser-focused. But your answers can be so too. I pinned possible questions and my answers behind my webcam on the wall. It gave me confidence in what I was saying and my words flowed without hesitation or shuffling paper and asking from time to time to look at my notes.

6. Bailiff, take them down!

Make sure once in your career you get a chance to visit a court and the cells beneath. When the pandemic is over, try and observe different courts, including criminal courts. It will demystify future court proceedings for you. All those wigs and gowns can seem strange. For those in Scotland, visit the children's panel but also do visit an English family court to get an idea of the differences. When you are in court, just think, you are nervous, but imagine what children and young people feel if they are called as witnesses.

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**

One-size-fits-all attitude is disablist and classist

Over the past several years I've noticed a behavioural and structural trend when accessing mental health services (particularly primary or 'healthy minds') and GPs in general. There has been a strong push towards promoting physical exercise and activity. Although I am not against this, and I recognise that obesity is a problem for both individuals and the health service, I think we need to be mindful as professionals and individuals that we are not being ableist or classist.

Here's an example of classism – recommending an expensive gym membership to someone who is on welfare benefits or suggesting that they buy specific equipment. Ableism is something I've experienced repeatedly and more times than I can count throughout my life. Many well-meaning professionals are not educated about specific health problems and impairments and disabilities and some charities and organisations might suggest inappropriate interventions for me such as cycling when I am visually impaired. Or in the case of my mother – who has several chronic pain conditions including fibromyalgia, neuropathy, arthritis, diabetes and a heart condition – that she goes on a 'mindful' walk when she can barely walk 100m unaided without being in pain or sitting down and she uses crutches.

Such initiatives are rarely inclusive of disabled people in my experience and it's very much a one-size-fits-all approach. People act surprised, perplexed and even irritated when you don't match the criteria exactly and they can't tick off the boxes.

In my experience mental health services have a poor understanding and training in regards to physical disabilities and likewise many organisations specific to certain impairments have a poor understanding of mental health and mental illness. It's almost as if you are not permitted to have both simultaneously. There seems to be a lack of joined-up thinking or multidisciplinary working across the various agencies.

It is disheartening and feels quite insulting and discriminatory when you are told that you could 'choose' to feel better mentally if you just did a bit of exercise that you might not be physically capable of doing, at least not without support, creative thinking or adjustments. Such oppressive practices make us feel worse, guilty even, and actually quite sad that we can't do these things. By refusing to be inclusive and make reasonable adjustments and adaptations and failing to think outside of the tick box, they are disabling us even more with inflexible attitudes.

A SOCIAL WORKER'S **DIARY**

July, 2021

I have recently made a big decision for myself as a social worker, which is to hand in my notice and take an agency position. This is something I have previously considered and written about in my articles. I am scared of the change and also feel slightly liberated by it.

Unfortunately, since joining the LA I currently work for I have been battered. Through 50-60 hour weeks, lack of management support and poor management communication which impacts the families we work with. Occasionally this lack of communication has resulted in poor service for the children and families where those of us on the frontline have been met with frustrated and upset people, which then damages our relationships with them. This has been agencies as well as families who have then seen us on the frontline as inept or perceive us as not caring.

I have been facing burnout in my current job since December last year. I considered going off long term sick and moving sooner but I had my student and I also believed we could resolve some of this. Throughout my time working for the LA I have communicated about unrealistic and unachievable workloads, lack of support and the poor communication. I did this not just for me but my colleagues who come to me and express upset; many times I have seen a colleague in tears because of the issues already mentioned. I also raised the issues with management because I believe in the core values of our job and all I want to be able to do is my job. This job is a privilege and I believe greatly in the purpose of us to empower, enable and support families and protect children.

Following guidance, I raised the issues first with line manager, then upwards. My last meeting was with two middle managers after I had sent an email to them and a director. The director had approached us on frontline and directly asked for feedback, so having already done this I thought it relevant to include him in this email also. This meeting did not go well, my voice was not heard. After the meeting I felt more sadness and very low. After deliberation I took an interview

for an agency role and was successful. So, I am excited about the change and also sad. A part of me believes that we are all equal no matter what title we have – we are all registered social workers, surely, who believe in the same things and follow the same standards of practice? But I was disillusioned, disappointed and felt very alone.

After handing in my notice things have become worse for me. I am no longer being supported to complete my practice educator course and received some very horrible emails from one of the middle managers I had the meeting with. I take pride in my work and work very hard, including continuing to access up-to-date research, changes in case laws, being open to challenge, and accessing training. For it to be made out in these emails that there were issues with my practice was horrendous. I was able to ask for specifics, because I still have some confidence left, and long story short I blew that manager out of the water as they had no leg to stand on.

This whole thing is miserable. I have worked so hard and have been a part of the team with good relationships and I now feel completely pushed out by those who only want things their way and that us frontline workers are but cannon fodder. Next time I will take an Ofsted report more seriously before choosing to work somewhere and will go agency until I find somewhere that suits us both. Part of our standards from Social Work England is to "Contribute to an open and creative learning culture in the workplace to discuss, reflect on and share best practice". It calls us to "Reflect on my working environment and where necessary challenge practices, systems and processes to uphold Social Work England's professional standards" and "Raise concerns about organisational wrongdoing and cultures of inappropriate and unsafe practice".

A friend said to me that if I raise issues, even though it is coming from a genuine place, it will be perceived as arrogant and not liked by management because you are "attacking" their egos. I didn't think that would be the case but now I do. There is a lot I can reflect on and learn from this. When I was a student on my first placement, I was told to challenge – if you don't understand something or you don't think something is right then challenge it. I was told that we are working with people and their lives and it is too important a role not to challenge.

I don't think how this is responded to will change but where I work is going to...

STUDENT NOTES



Jenny Hudson is a student doing a Masters in social work

When you work with people over time, what really troubles them becomes clearer and how this might be different to what you think the difficulties might be. In the case of some of the teenagers I am working with, our sessions frequently return to this – their experience of peer sexual relationships, often around photo sharing (and pressure to share explicit photos). Sometimes, when they talk about their experiences, it sounds like warfare playing out in school and teenage relationships, of responses and anticipated reactions to those responses and the fallout from things that happen. These can be overwhelming for teenagers and there is also a strong sense that this world they live in is not fully comprehended by the adults around them.

So when the Ofsted Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges was published in early June, it did not surprise me; it provided the broader context and analysis of what I had been hearing from the young people I'm working with. The Ofsted Review concludes that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse has become 'normalised' for children and young people. Young people interviewed said teachers and other professionals often underestimated the problem and the distressing impacts it has for them. They suggested that professionals are failing to understand their world and how they experience it.

Social work is well placed to have a really important role here. One of the great strengths of social work is our professional capacity to understand what people are experiencing and apply broad-based assessment. We are skilled at bringing in different perspectives and professionals to apply to difficulties. There is a real urgency for this work in the wake of Sarah Everard's murder and the emerging understanding of what sexual harassment means for so many people; it's multiple impacts.

On a personal note, I am in my final month of placement. This week, I will see the young people I have been working with for the last time, and after that I will be closing all my cases. I'm not sure how this is going to feel. I know, from my first placement, that it is the nature of social work that you are always preparing for the ending, pretty much from the onset. There is a lasting reward when you know you have done all you can. There is also the knowledge that we work with great complexity and we cannot know how things will be in the future beyond our involvement. I do know that I've learnt a huge amount in this final placement with the Exploitation Team. I've been very fortunate to work in one of the most fascinating emerging areas of social work which demands new thinking and constant agility. It is a learning experience which will always stay with me.



ASK DEREK

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

Q: How do I stop slugs from eating my dahlias?

Pete, Bromsgrove

Derek says: You're supposed to be working from home, not weeding from home Pete. I think you need to refocus.

Q: One of the little discussed consequences of the pandemic has been a loss of social skills. For instance, we had a barbecue the other day and it was excruciatingly awkward. And that was just my husband and me in the back garden! Any suggestions on how to overcome this?

Margo, Huddersfield

Derek says: Yes – it's called TV.

Q: I feel guilty that I had my vaccine offered via work before other priority groups and yet am still largely doing online or door step

visits. Any words of wisdom to alleviate this guilt?

Caron, Devon

Derek says: As I tell my clients, guilt is like a car without an engine – it doesn't get you anywhere. But if a small contribution to Derek's Holiday Fund will help alleviate such negative emotions I'm always here for you.

Q: I bought a dog during the pandemic to keep me company. We have bonded so well and he really helped me through. The problem is now we're supposed to be back in the office I can't bear to leave him and fear he will not cope in my absence. Am I within my rights to ask my employer to make reasonable adjustments for Wilson?

Fiona, Derry

Derek says: I'm afraid you don't have a leg – or four legs – to stand on. I'd like to take my

pet salamander into work but the office isn't a zoo. Saying that, some of the places I've worked in...

Q: I noticed you've been away a few months Derek. Is everything okay?

Precious, London

Derek says: I've been on gardening leave tending to my dahlias. Luckily the editor has come to his senses and reinstated me. Thanks for the (one) letter of support.

Q: I feel bereft, my energy levels have slumped and I'm having difficulty getting out of bed in the morning. I think I may have long Covid.

Calum, West Lothian

Derek says: Scotland getting knocked out of the Euros hit you hard, huh?

Email your dilemmas to derek@basw.co.uk

ENGLAND VIEW

We must ensure children's review hears realities of practice as well



I am delighted to have joined as a temporary professional officer in the BASW England team.

I strongly advocate for social work to maintain its integrity as a profession and an academic discipline. I was a children and families practitioner ten years before I undertook my PhD thesis on kinship care and the importance of hearing the voice(s) of the child.

Part of my work is to help BASW critically respond to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. Those who know about the well-needed review are undoubtedly aware that it has been steeped in controversy. Many academics and practitioners have raised fears regarding its independence and its often opaque use of the voices of care experienced children and adults. There are concerns that its narrative may lead to further deregulation, further privatisation of children's care, the separation of support and child protection, and blaming social workers and impoverished communities for inadequate services and help. There are also worries that the review cannot just unequivocally ask for more money. However, despite some persuasive arguments and early indicators, much

'There are concerns that its narrative may lead to further deregulation'

of this is speculation. We will not know for sure until the final report.

Last month the review published its interim document, *The Case for Change*. As BASW England, we released an initial response. Personally, it was disappointing that the review chose not to fully tap into our literature, our history and the reality of life as a practitioner. I felt there was an oversimplification of what we do and the spaces in which we work, especially regarding the continuum between care and control.

Only 300 people working with children and families were consulted before *The Case for Change* was launched. The review is now asking for practitioner views. I would plead for our members to fill in our survey to get a fuller picture of the personal impact (or not) of the review. I would also urge that social workers engage with the review itself. We must ensure that the actual realities of practice are also reflected alongside the experiences of care experienced children and adults. We must also be heard.

Paul Shuttleworth, professional officer

NORTHERN IRELAND VIEW

As every four-year-old is taught, we all need to share to get things done



In June Edwin Poots MLA resigned as leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, just 34 days after winning the party's first leadership.

Space does not permit discussion of the reasons for Mr Poots' defenestration. However, what must be stressed is Northern Ireland needs political stability, cool heads, and commitment to power-sharing, now more than ever.

A few days before the DUP's internal woes led to the departure of its leader, Health Minister Robin Swann introduced a long-awaited framework to reduce our hospital waiting lists – which are by far the worst in the UK. My assumption is the Minister timed the announcement to ensure Department of Health officials have the plans they need to make progress, even if the NI Executive collapses.

The problems experienced by social workers, and the people they support also deserve ongoing political attention.

Demands on social workers continue to increase. Whether they are the result of requirements of the Mental Capacity Act or due to the number of looked after children reaching the highest level since the introduction of the Children Order, we know many social workers are at

'NI needs cool heads and a commitment to power-sharing'

breaking point. The profession needs to be adequately resourced to deal with these challenges.

Legislation is needed to address a raft of issues. BASW NI continues to work as a member of the Cliff Edge Coalition to see extension and strengthening of the welfare reform mitigation package to protect households from the worst aspects of the UK government's welfare reform programme. We are still waiting for legislation to close important loopholes in the existing provision.

During our previous period without an Executive, vital domestic abuse legislation was delayed. The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021 is now law, but gaps still exist. The Protection from Stalking Bill is with the Assembly's Justice Committee and the Justice Minister intends to introduce the Justice Bill, which includes several important provisions relevant to domestic and sexual abuse.

Cooperation is the oil which enables our political machinery to function. Right now, I'm teaching my four-year-old son about sharing. It's a lesson some of our elected representatives would do well to heed.

Andy McClenaghan, public affairs and comms officer

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social work and social workers

BASW ENGLAND WORKSHOPS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT OR NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

13, 20 & 27 AUGUST 2021

12.30-1.30PM • BASW MEMBERS: FREE / NON-MEMBERS: £10 + VAT • CPD: 1 HOUR



This mentor-run workshop invites you to join a small group of other social workers and is an opportunity to hear and share ideas on:

- Interview preparation and CVs
- Demonstrating best practice
- How to evidence the value you will bring to a job

The session will be of interest to NQSWs, social workers from abroad looking for their first job in England and more experienced social workers looking for new job opportunities.

Contact mentoring@basw.co.uk for further details.

www.basw.co.uk/events

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Campaign
Promoting relationship
based practice

BASW ENGLAND CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SOCIAL WORK WORKSHOPS: STRENGTHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP-BASED PRACTICE

11, 25 AUGUST / 9, 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

BASW MEMBERS: FREE / NON-MEMBERS: £10 + VAT • CPD: 1 HOUR

This CPD workshop is for children and families social workers in practice looking to refresh and develop their direct work skills. By attending you and other attendees will have the opportunity to:

- Consider ways to improve relationships with children and families
- Share ideas
- Reflect on best practice

This 80-20 campaign run workshop will be of interest to students on placement, NQSWs as well as more experienced practitioners.

Contact england@basw.co.uk for further details.



www.basw.co.uk/events

FOLLOWING THE LAUNCH OF BASW ENGLAND'S RECENT **DOMESTIC ABUSE GUIDANCE**, WHICH HIGHLIGHTED THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF VICTIM-SURVIVORS FROM MARGINALISED BACKGROUNDS, WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT THE FIRST OF THREE HALF-DAY WORKSHOPS IN THE FOLLOWING SERIES:

SUPPORTING DEAF SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE



15-07-21

In partnership with Sign Health

SUPPORTING LGBT+ SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE



07-09-21

In partnership with Galop

SUPPORTING BLACK AND MINORITISED SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE



15-10-21

In partnership with Southall Black Sisters

These will be an interactive, reflective space for practitioners to develop skills crucial to meeting the needs of marginalised groups who are both more likely to experience domestic abuse, yet less likely to receive support. Each session is led by specialist services who are best placed to understand the specific challenges faced by the communities they support. The learning outcomes are as follows:

- To understand how the above marginalised groups experience domestic abuse differently
- To discover typical barriers faced by marginalised survivors when trying to access services (including racism, homophobia, NRPF, ableism)
- Discover practice-based tools which can be used to effectively support survivors
- Provide a safe, reflective space for practitioners to apply learning to their practice/case studies
- Opportunities for a Q&A session

More info, including a summary of each, can be found on the links below:

www.basw.co.uk/events/basw-england-domestic-abuse-workshop-series-supporting-deaf-survivors-domestic-abuse

www.basw.co.uk/events/basw-england-domestic-abuse-workshop-series-supporting-lgbt-survivors-domestic-abuse

www.basw.co.uk/events/basw-england-domestic-abuse-workshop-series-supporting-black-and-minoritised-survivors

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SCOTLAND VIEW

Together we can challenge racism that our social workers experience



In July, SASW launched its report *Racism in Scottish Social Work*.

The report summarises findings from a survey at the end of last year and a roundtable earlier this year, in which social workers in Scotland recounted experiences of racism.

The findings were not entirely unexpected but demonstrated a dire gap between the talk we talk in the profession and the walk. The evidence is clear: racism is experienced by social workers and students, it has a significant impact and, when reported, it is rarely dealt with in a satisfactory way.

The report is a launchpad for our anti-racism strategy. We wanted to capture the reality experienced by social workers from black, Asian and minoritised ethnic (BAME) backgrounds before identifying solutions. We were aware of snippets of experiences but wanted to know if these are reflective of the bigger picture. We also knew that, as an all-white staff team, we could not do this alone. We are immensely grateful to the people who have worked with us to gather and present the information in our report.

'SASW wants to stand in unity, challenging and advocating for change'

Social workers from BAME backgrounds cannot be expected to resolve discrimination and prejudice on their own. SASW wants to stand in unity, challenging and advocating for change in the systems that social work operates in.

One crucial task is to expand our advisory group of members who are from diverse backgrounds. These advisers co-produced the survey and the roundtable, and we intend to support the group to flourish, to challenge us and to direct our work in the future.

We see the publication of this report as a step towards a social work profession in which anti-racist values, principles and actions are clearly visible, and social workers from diverse backgrounds feel they belong. We will continue to gather information and listen to people's voices, as we critically reflect on our journey onwards towards this goal and develop our anti-racism strategy further. Please get in touch if you wish to join SASW's diversity advisory group. We would love to hear from you.

Sarah McMillan, professional officer

SOCIAL WORKERS UNION VIEWS

'Clash of personalities' or a 'style' of management no excuse for bullying

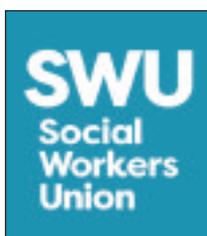


I have been dealing with a lot of members who have raised concerns over bullying in the workplace.

Whether this is a result of the pressures of the pandemic, increasing resource cuts or some other reason, the effects can be devastating for victims. Most people think bullying takes place only in the school playgrounds and classrooms, but for many adults, bullying has become the blight of their working day and they often feel trapped.

So what exactly is bullying? It can take the form of name calling, physical abuse, or even cyberbullying. The list is not exhaustive, but broadly defined in the workplace, bullying is a form of abusive behaviour where an individual or group creates an intimidating or humiliating work environment for another, with the aim of harming their dignity, safety and wellbeing. Victims can become mentally and physically unwell; family and friends can also feel the impact.

Different opinions exist about bullying in the workplace – some employers fail to see the legitimacy, or real impact bullying can have on an individual, and will try to present the concern as a non-issue. You may hear various descriptions but it is not:



A 'clash of personalities' – If you are being belittled, excluded, or intimidated, you are not just at odds with someone; this is bullying.

Character building – Negative remarks and actions will not strengthen character; quite the reverse. The effects can be debilitating and affect emotional health.

A leadership style – Aggressive or dominant managers may try and excuse behaviour as their management 'style' but if you feel threatened or intimidated, this is bullying.

It is worth noting bullying can come from any direction – top-down, but also bottom-up and from peer-to-peer.

Bullying itself is not against the law but if it is related to a protected characteristic such as age, gender or sexuality it could be harassment, which is illegal under the Equality Act 2010.

How can this be addressed? Initially, seek to solve the problem informally. If appropriate, speak to the perpetrator. This may be enough to stop their behaviour. If this fails or is inappropriate, consider a more formal channel, such as an official grievance.

Kevin Waldoock, advice & representation officer



SASW Conference 2021

Sponsored by the Scottish Social Services Council

#SASW21



SESSION 1

Tuesday 31 August (12:00-13:30)

WHICH WAY NOW? THE FUTURE FOR SOCIAL WORK

Members Free · Non-members £10 + VAT



SESSION 2

Wednesday 1 September (10:30-12:00)

POVERTY: THE WALLPAPER OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

With guest speakers Darren McGarvey (author of Poverty Safari), Prof Kate Morris (University of Sheffield) and Prof Brid Featherstone (University of Huddersfield)

Members £10 + VAT · Non-members £15 + VAT



SESSION 3

Thursday 2 September (12:30-13:30)

LEARNING FROM HISTORY: DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD

Listen in to this live webinar and pose questions to the panel.

Members Free · Non-members £10 + VAT



SESSION 4

Friday 3 September (11:30-13:00)

'IF ONLY YOU'D ASKED' - PERSON CENTRED SOCIAL WORK

Facilitated workshop providing opportunity to learn from voices of lived experience

Free

* All sessions will be delivered online

Sessions are priced individually
or buy a non-member pass that allows
attendance at all sessions for £25 + VAT

FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS VISIT
WWW.BASW.CO.UK/EVENTS

FORMAL NOTICE

SWU 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FRIDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2021

The 2021 Annual General Meeting of the Social Workers Union will be held online and joining instructions can be found here: www.basw.co.uk/events

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:

30-7-2021	Deadline for receipt of motions
03-9-2021	Notice of any proposed amendment to rules given in writing to members
17-9-2021	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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WALES VIEW

The devil is in the detail - but there is no detail yet from First Minister



Anyone expecting the First Minister's manifesto statement to be rich in detail was always going to be disappointed.

These things are always more tonal than annotated, setting out the theme of the concert season rather than focusing on individual symphonies and performances.

Such occasions are always more about mood music, not an invitation to dance the night away and stagger home the next morning with sore feet and a great big smile.

As ever, the Welsh government was at pains to paint its programme of activity as "ambitious and radical", though on this occasion those words must do rather a lot of heavy lifting. Labour's manifesto was in many ways a continuation of what had gone before and – after 22 years of government – such an approach is both predictable and disappointing.

There is no mention of parity for social work students so that they may all receive a bursary as their NHS colleagues have been granted. As a matter of fairness, there is no defensible reason not to include social work but given the shortfall in students joining courses and the general

recruitment crisis, it is incomprehensible. Needless to say, there is no mention of the latter either and our continued calls for a review of social work funding, recruitment, high caseloads and worker burnout remain unheeded.

Not to worry, we have been thrown a bone in the form of a chief officer for social care; not, you may notice, a chief social worker, like England, Scotland and Northern Ireland have, someone whose sole focus is to promote and improve social work. No, in their wisdom they have decided that giving one person this portfolio, plus the enormous challenges of everything else in social care after the pandemic, is a good solution to the crisis engulfing us all.

Perhaps we can look forward to hanging our hats on the promised launch of a National Social Care Framework and I will be forced to eat my words. As ever, the devil is in the detail, and as there is no detail whatsoever in the Welsh Government announcements, we are all left to ponder what on earth this is all about and what it will mean for us.

The orchestra is playing but the music is jarring.

Phillip Mitchell, professional officer

'The Welsh government was at pains to paint its programme as ambitious and radical'

CYMRU SYLWADAU

Yn y manylion y mae magl – ond ni chafwyd manylion gan y Prif Weinidog

Roedd unrhyw un oedd yn disgwyl i ddatganiad y Prif Weinidog yr wythnos hon fod yn llawn o fanylion yn siŵr o gael eu siomi.

Mae'r pethau hyn o hyd yn fwy tonaidd nag yn anodedig, trwy osod y thema am y tymor cyngherddau yn hytrach na chanolbwyntio ar symffoniau a pherfformiadau unigol.

Mae achlysuron o'r fath yn ymwneud a nawys y gerddoriaeth, nid gwahoddiad i ddawnsio drwy'r nos ac ymlwybro adref y bore wedyn gyda thraed dolurus a gwen fel giât.

Fel o'r blaen, aeth llywodraeth Cymru i drafferth i liwio ei rhaglen gwaith i fod yn "uchelgeisiol a radical", er, ar yr achlysur hwn, cafodd llawer o'r geiriau hyn eu codi o ffynonellau eraill. Roedd manifesto Llafur, mewn llawer ffordd, yn barhad o'r hyn oedd wedi mynd ymlaen yn y gorffennol ac – ar ôl llywodraethu am 22 mlynedd – mae'r fath yma o ymdriniaeth yn rhagweladwy a siomedig.

Nid oes unrhyw sôn am gydraddoldeb i fyfyrwyr gwaith cymdeithasol fel y gallent gael bwrsari yn yr un modd a gafodd eu cydweithwyr yn GIG. O ran tegwch, nid oes unrhyw reswm amddiffynnol i beidio â chynnwys gwaith cymdeithasol, ond, gyda'r prinder myfyrwyr sy'n ymuno a'r cyrsiau a'r argyfwng

recrwtio cyffredinol, mae hyn yn annealladwy. Does dim angen dweud nad oes unrhyw sôn am yr olaf chwaith ac mae ein galwadau cyson am adolygiad o gyllid gwaith cymdeithasol, beichiau uchel o waith a gweithwyr yn chwythu plwc yn parhau i fod heb gael sylw.

Does dim angen poeni, rydym am gael prif swyddog dros ofal cymdeithasol; nid, sylwer, prif weithiwr cymdeithasol megis yn Lloegr, yr Alban a Gogledd Iwerddon, rhywun sydd â ffocws yn unig ar hybu a gwella gwaith cymdeithasol. Na, yn eu doethineb, maent wedi penderfynu bod rhoi'r portffolio yma, ynghyd a'r heriau enfawr yn ymwneud a gofal cymdeithasol yn dilyn y pandemig i un person, yn ateb da i'r argyfwng sy'n amgylchynu pawb ohonom.

Efallai cawn edrych ymlaen a dibynnu ar lansiad y Fframwaith Gofal Cymdeithasol Cenedlaethol a addawyd i ni a byddaf yn gorfod llyncu'n eiriau. Fel o'r blaen, yn y manylion y mae magl a chan na chafwyd unrhyw fanylion o gwbl yng nghyhoeddiadau Llywodraeth Cymru, mae pawb ohonom yn gorfod myfyrio am beth ar y ddaear mae hyn yn ei glych a beth fydd yn ei olygu i ni.

Mae'r gerddorfa'n chwarae ond mae'r gerddoriaeth yn aflafar.

Phillip Mitchell, swyddog proffesiynol

'Aeth llywodraeth Cymru i drafferth i liwio ei rhaglen i fod yn uchelgeisiol a radical'



Social Workers' Benevolent Trust

Caring for those who care
Please make a donation

The Social Workers' Benevolent Trust (SWBT) is the UK's only charity dedicated to helping social workers when times are difficult.

The charity is receiving increased requests for funding and The Coronavirus pandemic has increased the need for urgent funds.

The trust offers financial help to social workers and their dependants in times of hardship, for example when experiencing sickness, bereavement, family difficulties or sudden catastrophe.

It is a small charity with limited funds, and it aims to provide grants that will make a tangible difference to the applicants. The trustees consider grants at their bi-monthly meetings and applicants need to complete an application form if they wish to be considered for a grant.

You can make donations to the trust by:

● Online Giving

Online donations can be made at www.justgiving.com/socialworkers-benevolent-trust

● Standing Orders

Download the form SWBT-Gift Aid on the website: SWBT.org and return to the Honorary Treasurer, SWBT, C/O BASW, Wellesley House, 37 Waterloo Street, Birmingham B2 5PP

● One-off Payments

Cheques should be made out to SWBT and sent to The Treasurer, SWBT, C/O BASW, Wellesley House, 37 Waterloo Street, Birmingham B2 5PP

● Leaving a Legacy

Include SWBT (Charity number 262889) in your will. More details are available on the SWBT website: swbt.org

More details are available
on the website:

swbt.org



Charity No. 262889

DIARY DATES

14 July

Utilising Systemic Family Therapy Tools in Safeguarding Children Training

See advert page 10

14 July

Agency Workers: Meeting your Registration Requirements

See advert page 10

15 July

BASW England Workshop: Supporting Deaf Survivors of Domestic Abuse

See advert page 46

15 July

Live Stream: An inquiry into new models of children's social work

22 July

Voices of Diaspora Social Workers in the UK

See advert page 10

27 July

Stepping Stones: From Student to Social Worker Training

See advert page 10

29 July

SASW: Young Carer Awareness Training for Social Workers

2 August

BASW England 80-20 Campaign: Pre-Birth Social Work Webinar

4 August

BASW England Criminal Justice Group meeting

11, 25 Aug, 9, 23 Sept

BASW England Children & Families Social Work Workshops: Strengthen your relationship-based practice

See advert page 46

13, 20 & 27 Aug

BASW England Workshops for Social Workers Seeking Employment or New Employment Opportunities

See advert page 46

18 August

BASW England Social Work with Adults Group

31 August-3 September

SASW Conference 2021

31 Aug: Which Way Now? The Future for Social Work

1 Sept: Poverty: The Wallpaper of Social Work Practice

2 Sept: Learning from History: Domestic Abuse in the Post-War Period

3 Sept: 'If Only You'd Asked' – Person Centred Social Work

See advert page 48

1 September

BASW England Mental Health Group meeting

3 September

BASW England: Unpicking the Myths around Domestic Abuse

7 September

BASW England Workshop: Supporting LGBT+ Survivors of Domestic Abuse

See advert page 46

7 September

Stepping Stones: Social Worker to Supervisor Training

See advert page 10

8 September

Live Stream: An inquiry into the proposals to integrate social care with the NHS

9 September

Live Stream: An inquiry into new models of children's social work

15 September

BASW UK Annual General Meeting 2021

See Notice page 4

15 September

Understanding Child Attachment Training

See advert page 10

21 September

Stepping Stones: Preparing for Placement

See advert page 10

22 September

BIA Refresher Training

See advert page 10

Upcoming BASW Branch events

13 July **Greater Manchester**
Seminar: Anti-Racist Training

14 July **North Yorkshire**
Network Meeting

19 July **Black Country**
Seminar: Pre birth social work with women in prison

26 July **Birmingham & Solihull**
Virtual Branch Meeting

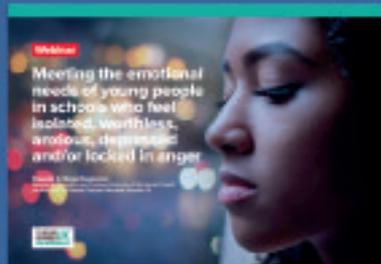
15 September **North Yorkshire**
Homes not Hospitals campaign and key documents: Championing human rights based practice

Information is correct at time of going to press.

Visit www.basw.co.uk/events for full details

UPCOMING LIVE STREAM CONFERENCES AND TRAININGS (via Zoom)

Vital CPD Webinars on child mental health: key skills and interventions with Dr Margot Sunderland and Dr Dan Hughes



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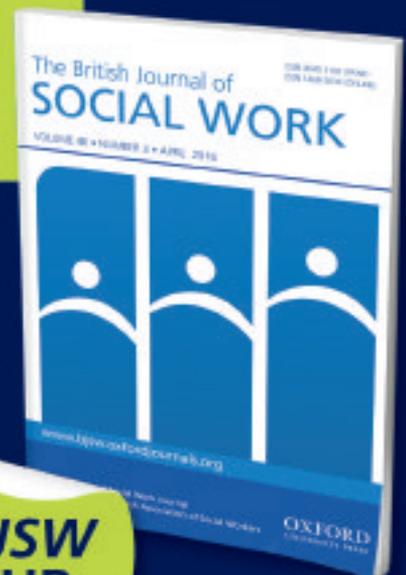
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BASW
The professional association for social work and social workers

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