

PROFESSIONAL Social Work

JUNE 2021

The cost of caring

Time to take stock of Covid's
impact on the workforce



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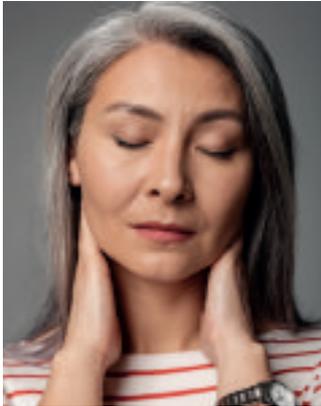
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From the Editor
SHAHID NAQVI



Have we already forgotten the sacrifices made?

Remember this time last year when we stood outside our doorsteps on a Thursday night clapping for carers?

Back then, there seemed to be an awareness that those in caring professions were in the frontline of the battle against Covid, often at huge personal cost to themselves.

Cynics, of course, said this show of solidarity was as much about the clappers needing a shared experience of community during lockdown as anything else.

A year on, have they been proved right? As the vaccines roll out and life appears to be returning to some kind of normality, wider society seems already to have forgotten the sacrifices made. A 1.5 per cent pay rise for local authority social workers has been branded "offensive" by the Social Workers Union and an "insult" by UNISON.

This edition of *PSW* is a reminder of the cost of caring. Social workers aren't the only workers to have been at the forefront of providing support during the pandemic. But they probably are the profession that has most comprehensively felt its traumatic impact on people, families and communities while often facing the same issues themselves. And it has left them exhausted.

People become social workers because they care about people. It's about time society cared for them too.

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



IN FOCUS

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BASW
The professional association for social work and social workers

ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING 2021 A MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

WEDNESDAY 9 JUNE 12-1.30PM – VIRTUAL MEETING

We will be holding our annual meeting, chaired by the BASW England Committee Chair, Andy Gill

This is your opportunity to hear about some of the work BASW England has led on over the last year and also to share your perspectives and help shape our future activities. This event can contribute to your CPD.

INCLUDES
1.5 HOURS
CPD

This FREE event is open to all BASW England Members
#BASWENG21



BASW ENGLAND STUDENT AND NQSW CONFERENCE 2021

A MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE: HUMAN RIGHTS - PRINCIPLES, ETHICS AND PRACTICE

THURSDAY 10 JUNE – VIRTUAL MEETING

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

DOMINIC WATTERS – 'ANTI POVERTY & SOCIAL WORK'

Join us for this virtual programme of events which include:

Session 1 (10:45-12:15): Getting your first job in social work workshop

When you have finished university the job hunting starts. This workshop will help equip you with skills and knowledge to overcome those barriers around application forms, being interviewed and getting prepared.

Session 2 (14:45-16:00): Anti-Poverty & Social Work Panel Discussion

Speaker Dominic Watters will focus on the importance of adopting an anti-poverty approach to practice, as well as reflections on his personal and professional experiences.

Session 3 (18:00-19:00): Joint student/England Conference celebration

An evening event of fun, laughter and bingo!

TICKETS

TICKET TYPE	PRICE PER PERSON
MEMBER	FREE
NON-MEMBER	£5.00 INC VAT PER SESSION

INCLUDES
4 HOURS CPD

#BASWSTUDENT21

BASW ENGLAND CONFERENCE 2021

A MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE: HUMAN RIGHTS - PRINCIPLES, ETHICS AND PRACTICE

FRIDAY 11 JUNE – VIRTUAL MEETING

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

VAVA TAMPA – 'REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ETHICS'

This year's conference will host speakers reflecting on the importance of ensuring human rights and ethics remain central to practice, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Session 1 (10:00-11:00): "Reflections on Human Rights and Ethics"

Vava Tampa is a social worker specialising in mental health and in health inequalities. Originally from Congo, Vava is also an activist and a freelance writer. Vava will share his experience of caring for victims and survivors of modern-day slavery and the issues of human rights and ethics.

Session 2 (14:00-16:30): Social Work Perspectives on Human Rights, Ethical Challenges and Dilemmas

A panel of speakers from a wide variety of backgrounds and experience will discuss the social work perspective of human rights and the ethical challenges and dilemmas that social workers face.

TICKETS

TICKET TYPE	PRICE PER PERSON
MEMBER	FREE
NON-MEMBER	£6.50 INC VAT PER SESSION

INCLUDES
4 HOURS CPD

#BASWENG21

TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS VISIT

WWW.BASW.CO.UK/EVENTS

The toll on staff of working during a pandemic revealed

Social workers are exhausted, worried about their mental health and feeling the strain on relationships after more than a year of practising in the pandemic.

They are also struggling to concentrate, have suffered the loss of loved ones themselves during Covid and feel their efforts have not been acknowledged by the public.

The stark findings come from a health and wellbeing snapshot survey by the Social Workers' Benevolent Trust (SWBT) to mark the charity's 50th anniversary.

Three quarters of practitioners describe themselves as emotionally and mentally exhausted. Of these, 17 per cent say they are struggling to cope and 58.7 per cent 'just about coping'.

Most – 68 per cent – say they have worried about their physical health during the last year – 25.9 per cent 'very often', 41.9 per cent 'often'.

When it comes to their mental health, the figure rises to almost 70 per cent, with 33.4 worrying 'very often' and 35.8 'often'.

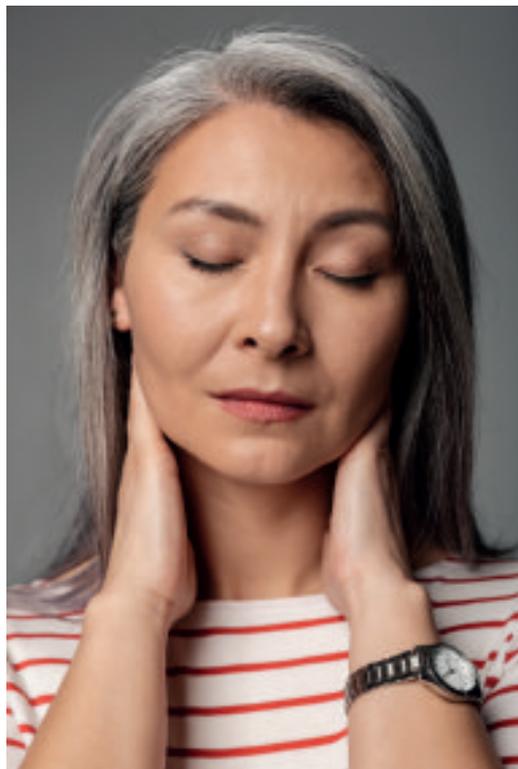
As a result of the pressure of working during the pandemic nearly a quarter – 24 per cent – have sought professional help for their mental health. One in five had to take time off work with stress.

Nearly one in ten – 8.5 per cent – have tested positive for Covid-19 themselves and 15.6 per cent of the respondents said they have lost a family member or relative due to the virus.

More than three quarters say they have found it difficult concentrating over the last year – 27 per cent very often, 47 per cent often.

Nearly seven out of ten – 67.7 per cent – have found working during the pandemic has put greater strain on personal relationships.

Asked if they believe social work's contribution



during the crisis has been acknowledged by the public the vast majority – 86 per cent – said no.

Nearly 60 per cent strongly disagreed they have been recognised and valued and 27 per cent disagreed.

Susan Roxborough, co-chair of the SWBT, said: "Our survey paints a very worrying picture of the toll the last year has taken on social workers revealing an exhausted and traumatised workforce. It is crucial that we care for the carers who have given so much to help others."

John McGowan, general secretary of the Social Workers Union, added: "This should be a wake-up call to everyone, and particularly to employers.

"The workforce's massive contribution during the pandemic must be recognised."

The survey also found 27 per cent have struggled financially in the last year, most commonly paying rent or mortgages and energy and utility bills.

Nearly 40 per cent felt less secure in their jobs and 62 per cent have found juggling their professional role with caring responsibilities more difficult.

Of the 213 who responded to the survey most – 40 per cent – worked with children and families; 21.8 per cent with adults, 11.8 per cent were in child protection and 11 per cent in mental health.

The majority – 65.8 per cent – were frontline workers; 22 per cent were operational managers and 8.5 per cent senior managers. Most – 81.6 per cent – were in statutory services with 9 per cent independents or agency workers. A quarter were from the south-east of England. Nearly 84 per cent were female and 82 per cent white.

Workforce focus – pages 16-25

Rights of child put in focus in legal cases

Government legislation on 'no recourse to public funds' is unlawful, high court judges ruled in a case involving a five-year-old boy.

The boy won a case against the Home Office after the court heard he and his Zimbabwean-born mother were denied access to state support.

The child was born in the UK and his mother, who has leave to remain, lost her job during the pandemic.

As a result of the ruling, children with low-earning migrant parents should be allowed access to housing benefit and universal credit, previously denied in what the court considered a breach of the duty to safeguard children.

Meanwhile children's rights campaigners have launched legal action against the Department for Education over plans not to ban unregulated supported accommodation for children aged 16 and 17.

New legislation due to come into force in September will ban their use for children aged up to 15. Charity Article 39 wants it to extend to 16-17-year-olds so they are not "shunted into unregulated accommodation, the majority of which is run for profit".

Food poverty

A report into people using food banks has found 95 per cent of those referred were destitute. The need for food banks has risen 128 per cent over five years, the Trussell Trust said. It distributed more than 2.5 million emergency food parcels in 2020-21 and supported 520,000 adults and 320,000 children.

NEWS

'Just because you're in poverty doesn't mean you're neglecting'

Social workers must not confuse poverty with neglect, inequality campaigners have emphasised.

The message came from a BASW England webinar which included powerful testimonies from people with experience of poverty and social services.

Tammy Mayes an activist with ATD Fourth World, a human rights-based anti-poverty charity, said: "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."

Tammy, who disputed the referral and won, added: "Just because you live in poverty, doesn't mean that you're neglecting your children."

She urged social workers to "stand up for those families where the system is against them" and not to judge people.

"Poverty is not neglect," she added. "Poverty is and always will be out of the person's control."

Omar Mohamed, a social work student at the University of Birmingham with lived experience of poverty, urged practitioners to view extreme deprivation as a "social problem".

He said: "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."

Tammy and Omar were speaking at an online event of BASW England's Children and Families Group examining the association's Anti-Poverty Practice Guide.

The group urged social workers to use the guide in conjunction with quantitative data showing the relationship between poverty and intervention, including poverty heat maps to identify areas of greatest need.

Callum Webb, a researcher at the University of Sheffield, said: "Funding has been reduced in some areas by more than half per child, and in the poorest places by even more than that. Simple tools like being able to visualise where poverty is greatest on a map might really help social workers to think strategically about what families really need."

The group acknowledged the difficulties social workers face in tackling the broader structural factors contributing to poverty, such as reduction in welfare and benefits.

"A lot of the structural factors that are punishing people and pushing them into poverty are the same structural factors that are preventing social workers from being able to act in an anti-poverty way," Callum added.

Visit PSW online to read full testimonies from Tammy and Omar. BASW's Anti-Poverty Practice Guide is on its website

Covid's impact being felt in communities

The hidden toll of the pandemic is being revealed in new figures, with the Office for National Statistics reporting a doubling of adults with depression.

More than 20 per cent of adults experienced depression in early 2021 compared to ten per cent before the pandemic. The figure rises to 43 per cent of young women aged 16-29 and 26 per cent of younger men, and 39 per cent of disabled people.

An Association of Directors of Adult Social Services survey shows there has been a 70 per cent rise in referrals of people experiencing mental ill health since last November, and a 57 per cent increase relating to domestic abuse during the period.

One in six five to 16-year-olds now has a mental health problem compared to one in nine in 2017 according to NHS figures.

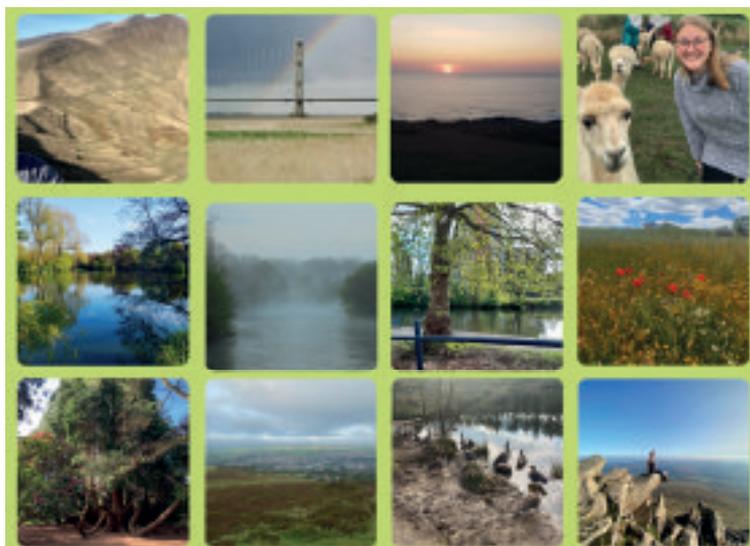
The NSPCC said calls to its helpline rose nearly a quarter in the year to this March. Children had worries about parental mental health, domestic abuse and alcohol and substance misuse.

Dementia care failing concern

Failures in social care led to a 27 per cent increase in people with dementia attending A&E between 2015-2019 said the Alzheimer's Society. It followed disappointment after last month's Queen's Speech made little reference to the long-promised reform of social care. BASW England called on the government to act.

Getting back to nature

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week, BASW England's Student and Newly Qualified Social Workers Group asked people in the profession to submit photos on Twitter celebrating the restorative powers of nature. See page 15



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'We will see the psychological consequences of coronavirus for months and months if not years to come'
Dr David Crepez-Keay, head of empowerment and social inclusion at the Mental Health Foundation

NEWS



John McGowan, general secretary of SWU



'A decade of toil and struggle highlights need for our union'

A decade of cuts, increased work pressure, managerialism, unacceptable working conditions and social injustice has underlined the need for a dedicated union for social workers.

The Social Workers Union stressed the importance as it marks ten years since forming on 21 June 2011 with record membership numbers.

General Secretary John McGowan said the rapid growth to nearly 15,000 members showed demand for specialist "social work-friendly" representation.

"The fact that we are the fastest growing union in the UK is significant but no surprise given the context social workers are working in.

"Over the last ten years we have seen an increasingly hostile environment for both the people we serve and for social workers themselves.

"Practitioners are being asked to do more with less by managers who are themselves under pressure in performance-driven cultures. Meanwhile, a decade of austerity has led to increased levels of poverty and social ills driving crisis work at the expense of early intervention work."

McGowan said the union regularly hears from workers "at the point of burnout".

He added: "Our Social Worker Working Conditions and Wellbeing survey highlights a workforce struggling with long hours and high levels of stress with four out of ten considering leaving the profession altogether. And that was before the additional pressures of Covid."

McGowan said the union was unique in guaranteeing representation by a social worker

while membership of the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) meant it was part of a wider movement of nearly 300,000 unionists.

SWU's national organiser and contact manager Carol Reid, said: "I frequently talk to SWU members who highlight the issues they face every day, particularly given the additional stresses and anxieties brought about by the pandemic and the difficulties and restrictions faced when trying to undertake a complex and person-centred job from the confines of your own home."

She emphasised the importance of being part of a union that campaigns on causes close to the profession's values.

"As social workers we've seen how the last decade of imposed austerity has impacted on individuals and decimated communities.

"We've worked within local authorities whose imposed austerity measures and government legislations have restricted our abilities to support and empower service users in the ways that we know we could and should.

"Austerity and legislation have challenged and contradicted our ethics and ideologies and affected our working conditions and wellbeing, let alone the lives and communities of the adults and children we work alongside."

Last month two motions proposed by SWU were passed by the GFTU. The first was to campaign against cuts to social work funding and assist in supporting vulnerable communities. The second was to call upon England's Children's Commissioner to support a ban on smacking children.

Emergency worker status sparks debate

BASW and SWU have defended their petition calling for social workers to get the same protection from assault as other emergency workers.

It follows an open letter from social work activists SocialWhatNow which claimed the petition, signed by more than 13,000 people, runs "counter to social work's values".

The letter claims the move would create disparity with unqualified workers, "risks putting further distance between social workers and the people we hope to support" and questions the effectiveness of "enhanced punishment".

The petition calls for social workers to be added to the Assaults on Emergency Workers Act 2018. But the government does not recognise social workers as emergency workers.

BASW said the petition aimed to "inspire discussion and raise awareness" while opening dialogue with the government.

SWU said: "Social workers deserve the protection from assault that many frontline emergency professionals have."

Experience in care network

The creation of an association of care experienced social workers is being explored.

It aims to provide a safe forum for practitioners and students who have been in care.

Expressions of interest are currently being sought through social media via #CareExpSW.

Ian Dickson, who is among those spearheading the drive, said: "Being both care experienced and in social work brings unique demands, stresses and responsibilities."

ENGLAND NEWS



'Views of social workers will be heard in children's care review'

The head of England's review into children's social care has told social workers they will be heard amid worries the profession's voice has so far been sidelined.

The assurance came after BASW England's Children and Families (C&F) group met review chair Josh MacAlister to highlight their concerns.

MacAlister said a "workforce engagement strategy" would be launched in the next few weeks. Early findings from the review are also expected by the end of May or June.

James Blewett, chair of the C&F group, said: "The meeting was organised because we had concerns about the exclusion of practitioners thus far from the review. We couldn't imagine any other area of review of services like teaching and health not having a central involvement of the workforce.

"While the meeting was constructive, the conclusions of his offer to engage with us are untested. We wait to see what the proposals are.

"Clearly social workers are the lead professionals in much of the children's social care sector and therefore must be at the heart of any discussion about the future of the sector."

Ministers launched the 15-month Independent Review into Children's Social Care earlier this year.

It was billed as a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity to "radically reform the system".

The appointment of MacAlister, founder of Frontline, the government-funded fast-track graduate training programme for children's and families social work, attracted criticism. Though he has stepped down as chief executive of the programme, a letter sent to the Department for Education signed by 100 social workers, care leavers, academics and 27 organisations questioned the independence of the review because of the financial support Frontline gets from the government.

Frontline's link to big business also sparked concern the review's findings are a foregone conclusion, with outsourcing of services likely to be recommended. The timescale for a "whole system" review is considered as too short by some.

Critics of the review include the Care Review Watch Alliance – see @CareReviewWatch on Twitter. Social Work 2020-21, an online magazine created to debate social work under Covid, has created a special edition on concerns around the review – see sw2020covid19.group.shef.ac.uk **Q&A with MacAlister page 26. PSW online: 'Will England's children's social care review live up to its bold ambitions?' BASW England's ten priorities for the review: www.basw.co.uk/ircsc-priorities**

Six priorities for politicians in manifesto

Social workers were the "forgotten frontline" during the Covid-19 crisis and their wellbeing now needs to be at the core of future policy.

That was one of the six key messages in a manifesto for social work launched by BASW England in the lead up to last month's local elections.

The manifesto places continuing to campaign for the wellbeing of staff at the top of its list, stressing that the long-term effects of the pandemic on the population will maintain pressure on social workers.

The manifesto calls for greater recognition and understanding of social work from politicians claiming its role often goes "unnoticed" by those who have not received its services.

The ethics of social work should be supported through legislation that embeds anti-oppressive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist values, the manifesto says.

It also calls for social workers to be given time for direct work with people and underlines the importance of people with lived experience in policy decision-making; the causes of "crisis intervention" such as poverty to be addressed and pledges support for those calling for an independent inquiry into the government's response to the pandemic.

Selling off offices in favour of home working is bad for us - Munro

Greater focus on home working is not good for social work, warned Professor Eileen Munro. The respected academic said: "I have a great worry that the

interest in cutting down on office space, which might have even been exacerbated by home working during the pandemic, may lead people to under-

estimate the importance of the team for the ongoing intellectual and emotional work that social workers do."

Speaking at an event held by

the Association of Professors of Social Work, she added: "They are not just your mates – that chat over a coffee break is actually of huge professional value to you."

SCOTLAND NEWS



Shaping a different future: SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon on the campaign trial

We must make sure our voice is not lost in historic changes

Scotland faces a “Beveridge moment” that social work must engage with to prevent others shaping the profession’s future, SASW said.

It issued the rally call against a backdrop of far-reaching reviews into social care and last month’s election results underlining a growing gulf between Holyrood and the policies of Westminster.

Scotland’s review of children’s social care led to The Promise last year – a nine-year commitment to change culture and practices in three stages.

Meanwhile, the Independent Review of Adult Social Care, which published its findings earlier this year, could see the creation of a National Care Service.

Alison Bavidge, national director of SASW, said the scale of change was huge: “Between The Promise and the Independent Review of Adult Social Care, this is a Beveridge moment for Scotland.

“At the end of the 60s we had the Kilbrandon report that led to the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and the creation of social work departments in local authorities.

“We are at a similar point with far-reaching consequences coming from these reviews, as well as the diverging political landscapes in England and Scotland driving potentially equally divergent policy.”

Bavidge said it was vital the role of social work was considered in reforms, but warned there was a risk of the profession’s voice not being heard and its contribution missed.

“Social work must be involved and shape the future.

“Social work is often focused on critical cases because the thresholds of eligibility are so high.

“That has led to a focus on getting through assessments and putting in place care packages at, perhaps, the expense of longer-term relational-based practice.

“Relationship-based work is what social work should always be – supporting people and enabling them until they are able to get on with their own lives again.

“We have to make sure that is heard – this is part of what social work organisations in Scotland have to do. If we don’t, we run the risk of others defining what social work is.”

SASW chair Jude Currie added: “We are reminded in The Promise that Scotland’s plan is not to build a new ‘care system’ but a ‘country that cares’ and that is thoughtfully made up of services that work together to meet the needs of people where and when they are needed. It is vital that social workers are part of these conversations – by invitation or request – to listen, learn, influence and lead positive change with and alongside people we support.”

Holyrood’s division from Westminster was underlined in last month’s elections with the Scottish National Party making significant gains.

It now has 64 seats – one short of a majority – and 85 per cent of constituencies. Together with gains by the Scottish Greens, pro-independence parties occupy nearly 56 per cent of all seats in Holyrood.

Vaccines and testing reality for workers

Most social workers in Scotland are getting tested for coronavirus as needed. A snapshot survey of SASW members in March found 86 per cent are satisfied with their access to testing. This was up from 80 per cent in January and follows lobbying by SASW.

The survey also showed improved satisfaction with information in March compared to January while the proportion that had had a first vaccination jab was up from 70 per cent to 87 per cent.

SASW has also successfully lobbied to ensure independent social workers are vaccinated as part of their role.

Activity bag to help build relationships

An activity bag including colouring pens, stickers and other guided materials has been issued to every children and families social worker in Glasgow.

The bag contains activities aimed at helping professionals connect with service users to overcome common barriers.

SASW member Kevin Williams who works for Glasgow’s children and families services, said: “The bag was designed to enable busy workers to undertake direct work by overcoming issues in relation to time and confidence.”

Kevin added: “We very much support BASW’s 80/20 campaign and see the bag as a way of working towards this aim.”

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Sandra Golding, BASW member.

WALES NEWS



Wales' first minister Mark Drakeford

Drakeford signals plans for a universal basic income pilot

Wales could become the first country in the UK to trial a universal basic income for citizens.

First minister Mark Drakeford, a former social worker, said the Welsh government is considering a pilot to “see whether the promises that basic income holds out are genuinely delivered”.

The concept could potentially be tested on people leaving care, a government spokesperson said.

Support for universal basic income (UBI) – where people are given a sum of money each month irrespective of their means – has gathered pace in Wales and beyond.

Councillors in Swansea, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Gwynedd have passed motions in support of trialing the radical policy.

A survey by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales earlier this year found 69 per cent of Welsh people in favour of a pilot. Nearly half – 25 out of the Senedd’s 60 assembly members – are also in support.

Ciaran Sturge, a member of the Welsh branch of the global campaigning organisation UBI Lab Network, said it was time to try something different.

“Being from Wales and Swansea, the sheer amount of poverty is unacceptable. This would give people a chance to level up in society.

“In its most simple form poverty is a lack of cash. If you give everyone a cash injection then hopefully it will alleviate poverty and stimulate the economy.”

Ciaran said research elsewhere in the world busted myths that UBI encouraged people not to work.

“It shows it gives people more power. If you are stuck in a job with a bad employer you have a safety net to find better employment, do that job you always wanted to or create that business.”

He also said the cost to the public purse would be mitigated by other savings.

“How much do we spend on administering the current benefit system? It is millions. If we had a system where it was just a universal cash payment and you don’t have to go through the benefit system, there is a saving immediately.

“There is a huge cost to our national health service because of the amount we spend on mental health and diseases caused partly because of poverty.”

UBI Lab Cymru has said introduction of the measure could be “this generation’s NHS”.

Ciaran said: “The NHS was born in Wales, we think basic income could be born here.

“Furlough was a big wake up call. The pandemic showed you can support people in society. There is a magic money tree, which has coincided with where we are with basic income. Now is the time that people have the appetite to try this in Wales.”

In the run-up to the 2019 General Election, Labour’s former shadow chancellor John McDonnell said his party would pilot trial UBI if it was elected to power.

Last year, a two-year project with four local authorities in Scotland supported by the Scottish government looking into a citizen’s basic income concluded a pilot was not feasible without “substantive” legislative change.

Low pay offer is ‘insulting’ in Covid wake

Social workers could in effect face a pay cut under a 1.5 per cent pay deal proposal.

The offer was made to local authority employees in England, Wales and Northern Ireland last month.

The Social Workers Union labelled it “offensive” and ignored the sacrifices the workforce had made during the pandemic.

General secretary John McGowan said: “Social workers have been on the frontline supporting people for more than a year, very often at considerable cost to their health and personal lives.

“The government seems to have forgotten the debt we owe this workforce with this offensive pay offer.”

UNISON labelled the offer an “insult” that was far short of its ten per cent claim.

Upstream fund focus pledge

New Welsh health minister Baroness Eluned Morgan has pledged to divert money into early intervention within communities and towards children and young people.

She also announced £100 million of investment to “kickstart” the NHS and social care recovery across primary, community, and hospital care.

More than half a million people were on the NHS waiting lists in March this year, a fifth of Wales’ population.

The Welsh government’s recovery plan acknowledges NHS mental health services “could become overwhelmed with referrals” due to the socio-economic impacts of Covid-19.



Consulting members: BASW NI national director Carolyn Ewart

‘Duty of Candour risks blaming workers for system failings’

BASW NI has urged caution over new Department of Health Duty of Candour proposals warning they could pose “significant challenges” for social work.

The Duty of Candour would make being honest and open a legal responsibility for all healthcare organisations and apply to the reporting of adverse or ‘near miss’ incidents that could have led to harm.

The proposals, along with a Being Open Framework, are currently open to consultation and were developed following recommendations from a health inquiry into hyponatraemia-related deaths.

Hyponatraemia is a medical condition that occurs when there is a shortage of sodium in the bloodstream and the inquiry – which examined the deaths of five children in NI hospitals and found four of the deaths were avoidable – was critical of what it saw as a “self-regulating” and “unmonitored” health service.

The inquiry led to 96 recommendations including the establishment of a duty of candour.

Health Minister Robin Swann said: “When I took up my role as health minister last January I gave a commitment to progress the implementation of the recommendations in the hyponatraemia report.

“I welcome the opportunity to launch this consultation and I urge everyone to have their say.”

But Carolyn Ewart, national director for BASW NI, stressed that individuals should not “bear the blame” for organisational failings adding: “The Department of Health proposals for a Duty of Candour present very significant challenges for social work.

“The proposal for an individual Duty of Candour with criminal sanctions would, to many, appear to be a step forward in ensuring good practice is upheld. However, all too often the factors that lead to mistakes are rooted in organisational failings, and we want to make sure these shortcomings are put right to ensure individuals do not bear the blame where the organisation they work for has fallen short.

“BASW NI is engaging with members to inform its position, however, our work to date leads me to believe the association will accept the proposals for an organisational Duty of Candour as the most effective way of safeguarding those who use social work services.”

The consultation can be accessed at the Citizen Space website <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/doh-1/duty-of-candour>

Health check on workforce in next phase

The health wellbeing of UK social workers in the “post-pandemic” world is being researched in a collaborative study including Ulster University and Queen’s University Belfast.

The study will look at working life, mental wellbeing, levels of burnout and coping strategies after more than a year of Covid impacting on the professional lives of social workers, social care workers, nurses, midwives and those in allied health professions.

The *Health and Social Care Workforce Research Study* is now in its third stage of an ongoing investigation aimed at providing an “evidence-informed” insight to help employers make organisational and policy changes that better support the workforce.

Previous phases of the study between May and July last year and November last year and January this year found overall wellbeing and work-related quality of life had decreased across the health and social care workforce during the pandemic.

The latest survey is open until 2 July. Social workers are urged to access it at www.hscworkforcestudy.co.uk.

The cost of caring during Covid - page 16

Mick’s social work ambition is back on track after cruel comment

An ‘expert by experience’ who was nearly put off his dream of becoming a social worker after a senior manager told him he might not be suitable due to his “difficult background” has

been offered a place to study the subject at Trinity College Dublin.

Mick Finnegan has been homeless and a psychiatric in-patient after suffering abuse as a child. He gained support from

other social workers including Northern Ireland’s chief social worker Sean Holland when he posted about the comment on Twitter. Writing in the December/January edition of

PSW, he said: “It reassured me that people like me have something to offer and can be an asset to the profession.”

He said of the course offer: “I can’t believe it – I’m buzzing.”

IN FOCUS

With campaign groups warning of a lack of government direction and patients reporting a postcode lottery for treatment, is Long Covid a ticking social care time bomb? **Louise Palfreyman** investigates...

Around 1.1 million people in the UK have Long Covid - including more than a quarter of a million public sector workers - latest estimates from the Office for National Statistics reveal.

The statistical snapshot includes 122,000 health workers, 114,000 teachers, and 31,000 people working in social care.

A staggering 674,000 people have recently reported symptoms that affect daily life, and 196,000 report a marked impact on daily tasks. Young people are affected in huge numbers - there are 476,000 people aged 25-49 and 43,000 children under 16 with the condition.

The ONS was "surprised" by the figures and a spokesman observed: "This isn't like other diseases".

The latest National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) studies show Long Covid is an active and ongoing disease, with inflammatory responses, lingering viral activity, or blood clotting disorders.

The NIHR warns: "Long Covid is a significant health burden that is unlikely to be met by existing NHS services. We recommend rapid evaluation of different service models and skill mix for supporting people with Long Covid."

THE BATTLE AHEAD

Louise Barnes sits on the NHS Taskforce for Long Covid, NICE review committees, and advises the NIHR, having worked on the geography of diseases.

She first became ill with suspected Coronavirus last March, just as the UK went into lockdown and said: "I only got it because I had to go to hospital for a scan. I had all the typical symptoms - bad headache, tinnitus, loss of taste and smell, fever, stomach problems. I went to hospital three times and wrote my funeral plan at one point.

"I was seriously ill for around eight weeks, and by May I was still experiencing problems, so I set up a group. We all realised that we were still ill. Since then, we've been campaigning to get Long Covid recognised."



Louise founded the Post Acute Covid Syndrome 19 (Pacs19) patient advocacy group. In the early months, she and fellow sufferers catalogued more than 200 symptoms associated with Long Covid and set up a forum for people with the condition.

"I spoke to senior people in the ME/CFS community, and they warned me that I would be fobbed off. It seemed there was a deliberate policy in place not to treat us, so I asked people in the group to keep diaries to present as evidence."

People with Long Covid, are reporting lack of effective treatment, no access to specialist scans and being referred for Graded Exercise Therapy or CBT, which patients report can make the condition worse.

Investigations by Pacs19 have also uncovered a postcode lottery - a recent survey revealed 90 per cent of members had not been able to access a clinic because one wasn't available, their GP couldn't refer them, or they were declined.

Louise has clear advice for social workers who encounter people with Long Covid: "Get them into a support group - there are many to choose from online.

"Even if there are Long Covid clinics in your area, they can be difficult to access. A GP will generally refer a patient for a mental health or physio assessment, or self-referral for graded exercise therapy, and possibly for scans or to a Long Covid clinic.

"But although there is a pathway, it may not always work.

"Social workers can best help by being aware of the general prejudice out there, and the fact that there are so many people impacted. The domino impact of this crisis will gradually unfold."

THE PLIGHT OF CHILDREN

There are an estimated 133,000 young people aged 2-24 with Long Covid and Sammie McFarland founded Long Covid

Continued on Page 14

IN FOCUS

From previous page

Kids after she and her daughter Kitty, 15, developed the condition.

Both fell ill last March and Sammie, 45, a health and wellbeing coach, has found her daughter's school unsympathetic. Kitty is under a local specialist clinic and has a supportive OT. But Sammie said: "It's been horrendous, and it's a constant battle. The school hasn't engaged with the OT at all."

Kitty, a keen ballerina, had mild symptoms at first but then developed the symptoms of Long Covid. She was in bed for eight months, having to hold the wall to even get to the toilet.

Sammie said: "She tried two-hour stints at school at first but relapsed and was very unwell again. Since January we've been building up to four-hour stints at school, with rest, but she suffered another relapse."

"There are social issues around not being able to see her friends, loss of education, the stigma, and there don't seem to be any guidelines in place."

Sammie has tried working with the education department to implement policies.

"Schools were recently told they can apply for exceptional circumstances, and educational assessments."

"But the risk in many families is that they don't even know a child has Long Covid and so spotting the symptoms is crucial."

She believes it is crucial social workers recognise the signs early: "Parents are worried their kids will be labelled as school refusers, or that their children will be taken away. I want a clear, cohesive approach to children with Long Covid."

BATTLING FOR TREATMENT

Amy Durant, 31, works in publishing and became ill with Covid-19 as the first wave hit the UK last year.

Her experience since is typical of many with Long Covid – the battle is not only with the condition but also with medics who fail to take it seriously.

Amy relapses frequently into severe fatigue and brain fog. On bad days she struggles to shower, cook or read and has to spend long periods in bed.

Her route to effective treatment has been further complicated by pandemic restrictions limiting face-to-face appointments. She said: "Of all the appointments with my GP only one of them was in person, the rest were over the telephone."

"I've had two appointments with the respiratory department, both over the phone. I'm due an appointment with a cardiologist this month – also over the phone."

"I did see a medical professional when I had my lung function test done but we didn't discuss Long Covid, just what I needed to do during the test. I've also seen lots of nurses for blood tests who were generally



Louise Barnes writes on the National Covid Memorial Wall in London

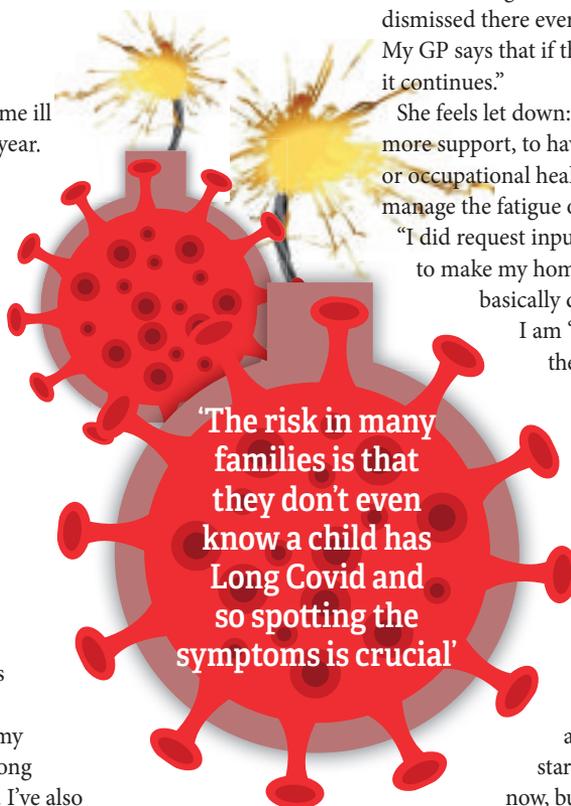
lovely, apart from one who suggested that only unfit and unhealthy people can get Covid complications, which is not true."

Amy has been caught in a cycle of being passed between doctors: "To get seen, I've had to go to A&E. But I've been dismissed there every time and referred back to my GP. My GP says that if things get worse to go to A&E, and so it continues."

She feels let down: "I would love to have been given more support, to have been seen by a physiotherapist or occupational health therapist to get ideas on how to manage the fatigue or try exercise without relapsing."

"I did request input, as well as help with assessing how to make my home more disability-friendly, but I was basically dismissed. I think there is an idea that I am 'too young' to have serious problems, therefore I am not a priority for this kind of support, or for referrals."

"I have a feeling that those of us who were affected in the first wave have become lost in the system somewhat. Most of us weren't hospitalised because at the time, unless your lips were blue or you were gasping for breath, there wasn't space to admit you. It took a while to get a Covid diagnosis and then the second wave hit and pushed all referrals back again. I hope I will start to get more support and treatment now, but I fear the damage may already be done and it will be a long road to recovery."



IN FOCUS



Students and social workers used social media to encourage people to get out and about during Mental Health Awareness Week

NATURE



Sarah, co-vice-chair BASW England Student and NQSW group in Perranporth Cornwall



Pam Shodeinde
– BASW England Student and NQSW Group co-vice chair

NURTURE

You can get involved by following #BASWnaturenurture



“Just living is not enough. One must have sunshine, freedom, and a little flower,” said the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen on the importance of getting out into nature.

Further insight into its restorative powers comes from Marie Curie who said: “All my life through, the new sights of nature made me rejoice like a child,” while no lesser a thinker than Albert Einstein urged us to: “Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.”

BASW England’s Student and NQSW group took heed of these wise words to mark Mental Health Awareness Week last month.

It launched a social media campaign #BASWnaturenurture asking social workers to share photos taken in the great outdoors.

The group’s co-chair Emma Grady, a social work student at Edgehill University, said: “The theme for Mental Health Awareness Week this year was nature so

we thought we would create a campaign which tried to bring students and social workers closer to nature.

“We have all been locked away with Covid so we thought it would be nice for people to get out and about and see what nature has to offer.”

Students and social workers shared photos from across the UK during the week between 10-16 May.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, more than half of adults in the UK find being close to nature improves their mental health. Four in ten say it makes them feel less worried or anxious.

Emma said: “There is evidence that being in nature and outside does increase people’s wellbeing, particularly for people in professions like social work which can be quite a stressful job to be in.

“And it gives us a break from being behind laptops and phones. With Covid restrictions being lifted and springtime, we thought encouraging people to get outside and take photos would be a nice thing to do.”

‘It gives us a break from being behind laptops and phones’

After more than a year of practising in a pandemic, **Shahid Naqvi** takes stock of the impact on the workforce – and looks at a new support service created by BASW

Even before Covid struck, there were issues in the profession. A 2018 study by BASW and SWU highlighted how high levels of stress, presenteeism and job dissatisfaction were common.

As a result, the Social Workers Working Conditions and Wellbeing study found that 40 per cent of 3,421 respondents planned to leave the profession altogether and 60 per cent were seeking a new job.

Feedback from social workers over the last year suggests for many the pressure upon them has significantly increased.

Earlier this year a BASW survey of more than 1,100 social workers found almost 60 per cent agreed that working during the Covid crisis has negatively impacted on their mental health.

Collaborative research into the wellbeing of the social care and health workforce including Ulster University, Queen's University Belfast, Bath Spa University and King's College London backs this up.

The Covid-19 Health and Social Care Workforce Study found more than six out of ten of 3,500 respondents reported severe or moderate levels of work-related burnout between November 2020 and January 2021.

Such findings should come as no surprise. Social workers have been at the forefront of supporting people in the pandemic, often at cost to their own health – and in some cases lives.

Perhaps more than any other profession, its workforce has absorbed the emotional and psychological trauma of individuals, families and communities affected. They have been doing this while also affected by the very same traumas in their own lives.

It was from recognition of this that BASW set up the Professional Support Service (PSS) last year. Monalesia Earle, lead coach for the service delivered in partnership with social training provider Strengthening Practice, says: "We realised our collective commitment to supporting our professional peers in these unprecedented times could turn out to be the emotional lifeline we have since come to understand many of them were seeking."

Suzu Kitching, a former principal social worker who now works as a consultant to the programme, adds: "The government talk about bounce back, but this is a pandemic! You already have quite a fragile, compromised working environment in social work, with all its complexities. You add a pandemic into that and those vulnerabilities get further exposed and that puts another layer of complexity and pressure on workers."

"Social workers may be experiencing their own issues due to the pandemic, yet they continue to provide service for

The cost of caring during Covid

children and adults.

"You are asking them to be strong and this can mean they hold that worry back and hold this in because they prioritise the needs of others."

Feedback from people using PSS suggests many social workers are reluctant to ask managers for help for fear of showing 'weakness'.

"Some of the comments we had were about resilience – people felt they should be strong," says Suzu.

Dr Paula McFadden, who led the Covid-19 Health and Social Care Workforce Study for Ulster University, says: "It is a vocational thing – there is that compassion in the workforce for service users and putting their needs above their own."

Working from home and social isolation has put additional strain on many in a profession that is so much about relationships and social interactions.

Feedback from PSS users includes comments such as: "It's a very isolating situation" and "What comes up constantly in my team is the sense of isolation". Another said: "We are isolated and stressed because we are not with our colleagues."

One respondent said of working in the pandemic: "My confidence has vanished underneath me. It has had a massive impact mentally and physically."

BASW's survey found nearly 70 per cent of workers agreed working from home had made it more difficult for them to switch off.

Some have found practising in the constantly changing landscape of Covid has resulted in "task-driven"





More than 70 per cent of social workers are worried about their mental health

FACT FILE

► The Professional Support Service (PSS) is designed by and for social workers to support their wellbeing

► PSS provides a confidential peer to peer listening service to help you reflect, with a trained coach, any current concerns you may have. It provides a safe space to work through and think about positive solutions to any challenges you are facing

► You can access up to three one-to-one video or telephone sessions with a trained volunteer coach who understands the challenges faced by the social work community. The sessions last up to one hour, you can search for a time and day to suite you and select your own coach by location and specialism

► To access the service visit www.basw.co.uk/professional-support-service

supervision with information passed on rather than support. One PSS user said: “Policies and procedures are changing so quickly and managers spend all their time telling workers how to do their job – what they should be talking about is how the workers are actually doing their job.”

Further insight into the fragility of the workforce comes from a health and wellbeing survey by the Social Workers’ Benevolent Trust to mark its 50th year this month.

It found that over the last year more than 70 per cent of 213 respondents worried about their mental health – 33.9 per cent very often, 36.3 per cent often.

Nearly a quarter said they have sought professional help as a result due to working during the pandemic.

Nearly one in five (19.4 per cent) had time off work due to stress over the last year and more than 75 per cent describe themselves as emotionally and mentally exhausted. Of these, 17 per cent said they are struggling to cope and a further 58.7 per cent said they were just about coping.

More than two-thirds (67.7 per cent) said working in the pandemic has put greater strain on their personal relationships and 15 per cent said they have lost a family member or relative due to coronavirus.

More than six in ten said they have found juggling work and caring duties either much more difficult (31.4 per cent) or more difficult (30.4 per cent). Nearly one in four (39.7 per cent) have felt less secure in their job.

All of which paints a picture of a workforce that’s exhausted, stressed and in need of support.

PSS seeks to address this. All or its coaches are social workers and BASW members who have gone through

special training for the role. Those signing up for the service can choose one of 49 coaches, 35 who are currently active, via a web portal.

“This is old school social capital,” says Suzy. “It’s about building the workforce. It is about social workers giving back. There are two strands for social workers, one about their wellbeing and the other is about giving to the service.”

Suzy emphasises that PSS is not a counselling service: “This is about the coach working with the coachee to come up with their own solutions. It is not a crisis service.”

Kate O’Regan, head of business development at BASW, was tasked by BASW’s Council with setting up the service last July. She adds: “It is not just about support with Covid. People talk about work, their career development, changing jobs. There’s a lot around transition, self-development, thinking about their futures. It’s a safe space for social workers to talk to someone who understands their business.”

Some 230 people have so far registered to use PSS which, along with seed funding from BASW, has benefited from charitable money.

The service is free to BASW members. Following a workforce development grant, it will soon be made available to all social workers in Scotland whether or not they are members.

While the fight against Covid carries on, the fallout from it continues to be felt by communities – and it will be social workers who continue to be there for them.

The need to support this hidden workforce remains high. As one user of PSS puts it: “I wouldn’t be in a job if it wasn’t for this service.”

Everyone is grieving

Social workers have been as much affected by Covid as anyone, says **Thembi Ndluvu***, who speaks from very painful personal experience

CARING FOR THE CARERS 
SPECIAL REPORTS

For more than a year now, social workers have been at the centre of supporting people traumatised by Covid. Individuals and families who have faced loss, grief, poor health – both mental and physical – isolation, financial pressures and relationship breakdowns.

What is often forgotten is that many of these same workers are facing similar trauma in their own lives.

It's something Thembi Ndluvu, a children's services manager, is all too painfully aware of.

"As a South African, I have previously worked through the AIDS pandemic and a study of deadly diseases identified that there is a point when everyone knows someone who has died of AIDS. That is the point where the pandemic becomes really scary and personal and people start to take notice of safety.

"I thought we reached that point in January 2021. I had lost two members of staff to Covid. My staff have suffered multiple losses. The mood music was really low."

Heartbreakingly, just three weeks ago, Thembi faced her own trauma when her husband died suddenly and unexpectedly. Thembi found him, had to call the ambulance, attempt resuscitation, spoke to the police and ultimately the undertaker all on that dreadful night.

"It was heart failure. I don't know if it is connected to Covid, I have to wait for a coroner's inquest. We were together ten years and only got married last October. It was very traumatic. He was only 51-years-old."

Still raw with grief, Thembi knows all too well the need to show compassion and understanding towards workers in similar situations.

"Employment law gives us three days for bereavement. I could go back to work now and sit through back-to-back meetings, but I make significant decisions about the lives of children.

"I shouldn't be doing that right now because it wouldn't be safe. It feels like most of me has just been ripped away."

Currently on sick leave, she feels let down by her employer,

a local authority in England, and how she has been treated by senior managers.

"They have not even spoken to me or tried to call. I am still on my probation period and at 8pm on Friday night I got an email informing me they have extended this.

"That caused distress at a time when I shouldn't be thinking about things like that. It was also my dad's birthday that day who I lost a year ago.

"My heart is dying, it was so insensitive to send that on a Friday. I felt frightened because I was on my own. They could have waited until Monday or checked to see how I was."

Thembi feels she is "being performance managed in a profession that is supposed to be caring". The experience has left her disillusioned and no longer wanting to continue working for her current local authority.

"Who would want to work in this environment? Is this why we struggle to recruit and retain social workers across our profession? I know I will have to go back and deal with this because I need a reference before I am able to resign. I have to pretend everything is okay before I move on.

"I feel I need to highlight this treatment. I care deeply about social workers."

Thembi's experience may not be typical but she's convinced it's not the exception either.

"In the last year many people may have lost someone significant to them and what I would want to see from an employer is compassion and understanding.

"What I wanted was to be asked 'are you okay? Do you want to come back to work? Do you need more time out?

"Do you need to speak to your GP? Do you have support around you? Do you have access to services? Who is doing your shopping? The kind of things I do with my staff. You just check to see if someone is okay and work alongside them, at their pace... restorative.

"This year international social work celebrates Ubuntu – 'I am because we are'. If I am not well, we cannot all be well."

Thembi adds: "We need to think about bereavement and grief and how we manage our staff because everyone is grieving. What's available to support them?"

***Name changed to protect identity**

'Being told I am unfit to practise hurts'

Even when cleared, the emotional cost of going through a fitness to practise investigation is massive. **Tracy Palmer***, who was exonerated after a two-year investigation, describes the trauma she suffered and calls for more support for others in a similar situation

I qualified in 2003 and am really proud of the fact that I can say I am a social worker. I worked very hard to get my qualification.

I work with children and try to get it as right as I possibly can for them. So to be told I am unfit to practise hurts.

I was working as an independent worker when there were four allegations against me. I had to answer every one as if I was in court. The case stopped at the investigation stage. It never got to hearing in the end –the regulator came back two years later with no case to answer. But it's a horrific place to be when you are trying to do your day job as well. I know someone for whom it has taken four years.

I totally understand why we need an investigation process because there are people doing things that aren't fit to practise. But the feeling of going through it is something we don't talk about in our profession.

We don't talk about it because there's that sense of shame, of not wanting to be judged as a social worker with this thing hanging over you about bad practice.

That leaves you really isolated and lonely and thinking

that it could end your career. I just ended up feeling, 'oh, okay, so I am completely on my own'. It did make me consider carrying on – it made me want to leave the profession. I made my mind up that they were going to say I was negligent, and I was going to get struck off.

Reflection and questioning your practice is a good thing but my confidence was completely shattered.

I would think about it before going to bed and wake up thinking about it. It is really traumatic. As social workers we deal with vicarious trauma all the time because we work with other people's issues and narratives. But when you have your own trauma as well... it is really hard.

I don't think people appreciate how difficult it is to prevent yourself from going under.

If I didn't have my good friends in the background I don't know what would have happened.

I probably would have dropped out of my career. There were times I thought 'this is going to end badly'. But I knew I had done nothing wrong.

I got no support from the local authority. I was doing the work for them as an independent, but they just disappeared so fast. The representative I had from SWU said: "Where was the local authority in all this? They commissioned you to do this work and then left you."

Being an independent has a different slant than working in a local authority because you don't have the big wheel of the organisation behind you. As an independent you are on your own.

I stopped doing independent work because part of me was scared to –what happens if someone else does this to me? You end up having to second guess your every decision.

I think regulators need to understand more about what it is like to be an independent social worker. They don't recognise we don't have that big cog of the authority behind us.

They need to speed up the process. There needs to be some kind of support network for people who are going through this.

I would have really valued being able to talk to someone else who has been through what I went through and understood the feeling of going through it. Not necessarily the process but the feelings I was having and where I was coming from and how traumatic it was.

I think it would be good to have some kind of support network and to be able to talk about it openly without that sense of shame. Because it could happen to anyone of us.

The fact that I feel I need to be anonymous says it all. I just don't want any comeback for me from anyone.

***Name changed to protect identity**

Social Workers Union view – page 40

'It is horrific place to be in when you are trying to do your day job as well'





Ian Collard is coming to terms with the loss of his long-term partner Allan, who had dementia and died in a care home last November. The couple were both social workers. Ian was unable to hold a funeral for Allan due to Covid restrictions. The following reflections on death and grief are from a diary he kept during their final months together...

They say that life goes on, and so it does. Sometimes you have to appear that you are coping but you are really just going through the motions. You know that your life has changed but you do not want to consider or even think of how you are going to be able to cope in the short or longer term.

Your decision-making ability is drastically reduced as you are unable to see very little that is positive in the future. You are wishing that this is a nightmare, and you will wake up and everything will be back to normal.

It is generally accepted that social work with people who have experienced death, loss and grief can be very challenging.

Following the Hillsborough disaster Liverpool Social Services Department set up a centre for survivors and families of the deceased in Anfield and I was appointed as manager. We were operational within hours and we soon found that it was essential to have somewhere for people to share their grief.

A telephone help line was also established. Women were widowed, parents lost sons and daughters and children said goodbye to fathers who never returned from a football match. The centre was able to provide invaluable support to all those who were affected by the disaster.

It is only now during the global pandemic that I can appreciate the intensity of the grief experienced by those affected across a wide range of age groups, cultures, and communities.

It is natural that when one experiences a trauma we go to the experts. Or in my case, consult notes or essays written at college or university prior to qualifying in social work. As a



social worker I wanted to understand the messages that were being sent to my head and my emotions over my loss.

It is generally recognised that every loss is usually accompanied by grief. The psychiatrist Enrich Lindemann talks about acute grief which can be accompanied by physical distress and pain and suffering. Psychologist J William Worden lists four stages such as acknowledging the reality of the loss, working through the pain and emotional turmoil, finding a way to live without the person who has died, and loosening the link while attempting to move forward on a new life. The skills required may be practised in all areas of social work from children, families, disability, and older people. Under the Standards for Palliative and End of Life Care (2004) the first credential is the Advanced Certified Palliative and Hospital Social Worker credential (ACHP-SW).

It is important that social work managers recognise that people working with loss and grief need regular structured self-care support and supervision. Part of my role as manager of the Hillsborough Centre was talking to and debriefing staff who had been on duty that day.

The psychologist Robert Neimeyer reminds us that "it is vital that workers are sensitive to practices surrounding loss that characterise faith-based communities or societies



your future life without the person. These periods are very distressing and uncomfortable especially when you are alone or awake in a dark bedroom in the middle of the night.

Worden's task-based model describes how the intuitive griever experiences waves of emotion and how it is possible to acknowledge the physical pain and adjust to a new environment and then move forward.

I found that I was able to cope with the early stages of grief as I was busy organising the funeral/cremation and all the other official tasks which were required at the time, such as recording the death and informing people of it.

Allan's life was so fresh in my mind that I was fully expecting him to come through the door with bags of shopping from the supermarket. The difficult period was when I had to come to terms with the fact that this would never happen, and I had to face a future without him. That was the worst time when all I could see was a dark tunnel without any light at the end.

In her book *On Death and Dying*, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross describes five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. I went through all of these, especially being angry and asking my God, "Why me?"

I have nearly reached the acceptance stage, but I am not there yet. Worden recognises that acceptance can take time and differs from each person. He says that "Death confronts the bereaved to adjust to a new environment without the deceased, and to find new roles for themselves, and move on in life."

The coronavirus pandemic has caused thousands of people to be confronted by the sudden death of loved ones.

Holly Nelson-Becker and Ann M Callahan (*Social Work Today* Vol 20 No 5 p14) acknowledge that: "This may be the most painful loss the person mourning ever experiences. However, there are new spaces to inhabit where memories and a felt sense of connection replace emptiness as healing occurs and love remains."

I do not know what the future holds but none of us can predict what is going to happen. I am sure that five years ago Allan would not have believed that he would be asking me the directions to our bathroom or how to change channels on the television.

People with dementia forget how to do things we all take for granted and this can cause great frustration and distress to those involved, their loved ones and carers.

There is no right or wrong length of time to grieving as we are all different. Some reminders will be there for ever, like birthdays or anniversaries, but the intensity of the grief will reduce in time. It is alright to cry.

lan is a retired service manager in disability services and was employed by Liverpool Social Services for 25 years. Allan was employed as a probation officer for 20 years

different to their own." Mourning is influenced by beliefs, religion and cultural beliefs and values.

Anticipatory grief occurs in anticipation of a loss. I remember when I realised that Allan was having problems with his short- and long-term memory. Sometimes when we needed to visit a supermarket I would walk with the dog to our local Tesco and ring him on the mobile when we were close to the store. This would give him enough time to meet me in the supermarket car park.

Often, I would arrive only to wait for some time before he finally arrived. On numerous occasions I would have to phone him again to remind him that we were waiting for him. A natural reaction is to disbelieve what was becoming obvious, especially knowing that dementia is a one-way journey.

"Life goes on" is a common term used by people who experience Normal or Common Grief. The initial reaction to a death may be emotional numbness, shock, disbelief or even denial when it is an unexpected loss. This may be accompanied by anger, sadness, guilt, and a general loss of interest in the future. Suddenly, you are confronted by something that reminds you of the person. It may just be a piece of music or song on the radio, and you quickly descend into a temporary sadness and a dark reflection on

Allan was a passionate Wigan Rugby supporter. He is pictured with his and Ian's puppy, Megan

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Covid and alcohol

Some people including social workers will have developed complex drinking responses to cope during the pandemic and need support, say **Ellie Reed** and **Wulf Livingston**

Social workers frequently work with those who turn to alcohol to cope with life's difficulties. For some these experiences have intensified during the last 15 months of the pandemic.

We have all undergone deep levels of change. The impact will vary for everyone; some will have found new strengths and skills, new relationships and connections, new ideas and a new worldview.

Others have experienced loss and are grieving - for loved ones and relationships, for jobs and income, for identity and stability, for purpose.

People's relationship with alcohol is something that has also changed. During Covid-19 alcohol has had its centrality reinforced with off-licences being identified by the UK government as essential.

While alcohol can play a healthy and positive role, it is also a well-established way of coping with difficult experiences. Excessive use frequently leads to a range of health and social harms.

For example, there has been particular focus on the link between the intensified use of alcohol and domestic abuse during the last year.

Media headlines about increased use of alcohol since the beginning of the pandemic have abounded. The reality, however, is more nuanced.

Overall consumption of alcohol in the population has actually reduced as the increase in home drinking has not compensated for pub and restaurants being closed. For the majority of people there has been either no change or a reduction in their alcohol use.

But there are individuals for whom the Covid-19 context has contributed to an increase in drinking. Research varies to what extent, but it appears to be in between 20 per cent to 30 per cent of the population.

It is likely that many of those were already struggling and vulnerable to the difficulties associated with drinking such as domestic abuse, homelessness and mental health difficulties.

Factors influencing increased drinking are complex, varied and sit within the context of individual lives and support networks. They can include bereavement, coping with difficult feelings, increased opportunity (time), isolation, mental health difficulties, and work pressures.

Agencies like Change Grow Live have seen this reflected in a huge increase in referrals for alcohol and drug services. Many such services have been able to reach out to more people than before through online meetings or over the phone. This really suits some, but not all, people.

Some agencies, notably NHS and local authorities, have had to prioritise resources away from alcohol provision. As a result, other agencies, notably those in the third sector like Change Grow Live, are increasingly meeting people on their own terms and stepping outside the 'one size fits all' service provision.

As social workers, working with a whole person approach, we must keep in mind that the impact for some people of damaged relationships, fractured mental health or problematic alcohol use will not disappear just because restrictions are easing.

Critically, social workers are themselves not immune. They will have had some of the same difficult experiences in their personal lives, such as trauma, loss, demands of caring, or lack of family stability.

As professionals, we must take notice of how we are feeling because we have a responsibility to care for ourselves so we can care for others. Some social workers will have seen their own alcohol use increase, for a small number to hazardous or harmful levels.

We can support and protect ourselves (and others) by noticing our behaviour and drinking on fewer days, avoiding too many 'reward' sessions, being self-compassionate and attentive to self-care and ensuring we take our annual leave.

The impacts of Covid are here to stay. Professionally, there is more focus on agile, remote and home working. In this context, we must acknowledge the importance of relationships, whether these are with family, friends, colleagues, people who use services, neighbours, people in our community.

Relationships help us feel connected and anchored. Kindness, compassion and openness is so important, especially in times of darkness. We can continue to utilise our connections as the foundation for changing behaviour, including ours and others relationships with alcohol.

Ellie Reed is Principal Social Worker for Change Grow Live and **Wulf Livingston** is Reader in Social Sciences at Glyndwr University, Wrexham, Wales. Both are members of BASW's special interest group on alcohol and other drugs



SOURCES OF INFORMATION & SUPPORT

www.alcoholchange.org.uk

BASW's special interest group on alcohol and other drugs on its website
www.changegrowlive.org

By Maggie Fogarty

'Your social workers cannot give their best in their work if they are in real debt themselves or facing eviction, bankruptcy or cannot afford to run their car'

This is the stark message from Bridget Robb, co-chair of the Social Workers' Benevolent Trust charity as it marks its 50th year. Hundreds of social workers have applied to the charity over recent years, with 495 appeals for help between 2017-2020 and the numbers are rising.

'Amy' (not her real name) has seven years experience of working as a frontline social worker and is well used to dealing with people facing severe hardships.

Right now Amy's focus is on a woman who has suffered a stroke, resulting in a loss of mobility, exhaustion and communication difficulties. Unable to work, this mum of two is reliant on her husband to care for both her and their teenage daughters. He too has had to give up his job and they are now on benefits, struggling financially with all their savings gone.

Hardly an unusual case but this time it is Amy herself we are talking about – she is the one who has had the stroke with devastating consequences. A social worker in desperate need of support, her professional and private worlds turned upside down.

According to Susan Roxburgh, who co-chairs SWBT with Bridget Robb, "Social workers are like the general population when faced with crises like the death of a loved one, divorce, abuse, disability, physical and mental health... during the pandemic key workers have not always had the support for their children, so have needed to reduce their hours to home school and care."

As the impact of the Covid pandemic starts to take effect, more workers are experiencing first hand their



Susan Roxburgh



own financial, health and family hardships. Requests to SWBT have included help for hospital bills, bankruptcy fees, veterinary costs, clothes for children, rent arrears and car repairs.

Coming from a professional background where you are expected to provide help and support to others, doesn't make asking for assistance any easier. This is something of which Bridget Robb is acutely aware.

"In society there has been too much of an attitude that you are either a hero who is helping others – or you are inadequate in some way and on benefits. These are deeply ingrained attitudes which are hard to shift."

Step back fifty years and in recognition of the need to provide help for those in the wider caring professions, the

EVOLVENT TRUST AT 50

Social Workers' Benevolent Trust – the only charity of its kind in the UK – was born. It grew out of the establishment of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) from a disparate range of organisations including The Institute of Medical Social Workers, The Society of Mental Welfare Officers, and The Association of Child Care Officers.

Most of these older professional groups had their own bespoke funds to support their members during hard times and in 1971, a year after the BASW was created, it was decided that a new charitable body was needed to continue this important work.

Records from the time provided by Joan Baraclough, who was the Trust's Secretary during the first formative five years, show that the aim was to provide help for "people who are or have been professional social workers, whether they are members of the Association (BASW) or not, and their wives, widows, children or other dependents who may be in need of assistance."

While the language is of its time, right from the start there was an expectation that BASW members would contribute either individually or through branch donations. Legacies were and still are a source of funding and the first annual report for 1971-2 shows that a donation of £1,000 was left from the estate of a Miss McDonald, formerly principal medical social worker at Hillingdon Hospital. That year there were just five members helped with grants amounting to £330. At the time this help could include medical care unavailable under the NHS, donations to care homes or institutions, and grants for training and educational purposes.

According to Bridget (pictured above): "In earlier years most applicants were retired social workers, mainly women, who were struggling on a small pension. Now most of our applicants are people of working age."

What hasn't changed is that it is mainly women applying for help. Susan notes that "more than ever it is the women who are in need of our support."

Half a century on, and the trust is still going strong with a board of ten trustees, all either current or former social workers. They meet six times a year and give out grants of between £450-£500, sometimes going a bit higher to cover bankruptcy costs of £680. Out of the 196 applications in 2019/20, 177 payments were made. This might seem like a drop in the ocean compared to the thousands of pounds worth of debts faced by some applicants but Susan Roxburgh says the help given isn't purely monetary: "We also give advice and information about where applicants can get other support or advice about debt. Recently we found links for a social worker needing to be repatriated for health reasons."

Take 'Barbara' – again not her real name – a Birmingham-based social worker. Both she and her husband are disabled. Although still working, Barbara has had to reduce her hours to cope with her disability. Meanwhile her husband is on sick leave from his work after a recent operation and the couple have large debts with their rent and utilities. In the cases of Amy and Barbara the Trust



'In earlier years most applicants were retired social workers... now most of our applicants are of working age' – Bridget Robb

awarded just under £500 each, noting that it is "unable to meet the worrying amount of debt accrued".

While individual grants are relatively small, it can often give people the impetus to seek extra help knowing that they are not alone or forgotten.

With a total annual budget of approximately £80,000, the Trust still benefits from occasional legacies and donations. Other sources of income include a grant from the Civil Service Insurance Society Charity Fund, donations from the Social Workers Union, along with BASW annual funds of £3 per member which makes up fifty percent of the Trust's income.

So what does the future hold now that the Trust has reached this milestone birthday? Backroom plans are in place to upgrade the IT systems, improving communications and two new trustees are being sought to diversify the board. There are currently no members from the BAME or disabled communities or from Scotland and Northern Ireland, something they want to address.

Bridget says: "For many years the Trust did not advertise itself widely as it was concerned that the demand for money would outstrip resources. While money is still tight, our view now is that transparency is better for social workers."

Has the pandemic made people more aware of the hardships social workers can experience while trying to give help to others? On the face of it, social work looks like the forgotten frontline service.

Bridget Robb believes that social work's commitment to caring for people in the community rather than institutions, too often backfires on the profession.

"Although people like community care, the focus of political and media attention is on hospitals, schools, care homes and on voluntary work in the community."

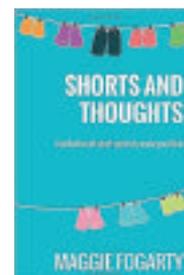
Plans to mark the SWBT 50th year include the trustees doing a '50-4-50' challenge which involves completing 50 fundraising tasks like running; walking; cycling and writing.

On that note Susan Roxburgh says: "Come and join us in doing something for our 50th year of supporting social workers. You could bake 50 cakes, write 50 poems as well as any physical activity."

Meanwhile, Bridget Robb urges employers and unions to give more help to those workers who are struggling.

"You could do a lot more to support your staff to get help early for themselves and their family. Stop the 'them and us' attitude – we all need help at key points in our lives."

See the SWBT website for further details of the Trust and its work visit www.swbt.org. Maggie Fogarty is a former *Social Work Today* reporter and author. Half of all sales of her latest book of short stories *Shorts and Thoughts* will go to SWBT. Book details on Amazon.



COVID CRISIS IN INDIA

Blossom Francis, who works as a parenting assessor in North West London, talks about her concerns for her parents and family in India

Our extended family lives in Gujarat. I am the only one here from my family and my husband is the only one from his.

It is really difficult. I am phoning not just my mum and dad but all family members daily. I worry about my parents being on their own indoors as elderly people. Socialising is a big thing in India but now they can't meet anybody. My mum has some health issues so we try and shield her.

My worry is for their mental health which is why I am trying to maintain as much contact as possible. My mum especially feels stuck indoors. My dad will go out and do things he needs to do but it is her mental health I worry about. She has broken down a couple of times talking to me because there is nobody to talk to.

Whenever you talk to people you hear all these sad stories. I am hearing about deaths in extended family, every other day there is somebody in hospital, somebody no longer here with us.

I haven't seen my parents for a few years now and last year I really wanted to visit them. I booked my tickets but we had to cancel. You don't want to think the worst but it comes to your mind that before it is too late I want to go and see them.

One of my friends lost both her parents last

'There's a real in India. It has there but it is

year in India within six months. Her mum died and then her dad. She went for her father which gave her some closure but when her mum died she couldn't.

For me, that is the worst nightmare. I don't want to think about it but it is always in the back of my mind. You hear things on social media and you don't know whether it is true or not.

It is impacting on my own mental health, especially in our line of work when you are working with people and families. You automatically compare the kind of facilities and resources we have here.

My mum was telling me there are organisations and charities providing food to people who need to quarantine at home or don't have the opportunity to go out or do online shopping.

But a lot of the population still live in rural areas. Knowing how to use the internet is a big thing and having the facilities is another thing. Nothing is consistent, there are still patches where there isn't any internet.

There is a real social divide in India – it has always been there but it is more visible now. Every facility you can think of is there, it is just whether you have the capacity to get that resource.

There are government hospitals where you don't have to pay but they are not going to have the best facilities.

The social inequality needs to be addressed, I have worked with people in slums and rural areas in India and it has been like that for years.

The virus is most dangerous in the urban areas because of the population and overcrowding. My parents have been vaccinated but my in-laws don't want to. They are hearing things about people who are vaccinated becoming very ill and having to go to hospital.

The government in India have used things to their benefit. When there was the election you would see thousands and thousands of people gathered in a small place for the rallies and that was allowed.

All the religious festivals were allowed to be celebrated. They thought nothing would happen if they were allowed to continue.

I think about the last lockdown when the situation was worse in the UK and India had managed it well. There were strict curfew rules and nothing was open. So it is not that it can't be done. This pandemic is not going to discriminate, it affects everyone.

Blossom Francis



COVID CRISIS IN INDIA

social divide
always been
more visible'

Dr Rohit Misra, a social work academic at the University of Lucknow, on the role of social work in responding to the Covid crisis in India

Due to lack of proper health services, hospitals, doctors, medicines, and black marketing the situation regarding Covid-19 across the country is getting worse. Limited resources and lack of public awareness have also played a major role in worsening the situation.

On 10 May, more than 22.6 million Indians were recorded suffering from the virus and 246,000 people had died from it. The scale of the crisis is heightened by the fact that one in five of India's 1.3 billion population live below the poverty line. Those in the middle and lower income strata of society live in densely populated areas where following the Covid guidelines is extremely hard.

Many Indians face an uncertain life. No one is sure what tomorrow holds, giving them a reason to live in the present. India has not faced a crisis like this since partition in 1947.

As a result, it has not had the experience or resources needed to cope. There are various voluntary associations working in the field which are doing their best. They are providing food, shelter, water, medicines, oxygen cylinders free of cost. They do what they can, but are not professional social work organisations.

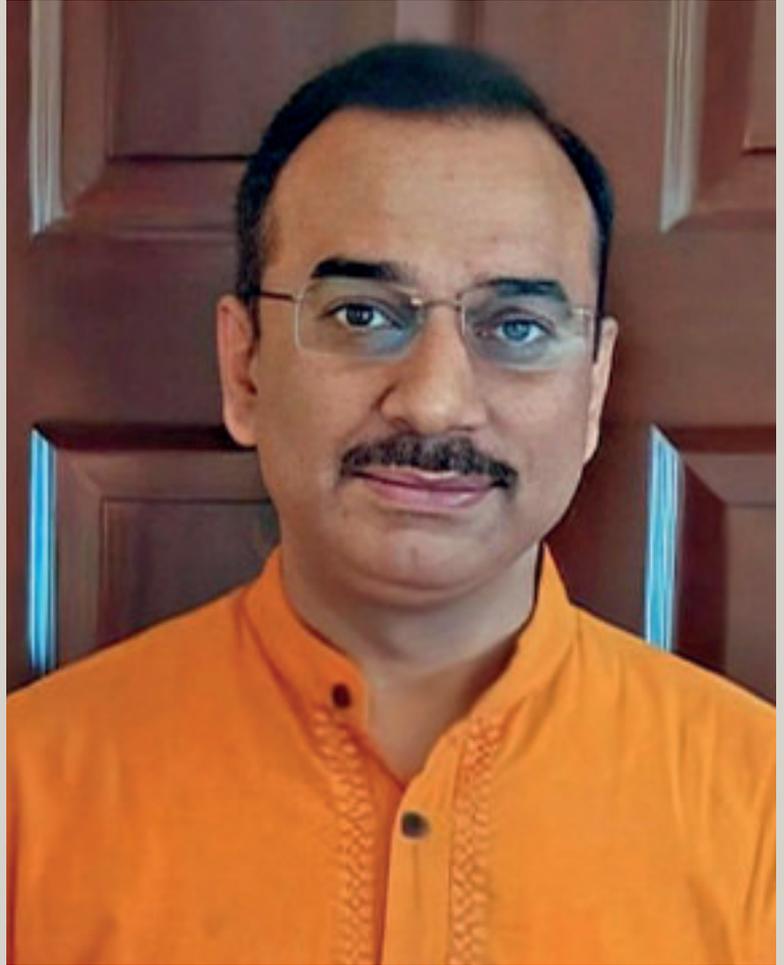
Social work's skill and approach to mitigate against the catastrophe in India is very much needed.

Social work has a long history in this country. In ancient times it was done in the form of charity – there are references to this in the 'Rigveda'.

Modern social work was introduced in the beginning of 19th during imperial rule by Christian missionaries. The first school of social work was started in 1936.

Today there are a number of professional social work associations and institutes delivering services. They have been very active during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Whereas voluntary organisations lack the ability to understand and solve people's psycho-social problems, this is the core of social work practice. People are going through mental disorders including frustration, depression and so much more.



Dr Rohit Misra

In some areas of the country, professional social workers have started private help lines to provide counselling services. In other areas they are co-ordinating voluntary organisations to support the population and provide them with basic rations such as water, cooked food, and clothes.

Some of them provide tiffin services in the afternoon and evening to poor people who are in quarantine.

India needs more social work professionals, especially medical social workers to help during this pandemic as a large number of medical and paramedical professionals have become infected with Covid.

If some extra training is provided to social workers to administer the Covid vaccination and provide other medical information then they could reduce to a large degree the pressure put on the system.

This has already been seen in the recent past with the extraordinary effort in eradicating polio in India through community mobilisation. There is now a need for community mobilisation on this scale again and we know professional social workers can do this.

Social work's main hurdle is a lack of awareness of the profession in India. It is often seen just as a "welfare service subject". There is also still confusion between 'social activists' and 'social workers'.

India does not have any system of licensing professional social workers, unlike the medical and legal professions.

But given a chance, social workers could prove how valuable they are during this time of crisis.

'India needs more social work professionals, especially medical social workers to help during this pandemic'

IN FOCUS

'I don't want to dilute legislation but I do want to get back to the principles that informed the 1989 Children's Act'



The Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England has been billed as a 'once-in-a-generation' opportunity to 'radically reform the system'. Its chair **Josh MacAlister** answers some key questions put to him by PSW

Why do we need a review of children's social care in England?

Social workers will know better than most that it is getting harder to meet children's needs within the current system. The human and societal consequences of failing some of society's most vulnerable children and young people are huge. Looking afresh at the whole system will allow us to spell this out, suggest ambitious reforms, and galvanise public support for change.

Why do you think this review will be different from those before?

Most previous reviews looked at an individual part of the system – this review will look at the whole of children's social care. This includes both the system of support, safeguarding, protection and care, and our approach as a society to ensuring children can grow up in loving, safe and stable families.

What are some of the key messages you are hearing so far?

The importance of relationships is a major theme. Too often different parts of the system, when trying to achieve safety, end up severing relationships – whether this is taking children into care who could have remained with their family or extended family, or children in care being constantly moved around and too often far from home.

Care experienced adults have told us about the importance of building trusting and stable lifelong relationships which they can call upon throughout the ups and downs of life.

And we have heard consistently about the need to act earlier for children and families rather than letting problems escalate.

Some people believe 15 months is too short for a whole system review. What's your response?

It's an ambitious programme but we are building on years of existing evidence, not to mention the recommendations of previous reviews. The problems that have been building in children's social care are not new, I believe the sooner we can set out recommendations for change, the sooner we can improve things.

We have achieved a huge amount already, most importantly recruiting and drawing on the knowledge of our Experts by Experience Board who have started a programme of engagement with those with lived experience of care. Our workforce engagement plan will allow those who work in the system to have their voice heard.

We will publish a Case for Change in the coming weeks, which will define the main problems, allowing us to use the rest of the review period to focus on solutions.

What's the biggest challenge in carrying out a review of this nature?

The scope of the review is both its biggest asset and its biggest challenge. Looking at the whole picture means there are a lot of different stakeholders with a view and a lot of evidence to consider. But it's a challenge worth overcoming as children and young people don't think of the system in silos, they think about it in terms of their experience of childhood and through the relationships that matter most.

What lessons if any have you taken from the review of children's social care in Scotland?

Fiona and her team who led the Scottish review have been generous in sharing what they learned from their experiences. I continue to meet regularly with them to gain insights and guidance as we make progress in England. A key

IN FOCUS

lesson from their work is to make sure that the perspective and voice of care experienced children, young people and adults sits at the centre of the review. This means we aim for our recommendations to resonate with what the care experienced community believe will improve their lives. We have also met and gained insight from the team that led the New Zealand review which preceded Fiona's work. We can see there is a lot to learn from both approaches.

Your appointment to lead the review resulted in questions about your independence because of your previous role heading Frontline, which is reliant on government support and funding. Do you understand those concerns and what's your response?

I can assure you the review is fully independent of the government with freedom to make ambitious recommendations. I wouldn't have signed up for the role if my hands were tied in any way.

I have permanently stepped down from my role at Frontline to take up the role of independent reviewer.

What do you say to those who fear a dilution of children's legislation and the impact of this on children's rights – and the role of social workers in promoting their wellbeing?

I don't want to dilute legislation but I do want us to get back to the principals that informed the 1989 Children's Act, to reflect on the impact of 30 years of tinkering and to ask if we have moved away from ensuring children have the safety, security and love that they need and that we can best do this by working in partnership with parents.

What's your view on private sector involvement in children's social care?

One of my first acts as independent reviewer was to ask the Competitions and Markets Authority to look at the so-called 'market' in children's social care. It's clear to me that the current system isn't working and we need a re-think given the urgent problems, the complexity of the issues and the fragility of the current system. I will have more to say on this when I have considered the CMA's market study.

Some believe the Buurtzorg model of self-managed community teams – a framework you drew from in a co-authored Blueprint for Children's Social Care – will form the basis of recommendations. What do you say to that?

The Buurtzorg project was asking how social workers could apply the principles of self-management - high freedom and responsibility for professionals - to the world of children's services. It proposed one way of doing this assuming that none of the structures, rules or funding around children's social care would change. But it is just one way of doing this and the review is asking much bigger questions. I'm open minded to the review making different recommendations.

How will anti-racist, anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice be embedded into the review and what scrutiny is there to measure its impact?

The review is giving focussed attention to looking at

'The facts speak for themselves – poverty and deprivation and the stress this puts on life undoubtedly contributes to families needing support'

racial disparities across children's social care and it is an important theme. One example of this is that black children and children from some other ethnic groups are significantly more likely to be in care.

Another is that we know very little about racial disparities in how 'early help' services engage with different groups. These are important issues and the review will look at them.

Some of the issues facing those who use children's social care are rooted in structural inequalities such as poverty. Can the review do anything to address this?

The facts speak for themselves – poverty and deprivation and the stress this puts on life undoubtedly contributes to families needing support and there are a disproportionate number of children from poorer families being taken into care.

An important part of the review will be highlighting the role deprivation plays and recommending ways to support and strengthen families and improve services so that they address rather than deepen inequalities.

Social work is key to delivering children's social care but so far its views have barely been heard by the review. How will you rectify that?

We deliberately prioritised finding ways to hear from those with lived experience of children's social care. It takes time to create safe and trusted spaces for people to share their views and if we want to produce recommendations which are developed and built from the perspective of children and families then we needed to start the conversation there.

But I know I also have a lot to learn from those of you who have first-hand experience of working with children and families. We have already spoken to lots of social workers and social work leaders and have shared a workforce engagement plan for all professionals working in children's social care.

BASW England's 80-20 campaign identifies part of the problem is social workers not having enough time to do relational work. Do you agree and if so how can this be addressed?

I do agree and I look forward to working with BASW to highlight the importance of reducing bureaucracy, increasing freedom and responsibility for frontline professionals and getting social workers out where they can make the biggest difference - working directly with children and families.

Describe the kind of children's social care system you would like to see ten years from now

It would improve life for so many care experienced people if we could ensure that every young person in care turning 18 entered adulthood with a large, loving and lifelong group of adults by their side. This is too often missing and I want the review to come up with recommendations that can help make this happen.

'I look forward to working with BASW to highlight the importance of reducing bureaucracy'

RUTH ALLEN

BASW's chief executive on the future of social work after the pandemic



'We must be better supported and recognised post-Covid'

June is a month of transition – one we hope will be marked by freedoms restored in our personal lives and with the possibility of holidays and social visits.

How social workers do their work will also be changing over coming months. At BASW we have decisions to make about how we develop our services and professional voice in this 'recovery' phase from Covid and in the longer term.

Whatever the Covid 'recovery' looks like, nothing will be quite the same as before. We have experienced a unique period of traumas and losses and seen the best and worst of our society. We have innovated at great pace, broken down silos and realised what new technology does and does not bring to human relationships.

The pandemic pulled back the veil on – and worsened – deep inequality. The devastating impact on health and economic wellbeing is something that as social workers we will be at the centre of addressing for years to come.

Social workers must be better supported and recognised than before this international crisis struck. There have been traumas and costs in sustaining 'resilience' through these very difficult times and employers need to embed better working and wellbeing practices for the long term.

Although social worker experiences throughout the pandemic have been very varied, we know from ten months of BASW surveys that many employers seemed to wake up to their duty of care for their precious workforce when the possibility of services falling over became more real. This must continue. Across public services, we need governments, employers, academics and policymakers to promote and support social worker welfare.

Visions for social work's future

The importance of social worker wellbeing is embedded in BASW's vision and discussion documents published earlier this year – a *Vision for Children's Social Work* and *A Vision for Social Work with Adults* (see BASW's website).

These documents lay out some of the key, high level principles that BASW believes should be at the heart of social work services post-pandemic.

BASW is committed to the idea that we are one profession so while we have separate documents for work with children and adults to reflect operational

realities, many of the high level principles cut across both documents. They include helping people live the lives they want; co-producing and co-creating solutions with people we work with; providing early help; not having to 'game' access to resources because of underfunding and impenetrable systems; having human rights at the heart of our approaches and taking account of everyone's rights in complex situations; having time to build purposeful relationships with people; personalising help; working within communities; integrating structural and interpersonal approaches such as embedding anti-poverty and anti-discriminatory practices within relational practice; advocating for effective, humane social and income protection and being active in 'macro-social work' where we make a difference through policy, politics, advocacy and campaigning.

This is not a new list – but we must grasp this opportunity to lay out what we know great social work is and should be in the emerging new context and be committed to making progress towards it in our advocacy and influencing.

A clear vision and sound principles are essential if we are to ensure the far-reaching social care and health policy agendas being pursued in each country of the UK take us in better – not regressive – directions for citizens, communities and for the profession.

A particular challenge is to ensure social work is well positioned to maintain its integrity and distinctive rights-based practices in the moves towards more organisational integration with health. This is certainly a dominant theme in England and Scotland, already shapes services in Northern Ireland and is influencing the integrated workforce review in Wales. Another is to promote a social justice, anti-poverty, community-based approach to children and families' services – particularly pertinent in England where the Independent Review of Children's Social Care is happening.

Over June we will be asking members for their further thoughts on the children's and adults' vision documents, hoping to develop a members' discussion about the principles for the whole UK. This will inform our policy work at country and UK level – and inform how BASW adapts and focuses its energies for the challenges ahead.

At times medical model is best in mental health

Our focus on the social model mustn't let us ignore the benefits of medical intervention says social worker **Jeremy Walker** who speaks from close family experience



I have an interest to declare. I am a member of a small, informal community of parents whose adult children have long experience of extreme mental health challenges and enforced detention.

These challenges have at times left them isolated, consumed by ideas and experiences which have put them (mainly) but others, too, at risk and completely unable to enjoy their human rights in the broadest sense. I would add that detention has actually restored their capacity to benefit from those rights, not reduced it. All of us come from families where mental ill-health has run down through many generations, so we feel we know the territory.

I can safely say that what we all want is the “medical model” applied rigorously. We can mostly sort out the other things and we are not too interested in the precise technical name which is given to their suffering – because it doesn't actually make that much difference. What we want primarily is for their doctors to arrive at the treatment – by which I really mean the medication – which, in reducing their distress and resulting alienation, allows them to form or re-establish rewarding relationships and follow the path of their hearts, as it is sometimes called.

I know from long experience from both sides of the table that this may take years of what looks like a chaotic form of trial and error but is actually a struggle with the emerging fact that different drugs work differently with different people. This field is what is now called pharmacogenetics. And when they have found that good-enough treatment, we would all say in unison “stick with it, please”.

Many, many things have gone wrong for them as they've moved from ward to ward, and from team to team. None of these problems has been to do with shortcomings in the medical model itself, I would say. Staff turnover is now, for complicated reasons, far too high so a lack of consistency has meant that no professional has really got to know them as people – but also as patients.

By this, I mean that an incomplete or simply misguided understanding of their histories and needs has led to what was referred to by Louis Blom-Cooper in the inquiry into the death of Jasmine Beckford in 1984 as the “rule of optimism”. Often, they were wrongly felt to be well enough

‘Sometimes the medical model must be applied wholeheartedly supported by other professionals’

to manage outside hospital, I guess because it is human nature to believe that your best therapeutic efforts are working. Some were moved through placements because that is what the mythical “pathway” demanded: computer says “go”. Another was, with good intentions, placed somewhere with a degree of independence and lack of oversight which almost proved fatal.

These are problems of structure, attitude and training which are compounded, in my personal and professional experience, by an institutionalised failure to respect and consult key relatives. Woven into this is a disastrous feature of health and social care over the past four decades or more, namely that careerism is rewarded at the expense of vocation. This means that the further staff move upwards and away from direct contact with service users, the greater the power, status and salary. Reversing or at least flattening this process, thereby retaining experience and expertise where it counts, is the single measure which would have the most benefit in mental health and child care.

So, the failings built into their structure and skewed thinking that are features of health and care services today are in conflict with my beliefs and values as a professional and relative, but the medical model isn't.

Social workers, like their colleagues in other organisations, are in a system where resources are finite. “Brokers in lesser evils” is a phrase that has stayed with me from the days long ago when I seemed to have time to read up on social work theory. Effective intervention is all about timing. Sometimes, the medical model must be applied, wholeheartedly supported by other professionals.

This may well mean a quick discharge to prevent a vulnerable older person contracting and dying from MRSA or Covid in hospital, as happened a few months ago to my next-door neighbour at the age of 101. Or, conversely, it could mean that discharge should be delayed, as in my son's case, until recovery is genuine and durable. At other times, a different focus and a different model with other imperatives will be called for. The real skill lies in knowing which to choose.

Jeremy Walker is a trade union official with the Social Workers Union

Need to address lack of faith in our profession



As part of a secular profession, social workers tends to shy away from talking about religion but for some service users spirituality is key to their wellbeing, says **Godfred Boahen**

Social work has deep roots in Christianity and faith organisations currently provide social welfare unencumbered by the bureaucracy and gatekeeping of statutory provision.

During the pandemic, these institutions have operated at the interface between public health and social care, cementing their status as important partners in public services provision.

However historically, the relationship between social work and religion has been characterised by tension and ambivalence. This needs to be addressed in a changed landscape in which faith organisations have demonstrated that they can be effective multi-agency partners.

One source of concern in social work about faith organisations is that religious doctrines may be incompatible with the profession's ethos of plurality.

Religious contexts can also present unique situational risks to people because their leaders, as representatives of 'God', can assume unreconstructed power, which can be misused. In the UK, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has been examining the reasons for institutional inaction to reported concerns about abuse by clergy in the Anglican and Catholic Churches.

It found that due to deference to clergy power, some survivors were disbelieved when they reported their experiences and, in some cases, there was orchestrated cover-up of the evidence within the churches.

Besides the individual actions of clergy, organised religion can result in sectarianism, whereby faith organisations become politically active and, in a quest to protect their identity, discriminate against others.

Due to these complex issues, social work ascribes to secularism. However, spirituality and religion are part of the lived experience of some social workers and people using services. Some social workers draw on their religious values for self-motivation while for some people who use services, it's central to them achieving their preferred outcomes from social work.

In *Spiritual Diversity in Social Work Practice* published in 1999, Edward Canda and Leola Dyrud Furman explained that spirituality is "the person's search for a sense of

'In the post-Covid landscape we should explore partnerships that can harness the expertise of faith organisations'

meaning and morally fulfilling relationships between oneself, other people, the encompassing universe, and the ontological ground of existence". This definition touches on questions about our purposes in life, our values and non-material aspects of our wellbeing.

Faith organisations are central to the discussions about spirituality because it is often reflected in their teachings and rituals. Religion and spirituality pose existential questions which some service users may require social workers to explore with them as part of their interventions. For example, in palliative care services explorations of these profound questions may be as important to the wellbeing as other interventions.

For other service users, their religious beliefs or spirituality shape their conceptualisation of their needs and should be the bedrock of social workers' interventions. The work of survivor movements in mental health and abuse of all forms shows that spiritual support and religious faith can be important components of the trauma-informed work required for recovery.

For other people, religious communities are indispensable aspects of their social support systems to socialise, prevent loneliness or give purpose and meaning to their lives. These interventions which may be cheaper than the traditional 'packages of care', remain unexplored by social work.

In the post-Covid landscape, social work should explore the partnership models that can harness the unique expertise of faith-organisations in service provision while ensuring equality of access. People who use services need assurance that social workers have the requisite skills to support their spiritual needs.

Furthermore, faith organisations have community-based assets which are vital to strength-based practice promoted by the government and local authorities. These realities require the profession to begin addressing the complex questions about the role of faith organisations in the post-pandemic era.

Dr Godfred Boahen is National Safeguarding Policy and Development Lead (Survivors Lead) for the Church of England. He writes in a personal capacity

REVIEWS

BOOKS

A reminder of the social factors influencing child mental health

Title: Improving the Psychological Wellbeing of Children and Young People

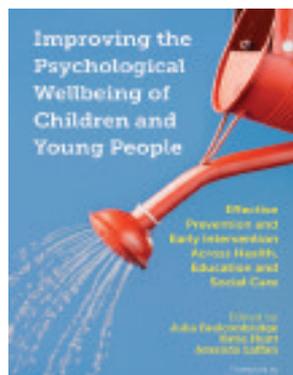
Editors: Julia Faulconbridge, Katie Hunt, Amanda Laffan

ISBN: 9781785922190

Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Price: £22.99

Website: www.jkp.com



One in ten school-age children are diagnosed with a mental health problem. The NHS struggles to support them. This edited collection of papers written by psychologists sets out to give an overview of what shapes a child's wellbeing, from perinatal care, adverse childhood experiences, the child's socio-economic background, through to their school and local community.

The volume's nine research-based papers suggest what professionals and society can do to raise psychologically healthy and resilient children.

Chapters cover risk and resilience in nurturing the psychological wellbeing of children; working perinatally with the infant and family; parental interventions; care for families in primary care and community child health, promoting psychological health in schools and hospitals; effective services for children; and improving the social context that

weighs heavily on childhood wellbeing.

Overall, the papers review the current evidence base on psychological wellbeing of children, including public policy and service barriers to good mental health. This is counter-balanced by examples of initiatives and professional interventions judged to be successful. The book aims to help future generations of children grow up with greater psychological wellbeing and resilience.

This isn't a handbook of dos and don'ts, but a treatise on developing social conditions that support families care well for their young. The book reminds us how poverty and social inequality, poor air quality, abysmal housing, impoverished diets and discrimination damage children's lives.

A robust, informative edited collection that will appeal to a wide audience.

Angie Ash

A guide to talking about differences, similarities and biases constructively

Title: Wish We Knew What To Say: Talking with children about race

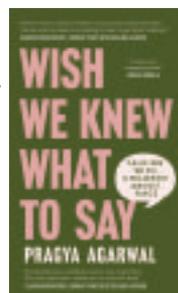
Author: Pragya Agarwal

Price: £9.99

Publisher: Dialogue Books

Website: www.littlebrown.co.uk

ISBN: 978-0-349-7005-6



Born in India Pragya Agrawal, a behavioural and data scientist, wanted to blend in with life in the UK. For more than two decades, she avoided and ignored her own racial heritage and roots. She avoided conversations about race and race politics with her eldest daughter who was born in India but was brought up in the UK. When she gave birth to twins, she realised that she could no longer keep silent about race and being different.

As parents, we want our children to grow and be confident of their identity. Their early years are the most important when they are curious about the world around them but also quick to form stereotypes and biases that can become so deeply ingrained. By dismissing race, we reinforce the notion that people are not born equal, and allow children to make their own judgement and inferences about racial equality. In this book you

will find scenarios, questions, strategies, resources and advice in an accessible manner on how to tackle tricky conversations around race and racism.

Agrawal brings together developmental science of how children grow, perceive race and form racial identity, combining it with personal stories and experiences to create a very helpful guide that every parent would refer to again and again. You will find tools and vocabulary to talk about curiosity in differences and similarities, unfairness, bias or prejudice in a constructive way.

As Agrawal says our children are "the people who are going to inherit this world, and we owe it to them to lay a strong foundation for the next phases of their lives". This is a book for every parent, carer, educator, child care professional, and all who wish they knew what to say when talking about race.

Jessica Cowan

TV/RADIO

The impact of an abusive childhood

Home Truths
BBC iPlayer

Ian Wright is best known for his football career and sports broadcast punditry. Until now we didn't know about his nine year old self, full of anger and feelings of worthlessness.

In his recent BBC1 documentary *Home Truths*, Ian talks movingly about a childhood marred by domestic abuse, recalling how his violent step dad made him stand facing the sitting room wall when a favourite TV programme *Match of the Day* was shown. Even today the theme tune takes him back to being that powerless child.

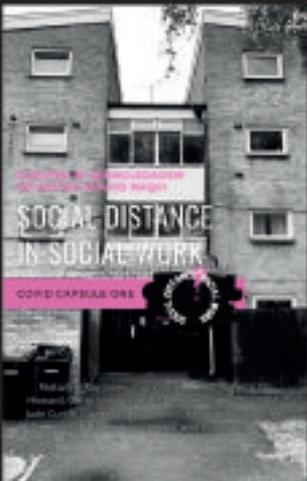
He remembers his mum being beaten and tellingly, her own fear and anger was directed at young Ian who was repeatedly told that she wished he had been 'terminated'.

Contributors include journalist and advocate, Charlie Webster, who also suffered childhood abuse and Professor Claudia Bernard, who describes how domestic violence was dealt with differently back in the 1970s when Ian was growing up. Ian speaks movingly about the school teacher who helped him to believe in himself and visits the Hampton Trust which offers help to people who are abusers or are in danger of becoming one.

A powerful talking point documentary on the painful legacy of domestic abuse.

Home Truths is now available on BBC iPlayer

Maggie Fogarty



SOCIAL DISTANCE IN SOCIAL WORK

BASW
The professional association for social work and social workers

Social Distance in Social Work

First book by *SingleDadSW*

'A collection of notes from the crisis'

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Co-edited by Shahid Naqvi (PSW editor)

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BASW 50 YEARS

The professional association for social work and social workers

BASW HERITAGE PROJECT 2020 JUNE UPDATE

1 THE END OF THE BASW HERITAGE YEAR 2021

We are closing the BASW Heritage Project this June with a number of events to celebrate the initiatives and activities from January 2020 to June 2021.

A big thank you to everyone that has been involved with the project from beginning and the support you have given.

We have some wonderful new plans for the future that we will be revealing in July reflecting the impact work from the project and promoting continued engagement.

- Look out for the countdown of the highlights from the project on the BASW website from June to September for the opportunity to watch all the events again www.basw.co.uk

2 Fifty years of Social Work by Jackie Wells

I qualified as a social worker in 1971. My professional qualification was 'The Home Office Letter of Recognition in Child Care'. Strange really when earlier that same year Children's Departments had been disbanded. Seebohm had happened and local authority teams were now generic. No longer would a family have more than one social worker going into their home. The generic social worker would manage all issues involving childcare, mental health, disability and old age.

- Read the full article: www.basw.co.uk
- Send your reflections to be published in our monthly newsletter heritage2020@basw.co.uk

3 June BASW Heritage Month

- SWU 10th Anniversary film** – John McGowan and Carys Phillips talk about the last 10 years and plans for the future.
- SWBT 50th Anniversary webinar** June 23rd 12-1pm
- BASW Heritage Steering Group webinar** June 29th 12-1pm
- Heritage Padlet** – post on the virtual heritage notice board and tell us your thoughts about the past year, what you are doing now and your hopes for the future.

4 The BASW Heritage Project 2020 eBook

Launching September 2021. We want to thank everyone that has taken part UK wide for all your wonderful submissions. We look forward to launching the BASW eBook very soon.

- Find out more about the eBook project at: www.basw.co.uk/call-essays-poems-and-visual-images-future-social-work

For more information or to get involved with any of the projects mentioned above please contact Gaby Zavoli heritage2020@basw.co.uk

WORD OF ADVICE

No jargon, no acronyms, and don't be wordy

Alasdair Kennedy's top tips
for writing court reports

1. En Garde

Court is adversarial so do not write anything in a report that you cannot back up with evidence or write passively. For example, "she intimidated", "I assumed", "apparently", "to some extent". Avoid the words 'clearly' and 'obviously'. Nothing is usually 'obvious' or 'clear' unless you make it so.

Also, do not generalise in your report, using words like 'stable', 'compliant', 'resistant'. Do not use acronyms or jargon. Judges might not know what they mean and let's face it, will never ask. Acronyms can detract from the details, and over time can change, so anyone looking at a file in 20 years will be puzzled.

2. Ask the experts

Do not try and be an expert in drug use or offending or another facet of care work outside your sphere of knowledge. If a client was acting erratically or unsteady on their feet, state that, just do not go into detail what you think was the cause.

Do not speculate. If a client looked intoxicated during an interview, why didn't you ask for help from drugs and alcohol teams to come and back you up?

3. Wordy wordsmith

Do not show off and use words you would not normally use. Remember, it is not just the lawyers and judges that read that report. In my younger days, I copied the report styles from other social workers. I remember

they always used "they, he, or she intimidated" at the time I never ever used that word in my professional life, and to be honest I did not really know what it meant.

To me it is better using strong verbs, action words to start sentences and avoid posh words like "contemporaneous" – you will just come across as pretentious.

4. The Magna Carta

Your reports should be succinct, say what you mean and mean what you say. Balance out your views, add in pros and cons.

Evidencing issues, patterns, and client engagement is key. What were the barriers to it, barriers added and outcomes from engagement? Your recommendations should be specific, smart, realistic, and linked to timescales.

Over time, you will work with the same clients with the same circumstances. What worked before, what did you learn from your past practice and what resources do you need?

Finally, avoid presenting evidence in email form. Move any email correspondence into a short narrative, no handwritten work please, use Arial 11-13 point size, or New Times Roman (Check out with admin).

A simple mistake I notice when file auditing – always sign and date your work.

Next month: tips for attending court

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

It's okay to not feel okay as we enter next phase

We are living in times of great upheaval, change and uncertainty.

Think about how you feel as a professional about your own anxieties surrounding coming out of lockdown and easing of Covid restrictions.

Then consider how you might feel if you were one of your service users who might also be contending with disabilities and additional ill health, insecure non-contracted work that is poorly paid, childcare or school-based issues, poor mental health and addiction.

These and other societal and socio-economic factors have been exacerbated by the pandemic where it has been harder for people living in poverty or close to the breadline to access health and social care services.

Unfortunately the government are planning to cut the £20 per week universal credit uplift in the autumn at the same time the furlough scheme ends. This, for some, is an additional source of worry.

In such times, you are allowed to feel however you feel - and you do not need to seek permission for your feelings, nor do your service users.

It's okay if you feel anxious or apprehensive about things opening up again...

If you think that things are opening up too soon...

If you don't trust the government to get it right and handle things properly again...

If you can't wait for things to get back to 'normal'...

If you feel anxious about seeing more people and being in crowds again...

If you have health anxiety about Covid or anything else...

If you can't wait to not have to wear a mask anymore...

If you want to continue wearing a mask when they are no longer compulsory...

If you've become comfortable working from home and doing things online and don't want to go back to do face-to-face things...

If, like me, you hate doing things at home and online and can't wait to get back to doing face-to-face things...

All feelings are valid. You are not 'wrong' or 'bad' for feeling this way. There should be no shame. This is radical self-acceptance as opposed to constant behavioural modification. Sit with your feelings, as you are entitled to experience them.

- 9.6.21 Revisiting Values for Practicing AMHPs/MHOs/ASWs Training**
Online MS Teams / CPD 6 hours / BASW members: £99 + VAT / Non-members £149 + VAT per session
This session considers the role and impact of values and ethics in approved mental health practice. Examining issues such as the relationship between ethical practice and the value-base of the practitioner, the use of power and how principles of autonomy, empowerment, and self-determination are balanced against risk, enforcement and protection.
www.basw.co.uk/events/revisiting-values-practicing-amhpsmhosasws-training
- 11.6.21 Stepping Stones: From Student to Social Worker Training**
Online MS Teams / CPD 3 hours / BASW members: £29 + VAT / Non-members £59 + VAT per session
The session will explore key aspects of the journey into social work following qualification. Hints and tips will be provided to support students and newly qualified social workers through their journey at that key transitional period.
www.basw.co.uk/events/stepping-stones-%E2%80%93-student-social-worker-training

BASW's Taught Skills Programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers



- 7.7.21 The right side of regulation: recording with care and critical reflection**
Online MS Teams / CPD 6 hours / BASW members: £20 + VAT / Non-members £99 + VAT per session
www.basw.co.uk/events/right-side-regulation-recording-care-and-critical-reflection-learning-nqsws-training
OUR ROLLING PROGRAMME FOR NQSWs AND STUDENTS CONTINUES BI-MONTHLY FROM SEPTEMBER 2021 – SEE WWW.BASW.CO.UK/EVENTS FOR DATES AND TO REGISTER

BASW's Taught Skills Programme for Practice Assessors



BASW's new taught skills programme for
Practice Assessors and Supervisors of early career social workers

- 16.6.21 Wellbeing in the workplace and professional leadership**
Online MS Teams / CPD 3 hours / BASW members: £10 + VAT / Non-members £49 + VAT per session
www.basw.co.uk/events/wellbeing-workplace-and-professional-leadership-training-practice-assessors-supervisors
OUR ROLLING PROGRAMME FOR PRACTICE ASSESSORS AND SUPERVISORS CONTINUES BI-MONTHLY FROM OCTOBER 2021



Professionals in Practice Series:

- 01.7.21** BASW Code of Ethics: Launch of Refreshed Version

Success in Social Work Series:

- 24.6.21** Past Reviews of Policy and Practice for Social Work with Children and Families – A Social Work History Network Event

BASW members: FREE / Non-members: £12 inc VAT

A SOCIAL WORKER'S **DIARY**

June, 2021

There has been so much going at work that I'm not quite sure where to start. So I'll look over my past week.

I started a new role which is looking at preventing breakdowns in placements and children going into care. I'm also still working on court work from my previous role. I still have my student and have been preparing my own practice educator portfolio work as well as my students.

I have worked late trying to ensure that everything is being done to meet deadlines. The most frustrating part of the week has been working hard and late hours and then being told by management that a court statement I wrote is going to be delayed due to management not having time to approve it.

Self-care is very much on my mind at the moment, in ensuring I am looking after myself and also that my team members are. It is tricky, when you feel you want to do everything as best as you can and worry about not meeting the deadlines set by management.

It has crossed my mind to leave permanent and go agency. Honestly, if it wasn't that the local authority will claim back university fees from me if I leave within two years of completing

the practice educator course then I would have probably handed my notice in. Agency is more money, meaning I could practise for six months and then take two months off and go travelling or focus on housework or hobbies, giving me more of a work-life balance which I lack at present. It also means that I would not feel as caught up in the politics and frustrations of the workplace where essentially I work for myself. Because I cannot afford to pay back the university fees I will be with this local authority for at least another two years.

I am not feeling particularly confident in myself at present, and have experienced a period of health issues which has left me feeling tired most of the time. It is possible that this is stress-related which frightens me, that my job has also started to impact my physical health. I have a tough month ahead as I take on this new role, finish my student's placement and portfolio, complete my own practice educator portfolio, finish court work for my cases from a previous role and complete work for the advanced practitioner course set by my employer.

Bring on the summer! The sunshine, the ability to meet friends easily and enjoy each other's company. There is nothing quite like enjoying good company to switch off and remember that life is not all about work...

STUDENT NOTES

Jenny Hudson is a student doing a Masters in social work



In my placement, one part of the team's work is something I thought I'd be fairly well equipped for. Return Home Interviews reminded me of my days in newspapers, when as a young journalist, I'd race out to a doorstep anywhere in the Midlands. Return Home Interviews have some of the same characteristics – you arrive often for the first time and quickly need to assess where you are, anticipate the response and get your communication absolutely right from the moment you knock on the door.

In this role and social work generally, you often arrive in a young person's life in a moment of crisis. A Return Home Interview seeks to capture the child's voice to understand what caused them to go missing. It can be a vital window on what is going on in their lives. Our team do more than 1,000 Return Home Interviews each year. We know that a third of the children who go missing are known to be at risk of exploitation and looking at the figures another way, two thirds of young people who are being exploited will have missing episodes at some stage. The profile of the young people we are doing Return Home Interviews with also reflects the changes in patterns of exploitation. The highest proportion of missing young people were female and aged 14 to 15 and now

they are male, aged 16 to 17, as criminal exploitation becomes a huge focus and growing area of work. Return Home Interviews are offered, in person, to every missing young person, so each day, practitioners cover huge distances to reach these youngsters.

Back in my newspaper days, I would usually head out to a visit with a name and address jotted on a piece of paper with a few details on what had happened. The big difference and learning curve for me is in using case history to inform the Return Home Interview. I've found them more challenging than I expected. In an early Return Home Interview, a young person told me: "It's all okay now" and didn't want to say any more; then I wasn't sure where to go next. I've learnt from my highly skilled colleagues who can meet a young person for the first time saying very little, but with their assessment skills can apply what they see and hear to the broader context known from case history. By reaching a young person just after a missing episode, the Return Home Interview provides a vital opportunity to draw in further support and refer for a broader based family assessment. This can make the difference between a young person being safe, drawing them away from risk of serious harm.

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

Talk to SWU: work place issues webinar

Wednesday 7 July 2021 – 6-7pm



A chance to talk with the Social Workers Union about workplace issues with a panel of Advice and Representation Officers and legal representation.

This is your chance to ask your questions (questions are sent within GoToWebinar anonymously and no identifiable information is kept on any questions asked during the session).

FREE WEBINAR / CPD 1 HOUR

basw.co.uk/events/talk-swu-workplace-issues-webinar-7-july-2021

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 professional association for
social work and social workers

FORMAL NOTICE OF 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

British Association of Social Workers 2021 Annual General Meeting 15th September 2021 from 3.30pm

This is the formal notice for the 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM is an opportunity for us to report back on our work and for members to be involved in decisions about priorities for the future. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

The meeting will take place by videoconference on Wednesday, 15th September commencing at 3.30pm.

Timetable for motions

If you want to put forward a motion (proposal for something that BASW should do), please do.

Your motion will need to be signed by one member who is the proposer, another member who is the seconder and at least 18 other full members of BASW (please give membership numbers); OR signed by the Chair or Vice Chair of a National Standing Committee, Policy Ethics and Human Rights Committee, International Committee, or a branch.

You will need to send in proposed motions **by 5pm on 14th June 2021** to governance@basw.co.uk

We will publish the motions **by 20th August 2021.**

Other members can then send in amendments and comments.

Guidance on submitting motions is available at www.basw.co.uk/about-basw/governance/basw-agm

If you need any help, please email governance@basw.co.uk.

ENGLAND VIEWS

Ten years after Winterbourne our values to affect change are needed



As we are fast approaching ten years since the horrific abuse at Winterbourne View was exposed, now is the time to reflect on our response as a profession to the human rights abuses of people with learning disabilities and/or autistic adults.

A cloud hangs over our profession when we consider where we are ten years on. Coinciding with the launch of BASW's Homes not Hospitals campaign key documents, last month's edition of this magazine focused on the voices of people and families who were brave enough yet again to share their stories and messages about what needs to happen to create meaningful and lasting change. These experiences and those shared by many more families over the years recounting the horror of what has happened to their loved ones. The trauma experienced when people are ignored or blamed, when they are not listened to and not understood and when a lack of awareness by professionals leads to children with additional needs failing, being taken out of school, placed away from their family and home. The failures within the current system that lead to the use of physical or chemical restraint, segregation, and seclusion

– punishment. Children, young people, and adults are effectively removed from familiarity at a time when that matters most. Where are we and our values in all of this?

As a profession we need to get much better at supporting families at the earliest possible stage, seeing early help and prevention as our business, no matter our job role.

People are in environments that prevent contact with the outside world – 'closed cultures'. We know that the set up within these modern-day institutions was punitive pre-pandemic. What has been happening during this last 14 months? Reports of blanket bans on face-to-face visits, families being turned away having travelled hundreds of miles to see their loved ones. Article 8 of the Human Rights Act anyone?

We have the power to effect change, using our values, skills, knowledge, and legal literacy to question, to challenge and create a system where people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people are valued and respected.

Let us pledge to take the action needed so that when the next ten-year marker approaches we are in a different place.

Liz Howard, professional officer

'As a profession we need to get better at supporting families at the earliest stage'

NORTHERN IRELAND VIEWS

Concern at poor consultation over transfer of commissioning power



BASW NI recently submitted written evidence to the NI Assembly Committee for Health in relation to the Health and Social Care Bill.

The bill, introduced by the Minister for Health on 8 March, is intended to close the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and transfer its functions to the Department of Health and the Health and Social Care Trusts.

Our evidence highlights BASW NI's concerns regarding the department's consultation process to inform the draft legislation. It also questions the extent to which closure of the HSCB will succeed in delivering the reduction in bureaucracy, increase in accountability and improvements in efficiency noted by the department as key drivers for the planned restructuring.

A document accompanying the draft legislation indicates the department is relying on the findings of a consultation carried out between December 2015 and February 2016 to justify the closure of the HSCB. However, the department's own analysis of the consultation responses acknowledges it provided insufficient detail concerning the options it intended to pursue. Furthermore, 62 per cent of responses

to the consultation question concerning restructuring proposals disagreed or strongly disagreed with the plans. Only 19 per cent agreed or strongly agreed.

Although BASW NI responded to the consultation we have received no additional information regarding the department's plans. The introduction of draft legislation to radically alter health and social care commissioning and governance structures based on this consultation indicates a lack of regard for the views of the stakeholders involved.

Significantly, engagement with members indicates a lack of transparency on the part of the department concerning the transfer of functions both up – from the HSCB to the department – and down, from the HSCB to the trusts.

We have also been called to give oral evidence to the health committee. By the time this article is published you will be able to review the session via the NI Assembly website.

It is vital that legislation and policy that affects the commissioning and delivery of social work services is undertaken openly and with appropriate scrutiny.

Andy McClenaghan, public affairs and comms lead

'We have received no additional information regarding the department's plans'

SCOTLAND VIEWS

Making your voice heard at 'pivotal time for policy' and our profession



Ahead of the Scottish Parliamentary Elections on 6 May – which saw a fourth consecutive victory for the SNP – SASW met with MSPs from across the political parties to discuss our Manifesto for Social Work.

Our manifesto comprises seven 'Asks' across three priority areas: human rights, poverty and listening to and benefiting from the voices and experiences of social workers. So, now that the election results are in, what do they mean for our asks?

In terms of human rights, all of Scotland's political parties – apart from the Scottish Conservatives – pledged to enshrine greater human rights protections in domestic law in their manifestos. Before the elections, the Scottish government announced plans to introduce a Human Rights Bill to the Scottish Parliament, subject to the results. The new bill will incorporate four UN treaties into Scots law, including legislation that enhances rights for women, disabled people, and ethnic minorities. SASW wholeheartedly supports this. It is likely the bill will gain cross-party support once it is introduced, but its less clear

what the Scottish Conservatives position will be.

Similarly, around poverty, all of Scotland's political parties – apart from the Scottish Conservatives – support the introduction of a citizen's basic income. While Scotland does not currently have legislative competence to implement this, a feasibility study has been carried out in four local authority areas, with the SNP committing to making 'step-by-step changes' to the existing social security system to make it a reality nationwide. We look forward to finding out more about what this will look like, and to feeding into and generating discussions on it as and when appropriate.

Lastly, in relation to listening to the voices and experiences of social workers, MSPs from all parties have committed to sponsoring our Cross-Party Group on Social Work. As Scotland moves into this pivotal time for policy, with the National Care Service and The Promise likely to significantly impact on the future of the profession, we look forward to bringing stakeholders from across social work and MSPs together round one table.

Emily Galloway, communications and policy officer

'Now the election results are in, what do they mean for our asks?'

SOCIAL WORKERS' UNION VIEWS

An investigation against you must be conducted fairly and objectively



It is accepted that being the subject of investigation brings with it vulnerability and anxiety. The approach taken cannot be underestimated in determining a reliable outcome.

An employer must ensure that they consider the employee who is subject to investigation, how they are supported and that they are given access to natural justice through a fair hearing. The investigating officer should be clear what the terms of reference are, make a clear plan, follow the procedures of the organisation and ACAS and deliver an unbiased report reflecting the facts.

Investigating officers are not there to apportion blame or decide an outcome, they have a responsibility to present their findings that are evidence based, make recommendations, and conduct all aspects fairly.

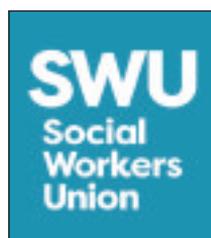
As registered social workers we are compelled to work to the codes of conduct set by our regulator, this not only applies to us as individuals but colleagues and managers we work with. In the process of investigating an employee it is important that this is a fair investigation, being open, honest, and acting

with integrity – both the interviewee and interviewer. Policy and procedures should be supplied to you – if you have not been given them ask for them and insist they are made available. It is helpful to write your own chronology of the event in question as soon as possible so that as much is recalled as accurately as possible. The chronology can be used by you and your representative to keep the focus and not have the interview go off in other directions.

Representation can and does have a positive influence with your employer, it can challenge the findings of the investigating officer, support you to have your voice heard and present alternative explanations that the investigating officer had failed to consider.

We all need support at such times and good representation brings to the table objectivity, professional experience and understanding, challenge to bias as well as an attention on due process being followed. We all deserve things to be carried out with professionalism, and within social work values.

Christina Ramage, A&R representation advisor



WALES VIEWS

We'll be pushing manifesto pledges as 'new and bold' ideas shape future



Welsh Labour will govern for the next five years and lead in 'building back better' from the pandemic.

They won 30 of the available 60 seats falling one seat short of an out-right majority, although there will be no coalition. This was the highest voter turnout in a Senedd election and 16 and 17-year-olds were able to vote for the first time.

We are sorry that Leanne Wood is no longer a presence in political life in Wales after losing her seat in the Rhondda. Leanne Wood is a committed social justice activist, and we had the pleasure of her company at our anti-austerity fringe event, the 2018 BASW Conference and AGM which was held in Cardiff. We wish her well and all success in whatever she chooses to do next.

There has been a cabinet reshuffle and the key ministerial posts for social work are: Eluned Morgan as MS for health and social services; Jane Hutt in a new portfolio as MS for social justice; Lynne Neagle is entering government for the first time and is deputy minister for mental health and wellbeing and Jeremy Miles is

appointed MS for education – significant because of the interface with the Race Equality Action Plan and the new school's curriculum.

There is another new portfolio with Julie James as MS for climate change.

In relation to social justice, UBILab Wales (campaign for a universal basic income) ran a successful manifesto campaign with nearly half of the newly elected Senedd members signing their pledge to deliver a pilot in Wales. I was honoured to speak on a panel with the Future Generations Commissioner and director of the Women's Equality Network Wales, where we discussed the merits of UBI in lifting women and children out of poverty, giving them agency and dignity. In his opening speech to the newly elected Senedd, the First Minister spoke of 'New and bold ideas, from clean air to a basic income'. We will watch this space!

We look forward to meeting the new ministers over the coming weeks and continuing our campaigning around our key manifesto asks.

Allison Hulmes, national director for Wales

'We look forward to meeting the new ministers'

CYMRU VIEWS

Byddwn yn gwthio ymlaen addewidion y maniffestos wrth i syniadau 'newydd a beiddgar' siapio ein

Bydd Llafur Cymru yn rheoli am y pum mlynedd nesaf gan ein harwain o'r pandemig trwy 'ailadeiladu'n well.'

O'r 60 sedd oedd ar gael, enillwyd 30 ganddynt, gan fod un sedd yn brin o gael mwyafrif clir; er hyn, ni fydd yna glymblaid. Dyma'r nifer uchaf i bleidleisio mewn etholiad i'r Senedd gyda'r rhai oedd 16 ag 17 mlwydd oed yn cael pleidleisio am y tro cyntaf.

Mae'n ddrwg gennym na fydd Leanne Wood bellach yn rhan o fywyd gwleidyddol Cymru ar ôl iddi gollu ei sedd yn y Rhondda. Mae Leanne Wood yn actifydd cyfiawnder cymdeithasol ymroddedig a chawsom y pleser o'i chwmm yn ein digwyddiad ymylol gwrth llymder, Cynhadledd BASW yn 2018 a'r Cyfarfod Blynyddol a gynhaliwyd yng Nghaerdydd. Rydym yn dymuno'r gorau iddi a phob llwyddiant ym mha bynnag maes bydd yn ei ddewis yn y dyfodol. Cafwyd ad-drefnu o'r Cabinet a'r swyddi gweinidogaethol allweddol dros waith cymdeithasol yw: Eluned Morgan MS - iechyd a gwasanaethau cymdeithasol; Jane Hutt gyda phortffolio newydd - cyfiawnder cymdeithasol; Lynne Neagle yn ymuno a llywodraeth am y tro cyntaf ac yn ddirprwy gweinidog dros iechyd meddwl

a llesiant a Jeremy Miles wedi'i benodi yn MS dros addysg-mae hyn yn arwyddocaol oherwydd y rhyngwynebu gyda Chynllun Gwaith Cydraddoldeb Hiliol a'r cwricwlwm newydd i ysgolion.

Mae portffolio newydd arall gyda Julie James fel MS dros newid hinsawdd. Mewn perthynas â chyfiawnder cymdeithasol, bu ymgyrch maniffesto Llafur Cymru am Incwm Sylfaenol Cyffredinol (ISC) yn llwyddiannus, gyda bron i hanner yr aelodau newydd a etholwyd i'r Senedd wedi arwyddo addewid i gyflwyno peilot i Gymru. Cefais y fraint o siarad ar banel gyda Chomisiynydd Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol a Chyfarwyddwr Rhwydwaith Cydraddoldeb Merched Cymru, lle cafwyd trafodaeth ar rinweddau ISC o godi merched a phlant allan o dlodi, gan roi iddynt gymorth ag urddas. Yn ei araith agoriadol i'r Senedd newydd etholedig, cyfeiriodd y Prif Weinidog am 'Syniadau newydd a beiddgar, o awyr iach i gyflogau sylfaenol'. Byddwn yn gwyllo'r gofod hwn!

Rydym yn edrych ymlaen at gyfarfod y gweinidogion newydd yn ystod yr wythnosau nesaf ac i barhau a'n hymgyrchu am ein gofynion allweddol o'r maniffestos.

Allison Hulmes, cyfarwyddwraig genedlaethol Cymru

'Edrychwn ymlaen at gyfarfod y gweinidogion newydd'

BASW England

The professional association for
social work and social workers

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

4, 18 & 25 JUNE / 6, 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

DIARY DATES

4, 18 & 25 June, 6, 13, 20 & 27 Aug
BASW England Workshops for Social Workers Seeking Employment or New Employment Opportunities
See advert on this page

8 June
BASW England in support of National Carers week: Hearing the voice and experience of family carers

9-11 June
BASW England Conferences: A Manifesto for Change
9-6-21: Annual Members' Meeting
10-6-21: Student & NQSW Conference
11-6-21: BASW England Conference
See advert page 4

9 June
Revisiting Values for Practicing AMHPs/MHOs/ASW's Training
See advert page 36

10 June
BASW Cymru Community of Practice for Social Workers in Child and Family Services

11 June
Stepping Stones: From Student to Social Worker Training
See advert page 36

11 June
SASW: Interview Skills Training

16 June
BASW NI CPD Seminar Domestic Abuse

16 June
Wellbeing in the workplace and professional leadership
See advert page 36

16 June
BASW England Theory to Practice: Children and Families

16 June
BASW England Social Work with Adults Group

23, 30 June, 11, 25 Aug, 9, 23 Sept
BASW England Children & Families Social Work Workshops: Strengthen your relationship-based practice
See advert on this page

23 June
SWBT 50th Anniversary webinar

24 June
Past Reviews of Policy and Practice for Social Work with Children and Families – A Social Work History Network Event
See advert page 36

29 June
SASW Community of Practice: Children & Families

29 June
BASW Heritage Steering Group webinar

1 July
BASW Code of Ethics: Launch of Refreshed Version
See advert page 36

7 July
Talk to SWU: Work place issues webinar
See advert page 38

7 July
The right side of regulation: recording with care and critical reflection
See advert page 36

8 July
BASW Cymru Community of Practice for Social Workers in Adult Services

29 July
SASW: Young Carer Awareness Training for Social Workers

4 August
BASW England Criminal Justice Group meeting

18 August
BASW England Social Work with Adults Group

1 September
BASW England Mental Health Group meeting

15 September
BASW UK Annual General Meeting 2021
See Formal Notice page 38

Upcoming BASW Branch events

16 June **North Yorkshire**
Network Meeting

16 June **Black Country**
Wellbeing and building resilience

22 June **Coventry & Warwickshire**
Social work and anti-racism

28 June **Birmingham & Solihull**
Virtual Branch Meeting

26 July **Birmingham & Solihull**
Virtual Branch Meeting

Information is correct at time of going to press.

Visit www.basw.co.uk/events for full details

BASW England

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Campaign
Promoting relationship
based practice

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

23, 30 JUNE / 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

Specialist care for adults with complex needs



Exemplar Health Care is a leading provider of specialist nursing care for adults living with a range of complex and high acuity needs.

We have 32 care homes and OneCare services across England that provide person-centred care and rehabilitation which focuses on:

- maximising independence
- building everyday living skills
- empowering people to live as fulfilled lives as possible.

David's story

When David moved to Greenside Court, he was on a PEG feed, was unable to stand and he spent a lot of time sleeping in bed.

The team has worked with David to support his rehabilitation, and over time, his health and wellbeing has improved.

David has had his PEG feed removed and eats a normal diet with minimal assistance.

An individualised exercise programme has enabled David to stand freely on the Sarah Steady, and our Life Skills Team has worked with him to rebuild his communication, in particular his writing.





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- ✓ Free sample collection at our UK Walk-in Centres

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 info@alphabiolabs.com

 www.alphabiolabs.co.uk



THE QUEEN'S AWARDS
FOR ENTERPRISE:
INNOVATION
2016



GIVING BACK

We are proud to support the important work of these charities and **will donate £5 for every instruction received throughout 2021:**

