

PROFESSIONAL Social Work

May 2020



BASW Heritage Project 2020 May Update

1 THE BASW HERITAGE PROJECT 2020 VIRTUAL MAY EVENT 'TALKING TOGETHER'

May 19th 'Talking Together' Virtual Event. This will be an opportunity for BASW members to hear reflections and experiences through current extraordinary times, marking and celebrating the work of BASW members past and present. This will explore how our heritage supports us to deal with the current challenges. This is a webinar including speakers and a Q&A session.

For further information and event registration go to www.basw.co.uk/events

2 BASW 50th Anniversary Birthday Virtual celebration

June BASW virtual 50th anniversary celebration event for BASW members, staff and supporters UK wide.

Celebrate from home! Make your own bunting and dress up in your best 70's, 80's, 90's or 00's clothes and connect with each other. We cannot be together face to face however we are all together and supporting each other virtually. This event will include music, talks, competitions, poetry, workshops and much more. Further details coming soon.

3 PODCASTS, VLOGS AND VIDEO'S PROJECT

The BASW Heritage Project 2020 have teamed up with BASW members and partnership organisations UK wide including the National Trust (Back to Back Houses Birmingham) to offer talks and podcasts this year looking at Social Work and BASW past, present and future. We will be asking members to send their own podcasts, vlogs and videos to us focused on specific themes. The call out will be available on the BASW website soon.

4 VIRTUAL HERITAGE TRAIL

This is a UK wide interactive initiative for all BASW members. Members will be given the opportunity to produce a virtual heritage trail. This will involve researching your chosen topic and presenting this with photographs, visual representations, text or video. The trail can be tangible and include a town or city however this can also be a person or archive or include a culture or community.

You might want to draw upon a family tree approach to reflect the social workers you know past and present or allow members the ability to journey through the social work history of your town. The possibilities are endless, and we want to hear from you. If you would like to be involved please contact heritage2020@basw.co.uk

5 PSW 50th year anniversary edition this summer

6 BJSW anniversary virtual edition will be coming out this June. This will be free to access and will include 50 of the best, most seminal articles across all five decades, with an overarching editorial.

7 CALL OUT FOR MEMBER ESSAYS, POEMS AND ARTWORK

We will publish all submissions online that meet the call our criteria, terms and conditions. Everyone participating can therefore share their ideas and views with others. You can also send us your reflections and thoughts on social work through Covid-19. This will be a defining time for our profession and society, present and future. This can be in a video, podcast, blog, vlog, essay, poem, photograph or visual representation.

Full information about how to apply, eligibility criteria, terms and conditions can be found on the BASW website: www.basw.co.uk/call-essays-poems-and-visual-images-future-social-work

8 The BASW Heritage Project Steering Group

The BASW Heritage Project Steering group met for the first time since lockdown on April 16th. We have a wonderful group with some exciting plans for summer activities and projects.

If you want to get involved with the heritage reference group, wish to send any suggestions through for the project or just want to have a chat about something that interests you about the project please get in touch with Gaby Zavoli heritage2020@basw.co.uk

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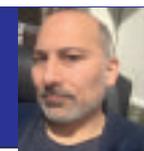
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From the Editor
SHAHID NAQVI



Putting your own concerns aside to step into chaos

Unsettled, anxious, angry, distracted, confused. They are just some of the emotions I confess to having experienced in recent weeks. And it's okay to admit it. All of our lives have changed and we don't know when or if things will return to normal. We are denied seeing family and friends and are surrounded by a sense of peril. When we step outside, we are forced to unnaturally distance ourselves from our fellow humans.

Concentrating at work can be hard in the face of this – and then you think about those who have lost their lives, their jobs, have been furloughed or whose safety and wellbeing is being further compromised.

And into this chaos and confusion steps the social worker, while at the same time coping with all of the above in their own lives.

This edition is dedicated to your professionalism in adapting to the 'new normal'. We have tried to capture your experiences as you go through a historic time in social work and we want to continue to platform this through our 'Social work voices in COVID-19' spotlight (see PSW online and email your contributions to editor@basw.co.uk).

But amid the seriousness, we must not lose our humour. Our front cover by BASW member Douglas Racionzer is hopefully a reminder of that...

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

BASW
Wellesley House, 37 Waterloo Street,
Birmingham B2 5PP
Tel: 0121 622 3911 www.basw.co.uk

Editor
Shahid Naqvi
Email: shahid.naqvi@basw.co.uk

Assistant Editor
Andy McNicoll
Email: andy.mcnicoll@basw.co.uk

Production assistant
Susan Hatton
Email: s.hatton@basw.co.uk

Editorial Advisory Board
Daniel Keeler and Marianne Palin
(co-chairs), Laura Davis, Yvonne Boyle,
Lindsay Giddings, Sumayya Hanson, Bill
Stone, Nicola Sylvester, Tim Parkinson

Advertising
David Nelmes, Winterburn Media Ltd
Tel: 01309 690063
Email: david@winterburnmedia.co.uk

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BASW

The professional association for social work and social workers

SEEKING MEMBERS WITH THE SKILLS, ENTHUSIASM AND COMMITMENT TO TAKE BASW FORWARD

BASW Council, the governing body of the Association, is currently seeking nominations for the following roles:

- **BASW Chair**
- **Vice Chair**
- **Chair of Policy, Ethics & Human Rights Committee**
- **Elected Directors x 2**

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

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

The closing date for receipt of nominations for all of the above vacancies is 5pm on 30th June 2020.

Candidates should submit their completed Nomination form, together with an election statement of no more than 300 words and a passport size head and shoulders colour photograph to Ruth Allen by email to governance@basw.co.uk.

An early discussion on any of these roles can be arranged with the BASW Chief Executive by emailing governance@basw.co.uk.

Please ensure when applying for these vacancies that you take an early look at the website to check the criteria for nominations, election statements and photographs. All Council members must be eligible to be Directors of BASW, a not for profit company.

Full details of all vacancies, including role descriptions and criteria, are available at www.basw.co.uk/vacancies.

CHAIR OF BASW

The Chair of BASW is elected to lead the Association and to chair Council, the governing board of Directors of BASW. If you can demonstrate effective leadership, chairing skills, the ability to engage with and represent members, a wide understanding of the profession, the ability to represent the association in diverse forums – and have the dedication needed to make a difference to social work and people using social work services – this could be a role for you.

The term of office is two years from the September 2020 AGM. The Chair may stand for a consecutive second term of two more years. The current Chair may stand for a second term of two years.

The Chair must be available to work on Association business an average of two days per week. Exact time requirements will vary. Occasional blocks of more days will be required e.g. for international work. Remuneration (or compensation to employers) will be paid to reflect the responsibility and time commitment of the role. This is currently £24,000 per year plus expenses (may be subject to review).

Criteria for candidates applying for nomination as BASW Chair

Candidates for election as Chair must be nominated by five members other than the candidate themselves) or by a branch committee or a National Standing Committee. Candidates must have been Members for a minimum of 2 years continuously immediately prior to nomination. They must meet the criteria set out in the role description which is available on the website.

VICE CHAIR

The Vice Chair of BASW will support the Chair in leading the governing body of the Association. They will be a Director and Honorary Officer of the Association. The successful candidate will need to demonstrate effective leadership and chairing skills and commitment to ensure that the Association meets its ambitions, constitutional and legal objectives. The term of office is for two years from the September 2020 AGM and they may stand for a consecutive second term of two more years. The Vice Chair must be available to work on Association business for up to one day per week for which an honorarium of £12,000 is available.

Criteria for Vice Chair nomination

Candidates must be nominated by five full voting members (other than the

candidate themselves) or by a branch committee or a National Standing Committee and candidates must have been Members for a minimum of 2 years continuously immediately prior to nomination. They must meet the criteria set out in the role description which is available on the website.

CHAIR OF POLICY ETHICS & HUMAN RIGHTS (PEHR) COMMITTEE

The Chair of the PEHR Committee is an Elected Director and sits on the governing body of the Association as well as chairing the PEHR Committee. They will be responsible for leading on UK policy work, and for reporting to Council on the work of the Committee. They may be required to represent the Association at external meetings to promote the policy work of the Association and in the media. The term of office is for two years from the September 2020 AGM and they may stand for a consecutive second term of two more years.

Criteria for Chair of PEHR Committee nomination

Candidates must be nominated by two full voting members (other than the candidate themselves) or by a branch committee or a National Standing Committee and candidates must have been Members for a minimum of 1 year continuously immediately prior to nomination. Chair of PEHR is not remunerated but receives expenses. They must meet the criteria set out in the role description which is available on the website.

ELECTED DIRECTORS x 2

Elected Directors do not have a fixed committee role or portfolio but play a key part in setting the direction of the Association through being part of Council and other responsibilities and portfolios of activities relevant to their interests and expertise. Elected Directors are not remunerated but receive expenses. Time commitment includes attendance at up to four face to face Council meetings per year and approximately four additional days on BASW business. The term of office is for two years from the September 2020 AGM and they may stand for a consecutive second term of two more years.

Criteria for candidates applying for nomination as Elected Directors

Candidates must be nominated by two full voting members (other than the candidate themselves) or by a branch committee or a National Standing Committee and candidates must have been full voting members for at least 1 year prior to nomination. They must meet the criteria set out in the role description which is available on the website.

The closing date for receipt of nominations for all of the above vacancies is 5pm on 30th June 2020.

Full details of the vacancies are available at www.basw.co.uk/vacancies

NEWS



Left: Karina Salek donated hand-made masks. Right: Roundwood Gin donated hand sanitiser

You helped my family, so now I will help you by making masks

When Karina Salek watched a news report about how some social workers were being left without protective equipment during the coronavirus pandemic she desperately wanted to help.

It led to her sewing handmade protective masks, with space for a filter, and sending them to frontline teams while they wait for much-needed stocks of clinical PPE to arrive.

Karina, a biochemist at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, told *PSW* she feels social workers don't get the credit they deserve and she'll always appreciate the support they gave her family.

She said: "I'm from Poland and when I lived there I looked after my grandma before she died. Without a social worker's help back then there's no way I could have looked after her. I know what a difficult job it is. I'm so thankful for them.

"I'm vulnerable myself so I can't go out but at least I can help in this small way. I just wanted to do something to thank social workers for doing what they're doing because nobody really talks about it much in the media."

Karina has sent the masks to the Scottish Association of Social Work. Its national director Alistair Brown said employers needed to provide social workers with professional clinical PPE when they are carrying out face-to-face work.

"It is unacceptable where social workers doing that work have been left without PPE. We've made that case repeatedly and we're glad that the latest feedback we're getting is that things are improving and more social workers are getting the equipment they need.

"But Karina's gesture has been so kind and

a reminder of the support out there for our profession. While we're clear that clinical, purpose-made PPE will be needed in face-to-face work by social workers, her masks could help social workers and loved ones keep well outside of work or while doing other duties. It can all make a difference in preventing the spread and risk. Her support and thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated."

Karina said her university backed her and colleagues' efforts to see how they can help vulnerable people and key workers during the crisis.

It's just one example of people and businesses offering support for frontline key workers. Several distilleries have made hand sanitisers to deliver to teams.

In Cambridgeshire, Roundwood Gin donated ten litres of sanitiser to the county's social workers as well as supplies to healthcare workers and prison staff.

"Once the government relaxed the licensing requirements for production a couple of weeks ago, we felt we had to take the opportunity and do something to help the heroic key workers in our community," Emily Robertson, the distillery's founder told *The Hunts Post*.

"They are risking their lives for us on a daily basis. We hope that Roundwood can help, even if in a small way, to support the essential services in continuing with the incredible work they're doing."

Several food businesses are offering free meals and coffees for key workers.

Other offers include discounted car hire and free bike repair. Publisher Jessica Kingsley has made self-care resources free to access.

We place our lives at risk for 'greater good'

A social worker who was left fearing for her life after catching COVID-19 doing her job called for greater recognition of the contribution being made by the profession.

Rosie Meleady said social workers had put themselves at great risk continuing to support people within the community without adequate protection. She added while doctors and nurses were the focus of public support, social workers deserved equal praise.

"I hope this situation has highlighted the value we bring to society, how we are here in the job to help people and are not the stereotypes the media and others sometimes portray."

Rosie, who is now recovering, said she was just one of thousands in the profession who had put their lives at risk "for the greater good".

See [PSW online](#) for more

First thousand offer backup for pandemic

More than a thousand former and trainee social workers have joined an emergency workforce councils can turn to for help during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In England, 900 people have signed up through Social Work England to return to practice if local authorities need them.

In Scotland, where final year students can also register, 80 people have been temporarily registered and a further 163 applications are being processed. Wales's temporary register has seen 57 workers sign up so far.

NEWS

Don't treat social care as an 'afterthought' behind NHS

Social work and social care leaders urged ministers to provide workers with adequate personal protective equipment amid growing fears over the impact of COVID-19 on the care sector and those it supports.

BASW wrote to Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) Director General for Global and Public Health calling for them to address "significant gaps" in equipment for social workers.

The association said: "While some social work can be done via phone and teleconferencing, seeing people in their homes is central to the social work task. Social workers can see up to a dozen or more service users a day and, at the moment, there is a lack of even basic hand sanitiser, leaving social workers concerned for service users' safety and their own safety.

"Measures are being applied unevenly across different local authorities and workplaces and there is a need for clearer guidance that can be applied uniformly."

In a separate intervention, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services wrote to the DHSC saying the delivery of PPE to care homes had been "shambolic" and ministers had treated

social care as an "afterthought" behind the NHS.

The warnings came amid concerns the number of deaths linked to coronavirus in care homes might be far higher than those recorded in official figures.

As PSW went to press official data suggest 1,043 people had died in care homes after contracting the virus, compared to 18,000 in hospitals.

But care group The National Care Forum estimated more than 4,000 people have already died due to the virus in care homes and nursing homes. Care England, which represents providers, estimated 7,500 deaths.

Dr Hans Kluge, the World Health Organisation's director for Europe, said across the continent "up to half of those who have died from COVID-19 were resident in long-term care facilities".

He said: "This pandemic has shone a spotlight on the overlooked and undervalued corners of our society. Across the European Region, long-term care has often been notoriously neglected."

The Westminster government announced a new action plan for adult social care during the COVID-19 outbreak. It includes a pledge to introduce a "dedicated supply chain" for PPE for social care and a commitment to "ramp up testing".

Tributes paid to 'amazing' social worker

The social work community paid tribute to a social worker who died after contracting the COVID-19 virus.

Birmingham Children's Trust announced that Muhammad Islam, a social worker who supported care leavers, had passed away "after a battle with COVID-19 over the past few weeks".

Andy Couldrick, the trust's chief executive, said: "Muhammad was a well-respected, well-liked and highly-valued member of our care leavers' team who supported many young people in Birmingham.

"He was passionate about providing the best care for young people and he will be sorely missed by his colleagues and the young people he supported, and our thoughts are with his family and friends."

BASW chief executive Ruth Allen said: "Social workers form a tight knit community and this tragic news has hugely affected us. We send our heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Muhammad."

A JustGiving page raising funds for children's charities chosen by Muhammad's family has been set up in his memory.

An apology

An advert on the back cover of the February 2020 edition of *Professional Social Work* magazine featured an image of a food dish incorrectly described as "puree petite fish and chips". The image was in fact a red meat and potato-based dish. We apologise for the error.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'As a frontline social worker I am seeing families I work with twice as much and with many more and different risks. It's easy for the media to point out what we aren't doing over the many things we are doing to support families to stay safe.' **Natalie Bennett, social worker for Devon County Council**

NEWS

Show of thanks for SW

This picture was shared on social media by social worker Michelle. It was made by her daughters to show support for the profession's efforts during COVID-19. "It's not often we get a thanks," she tweeted.



A wellbeing taskforce is needed as virus takes mental health toll

Action must be taken to mitigate the negative impact on people's mental health caused by COVID-19 professionals warned.

The effect of social distancing, lockdown, the loss of loved ones to the virus, public health alerts and the over-consumption of anxiety-inducing media reports are potentially causing long-term damage.

BASW chief executive Ruth Allen was among a number of professionals signing a letter in *The Times* calling for a "wellbeing taskforce" to be established to develop strategies that will "mitigate the threat to psychological, social and spiritual health posed by coronavirus".

Margaret Holloway, emeritus professor of Social Work at the University of Hull and one of those signing the letter, said the "secondary impacts of social distancing and lockdown are becoming daily more apparent" with the risk increased for vulnerable service users.

She added: "People suffering with mental health problems such as anxiety and depression or prone to paranoia and catastrophising; those frail older people whose daily visit to the shops provides a rare opportunity for human contact; those with dementia or learning disability who struggle to cope with, let alone understand, why life is so changed; those who have no home in which to self-isolate or those whose home is not a safe place – these are all people for whom COVID-19 represents a massive threat to their health and wellbeing beyond the physical effects of the virus if caught."

A taskforce would aim to share expertise already available within communities, voluntary groups and

among professionals about what helps in tackling the effects of isolation and bereavement.

A stakeholder survey by charity MQ and the UK Academy of Medical Sciences highlighted concerns over declining mental health, access to services and the impact of the pandemic on support to people. The potential for increased family tension, including domestic violence was also underlined.

Academics warned there is an "urgent need" for funding to look into how to reduce the mental health consequences for vulnerable groups under pandemic conditions. It warned the consequences could be long-lasting for some people.

Writing a position paper in *Lancet Psychiatry*, the researchers said: "It is already evident the direct and indirect psychological and social effects of coronavirus is pervasive and could affect mental health now and in the future.

"The pandemic is occurring against a backdrop of increased prevalence of mental health issues in the UK in recent years in some groups."

The researchers added the virus could have "additional adverse effects on brain function and mental health in patients with COVID-19".

They also called for research to inform guidelines for the media around pandemic reporting to minimise exposure to misinformation and reduce "amplification of anxiety".

Mental health charities have reported an increase demand for support. Mind said people are being discharged from hospital without support and referrals to child and adolescent mental health services and psychological therapies had fallen.

Essay contest for SWU could win you £500

How do we build stronger relationships between social workers and people using services?

That's the question asked by the Social Workers Union's social work student's essay writing competition this year.

Essays must be between 750 – 1,000 words and the four winners will receive £500 each plus see their work published in a BASW e-book celebrating the association's 50th birthday.

Entries should be typed, include the entrant's name, the question title and references. Email to joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk by 5 June.

Worker draws cartoon a day to raise spirits

A BASW member has launched a daily cartoon in a bid to raise spirits among social workers during the pandemic.

Douglas Racionzer who works as an independent doing mainly court work, said he hoped his "doodlings" would provide some light relief amidst the seriousness of the situation.

"There is this constant sense of anxiety and I just thought I could send a little flicker of humour that may help the day along and put a smile on people's faces."

Douglas, whose work features on the front cover of this month's *PSW*, added: "It is dire and there is really bad stuff we are going through. There will be economic as well as social problems. But a little bit of humour can go a long way."

Visit douglasracionzer.blogspot.com

ENGLAND NEWS



Education secretary Gavin Williamson is urged to amend guidance on children's statutory duties

Concern guidance tries to relax child safeguards 'unlawfully'

BASW and SWU joined a coalition of children's sector groups in sounding alarm that new government guidance for councils during the COVID-19 outbreak risked "unlawfully" removing safeguards for children.

They were among 50 signatories in a letter to education secretary Gavin Williamson calling on him to "urgently amend" the guidance to make it clear that councils have to meet their statutory Children Act duties during the crisis.

The guidance says ministers know councils "will want to continue to meet their statutory duties as far as they can, but there will be times in the current circumstances when this is not possible".

The coalition say this "sweeping statement" wrongly gives the impression that a series of major duties under the Children Act 1989 have been relaxed by the emergency Coronavirus Act 2020.

The emergency legislation does hand ministers powers to suspend certain duties for local authority care and support. Most concern duties to assess and provide adult social care under the Care Act 2014 though duties concerning transitions between children's and adults services are also included.

The coalition said the DfE guidance should be amended to detail exactly the duties affected.

"Otherwise local authorities, parents, young people and others may mistakenly believe there have been significant changes to the Children Act 1989, which is not the case," they said.

The group said they were particularly concerned by a section of the guidance that attempted to relax local authority duties to care leavers. They called for Williamson to remove this part from the document.

Children's minister Vicky Ford was asked about the guidance at a hearing of the Commons Education Committee.

She said that during this "unprecedented time" there would be "focus on giving flexibility to lower risk areas, so that local authorities can focus on core safeguarding areas".

The Coronavirus Act provisions for adult social care have also been causing concern. As *PSW* went to press there were reports that six councils had already applied the so-called 'easements' to their Care Act duties. Campaigners fear these could see more vulnerable people going without support.

See page 30 for more on the adult care changes

Back social workers on budgets

Employers should give social workers the freedom to decide how to spend money to best support families, a study found.

The What Works Centre for Children's Social Care said evidence from three pilots showed social workers "thrived" when given devolved budgets. The workers also spent less than expected and managed budgets carefully, the evaluation found.

The centre said the findings should be "tested at scale" and pilots needed to be developed further, but local authorities should in the meantime "seek to enable workers to exercise this freedom, whether or not they implement devolved budgets per se".

Hillingdon, Darlington and Wigan councils took part in pilots to test the idea that social workers are best placed to know the help families need to keep children safe at home.

The evaluation found they used the budgets in a variety of creative ways. These included providing material help such as clothing, funding for nursery care and driving lessons. Other examples included buying a caravan so that grandparents of Gypsy Roma Traveller background could act as Special Guardians, settling rent arrears and using funds to make home renovations.

Children's commissioner comment on social workers sparks anger

Social workers hit out at England's Children's Commissioner for saying they should be "knocking on doors" to get vulnerable children to attend school during the pandemic.

Anne Longfield made the comments in response to government figures showing only five per cent of more than 500,000 vulnerable children were attending schools, which remain open to them.

BASW said the "oversimplified soundbite" was "unhelpful" and carried a connotation that social workers were failing to keep adequate contact with vulnerable children and families during the virus outbreak.

The association said: "We know that social workers are working tirelessly every day out in communities, on the doorsteps and in schools to safeguard vulnerable children in these unprecedented times."

SCOTLAND NEWS



Fears over pandemic's impact on domestic abuse survivors

A new practice guide to help social workers respond to domestic abuse has been launched amid fears the coronavirus restrictions could increase the risks to survivors and their children.

The SASW guide focuses on domestic abuse where child welfare concerns are involved and includes advice on supporting adult survivors and children. It also includes a dedicated section on working with perpetrators.

SASW professional officer Sarah McMillan said the guide aims to help child welfare services move away from a 'failure to protect' approach that lays responsibility for child safety solely with mothers, leaving survivors feeling blamed as a result.

She said: "We need to challenge that narrative and instead really partner with survivors and look at their actions from a strengths-based perspective."

There has been rising concern over the potential impact of COVID-19 on domestic abuse. The charity Refuge reported an increase in calls to its UK-wide helpline in a five week period after Prime Minister Boris Johnson first announced the lockdown measures.

Charity Children 1st's chief executive Mary Glasgow told the *Press and Journal* her services were worried about the impact on families.

"There is lots of concern about domestic abuse and the impact that has on women and children, coercive control, parents who have been separated and behaviours around fathers, mainly men, trying to gain more control over the children, putting pressure on women and children that way."

The Scottish government announced a £1.5 million funding boost for Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland to help organisations maintain services during the outbreak and make sure victims had ways of reporting crimes during the crisis.

McMillan said the COVID-19 restrictions were "not an excuse" for domestic abuse, but the situation did have the potential to increase the pressures on families and the triggers that can add to the risks.

She said: "There are clear worries that women who are in an abusive relationship will be locked at home with the perpetrator. There are also concerns children can't go to schools, clubs, and the things that were an important relief for them but also a way of checking on their wellbeing. Fewer people are going into houses to see what is going on and no-one is coming out of houses to see how they are."

"Social workers and others are still trying really hard to monitor risks. They're having to be creative in the ways they engage, using technology where possible to keep in touch. Some domestic abuse groups are offering online support, some refuge places are still available. We need to remember the legislation around domestic abuse remains the same. Police Scotland have been clear they will still be responding to calls."

Alongside the guide SASW is publishing a list of COVID-19 specific resources on domestic abuse to help practitioners. These include signposting to materials produced by the Safe and Together Institute – one of the organisations profiled in the guide.

To download the guide visit the SASW website

Parents need support for online contact

Councils need to provide parents of children in care with the right equipment and support to maintain contact as best as possible during the COVID-19 outbreak, advocates said.

Support group Parents Advocacy and Rights said many local authorities had decided to end contact sessions, citing the coronavirus restrictions, and too little was being done to mitigate the harm.

"Orders made by Children's Hearings for contact have been breached without any consultation," the group said. "Parents have been told that they can only have contact over Facetime or WhatsApp. Many parents do not have smartphones, or wifi or do not have any credit left. They are not being provided with equipment or with credit to make contact possible."

Call for your poems about social work

Social workers and people with experience of services are being invited to submit poems for a new anthology being collated by the Scottish Poetry Library.

The 'poems about social work' project aims to profile works "that inspire, support reflection, enhance empathy and soothe".

It is being run in partnership with Edinburgh University and Edinburgh Napier University. To submit a poem for consideration email project coordinator Samuel Tongue at Samuel.Tongue@spl.org.uk. The deadline for entries is 30 September. The best will be published in a book and online.

NEW – Professional Practice Series

The *Professional Practice Series* explores a range of practice issues across the social work community.

7 May 2020 (12.30-1.30pm)

Working with autistic adults during COVID

14 May 2020 (12.30-1.30pm)

Using best evidence in social work with adults with learning disability

21 May 2020 (12.30-1.30pm)

Social Work and Coronavirus – Staying Connected in Crisis

An opportunity to hear from a range of speakers and panellists, highlighting the challenges, what's worked and what should change in the future.

CPD
1
HOUR

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

For more detail and to book on to the webinars please visit
www.basw.co.uk/events

Once you have successfully registered, we will contact you with joining instructions.

4 June 2020 (12.30-1.30pm)

Social Work and Domestic Abuse

This webinar will explore how social workers can identify and respond effectively to women and children affected by domestic abuse.

Success in Social Work Series

The *Success in Social Work Series* focuses on recent evidence from current research and how the findings can be applied to practice.

28 May 2020 (5.30-6.30pm)

The Invisible Victims

- Understanding how boys experience childhood domestic violence/abuse and gang-involvement
- Black girls experiencing child sexual abuse

Enhancing your career
through learning

Reflective Practice Masterclass with Siobhan Maclean

2 June 2020 | Birmingham

BASW members: £59 + VAT | Non-members: £99 + VAT

This session will be useful to everyone at any stage of their social work career. Supervisors will be able to explore how they might provide more reflexive supervision, practitioners will consider how they might further develop their skills in analysis, students will be able to explore how they might develop their reflective writing skills.

■ www.basw.co.uk/events/reflective-practice-masterclass-siobhan-maclean

CPD
5.5
HOURS

Learning from Practice

14 July 2020 | BASW Birmingham Office

BASW members: £59 + VAT | Non-members: £99 + VAT

A course developed to support people who are involved in promoting other people's learning, whether through student supervision, mentoring staff on in-service qualifications or through line management. It explores principles of good practice and pitfalls to avoid. The course is based on the experience of Dr Neil Thomson who has decades of helping people learn and supporting others in doing so.

■ www.basw.co.uk/events/learning-practice-training

CPD
6
HOURS

Personalisation Training

20 July 2020 | BASW Birmingham Office

BASW members: £59 + VAT | Non-members: £99 + VAT

This training is co-produced and co-delivered by Integritas Support Ltd, who aspire to promote the dignity, self-determination, legal and human rights of individuals, and We Can Do It Training CIC, a group of trainers with learning disabilities who work in partnership with other trainers to make sure their voice is at the heart of staff learning.

An interactive session covering person centred tools to support service user empowerment, understanding how attitudes and values interact with this.

■ www.basw.co.uk/events/personalisation-training

CPD
3.5
HOURS

Quality Supervision for Quality Practice

28 & 29 September 2020 | BASW Cardiff Office

BASW members: £99 + VAT | Non-members: £149 + VAT

Special offer price A two day course delivered by Dr Neil Thomson, an independent writer, educator and adviser with qualifications in social work, management, training & development and mediation & alternative dispute resolution. This course will help delegates understand the importance of supervision in social work and social care and help participants explore how to maximise the benefits of the supervision process.

■ www.basw.co.uk/events/quality-supervision-quality-practice-training

CPD
11
HOURS

Siobhan Maclean's top tips for the journey into management

16 November 2020 | BASW Birmingham Office

BASW members: £99 + VAT | Non-members: £149 + VAT

A CPD day for social workers who are new to management or those who are looking to make the move into management. A session uniquely designed by Siobhan Maclean, an experienced social worker, practice educator and consultant who has written widely around social work theory and written reflection.

■ www.basw.co.uk/events/siobhan-maclean's-top-tips-journey-management

CPD
5.5
HOURS

WALES NEWS



Wales' industrial past has put its ageing population at greater risk of COVID-19

Give us the guidance to do our job under the new regulations

BASW Cymru has called on the Welsh government to provide guidance on how social workers are to practice under law changes introduced during the pandemic.

The Coronavirus Act has reduced statutory responsibilities to adults enshrined in the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

Instead of a duty to meet “eligible” needs to promote wellbeing, the requirement to act now only applies where a person is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect.

The threshold is lower than England where the trigger for intervention is where failing to intervene would breach an individual's human rights.

However, unlike in England, no guidance has been produced in Wales on the new way of working. As a result, say BASW Cymru, social workers in Wales have “no framework or guidance on which to base their practice and decision-making”.

BASW Cymru national director Allison Hulmes said: “How on earth can social workers know what their new duties are?”

“We are weeks into this and we are still waiting. You can draw conclusions about how we value adults and carers by the fact that duties have been removed under the act yet there is no guidance on how to undertake safeguarding during a pandemic.”

Fund Wales to reflect greater health risk - Drakeford

Welsh first minister Mark Drakeford called on Wales to be given more funding to cope with coronavirus because of its ageing and vulnerable population.

He said: “We get money depending on how many people there are in Wales. What we say we should get is money that reflects the needs of Wales.

“We have an older, sicker

Hulmes said she has been told by Social Care Wales that “general guidance” will be issued shortly.

However, she added: “I have had no further clarification on what ‘general’ and ‘shortly’ means.

“General guidance is no good for social workers. They have statutory roles and need to know exactly what their legal responsibilities are.”

In England, a document entitled *Responding to COVID-19: the ethical framework for adult social care*, was published on 19 March.

BASW Cymru said a similar document for Wales would help workers make decisions in a “consistent and ethical manner”.

Relaxation of statutory duties in Wales is particularly troubling given the country's demographic, said Hulmes.

“We have an ageing demographic and because of the type of heavy industry traditional in Wales there are a lot of elderly people with chronic lung and heart conditions.

“So we know we have huge issues with poverty, we know we have a vulnerable ageing population, we know there is tremendous impact on unpaid carers, we know the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act hasn't worked at all for unpaid carers and now we have new legislation which has wiped all that out under the Coronavirus Act.”

population. Our history of coalmining and heavy industry means we have people with breathing problems that the coronavirus is particularly likely to affect.”

Card is issued to prove key worker status

Social workers in Wales are to get the same key worker benefits that are currently afforded to health workers.

They have been sent a card which they can use in supermarkets and to access other benefits.

It was issued following reports from workers that they had difficulty proving they were key workers.

Social Care Wales chief executive Sue Evans said: “Social care workers are making similar sacrifices to those working in hospitals by working long hours and shifts, which gives them little time to do their shopping for essential food and provisions.

“Being able to access beneficial offers could have a significant impact on them during this pandemic.”

Lack of clarity for students raises concern

Clearer guidance and support is needed for social work students in Wales during the pandemic, said BASW Cymru.

The call comes amid reports of inconsistent approaches by universities across the country.

BASW Cymru urged regulator Social Care Wales and course providers to find out if anyone still in student accommodation needed assistance.

Clarity on how social work students can be fast-tracked to qualify or enabled to provide support in non-social work care and support roles should also be provided, said BASW Cymru.

NORTHERN IRELAND NEWS



Health minister Robin Swann (right) says personal protective equipment is a priority for all key workers

COVID-19 guidance too clinical and not specific to social work

Government guidance to care professionals in the face of COVID-19 fails to take into account the “unique circumstances of social work practice”.

BASW Northern Ireland said information from Public Health England (PHE) and the Chief Medical Officer “overwhelmingly” focused on clinicians.

In a letter to Northern Ireland’s health minister Robin Swann, chair Orlaith McGibbon said: “Neither is specific to social workers nor take account of many of the community care settings in which social workers practice.

“Social work often entails challenges in establishing communications and rapport between professionals and the people they seek to help.

“It often entails the use of statutory powers, making managing risks within professional encounters, particularly in community settings, distinctly challenging.”

Orlaith said intervening in cases of abuse or in assessing acute mental illness “will almost always be in that person’s home”. She added: “These are the unique circumstances of social work practice that we do not believe are covered by the current PHE guidance.”

Orlaith said the PHE guidance assumed social workers can “straightforwardly establish” if people they visit will reliably communicate if they have COVID-19 or are symptomatic.

Avery Bowser, a social work manager in a charitable

fostering service, said the lack of specific guidance “placed a considerable burden” on employers.

“From a health and safety perspective there are liability issues. As a senior manager I have to think about whether the instructions I give on home visiting are lawful? Are they reasonable? Are they ethical? Would they be deemed safe if they were subsequently judged in court? The result is I have to work on developing my own local, detailed guidance.”

Avery said social workers needed guidance that was specifically relevant to the kind of scenarios they experienced.

The letter from BASW Northern Ireland also called for social workers to be in the priority group for testing. It repeated concerns about access to personal protective equipment (PPE) highlighted in a letter to chief social worker Sean Holland in March.

Holland said more specific guidance for social workers in different settings is being developed.

When asked about the availability of PPE by Stormont’s health committee last month, he said he was “confident” stock was available to meet demand.

However, he added: “In relation to social workers, I think it’s really important that at a time when PPE is so critical we make sure it is used where and when it’s needed and I think for an awful lot of social work activity it is not a requirement...”

He said for workers not providing “direct personal care” the two metre distancing rule and hand washing measures were “the appropriate response”.

‘What we do now will be remembered’

The “quiet heroism” of social care workers will be remembered by history after the current crisis passes.

That was the message to the sector by Northern Ireland’s chief social worker Sean Holland.

In an email sent to workers, he said: “Coronavirus poses probably the biggest threat any of us have ever seen in our lifetime. The word crisis barely seems to enough to describe what is happening.”

Holland said he was impressed but “not at all surprised” by how the sector had responded, adding: “We know from history that what is remembered and talked about long after the crisis is over are the people behind the stories.

“Their selflessness, generosity of spirit, acts of kindness, quiet heroism.

“And you will be one of those people that history remembers.”

Holland added the crisis meant workers were having to make difficult decisions on what to prioritise. Sometimes that meant opting for the “least worst choice”.

Graduates ‘fast-tracked’ into work

This year’s social work graduates are to be “fast-tracked” into employment in wake of the coronavirus crisis.

Ministers are working with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, employers and universities in a bid to boost the workforce. Retired workers are also rejoining.



Social work
VOICES
during COVID-19

For a profession based on building relationships with people, COVID-19 has presented unprecedented challenges. Over the following pages social workers tell us how they have adapted while people who use services share their experiences of life during the pandemic...

IN FOCUS



Sian Miljkovic (left) and Emily Hill continue to work with children and families as best they can against a backdrop of social isolation

Child protection in a **PANDEMIC**

Social workers Sian Miljkovic and Emily Hill shared their experiences of working with children and families during the COVID-19 outbreak with **Shahid Naqvi**

Being a child protection social worker during the COVID-19 pandemic presents many challenges. Working from home during lockdown is one of them.

“The other day I had to attend court virtually and ended up sitting in my bedroom for four hours with the door closed to make it confidential because I don’t have a proper office at home,” says mother-of-three Sian Miljkovic.

“I try to explain to my children that if I am on my phone you need to leave me alone – I find myself walking around the house trying to get away from them while having a conversation.

“The trickiest thing is balancing work with the needs of my kids who are bored and don’t understand fully what is going on. I’m trying to manage their homework at three different key stages while having an increased workload.”

‘I think we are going to see a huge surge of work when the crisis is over’

Like many social workers, Sian worries about the additional stress lockdown is placing on families and the extra pressure on social work teams.

“All the statutory duties are still there, they have not gone anywhere, but the services that keep placements going have closed down. CAMHS aren’t seeing children at the moment and the children on my caseload are predominantly CAMHS placements. Everything we used as universal support for families has dropped away.”

Without this, says Sian, safeguarding risks have increased.

“Previously I could sit with my caseload and say ‘I don’t need to see this child’ because I know they have been at school or had this appointment so I can put it off until next week. Now I can’t put anything off because nobody is seeing these children and families. That feels risky. If the worse was to happen to one of my children and there was a serious case review, what would the considerations be

IN FOCUS

around the circumstance at the moment?”

Emily Hill, who works in a child assessment and safeguarding team in Hampshire, believes the workload for social workers will be even greater after the crisis is over.

“I think we are going to see a huge surge. When the schools were told to close we had an influx of referrals because they were holding onto these cases.

“Domestic abuse more than anything is going to be the biggest challenge for a lot of services when everything goes back to normal.”

While understanding the reasons for the lockdown, Emily adds: “There is public health and then there are children whose lives are potentially at risk in their homes because they are now locked up with perpetrators of violence, with parents with drug and alcohol addictions, parents with really poor mental health who can’t access support services they had before. Removing that frontline and face-to-face contact has such a dire impact.”

Emily and Sian both have worries for their own safety as they continue to work during the pandemic.

“We have never been issued with PPE or anything like that,” says Emily. “I did a section 47 joint visit with the police a few weeks ago. It was only when we got to the house that we asked the family if they were self-isolating.

“When we do go out on a visit there isn’t anything to keep us safe other than common sense.”

Emily thinks it’s right NHS staff should be prioritised for PPE but she adds: “As social workers we always get missed. The NHS do a fantastic job and should get their PPE, but we are also frontline workers and we also need the same level of protection because our job entails going into people’s homes. I think we should at least be offered the very basics.”

Sian adds: “With the help of my husband I have provided my own PPE because the local authority just couldn’t get hold of stuff.

“I have gloves, hand sanitiser and a mask but I don’t know if it is approved – it is a plasterer’s mask because it was all I could get hold of.

“There are a vast amount of COVID-19 symptomatic people who aren’t in hospital that people outside the NHS are having contact with. Those workers tend to be local authority representatives and social workers.”

Like Emily, she feels frustrated that social workers appear to be a lower priority.

“I feel PPE is one of those things we will get when we don’t need it anymore. I think social workers just accept it. We have this in-joke with colleagues that we will go into situations where police won’t go or when they do they have protective equipment and we have our magic ID badge.

“I work with midwives who have GPS location tracking ID badges for safety reasons for remote and home visiting. I don’t have anything like that.”

In common with social workers across the UK, Emily and Sian are using technology as best they can to continue working with service users remotely.

“We have access to WhatsApp, Zoom and Microsoft Teams,” says Emily. “We are using a range of different platforms to speak to people. In terms of direct work, we are still putting up our worksheets online and we can give

parents or children documents so they can draw over it and write what they want to write.”

Sian adds: “I did a game with one lad who is nine – we played online and talked through text talk while we were playing.

“I had another one where we did some drawing over WhatsApp. We are still trying to do that work because it still needs doing but we are having to find more creative ways to do it. Some find it exciting and enjoy it. But for younger children it is a real struggle.”

Emily says she is picking up tips on ways of working from other colleagues.

“I was having a conversation with someone from CAF/CASS the other day about how you can determine if a child is in the room on their own.

“She said what she does is get them to do a little game and stand up with the phone and spin round so she can have a look at the room. They don’t realise that is what I am doing. I have started using that.”

Using such technology, however, is dependent on families having technology and being online.

“I have a family who don’t have access to the internet,” says Sian. “How do you remote work with a family without access to the internet?”

Sian is also concerned over contact arrangements in the current climate.

“I had a child who is aged three who said to me ‘mummy lives in a computer now’. Because she is in care she sees her mum via contact and since all face-to-face contact has stopped we are offering virtual contact.”

Emily says she is lucky in that all the families she works with are able to use technology. But she adds: “While it is great us being innovative in practice, it is a risk to those children we are trying to do an assessment for because we are not getting a true and realistic picture of what life is like for these families.

“It is challenging because we can’t see the body language and what is really going on because we are so removed from it.”

Sian feels frustrated that social workers aren’t as recognised as other professions for the work they are doing.

“We are dealing with this now and when it is long past crisis in the NHS we will still be dealing with it and it won’t be mentioned then because some of the things we have to do aren’t things the public want to hear about.

“We save lives in a very different way to the NHS. And in the process of doing that we also, unintentionally, cause havoc in other people’s lives.

“When we remove children we do it for a good reason but it breaks the parents we are removing the children from.

“Most of the time we are fighting tooth and nail to keep children with parents. But the media don’t want to hear about that which doesn’t help the profession in raising awareness of how much of the population we are helping.”

Despite the many challenges, both Sian and Emily feel well supported by their employer.

Colleagues have also been a source of support during the crisis, says Sian: “We are meeting virtually via teams to keep in touch with each other. Tonight, for example, we have a virtual team pub quiz to try and lift spirits.”

‘I have a plasterer’s mask because it was all I could get hold of’

IN FOCUS

ADULTS

Warren Belcher, social worker in Hertfordshire

My team works with adults who have physical and learning disabilities. Many have underlying physical health conditions.

They're more at risk if they contract coronavirus, so a lot of our work so far has been identifying where the most vulnerable are and working out how best to respond to their needs.

We're carrying out a lot of risk assessments, we're making lots of phone calls to people and talking to their families. We've been working out what support networks and infrastructures people have. That can look very different if someone is, for example, in residential care, supported living or if they're living on their own or with family.

The biggest challenge providers are facing is definitely sourcing personal protective equipment (PPE) just now. We know it's an issue all over the country and it's creating a lot of anxiety and concern.

Hertfordshire County Council has developed a provider hub, with a dedicated website and helpline offering providers and family carers the latest information. It's giving us a coordinated response to the issues being raised and helping us obtain PPE and get it to those providing care who are most at need.

This has helped free up social workers to help people living at home. People with direct payments don't have the same infrastructure as services. Many families have had to suddenly become the main carers for loved ones. That's a huge change and we need to be doing everything we can to support them and their wellbeing because people are taking on more just now.

Every part of our services are adapting and pulling out the stops. Some of our day services have had to close. Any displaced staff are now doing outreach work; they're doing people's shopping, visiting where appropriate and phoning to check in with people. Just because people can't attend their regular services, doesn't mean those staff aren't still looking out for them. They've been incredible.

We also have a local network of community organisations who offer information, advice and support to residents. Our #TeamHerts Volunteering has been coordinating the countywide volunteering network with other groups. They have really galvanised. Over 2,400 volunteers have now been trained and are out doing food and medication drops, befriending calls and more.

Our team also includes fantastic occupational therapists, community care officers, health care assistants and community learning disability nursing colleagues. Often these colleagues and nursing staff in particular never really get the recognition they deserve in national media



Warren's team before lockdown and coronavirus restrictions became the norm

Providers are struggling to source PPE

'It feels like things went from zero to 100 instantly'

coverage. But here they've been instrumental in helping people with learning disabilities understand what is going on and make reasonable adjustments in a safe way.

We're all having to react to a constantly changing environment – it feels like things went from zero to 100 instantly. My main concern just now is having the right resources, planning and having visibility to support people.

My hope is the country will get behind the group of people we serve. Too often it's the people at the highest risk who have the least voice and visibility.

When this awful virus is over, I hope it leads to a very long, hard look at how we support people within social care.

The journey is only just starting. Once the health risk of the virus has passed we're going to need to help people with bereavement, with trying to get their lives back on track, with unemployment, debt and benefits challenges. It is going to be a difficult, long-term piece of work for our profession and others to do alongside people and families.

IN FOCUS



MENTAL HEALTH

Catherine, an approved mental health professional

Everyone is trying to manage the crisis the best they can. Our community mental health teams are only visiting people in emergencies. They're delivering food and medication – the necessary stuff in crisis.

In our AMHP service we're trying as far as possible to do business as usual, but it is difficult. Finding beds for people needing admission was hard before coronavirus. Now hospitals are understandably reorganising to try and minimise the risk of infection. It adds to the pressure on beds and we're also seeing patients being discharged sooner than usual which could have a negative effect on their health in the long term.

Our referrals for Mental Health Act assessments have been steady so far. I wonder how long it will last. I think at the moment people are trying to only refer in an absolute emergency. Our team is doing okay with staffing but I know some other teams and care providers we work with are thin on the ground because so many people have had to self-isolate after showing symptoms.

We're still trying to do our assessments face-to-face. At least we finally got some PPE the other day – that had been a massive concern because we're going into a lot of risky situations. Even though we now have some equipment, it is the bare minimum and we're still getting mixed messages on what PPE is needed in what situations.

I'm concerned for our service users because a lot don't seem to be understanding the gravity of what's happening or the risks involved. A lot of them have poor levels of self-care, they're often living on wards or in supported living where there are a lot of people. I worry they're really at risk and the impact of all of this on their mental health.

Crisis could take a huge mental toll

'Everyone is just trying to make sure everybody is safe'

It's a very anxiety provoking time because if you don't have any symptoms you still just don't know if you're carrying this thing. I worry about everyone's welfare.

I've had to assess someone who had tested positive for the virus. It was terrifying. The assessing doctors were brilliant. We were provided with scrubs, gloves, masks. The doctors were really proactive in trying to put in protective measures. That felt very supportive and helped a lot.

However, I've had other assessments where my decisions to wear a mask or other PPE have been questioned. I'm learning that we need to make our own informed decisions about the risks involved as different departments seem to be following different guidance. More than ever we need to ensure our own health and safety to continue with our role.

Any of the kind of organisational politics you can sometimes see between social care and NHS have been thrown out of the window just now. Everyone is just trying to make sure everybody is as safe as possible and working hard to get through this. There are so many other issues involved, and I know those in higher management are working very hard to problem solve.

IN FOCUS

INDEPENDENT

Rebecca

Most of my work is court-directed. I do a lot of parenting assessments of families involved in care proceedings. Those normally involve one-to-one interviews as well as observing parents with their children or carers for their children.

The current restrictions mean I can't really do face-to-face interviews. Most local authorities I work with have stopped contact sessions too. So a lot of how I'd normally work has ground to a halt.

I'm doing what I can remotely. I'm trying to frontload the bits of assessments I can do over the phone. For example, I'll phone other professionals to get their input. Where it's appropriate I might do a phone or Skype interview with parents.

But for a lot of my assessments that can't work – for example with parents who have learning disabilities and have different communication needs. Phoning or Skype wouldn't be fair to a lot of people. I couldn't get a fair understanding of their parenting abilities. So I'm taking everything on a case-by-case basis and using my experience and judgement to make a call on what's appropriate.

A big dilemma for me is assessing the balance between the risks of continuing to do direct work with people, the risks of spreading the virus and the risks of the work not being done. I don't have an employer to get PPE from, I've had to try and source my own but I'm having no luck apart from one bottle of hand sanitiser.

I also really worry about the impact a prolonged delay to assessments and care proceedings could have. Research tells us delays can have a detrimental impact on outcomes for children and young people. For example, younger children may lose the 'window' for adoptive placements, children who remain at home may experience further mistreatment and children who are in short term foster placements could see those breakdown.

I work on cases where babies have been removed on an interim care order. Months of delay can make it much harder to rehabilitate a baby back into a parent's care. Bonds and attachments change. That kind of thing can have a huge impact on decisions around adoption for example. So there are enormous human rights issues around all of this. These are all things that could have a long-term detrimental impact on children.

One of the pressures of independent work is a lot of decisions are all on your head. It's really hard to know what's right because this situation is unlike anything we've seen before. I've developed my own policy so I'm really clear on what I can do. I'm reviewing it all the time as things change. If contact does start again, I'll start going to observe that if I can and I'll start more face-to-face work.

Being self-employed it's also very hard to know what my income will be because everything is so unpredictable.



Rebecca worries about the impact assessment delays could have on children

It's unlike anything we have seen

'I don't have an employer to get PPE from, I've had to source my own'

I know some independents who have decided they just can't do their jobs now and will look at the government's self-employed scheme.

I understand why some are in that position. Personally, I want to try and continue doing what I can while the work is there as I see parenting assessments as essential. I worry about the impact on young people if they're not done or left for months so I'm keeping going, and continuing to think about how best to safely try and complete direct work, in the hope things change soon.

CHARITY SECTOR

Jean Templeton, of Hull Churches Home from Hospital service

I'm a registered social worker and run a voluntary organisation, Home from Hospital, supporting people who have been in hospital. We help with shopping, befriending, family work, reablement and other things.

A lot of people are being discharged from wards to try and free up more beds for coronavirus patients. It means our referrals are rising. The work never stops and there are lots of long days.

Food has become a massive part of our support for people during this crisis. We're seeing 25-30 more daily requests for shopping on top of what we'd normally do. I've managed to get one of the big supermarkets to help by allowing our staff to pick food up from their warehouse.

We're constantly trying to innovate in response to the situation but it's hard because we've never seen anything like it. The increase in need has been so rapid and the referrals are coming from everywhere.

As a social worker, I'm used to the idea of being a change maker or a problem solver. Right now it feels like I'm problem solving in a day the amount I would normally do in a week.

As an employer I need to make sure I have enough staff and volunteers. I also need to make sure they are safe – that includes buying in PPE and changing how we work where we can.

We're trying to support more people digitally or over the phone. We've seen a drop in face-to-face work but we're still doing some. Everything is risk assessed. We're gowned up and masked where it's needed.

It's an anxious time for everyone. It feels like we're looking at a storm but we know the major part of it has still to come.

Social workers like to plan things. We have loads of ways of managing risk and for the most part that works. But the situation we're in just now is totally reactive and that's uncomfortable. I'm not saying we won't manage it – but it is uncomfortable.

As a charity, funding is always an issue too. The extra food we're providing costs money. We had some funds saved for a rainy day that we're relying on. Thank goodness we had that because the rainy day is definitely here but going forward we'll need all the fundraising and donations we can get.

I have a brilliant team of staff and volunteers. Everyone is working under immense pressure, we're just normal people doing our best. We've had people at the city healthcare partnership and other third sector organisations ringing up, checking in on us and offering to help where they can. That all makes a difference.

People are really pulling together and looking out for each other. This is such a hard time for so many families. But all of our skills are needed and are coming into their own.



A delivery from the Home from Hospital team

Food is a massive SUPPORT

ACTIVISM

Helen

'The situation we're in is totally reactive and that's not comfortable'

Just as the coronavirus situation started to blow up I was about to start a contract working for a local authority as a best interest assessor (BIA).

That was cancelled because we couldn't go into care homes to do the assessments and the council also said it didn't want to place me at risk. I rang my agency about other BIA work but they said there wasn't any going for the same reasons and there were so many BIAs in the same position.

I've never been out of work. Bills still need to be paid. The financial pressure is huge, especially as I've no idea of

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IN FOCUS

Continued from page 19

when this is all going to end. Despite everything going on with work, I knew I still wanted to put my social work skills to use locally. I decided to set up a community group to help with things like shopping, collecting prescriptions and befriending. I knew people might not have Facebook or social media, so I just wrote out a little note offering to help and put it through doors.

Out of that we've now got a WhatsApp group that has about 30 households on it where people are helping each other. There are about another ten people who aren't on WhatsApp but I'm emailing them. Then there's another ten or so who only have a landline and I'm doing telephone befriending with. I've contacted our local council, I've spoken to supermarkets to find out times for deliveries, I've spoken to a local farm shop who are now doing deliveries for the over 70s.

It's so important to keep talking through this experience. When I speak to people they're often frightened, they're lonely, they don't always understand the virus and the risks. People talk about the silence and the isolation. We have a really diverse group – this affects all sorts of people.

As a social worker, I've been so frustrated by seeing social work sidelined in media coverage of coronavirus. The doctors and nurses are doing incredible work but social workers are still out there too. I think this was the time, the crisis, for social work-led organisations to really say 'we are here' and get out there in the media.

But outside of my work, what we've got going in our community here has given me hope. People are making connections and helping people in need. I'd never met half the people in the group before. All I know is that at the end of this we're going to have a big street party. Our group might not be massive in size but its impact is huge.

STUDENT

Deborah Cruddace

I am on the Step Up to Social Work programme at Manchester Metropolitan University and was 28 days into my placement.

All the placements have been paused now. I was devastated as I was in an adoption and fostering team. I was worried about the young people I was working with. I wanted to go back and help but because I have diabetes I am in a vulnerable group but couldn't.

The university has been outstanding. When COVID-19 took over we were all thinking what is going to happen to our social work career now? I was terrified at first. Within hours they changed the timetable to make sure we are able to get up to the standard of knowledge we need to be on track to qualify. Our exams are still going ahead, our lecturers come online and do face-to-face video through Zoom, Microsoft Teams and virtual resources that are available. We have slides and groups set up, video logs. I think I am learning more than when I was having to drive to lectures and was really tired!

We are missing the social interaction though, so we set up Zoom study groups which I think is something we will take



Deborah Cruddace

Students and tutors are all there for each other

forward when we get back to normal.

I was terrified our bursary would stop but we have that still in place because they are still going to be doing the same thing. They have said if the lockdown goes on longer there is support there for us, though you can't qualify without doing your placement.

I try and give myself a schedule studying from home – I get up and get dressed as if going to work. I come onto Zoom in the morning where my fellow students are. We discuss our plans and set our objectives for the day. We're all there for each other and our tutors are constantly there for us. They have set up a Facebook page too.

My husband is still working – he does deliveries. When he comes home he has to change out of his work clothes in a zoned off area and washes off outdoor life before coming into the shared living zone.

Unfortunately we are having to stay in separate bedrooms in case he brings the outside into the house.

We are facing more ethical dilemmas

HOSPITALS

Jaison Masundo

The pandemic is changing the way hospital discharge social work teams like mine are having to work. Hospital social workers are used to being based in hospitals as part of multidisciplinary teams. They attend MDT meetings and assess patients from the bed and engage with their families too.

But since the pandemic this therapeutic intervention has diminished with patients discharged much more quickly under the new COVID-19 discharge plan. This takes away the legal framework that is enshrined in the Care Act 2014.

Hospital social workers are now working outside the acute ward, following up patients discharged back home under discharge to assess (D2A) pathways. Working in this way comes with challenges. Social workers are now having to ensure they wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when carrying out assessments and at the same time are expected to observe the two metre distance rule.

There are ethical dilemmas too that we now face, such as when a social worker visits a patient in the community and finds them soiled or incontinent. This kind of moving and handling work is not our role or what we are trained to do but we can't leave a patient in this way.

This is where we find the social worker role changes from assessor and commissioner to care provider and the need to keep the two metre distance goes out of the window. It means social workers have to get close to provide the care required.

If the person has a carer the social worker can call them and they will need to wait for the carer to arrive. If the person requires two carers, then the social worker will become the second carer.

These changing roles mean that social workers are spending more time with the client which is a good thing in a way to get an evidenced-based assessment. Some social workers, however, are not prepared for this hands-on role. They require training in areas like manual handling techniques and the whole health and safety element that comes with performing such tasks.

When working with people who have COVID-19, the PPE that is provided is not as complicated as that used in acute wards. A plastic apron, face shield, mask and pair of gloves is all that is needed. However, there is the issue of



Jaison Masundo says the social work role is changing to a care provider

'Patients are being discharged much more quickly during this crisis'

PPE disposal after the intervention.

An issue community social workers face working in an acute ward is that we don't have changing facilities or places to wash after interventions – all we have is alcohol gel.

These are stressful times for frontline social workers and we must look after ourselves. Teams should have weekly supervision and opportunities to offload so that they don't get emotionally bogged down and feel alone and undervalued.

It's important to encourage, if possible, a daily debriefing via video conferencing to ensure everyone is okay and feels safe.

BASW

The professional association for
social work and social workers

THA

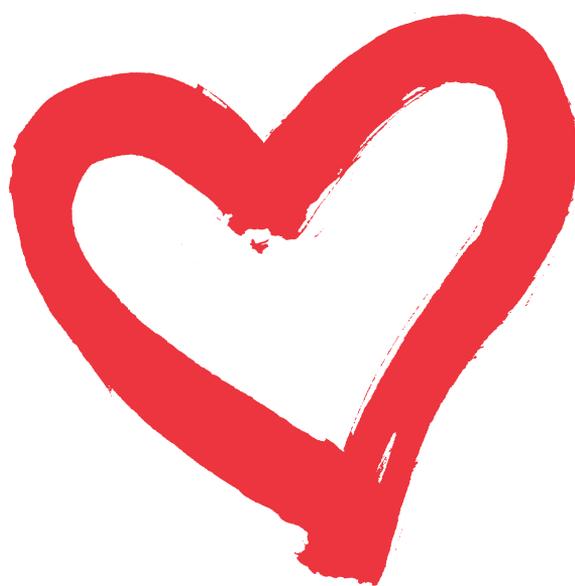
To **social workers** and every h
- thank you for the amazing wo



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THANK YOU

**health, care and key worker
work you are doing across the UK**



#clapforNHS
#clapforourcarers
#clapforsocialwork
#clapforkeyworkers
#thankyousocialwork

Jillian Allan

Mother of two children with additional needs

My two children have very complex needs. They both have a personal budget from social care. My son also has another budget from NHS continuing healthcare and he needs full-time 2:1 care.

I'm on my own so in terms of their care and support we employ five PAs through those budgets. It's really about another adult being here most of the time, particularly to make sure my son's not putting himself at risk.

Like a lot of families we chose a personal budget for the flexibility and control. When you get one nobody really explains the full ramifications of what comes with being a small employer. The coronavirus situation has really brought that home. As an employer of personal assistants I've been told I have a responsibility to provide PPE if anyone in my household starts displaying symptoms.

I desperately want to be able to provide that PPE. I don't want to put anyone at any extra risk. I've asked the council and the NHS for help. They're doing their best but so far it has proved impossible to get us any equipment.

This is a huge issue for a lot of families yet I never see it raised in media coverage. What do I do if one of us falls ill in the house and we have to self-isolate? If I don't have PPE I can't ask the PAs to work but without them my kids are at risk. What happens if I have to go to hospital? I keep asking social work and health what the plan is if I get unwell. So far there is no plan. That's really worrying.

In my job I support families where children have a disability or additional needs. Coronavirus is causing a lot of concerns. A lot of kids' routines have changed, they might not understand why there are these restrictions. And a massive issue for a lot of families is getting enough food.

Some are struggling to get food full stop. A lot are struggling to get the only food their kids will eat. I can relate to that. My daughter will only eat certain things. So my normal shopping list will have 20 of the same item. Just now the shops are restricting how many of each item you can have so I can't buy enough of the few things I need.

I'm lucky that people I know have really rallied round and helped pick up the things that my kids will eat and dropped them off. I worry a lot of families might not have that support. Services are springing up all the time to help but a lot of the calls we're getting at work are people telling us they're stuck in the house and can't get what they need.

Mark Neary

Mark's son Steven has a learning disability

Steven is so far taking this all completely in his stride. He's coping much better than me and the support workers to be honest.

The restrictions mean his routines have gone completely out of the window. He can't go out to a lot of things that he normally loves, like water aerobics every Thursday. That

Life during lockdown



Jillian Allan at a learning disability rights event in 2019

How the pandemic is impacting the lives of people who use services and their loved ones

would ordinarily really throw Steven but just now he's asking if they're cancelled because of the virus and being okay when I explain that. We're doing more music sessions instead. We've just had three hours of Pet Shop Boys. We try to get some exercise and dancing in.

Why hasn't Steven been more thrown by it all? I think a lot of it comes down to how much more comfortable he's been about making decisions since he moved into his own place in 2016. It's almost like all that has mentally prepared him for this.

My big worry is what happens if either Steven or I get sick. We've had support workers go off sick recently but not because of the virus thankfully.

We're all trying to minimise the risks but we've had no luck getting some adjustments made that we thought would help. Normally Steven has part of his personal budget for funding taxis. With him not being able to go out much just now I asked if we could use some of that money to get cabs for the support workers to get here. I thought it'd be safer than them having to use public transport. The council said no, it wasn't an 'assessed need'.

We're managing to keep some of our routines. Everyday at 2pm Steven has DVD time. At the moment we're working through musicals. Yesterdays was *Muriel's Wedding*. Today was *Summer Holiday*. We've been relatively lucky so far getting shopping deliveries but it's getting harder. A big problem is getting milk. It's the only thing Steven will

IN FOCUS



Mark and Steven Neary

drink. We get through five or six bottles a day but the shops are limiting it to two or three.

I've been in touch with a few other parents. A friend of mine's son was in supported living but as soon as this flared up she thought it'd be safer for him to be back home. Where that's possible it seems a lot of families are trying to do it. But I know that other people are being kept in assessment and treatment units and now their families are being stopped from seeing them because of the pandemic. That's made an already horrible situation worse.

Mary O'Reilly

Mental health advocate who has depression

I became seriously unwell in February shortly before the coronavirus crisis erupted. Desperate to avoid the horror of hospital admission, I succeeded in contacting and securing the support of two beautiful, extraordinary, humane community mental health professionals – a psychologist and a nurse – who saw me through my last crisis and are now visiting me at home.

I am more than aware of my good fortune. I am constantly haunted by the knowledge of the thousands in mental distress who have no such support because services have been savagely decimated, stripped of the life support of adequate humane nursing staff, psychologists and occupational therapists. Services have been rendered crude, commodified and instrumental.

Why are the most important human activities and attributes – care and compassion – the least rewarded and respected and the most exploited while the vultures, predators and parasites of our society – power, money, status and vacuous celebrity – thrive?

COVID-19 is a terrible and terrifying virus. But there is an equally terrible and terrifying virus in our global culture – greed. We have consumed the best of ourselves with greed.

How dare politics use 'Protect our NHS' as a rallying cry when they have inflicted nothing but savage abuse upon it

for decades. How dare my local commodified, instrumental mental health service squander resources on creating an image of itself as 'A Global Digital Exemplar' when real human contact and human relationships are what is vital to real care.

No amount of technology, apps, robots or digital wizardry could have saved my life over the past month. Two caring, supportive, compassionate human beings who know me and with whom I have a relationship did and continue to do so. As do loving friends and family whom I speak and weep to on an old-fashioned land line.

The pandemic will cause a tsunami of further mental distress not because people are weak or unstable, but because the same adverse conditions are likely to pertain.

Dare I hope a cultural change arising from what we have all endured could alter all of our priorities and bring about humane, caring, compassionate, properly funded, staffed and resourced mental health and social care services?

Mark Ellerby

Mark has schizophrenia

The main impact of coronavirus on my mental wellbeing is being housebound and isolated. I feel the emotional force of the isolation. It's dangerous and depressing to be left alone with the voices for so long.

Being on my own indoors magnifies the impact of the voices. I end up listening to them. For me it was always better to get out and do things to take my mind off them.

Being housebound cuts you off from important forms of support like being able to go to day centres where you can meet up with friends and do enjoyable courses that exercise your brain.

Social isolation cuts you off from friends and family. The only option is to make regular phone calls to each other but it's not the same as meeting face-to-face.

Before the virus I had very high levels of support and met my parents two days a week, went to a day centre once a week and an archery club twice a week.

The other thing that happens is that you worry that loved ones may catch the virus which is a serious concern on top of your mental health problems.

I have kept out of hospital so far and have not been let down by services as I am still in telephone contact with them. That has been a big relief to my family.

I have had to force myself to do activities that relieve the boredom; anything I can do round the house like playing computer games, watching movies and listening to music. That's okay for a while but if the situation goes on for months and months the distraction of this is going to lessen.

The only thing that breaks up the day is getting out for exercise. This is still allowed and that clears my head from the forced confinement. The trick for some will be to try and find some form of therapy that really works. For me it has been writing. Being on my own has given me an opportunity to do this and made it easier because I am totally absorbed in what I am doing.

IN FOCUS

Doing our work DIGITALLY

The COVID-19 crisis is a serious challenge to social work because social distancing requires the profession to alter how relationship-based approaches are framed and practised.

How do you maintain relationships with people who use services if you cannot visit people regularly? How do you keep people safe and well if you cannot assess their living spaces? How can we model 'good' behaviours and encourage people to maintain change when we cannot see to ascertain their physical and emotional demeanour?

Keeping in touch

During this period of uncertainty and rapid change, it is easy for social workers to lose regular contact with people. There are a range of technologies that can enable us to keep in touch with people who use services, for example Skype, Microsoft Teams, Slack, Google Hangouts, Facetime and WhatsApp.

Through these applications, social workers can either call or text people who use services to ensure that they are safe and have food at home to maintain their wellbeing. In relationship-based terms, they can call to let people know that they are thinking of them, to demonstrate care and compassion to people who may be alone and therefore feeling excluded. This is going beyond the procedural aspects of social work – it is about humane practice, recognising our mutual need to know people are looking out for us at a time of crisis.

Co-production

To have a genuine relationship with people who use services, social workers have to recognise service users have as much power as the professional to determine the nature of their engagement. People have a right to be heard and consulted about decisions about their care, they have to consent, and they need to be included in service provision. Digital technology enables social workers to keep to these principles even in this time of social distancing. We can email assessment and care plans to people to ask for their feedback and comments, through video-conferencing people can participate in inter-agency professional meetings about their care and a host of online apps allow people to express their wishes.

Access to the internet

With social interactions reduced at this period, people who use services need access to the internet to receive information and maintain contact with their family and



Technology can help social workers maintain relationship-based practice during the coronavirus pandemic, writes **Godfred Boahen**

professional networks for safety and wellbeing. Social workers therefore need to think of creative ways in which care plans and packages can be reviewed to take account of this new context. Mobile charges to NHS information have been removed – this means that people who use services can maintain the relationship they had with NHS staff and networks prior to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Online support networks

Recently, there has been a strong focus on strengths-based and asset-based models of social work practice. In these approaches social workers seek to identify what people can do for themselves alongside co-production of care plans to identify community resources for support. Although social distancing means people cannot access the physical spaces where services were located, social workers can use digital technologies to continue to uphold these principles.

Social workers should continue to draw on peoples' strengths and desires to socialise and form relationships and work with them to identify online self-management groups and support networks. People who use services may also have had active social lives centred on physically accessing community-based services. Social workers can assist them to create new online networks.

A chance to rethink...

While not a substitute, digital technologies can facilitate social workers to maintain contact with people. This time of crisis presents an opportunity for social work to re-think the meaning of relationships without losing sight of their core moral and ethical worth.

IN FOCUS

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, social workers at East Sussex Council had been piloting the use of different online tools in some services. PSW asked Nicola McGeown, the council's principal social worker for children and families, about what they learned.

What technology are your teams using?

Our throughcare team, which works with young people aged 14-24, has been using WhatsApp for a while as a means of some very vulnerable young people being able to get in touch with social workers. Now with the COVID-19 situation there's a much wider need. Our social workers cannot visit families unless it's absolutely critical. So there's an imperative for us to have a good video call option.

Our first preference is Skype, and we've produced very clear, step-by-step guidance for families on how to set that up. If that's not possible, then we'll recommend Facetime if they have an iPhone. If not, we'll recommend WhatsApp and we find most families have that on their phones.

We're currently rolling out WhatsApp in our social work teams. We're making sure they have the right support and the right guidance. It's not a case of us just dropping the app into everyone's phones and saying 'on you go' because there are a lot of risks and practice issues to consider.

What issues have you found when using tech?

You have to understand what the different apps are doing. For example, initially we looked into the possibility of using Facebook Messenger in the throughcare team. It had the advantage of being website-based so if young people had lost their phone they could go to a library or cyber cafe and make contact. But we found out in the background it went through your phone contacts and suggested connections. So we decided on WhatsApp, which is encrypted and much tighter.

There are still risks though. A big one is location sharing – you have to make sure that setting is switched off. You have to make sure the WhatsApp account is closed properly if someone is leaving the organisation. Our approach is to have a really, really robust risk assessment, be clear about what we're doing to mitigate risks, and make sure we're offering good support and guidance for staff.



Nicola McGeown

'Mitigating the risks of tech is key'

Advice on using digital tools in social work from a council that was trialling them before the COVID-19 outbreak

What are some of your tips for WhatsApp?

Firstly, make sure all your settings are correct. Regularly check that, especially after automatic updates. Make sure location sharing is turned off.

Only use your work WhatsApp account to communicate with children and families. Be clear you'll only be monitoring it during normal working hours. Be mindful of the content of your messages. Remember anyone with your work phone number can send you a message on WhatsApp. Remember if someone sends you a message out of the blue they may not be who they claim to be.

Don't share personal data about yourself or your location. Don't send any data from your work device to your personal device. Report any data breaches.

Is there advice for using video calls for virtual home visits?

Yes, absolutely. For example, if you're doing a statutory visit and you'd normally see the child alone try and do that on the virtual visit too. Be aware of confidentiality issues in your own environment and with the family who you are video calling. Find out who is in the home, who is in the room, who can hear or see the call. Try and make sure the call is as confidential as possible.

If you have concerns over the conditions of the home ask if you can be given a virtual tour. Don't lose sight of why you're involved – virtual visits still have to have a purpose. Be aware of what the child can see or hear in your environment. Get rid of unnecessary clutter from the space behind you and minimise distracting noises.

What would you say to other social work employers introducing more technology?

Think it through. The coronavirus situation has brought a lot of pressure to use these tools instantly. But you still need to start from a place where you're very clear about the risks, what you're doing to mitigate those, the practice principles you will use and the guidance you'll have to help people to stay as safe as possible online. If you don't do that right from the start and things start to go wrong, it is very difficult to roll things back. You need to keep on top of it and build in lots of support.



Social work in **MALAWI**

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with 60 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. The precarious living achieved by rural workers is intensified by natural events such as drought or flooding.

Beyond this, Malawi's children face high levels of violence. Two thirds of boys and half of girls experience physical violence during their childhood.

One particularly shocking statistic is that a third of girls reported that their first experience of sexual intercourse was violent or unwanted. The death of parents due to HIV/Aids has left many children with overwhelming responsibilities for bringing up younger siblings. Early marriage, gender-based violence and the exploitation of street children all add to the difficulties for young people.

This is the context Malawi's dedicated and dynamic force of social workers work in. This workforce passed a major milestone recently when the Social Workers' Bill was introduced into legislation at Malawi's second National Social Workers Conference in November last year.

One of the principal concepts for social workers is promoting *kuumba chikhulupiro*, or 'resilience'.

The creation of Children's Corners in Malawi is helping boost creative social work with young people in one of the world's poorest countries, say **David Pitcher and Lawrence Matiti**

One of the key means of achieving this is through Children's Corners. Originally developed in the 1990s to respond to the overwhelming needs of children in the wake of civil war and natural disasters in the Balkans, Children's Corners have become important in sub-Saharan Africa and perhaps particularly in Malawi.

A Children's Corner is a child friendly space where children age between six and 18 may go on some days after school (in Malawi school finishes at 2pm) to learn skills, play safely, and develop confidence. There are about 2,400 Children's Corners in Malawi.

Children's Corners are run by facilitators, who are volunteers. They are visited and supported by a social worker from the local district office, each being responsible for perhaps ten Children's Corners.

We visited the Kuliyani Children's Corner with Social Welfare Officer Linet Matamula. There we met facilitator Aldon Chikaoneka who explained that sometimes even just attending the Children's Corner protected children. He told us how before this one was set up, there were a number of deaths as children had drowned while playing unsupervised near the local river or were knocked down by cars on the road.

IN FOCUS

When we visited the corner, Aldon was administering essential medication for those suffering from HIV/Aids. Another group were being taught strategies to avoid early marriage. Others, many at risk of losing cultural knowledge through the loss of their parents, were learning traditional songs while another group played volleyball as an alternative to being drawn into exploitative gangs.

Some others were seated around a blackboard being made aware of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF, which has a big presence in Malawi, provides each Children's Corner with a toolbox, including skipping ropes, balls, board games and art materials.

A programme of activities to structure discussion and direct work with children has been set out by the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare. One such activity is called 'The Tree of Life' where children are taken to look carefully at a tree. From this, they identify how they are like the tree. What is my soil ('Where I come from'); my roots ('the people who have taught me the most'); the trunk ('my skills'); the branches ('my hopes and dreams'); the bugs ('the things that get in the way'); and the fruits ('the things I am proud of').

These are shared with each other, promoting confidence and mutual understanding. One result of these activities is that children may become less violent, more aware of their own behaviour and easier for parents to care for, thus reducing the risk of life on the streets.

One village headman described the Children's Corner as, 'the sharpener', because children are 'sharpened' to become reliable members of the community. By becoming part of the Children's Corner, children learn not only practical skills, but the ability to work co-operatively together and solve their own problems.

A central principle is that it is the children who are the major decision makers. They do not just come to receive adult help but mobilise other children. This is at the heart of kuumba chikhulupiriro. As we discussed the social worker's



Social workers Maureen Banda, Aldon Chikaoneka and Linet Matamula

role in supporting resilience in Malawi, Linet described the concept as like that of stretching an elastic band which, despite the stress put on it, will 'bounce back'.

We noticed the respect given to social workers by facilitators such as Alton, who looked forward to supervision and advice from Linet. Linet, in turn, knows that the needs of Malawi's children for protection is "so vast". Social work in Malawi works with workers with different levels of qualification supporting each other. There is a huge desire for knowledge and training, but books and accessible and specialist expertise are hard to come by.

Those helping Malawi's children, like the children themselves, need creativity, imagination and reliance on each other. In short, they need kuumba chikhulupiriro.

'A central principle is that children are the major decision makers'

Dr David Pitcher is a social worker for Cafcass and visited Malawi as part of Supporting Social Work in Malawi. Lawrence Matiti is a social worker at Lilongwe District Office and supports several Children's Corners.



IN FOCUS

Sweeping powers rushed through parliament as the coronavirus outbreak intensified could suspend a series of statutory duties local authorities ordinarily need to meet.

The Coronavirus Act 2020, which became law on March 25, lays the legal grounding for councils to apply what ministers have labelled 'easements' to duties to assess and provide social care to adults and carers and to provide support to children transitioning to adult services.

The official language of 'easements' is anodyne. The impact of what it describes threatens to be anything but. Legal experts and disability rights groups are among those alarmed by the risk suspending these duties, even temporarily, poses to the rights of vulnerable people.

The changes to adult social care

The act contains provisions affecting care in England, Scotland and Wales. The exact changes differ by the countries (the BASW website has information tailored to each jurisdiction). But they broadly share in common a suspension or relaxation of the requirements of councils to assess and provide care and support.

In England, this means effectively downgrading several parts of the Care Act 2014. For example, councils meeting criteria to apply 'easements' (more of which in a moment) won't have to comply with the duty to assess a person or their carer's needs. They will also not be bound by law to provide services to meet assessed needs unless failing to do so would breach the human rights of a service user or carer.

The criteria for using 'easements'

The government says these measures should only be used by councils where it is "essential". In guidance, they say authorities are expected to comply with pre-amendment Care Act provision "for as long and as far as possible".

But if staff shortages or rising demand makes that no longer practical, a decision on applying easements can be made by the director of adult social services and the principal social worker. Councils are expected to evidence the decision, inform all providers, carers and service users and tell the Department of Health and Social Care.

The impact in practice

Already there are questions about accountability and transparency in how these easements are being used, and by whom. As *PSW* went to press there were claims at least six English councils were already using easements. There was pressure for ministers to publish a list of where the measures are in force and the evidence why.

The easements raise a host of legal questions too. In a webinar on the Coronavirus Act changes, the public law team at 39 Essex Street Chambers said the guidance and legislation raised a number of concerns.

These included questions of how councils using easements would assess the risk to a person's human rights. How are they monitoring the impact of restrictions, which have been imposed by the state, on people's needs? How do the Coronavirus Act changes fit with case law? There were also concerns the easements reinstate a "cliff edge" for those moving between children's and adults services.



How will Coronavirus Act impact social care?

**Andy
McNicoll**
looks at
changes that
aim to help
councils cope
with the
COVID-19
crisis

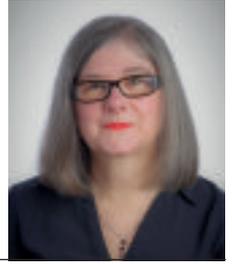
Social workers and disability groups worry about the potential impact of the measures on people's lives.

Fazilet Hadi, Head of Policy at Disability Rights UK has warned of a "real danger" that moving to "untested ways of assessing, delivering and prioritising care will lead to disabled people with high care needs falling through the cracks, being alone and unsupported".

Legal experts emphasise that lots in the Care Act remains untouched by the changes – this includes the duty to promote wellbeing, safeguarding responsibilities and advocacy. Those will help, as will scrutiny of easements and how they are used. But it still looks like some people who previously had a right to care will instead face a fight for it.

RUTH ALLEN

BASW's chief executive draws parallels between the current crisis and WWII



This existential threat could sharpen our shared purpose

I am not one for war comparisons, but I keep having conversations with people which bring up parallels with what we are living through now.

We are dealing with existential threats that might sharpen our common focus in similar ways – on what really matters in life, individually and collectively. On what can we do together that we cannot achieve alone. And about what sort of world we want after this.

Modern social work in the UK was shaped after the second world war with the rise of global ideals of international collaboration, human rights, social protection and welfare, healthcare for all and safer communities. The need for reconstruction and transformation was not only physical and economic but also social and psychological.

Many of the horrors of that (and any) war were immediately and terrifyingly visible. Yet others were hidden and only came to light later, sometimes after decades.

Events and their impact on people often lay buried. And emergency efforts in the midst of crisis – while well-intentioned or presented as ‘necessary’ – had many unintended or unheralded consequences, good and bad.

I am reminded of the mass evacuations of children from UK cities in the 1940s. It was a logical act carrying a dominant, rallying story of kind strangers taking in and protecting children. That happened of course, and much was learnt about the extreme poverty of many of the children evacuated from poor, working class industrial areas to the countryside that contributed to the post-war determination to tackle poverty and illness. But evacuations also brought a lot of unspoken loss, harm and trauma.

The current ‘stay at home’ policy has parallels. It is necessary to tackle the pandemic. It is also highly risky for many people. Domestic homicides have risen globally as a result of ‘lockdowns’, including in the UK. UNICEF warns of the intensified online risks to children. School and college closures disrupt friendships, learning, prospects and support for children and families under the most pressure.

Job losses and business failures have sent benefits claims soaring. And apart from the general increase in pressure on families, mental health groups and social workers are reporting a rise in distress and more crisis referrals.

The need to create cultural stories of ‘coping’ and the best of humanity can silence people who have harder experiences, particularly people whose voices are quietest – or who don’t get heard however loudly they speak.

But this isn’t the 1940s. Social media at its best is connecting many, bringing marginal stories to the fore. Mainstream journalism is investigating the harms as well as the heartening stories. And social workers have agency and a voice too.

BASW is also raising the issues. I spoke last month on national radio stations, and to the *Guardian*, *Telegraph* and other newspapers, about how the public and social health risks of measures to contain coronavirus had to be acknowledged by government – and about the role of social workers in supporting and protecting people affected.

We have advised broadcasters and supported members to speak out in the media about the work they are doing to support and protect people in creative ways – and the ethical, moral and personal dilemmas they face.

We need to hear and learn from all types of COVID-19 stories, from professionals, from people using services, from all citizens. Our ‘Social work voices during COVID-19’ series is helping to capture these, in real time, to create a wealth of first person stories about what social workers do, what they are achieving, the creativity they use, the struggles and the challenges they are overcoming. We are hearing about adult social care, children in need and child protection, mental health, the experiences of agency and permanent staff at all stages of career and levels.

We will keep producing these online throughout the crisis and build clarity within the profession, with government and the public about social workers’ crucial role, our distinctive contribution to the pandemic effort – and what we need and expect on the other side of the crisis.

Apart from bearing witness to our colleagues’ experiences – which is vital in itself – we will show how social workers’ attention to social health is integral to public health and the sustained wellbeing of our four nations as a whole.

And as Lena Dominelli puts it in her article on page 33 we will work towards a fairer, kinder, more equitable and environmentally friendly world.

‘The need for cultural stories of ‘coping’ can silence people who have harder experiences’

VIEWPOINT AFTER COVID-19

We must harness the catalyst for change

Social work will have to play its part to ensure current goodwill toward the caring professions creates a lasting legacy says **Edward MacLeavy**



CCOVID-19 is a type of crisis our country has not seen in living memory. The steps being taken to deal with it would have been unthinkable a few months ago but many thousands will still lose their lives and everyone will be affected.

And yet, there has never been a greater appreciation of health and social care workers. Every Thursday people are lining the streets to 'Clap for Our Carers'. At the time of writing, over half a million people have volunteered to help vulnerable adults with their shopping, medication, and emotional support. I can't help but be moved by the public response and feel optimistic about the future.

If this public sentiment can be captured, it could be the catalyst needed to reform social care for the better. We've seen ten years of budget cuts, efficiency savings, care agencies going bust, and social workers being signed off. But perhaps COVID-19 will bring change.

Although many aspects of this crisis are unprecedented, reforming social care once it's over wouldn't be. In the aftermath of the Second World War, having worked together to protect their rights and freedoms, the British people elected Clement Atlee's government to create the NHS and welfare state in the national interest.

To overcome COVID-19 we all need to play our part, and this collective effort will have a lasting impact on the national psyche. If there ever was a time to improve care services, working conditions and outcomes for clients, it's now.

However, it's not a given that this crisis will prompt positive reform of social care. The amount of money borrowed by the government to keep the nation in business will dwarf that borrowed to save the banks in 2008.

Although there may be the will to transform social care, there may not be the budget. This is why it is so important that social care remains alongside the NHS as a top national priority. To ensure this, we must do a number of things, big and small, collective and individual.

Firstly, social care would benefit by uniting under

'If there ever was a time to improve care services, work conditions and outcomes for clients it is now'

a single banner, akin to the symbolic blue and white lettering of the NHS. We're undermined by our compartmentalised system and as a result, it's harder to galvanise the public support for our efforts.

This is not a quick fix, but conversations should be taking place between the relevant bodies, including BASW, regulators, unions and the Local Government Association.

Secondly, we must stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the NHS. I reluctantly confess that this does not always come naturally. I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels slightly aggrieved every time a government minister forgets the "... and social care" bit when praising the health service.

However, it is not the time for division in the public sector. Now is the time to support our NHS, be proud of it, and defend it in order to lift up our health colleagues. When we do this, we will see our solidarity shared and returned by the NHS.

Finally, we must build upon the public's goodwill. To do this, we must do what we do best. We must care for others, be compassionate and protect the vulnerable.

The NHS cannot do it all. When people are discharged without the proper assessments being completed due to service demands, we will step in and provide care.

When people cannot get to the shops because their carer is sick, we will be there. Yes, we are overstretched, but we mustn't abandon people or harden our stance.

We must try to help as many people as possible. And when there are difficult conversations to be had, we must be compassionate and sincere to communicate we care.

If we do this, we might start a process of positive change in social care not seen since the advent of the welfare state.

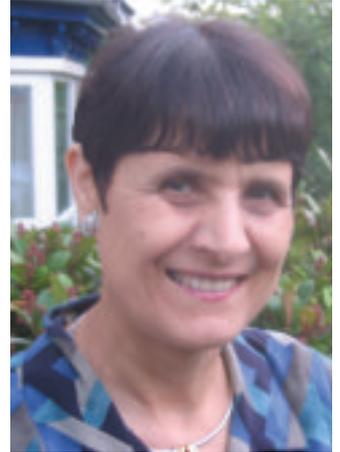
We're currently in a crisis, but that doesn't mean something good cannot come out of it.

Edward MacLeavy is a social worker for adults in the north-west of England

VIEWPOINT AFTER COVID-19

Creating a new way of being in this world

A kinder, fairer and more environmentally-friendly future is needed and social workers have an important role to play in creating it says **Lena Dominelli**



COVID-19, a new coronavirus, burst on the world in December in Wuhan, China. In a world badly prepared and without immunity, it had spread to most countries globally by mid-March and was termed a 'pandemic' by the World Health Organisation.

Countries attempting to control and contain it have had varying results with Europe – especially the UK, Italy and Spain – and the US experiencing huge numbers of fatalities, despite 'lockdowns'.

The damage socially, financially and to everyday lives is unknown. These scenarios show that nations and professions – especially the medical profession, social workers and social care workers – have been unprepared for the horrific scenes they faced in hospitals and residential homes.

It will take some time to see the end of the virus, but how can we prepare for a post-COVID world? What can help us achieve one that is collaborative, practices solidarity across national and other borders, shares knowledge and resources equitably, is less-consumerist and more environmentally-friendly?

Current responses whereby people have volunteered to help, respect, and treat each other kindly provide a helpful foundation for moving forward. Social workers can help realise this new vision along two lines: in community-based routine practice and influencing change in policies locally, nationally and internationally.

To do this they can draw on existing knowledge, especially around anti-oppressive practice (AOP) and mobilise communities and organisations to change government policies.

Promoting AOP in daily routines includes treating people with respect and dignity, active listening, strengths-based approaches, and co-producing solutions to problems.

Social and physical distancing has challenged democratic rights regarding freedom of movement and association considerably, and required innovation and skillful use of information technologies to maintain connectivities in their absence.

Using internet-based technologies can maintain connections between individuals and families, groups and

'We can draw on existing knowledge, especially around anti-oppressive practice'

communities. It carries enormous empowerment potential if it facilitates dialogues across controversies, and ethical socially just behaviour.

However, smartphones allow for intensive surveillance that require practitioners to defend the observance of human rights, including privacy, unless life or abuse is threatened.

Mobilising communities is critical to social change. If this can occur within parameters of solidarity, reciprocity, sharing goods and resources, a new way of being in the world can be established.

This requires the profession to be more active in arguing that we live in one world, where what happens to one person impacts meaningfully upon everyone and requires sharing of resources and power, and equitable engagement in international governance structures.

Social workers, their unions and professional organisations can play active roles in lobbying for changes to policies and practices at all levels of society. These should include a decent income and welfare services including in housing, health, education, and the provision of satisfying and well-paid employment for everyone.

Additionally, promoting green technologies, a reduction in fossil fuel usage by becoming more self-sufficient locally, especially in food and energy production, easy-to-use clean green public transport and less consumerist lifestyles will continue to lower greenhouse emissions and protect the planet.

Community social workers can do post-disaster reconstruction differently by establishing one-stop offices where people can engage in rebuilding more inclusive and sustainable communities together.

These will be essential in preparing for the next health pandemic. One is probably lurking around the corner unless we become custodians of the Earth and discharge a duty of care to its people, its flora, its fauna, and the physical environment.

Lena Dominelli is a social work activist scholar, practitioner and researcher with experience of disaster-based practice

REVIEWS

BOOKS

A helpful guide to the risks of a rapidly changing digital world

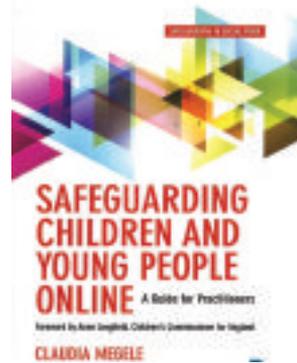
Title: Safeguarding Children and Young People Online

Author: Claudia Megele

Publisher: Policy Press

ISBN: 9781447331827

Price: £16.99* - BASW members get a 30 per cent off at www.policypress.co.uk using code WEX7413EGW



A young person's online activity can pose dilemmas for the social worker. Do you restrain and limit this, thus risking covert, unmonitored activity? Or do you cast a critical eye over online risks and go from there?

Safeguarding Children and Young People Online takes the second approach, guiding the practitioner through risks to the child of abuse, online grooming, bullying, digital self-harm and the rest.

Instead of denying or restricting them internet access – which can isolate the child from learning about and developing resilience in the digital world – this book proposes a digital citizenship programme for young people. Equipping social workers with research-informed understandings enables them to assess online risks to the child, and support them in safely navigating their online worlds.

Eleven chapters cover fast-changing concepts of digital landscapes, online identities and digital citizenship. The book develops a 'relational boundary scale' to understand online relationships, and introduces a psych-social-ecological framework (representing the intersection of social media across the child's personal and social life) to assess risk and resilience. Other chapters look at play and games, online gambling, sexting, grooming, cyberbullying, cybercrime, online radicalisation and tech trends.

The book is clear it is not a procedural guide to e-safeguarding. Rather, it offers models, tools and principles for the practitioner to use.

In a rapidly-evolving digital world, this is a welcome check-in point for safeguarding workers, even though the principles it sets out will likely outlive the tech platforms the book describes.

Angie Ash, principal Angela Ash Associates

TV/RADIO

Moving story of disability rights fight

**Crip Camp
Netflix**



A summer camp for disabled teenagers inspired a disability rights revolution in America.

That's the subject of *Crip Camp*, which follows the lives of several people who attended Camp Jened in the early 1970s.

The camp offered them something that shouldn't be remarkable but was: a chance to be treated as whole, complete, people. And a temporary escape from the exclusion and discrimination they usually faced.

At the camp they played sports, music, danced, flirted. Relationships blossomed. When they left it felt, as one says, "like going back in time" to a more regressive society.

But the camp inspired a grassroots movement that campaigned for disability rights since the 1970s.

That struggle, and the huge sacrifices and anger it took, is recounted here. The film culminates in a major victory in getting anti-discrimination laws passed. But as one of the group says, it is "only a tiny tip of the iceberg" – and it won't mean much unless society's attitudes to disabled people shift with it.

Andy McNicoll

BOOKS

A book oozing with ideas to help your therapeutic work

Title: Cleo the Crocodile Activity Book

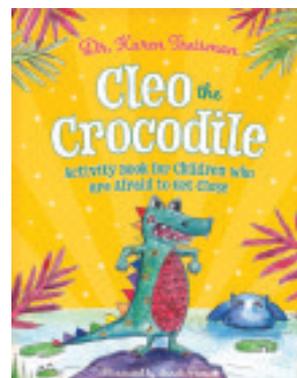
Author: Dr. Karen Treisman

Publisher: Jessica Kingsley

ISBN: 9781785925511

Price: £18.99

Website: www.jkp.com



Dr Karen Treisman has produced a wonderful therapeutic resource using *Cleo the Crocodile*. I loved this book – but I would recommend you ignore the age guide.

The first part is Cleo's story and this is pitched at young children (aged five-ten) in a friendly colourful illustrated book. The style may not be appropriate for older children or teenagers. However, when I was stuck for finding the right approach for a young person (adolescent) I was working with I found the answer in Cleo.

The book includes suggestions aimed at encouraging reflection and conversation using light hearted, non-threatening activities. Although I wouldn't use the book in person with a teenager as

they may find it childish I will use the activities and be modifying them for an older audience

The second part of the book offers craft ideas based on the story. Part three explores themes around various feelings that Cleo has, including positive emotions. This gives a good balance to the book. The fourth part looks at relationships and following the certificate there is a helpful section for adults to read on how to support a child using the book's resources.

Cleo the Crocodile positively oozes with ideas, activities, guidance and resources, so much that it could easily be a one-off purchase to meet the majority of your therapeutic toolkit needs.

Ms R. Rayner, independent social worker

SELF CARE

Ways to switch off from work during lockdown

With restrictions on what we can do outside after work, PSW looks at options for de-stressing indoors

1. Get creative writing

“Everybody has a book in them” or so the saying goes. Fancy finding yours? If so, online learning website Future Learn is offering a free course on writing fiction. It’s been put together by the Open University and runs for eight weeks. If writing’s not your bag, there are plenty of other free courses on there including on mindfulness, nutrition and wellbeing.

www.futurelearn.com

2. Learn a language

Apparently more than half of UK adults wish we hadn’t let the language skills we learnt at school slip. Maybe the lockdown/hours of isolation during the coronavirus crisis offers a chance to revisit them. Duolingo is the most popular language learning app and has free and paid for courses.

www.duolingo.com

3. Tune in to slow down

Looking for an “antidote to today’s frenzied world”? That’s what the BBC’s Slow Radio podcast offers up with soundscapes of everything from woodland birds, monks chanting and hillwalkers’ boots. The idea is to offer up a space to be reflective and many listeners say it helps them sleep better. [BBC Sounds and other podcast apps](#)

4. Play an instrument

Playing music can provide a retreat after a stressful day. If you got a guitar years ago and never got round to playing now might be the time to dig it out. Fender are offering free lessons for three months. YouTube has lots of lessons for keyboards and other instruments too.

www.fender.com/play

5. Dance

Fancy trying to unleash your inner Billy Elliot or Beyonce? Some of the big dance studios are offering free online tutorials during lockdown. Sadlers Wells and the Royal Academy of Dance are offering ballet. For something a bit more pop, check out Seen on Screen’s instagram lessons. The studio has free online routines inspired by Britney Spears, Rihanna and Beyonce for you to try.

www.instagram.com/schoolofsos

6. Yoga

Lots of social workers regularly use yoga classes for self-care. But with leisure centres and gyms closed for the foreseeable future, online alternatives are needed. One of the most popular is Yoga with Adriene, which offers a range of free classes including a ‘30 days of yoga’ set of lessons.

www.yogawithadriene.com

7. Exercising

We’re being limited to how much we can exercise outdoors so plenty of fitness classes are offering different ways to get fit inside. Fitness instructor Joe Wicks is running daily PE lessons for kids on his YouTube channel. Meanwhile Bristol gym Starks Fitness is running daily home workouts on Instagram.

www.instagram.com/starksfitnessgym

8. Meditate

Meditation and mindfulness can help us switch off – at least temporarily – from the stress of work and daily life. There are plenty of apps that offer a guided introduction to mindfulness. One commonly used option is Headspace, which offers a free trial.

www.headspace.com

LIVING IT

Reflections of a service user
by **Jodie McLoughlin**

The great leveller? We'll have to wait and see...

I will begin by saying that I hope you and your loved ones are safe and doing as well as you can be doing in these exceptionally challenging and worrying times.

As much as we appear to be ‘all in this together’ I think it is important to remember that those who are not already living in a position of privilege are most likely to be struggling more than others when it comes to things like accessing basic necessities, staying mentally healthy and coping with social isolation.

I feel that coronavirus has been something of a leveller and evened the playing field when it comes to the status of those who are unemployed versus those who are employed, those who have to claim benefits versus those who don’t and might not ever have had to and also the abled bodied versus disabled people.

I use the word ‘versus’ because over the last decade of austerity, social instability, ‘othering’ of the vulnerable and polarisation it has very much felt like ‘versus’ or pitting one vulnerable group against another. I think that we can to a large extent blame the media and political extremes for this.

When it comes to welfare, now more than ever we can see that bureaucratic, cruel, penalising and non-personalised systems such as universal credit are not working and will not work in the long term for the majority.

Perhaps (hopefully) now more people will see that working together, collectivism and greater funding of vital state interventions (such as the NHS) are necessary as opposed to the extreme nationalism, individualism and selfishness we’ve witnessed in a post truth ‘society’ over the past decade or so. Helping others as well as ourselves and having empathy for the greater good are not ‘far’ left ideals. They make sense practically and economically as well.

I worry about those who are not on the government’s most vulnerable list. GPs and social services recognise their vulnerability due to their disabilities and health problems. Groups such as blind people and those with autism and other learning difficulties are not usually able to shop unaided, usually cannot drive and are maybe having to self-isolate, yet they cannot get shopping slots online. Mutual aid groups are purely run on the goodwill and professionalism of volunteers.

I will finish by saying that....

“Sickness or unemployment is neither an individual failure or a weakness of character.”

How to enable home and flexible working



Advice to managers from BASW England professional officer Gavin Moorghen

1 Empower and support social workers to work flexibly. Social work from home has rocketed and work-life pressures have grown. Managers should encourage flexible working with social workers and make allowances for caring responsibilities, food shopping and other personal and family needs.

2 Don't let social workers fall off the radar. Social workers are feeling isolated and anxious. Do acknowledge these feelings with your staff and take steps to counter this. To not do so leaves them emotionally vulnerable and potentially compromises their ability to function in the job. Build in support for social workers to share worries and concerns and use of technology to do this. This could include giving time for social workers to engage in one of the BASW online support forums.

3 Excessive hours is rarely a good thing. It is all too easy to switch on the phone, open up the laptop and work at the times you should be relaxing and living. Look out for evidence of round-the-clock working and signs of fatigue. Insist your social workers

'Insist social workers take back time owed and lead by example'

take back time owed and lead by example. Look after yourself and don't fall into the trap of sending 3am emails.

4 Check social workers are digitally aware, resourced and prepared. Social workers in lockdown are competing for band-width with members of their households, there are varying abilities with technologies and in some cases the equipment is inadequate. Many are having to re-learn to practice through digital platforms. Check your social workers are digitally resourced and educated to use the technology to deliver good and ethical social work. Look at the BASW website for ideas and guidance.

5 Be aware of the benefits and the pitfalls. Make sure that social workers are setting personal and professional boundaries, be mindful of the risks of screen overload, burnout and stress and use supervision to support, challenge and improve practice. Finally for both yourself and your staff keep yourselves safe and remember when it is time to switch off the laptop and turn on the kettle...

STUDENT NOTES



Jenny Hudson is a student doing a Masters in social work

The impacts of COVID-19 reach everyone and for us, it means a postponement of our first 70-day placement. We don't know when the placement will be, nor whether there will be any adjustments to our course as a result. The academic part of our first year is over. So, we are at a hiatus, although not such a tumultuous one as for those that have lost loved ones or their job.

I have continued with my role volunteering for a football team run by a charity for people with learning disabilities. Within a day of the lockdown announcement, a 'wellbeing and staying in touch' group was created by the charity on WhatsApp. The principle was simple: every day, a video with a physical challenge was posted and everyone in the group could do some, or all of the challenges. I did the first and so did lots of other people. I had been feeling quite overwhelmed that day, thinking about the different ways isolation will affect us. Seeing familiar faces having a go at a plank and thoughtfully encouraging each other's efforts really cheered me up.

Weeks into lockdown, the daily challenges are still coming; some are physical, some are fun and jokey, others, like choosing four things that mean a lot to you, about keeping up the social side. Every day, engagement is strong and when people share how they

are having difficulty with the situation, support is readily offered, from service users as much as from the professionals.

What works particularly effectively with the wellbeing challenge is the way it is a true strengths-based approach: this is a group of people who have come together because they enjoy doing sports. We are not simply asking them how they are because this can sometimes be a difficult question to answer. By keeping in touch with a physical challenge, we are all doing something we enjoy and through that, people can share how they are feeling.

On our course, we have discussed professional boundaries and clearly in areas of statutory work, social media is problematic. In support and therapeutic services, it is perhaps not so clear cut; indeed, across the third sector, there has been a huge move from face-to-face to different forms of digital and social channels.

In reaching people this way, we are working in a different framework. I will send messages during an evening or weekend to respond to the times others send videos. My dog might stroll into a video, my son, who volunteers with me, might do a challenge. I wonder if one of the many consequences of the pandemic is we learn more about ways of engaging, particularly using digital media.

WORLD VIEW

We must keep contact with community during COVID-19



AROUND THE
WORLD IN
SOCIAL WORK

Italy

How is social work responding to coronavirus?

Coordinating resources, distributing food, arranging volunteers for delivering medicine. Social workers are working individually with people and families experiencing economic difficulty or other vulnerabilities and lobbying government on decisions about support for people in vulnerable situations. We are also operating phone lines to help people have access to the correct information and supporting people who have lost family members.

What are the biggest challenges?

Individuals experiencing poverty, supporting older people and those who have lost family members, responding to requests for economic support. A big problem is the lack of protective equipment like hand sanitiser.

How is the workforce coping?

A lot of people are working remotely from home during lockdown. It is very hard for workers to sanitise at home and in the office.

Are you getting the support you need?

No, there isn't the support that's necessary.



Paola Pontarollo
President of
the Italian
Association
of Social
Workers

What work issues do you come across?

We are having to communicate with people via the phone rather than face-to-face. The same for remote working, this is not common in Italy within the social work system.

What advice do you have for UK workers?

Attend to families and issues like domestic violence and child abuse. It's very important to have dialogue with the community because there are new groups of people in difficulty who may not ask for help. Work with families who have lost members from COVID-19.

What's inspired you and kept you going?

The possibility to support and help people.

How will this change Italian society?

There will be economic crises, a lot of people will lose work and poverty will increase.

How will it change social work?

In the future social work will be harder because we face an economic emergency and difficulties within family relationships. There will be a lot of trauma and mourning.

DIARY OF A NQSW

May 2020

After a few weeks of being based at home I needed to sort a work/home life balance and so fixed up my box room as an office. The difference that has made to me already is huge. Working from home in this job is challenging as I miss the 'switch off' from leaving the office. I learnt to mentally leave my caseload and the families I work with at the office when I left at the end of the day, and then pick it up in the morning. Working from home, and having worked in my living room, meant at the end of the day my work and the families I work with were still with me. There was no divide and it felt almost intrusive into my personal life and home. There was also the challenge of having a rather large young dog who fails to grasp the idea that I am home and working and not at home for him! Being brought a dog toy or having my new work colleague sitting and staring and whining at me whilst trying to focus has been an experience I never thought I would have as a social worker.

Now that I have my separate office space it has meant at the beginning of the day I pick up my work and have somewhere to leave it when the day comes to end. I can close my study door and leave it all without it continuing to play on my mind or end up with me opening up my laptop or continuing to work past working hours. To be honest I still do this at times as due to the coronavirus there are members of my team self isolating so any of their visits or s47s need to be picked up.

It still astounds me how low my caseload is at my new LA job. It is unfortunate that due to coronavirus this has not meant I am able to do more direct work with children. Visits are kept to those cases which are high risk and in most need. The referrals are lower currently and there is an awareness that when schools are back and agencies are completing face-to-face work we are likely to see a rise in referrals. This does cause me concern as children are not being seen and therefore unable to disclose any worries, harm or risks.

As a profession that usually receives negative messages from the media, I also feel now would be a time to talk about the good work we do.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

BY SOCIAL WORK
CHEF EMMA BINT

In this time of lockdown, I thought something from food writer and anti-poverty campaigner Jack Monroe's book *Tin Can Cook* would be good. This is a book I often recommend to people I work with because it uses everyday store cupboard items. For anyone having to self-isolate in particular who may have limited access to fresh produce the book is particularly useful as it provides quick and easy meals using store items.

The one I'm choosing is a healthy pasta dish which can also be an easy lunchtime meal. This recipe is really quick and it can be frozen.

LOCKDOWN PASTA

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4)

200g dried pasta shapes
1 x 400g tin of mushroom soup
1 x 320g tin of sweetcorn
1 x 160g tin of tuna (use two if you have them)
Salt and pepper to season
Cheese for topping (if you have it).

METHOD

Place pasta in pan with mushroom soup.
Fill the emptied tin of mushroom soup with water and add this.
Bring to the boil, simmer until pasta is cooked.
Add sweetcorn and tuna (drained), stir, season and serve.
Top with cheese if you have it.



ASK DEREK

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

Q: I'm hoping to keep spirits up by running a virtual pub quiz (you might have heard of these?) on Zoom. The topic will be social work magazines from the 1970s to the present day. Fancy entering a team?
Kirsty, Glasgow

Derek says: Blimey Karen. I'm struggling to separate work and life enough as it is just now. Think I'll have to virtually social distance myself from this one – it's too close to home.

Q: How are you coping with lockdown Derek? Are you putting your social work skills to good use in your community?
Lucy, Cardiff

Derek says: I've been looking out for my

elderly neighbour. She asked me to get her 'some pills' the other day. I thought she meant medication and offered to go to the pharmacy. Turns out she meant Holsten Pils. It's the new regular order.

Q: I've noticed many people posting feelgood videos on social media and wondered if you would be putting anything up that might help in these troubled times?
Jenny, Barrow-in-Furness

Derek says: You can have a video of me in front of the telly if you want. Or tucking into my pie and chips if that kind of thing floats your boat.

Q: This enforced period of confinement has served as an opportunity to pause and

reflect on how we live our lives. Strolling through the quiet streets and hearing the twittering of the birds moved me to contemplate how I should appreciate nature more. Have you had any similar revelations, Derek?
Dawn, Brighton

Derek says: Yes, cancel my subscription to Amazon Prime. Next day delivery's a lie.

Q: We all need some light relief from the constantly scary news about coronavirus. Tell us a good joke, Derek.
Gavin, Belfast

Derek says: What time does Sean Connery get to Wimbledon? About 'Tennish.
Email your dilemmas to derek@basw.co.uk

ENGLAND VIEWS

Still frontline services but not as we know it in these times of crisis



It's 40 years since the suicide of Ian Curtis from the band, Joy Division. I'd implore everyone to listen to *Love will Tear us Apart*, and to remember and reflect on his amazing talent cut short.

Suicide and mental health is a dominating issue within frontline practice.

A BASW activist recently told me about a woman who has taken multiple overdoses. Normally the service user would be treated as an inpatient.

However, the pandemic has meant thresholds for bed spaces have rocketed and therefore the service user is being supported as an outpatient.

The social worker tells me she has spent time directly working with this person albeit remotely. It means managing a higher level of risk to the norm, being empowered to take a flexible approach to established work practices and fundamentally accepting and tolerating a fall in standards.

I hear the service user is responding to the intervention. The social worker is a sound practitioner but is having to personally redefine what is good

practice. Events have revealed a vacuum of national guidance for social workers in a crisis.

I've been running online forums with BASW members for social workers seeking mutual support from other association members.

Feelings of isolation and anxiety both for social workers and their service users are immense. This is exacerbated by the lack of protective equipment and practice guidance.

What has been most heartening is that in the face of risk, fear and uncertainty members are working together to share ideas, support one another and find ways to deliver the best possible service to the people and communities they support.

Whether through cutting out bureaucracy or using technology to improve the working relationships with service users, innovative practice is taking place.

If you are interested in supporting or attending an online forum please contact me at gavin.moorghen@basw.co.uk.

Gavin Moorghen, professional officer

'It means managing a higher level of risk to the norm'

NORTHERN IRELAND VIEWS

In the absence of guidance we have had a fragmented approach to PPE



Since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, BASW NI has focused on supporting and safeguarding our members as they work amidst extraordinarily challenging situations.

I have been in touch with many of you, by phone and videocall discussing the new difficulties you are facing.

These conversations have highlighted that in the absence of regional guidance there has been a fragmented approach to use of personal protective equipment. The situation seems to be improving but I've received accounts that in many cases PPE is insufficient or unavailable.

While the majority of home visits have been stood down, those which continue to be made are restricted to the most high-risk cases – primarily child safeguarding and mental health assessments. In these scenarios it will often be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain social distancing from service users and others in their household.

We have pressed for a commitment from the health minister that PPE will be made available to all frontline social workers. In light of the challenges facing social workers who continue to conduct home visits, we have

repeatedly called for the publication of practice guidance to ensure a regionally consistent approach across the five health and social care trusts.

While this valuable lobbying and advocacy work has gone on, BASW NI has also taken practical steps to help members deal with the stress they are contending with. We have hosted a series of online discussion forums which have allowed members to come together, albeit virtually, to chat about what they're going through and discuss what, if anything, is working well.

Our research project *Voices of Social Work Through The Troubles* – which was published last year – highlighted the extent to which social workers valued peer support as they worked throughout the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Now, more than ever, it is vital that colleagues assist one another, not just at a practical level, but also an emotional one. By hosting our forums, BASW NI aims to help members to process the emotions and deal with the anxieties many of us are facing. Our hope is that in turn, we will help you to help each other.

Martina Jordan, professional officer

'In these scenarios it will often be difficult if not impossible to maintain social distancing'

SCOTLAND VIEWS

Unprecedented challenge is uniting us in ways that seemed impossible



On Tuesday the 31st of March, the Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill was laid before the Scottish Parliament. The bill, said to “complement” the Coronavirus Act 2020 passed by the UK Parliament on 25 March, introduced several emergency measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following day, the bill was debated at all three stages by MSPs at Holyrood. This meant the team in Scotland had just one day to interrogate an entire piece of legislation and brief MSPs from all political parties on areas we felt needed to be addressed. Despite this work – and the work of many other organisations across Scotland – the bill passed through the full legislative process, with fewer MSPs than usual present in order to maintain social distancing rules.

The word unprecedented is one we have repeatedly heard – and one that will continue to be used in the weeks and months to come. The speed at which this legislation made its way through parliament, the unanimous support, the putting aside of ideological and party-political allegiance, in Scotland and across the UK – is indeed unprecedented.

‘Physically we’re far apart but there is a sense of togetherness’

Provisions made in law that give Scottish ministers, local authorities and the police powers which, in ordinary circumstances, would be deemed to significantly breach our human rights – unprecedented. Knowing that every single person you see out your window, in a shop, at the park, or as you scroll through your social media feeds is going through similar things as you – and it’s happening all over the world – unprecedented.

The COVID-19 outbreak has united us in a way that seemed impossible just a few months ago. We are fighting a war against an invisible and deadly enemy. The sense of togetherness and community this has brought is welcome. It has also encouraged many of us to take a step back and re-evaluate our lives and what’s important. This comes even though physically, many of us couldn’t be further apart.

Now more than ever, we must continue to play our part, as professionals, colleagues, family, friends and citizens, to protect ourselves, our public services and the people we love most.

Emily Galloway, communications and policy officer

SOCIAL WORKERS UNION VIEWS

Employers have duty of care to you - the pandemic doesn’t change that



The Advice & Representation service are getting numerous calls about coronavirus and employers’ responses to it. By and large, social work employers are exercising their duty of care to their staff and staff are feeling supported and protected. Unfortunately, the calls we are getting are from social workers who are not feeling supported, nor are they feeling protected.

Social workers are performing varying roles across all four UK countries during what is an unprecedented international pandemic. All of these roles have differing levels of contact with the public so demand different levels of support and equipment to help minimise the risk to everyone involved.

Additionally, there are new and temporary systems of working that we have to implement for the best possible outcomes. BASW has provided guidance about how social workers can protect themselves and their service users in the course of their work, including guidance specific to the challenges of carrying out home visits in the current climate. You can find it on the association’s website.



We are also hearing about social workers being told to attend offices when there does not appear to be a reason for it, or to visit homes without an understanding of the risk involved, for example.

Unfortunately these are uncertain times, so A&R has to weigh the advice we give with the current government and ACAS guidance, regulatory body guidance, and existing employment law.

BASW and SWU are continuing to raise issues with policymakers and update our COVID-19 resources.

If you have concerns at work, we advise you to express them to your line management, escalate if necessary, but try to negotiate with your employer so that they get what they want, and you feel safe and supported.

All face-to-face contact with service users should be assessed for necessity and for the safest way possible to achieve the goal without putting anyone at risk. If you are in any doubt about whether your employer is doing everything they can to exercise their legal duty of care toward you, please call the A&R Service at 0121 622 8413.

Lyse Hurd, A&R officer

WALES VIEWS

We change, we adapt, but we never lose sight of who we are or our task



In Wales, as everywhere, the coronavirus pandemic has seen BASW Cymru adapt and change how it does things so that it can continue to offer support, advice and guidance to members.

Our use of digital communication and social media is increasing, we are becoming more proficient with Zoom, Skype and Teams as platforms to communicate and we are now delivering webinars and training sessions online.

What doesn't change however is the recognition that social work is about relationships and being connected to one another. It is, in essence, about respecting the rights of every individual, regardless of their background or their abilities and striving to make sure they can play an equal part in society.

Social workers are human rights champions who understand the value of human relationships to make a real and positive difference by working together, in our teams, across professions and with families and using our skills, our learning and our knowledge in the service of others.

While we recognise that this is a very alien and strange new world, we adapt, we develop, and we change but we

never lose sight of why we wanted to be social workers in the first place. In order to maintain that focus, BASW Cymru has set up several online forums for social work staff and students that offer a space for discussion, reflection and learning from each other. Bring yourself, a cuppa and a favourite snack and join us in recreating those informal, no particular agenda, chit-chat, peer supervision sessions you're already used to. These sessions will run every week, or more frequently if desired, and you can dip in and out as you please. Details are on the BASW website events page.

We are also offering a 'Siarad 'da Ni/Talk to Us' initiative, a more individual, one-to-one session where you can have a listening ear, share your concerns, tell us your experiences and ask any questions. You can email us on cymru@basw.co.uk with your preferred contact details and we'll aim to get back to you within 24 hours.

Finally, make sure you regularly check the BASW website, for a host of UK and Wales specific resources and practice guides about the coronavirus pandemic.

Phillip Mitchell, professional officer

'Social workers are human rights champions who understand the value of relationships'

CYMRU VIEWS

Rydym yn newid, rydym yn addasu, ond nid ydym byth yn colli golwg o'r hyn yr ydym na beth yw ein tasg

Yng Nghymru, fel ym mhob man arall, ma'r pandemig Coronafeirws wedi gweld BASW Cymru yn addasu ac yn newid y ffordd o wneud pethau fel y gellir parhau i gynnig cefnogaeth, cyngor ag arweiniad i'n haelodau. Mae ein defnydd o gyfathrebiad digidol a'r cyfryngau cymdeithasol yn cynyddu ac rydym yn dod yn fwy hyddysg yn y defnydd o Zoom, Skype a Teams fel llwyfannau i gyfathrebu ac erbyn hyn rydym yn cyflwyno Webinarau a sesiynau hyfforddi ar-lein.

Yr hyn sydd heb newid, fodd bynnag, yw'r gydnabyddiaeth bod gwaith cymdeithasol yn ymwneud a pherthynas a bod mewn cysylltiad a'n gilydd. Yn ei hanfod, ma'e'n ymwneud a pharchu hawliau pob unigolyn heb ystyried eu cefndir neu eu gallu, ac i ymdrech i sicrhau y gallent chwarae rhan gyfartal yn y gymdeithas.

Mae gweithwyr cymdeithasol yn hyrwyddwyr Hawliau Dynol yn eu dealltwriaeth o sut mae gwerth perthynas dynol yn gwneud gwahaniaeth gwirioneddol a chadarnhaol trwy gydweithio mewn timau, ar draws y proffesiwn a gyda theuluoedd, a'n defnydd o'n sgiliau, ein dysg a'n gwybodaeth wrth wasanaethu eraill. Wrth gydnabod ein bod mewn byd newydd anghydnewid a ddieithr iawn, rydym yn addasu, yn

datblygu, ac yn newid ond nid ydym byth yn colli golwg ar yr hyn a wnaeth i ni fod eisiau bod yn weithwyr cymdeithasol yn y lle cyntaf.

Er mwyn cadw'r ffocws hwn, mae BASW Cymru wedi creu nifer o fforymau ar-lein i staff gwaith cymdeithasol a myfyrwyr, sy'n cynnig lle i drafod, myfyrio a dysgu oddi wrth ein gilydd. Dowch i ymuno a ni, a dowch a' phaned a thamaid i fwyta wrth ail-greu'r sesiynau ymgom anffurfiol heb unrhyw agenda penodol, a goruchwyliaeth eich cyfoedion rydych eisoes yn gyfarwydd â hwy. Fe gynhelir y sesiynau hyn pob wythnos, neu yn amlach os dymunir hyn, a chewch daro i mewn ag allan fel y mynnch. Mae manylion ar gael ar dudalen digwyddiadau gwefan BASW <https://www.basw.co.uk/> events

Rydym hefyd yn cynnig menter 'Siarad 'da Ni/Talk to Us' , sesiwn i unigolion cael trafod un i un, lle cewch rywun i wrando arnoch, cewch rannu eich profiadau a gofyn unrhyw gwestiwn. Cewch gysylltu trwy e-bost ar cymru@basw.co.uk gyda'ch manylion cyswllt dewisol a byddwn yn ceisio cysylltu â chi o fewn 24 awr.

Phillip Mitchell, swyddog proffesiynol

'Mae gweithwyr cymdeithasol yn hyrwyddwyr hawliau dynol ac yn deall gwerth perthynas'

BASW

The professional association for
social work and social workers

BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

REVISED FORMAL NOTICE

This is the revised formal notice that this meeting will take place and is the annual meeting for all members to report back on our work and to make decisions about priorities for the future.

The meeting will take place on 15th September 2020 in Birmingham and accessible online.

All members are welcome.

Social workers and allies who are not members of BASW can also attend but won't be able to vote.

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

You will need to send this in by **19th June 2020**, to governance@basw.co.uk.

We will publish the motions and other members can then send in amendments by **21st August 2020**.

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

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

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

BASW, Wellesley House, 37 Waterloo Street, Birmingham B2 5PP

www.basw.co.uk/agm

Formal Notice SWU 2020 Annual Conference and General Meeting

Friday 25th September 2020

The 2020 Annual General Meeting of the Social Workers' Union will be held at The Mechanics Centre, 105 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD

The timetable is as follows:

31-7-2020 Deadline for receipt of motions

4-9-2020 Notice of any proposed amendment to rules given in writing to members

18-9-2020 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.

SWU Social
Workers
Union

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

www.swu-union.org.uk

Social Workers' Benevolent Trust

Caring for those who care
Please make a donation

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

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

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

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

You can make donations to the trust by:

● Online Giving

Online donations can be made through Charity Choice website

● Standing Orders

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

● One-off Payments

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

● Leaving a Legacy

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

More details are available
on the website:

swbt.org



Charity No. 262889



ARE YOU A SERVING OR RETIRED UK SEAFARER?

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www.seafarersupport.org www.facebook.com/seafarersupport [@seafarersupport](https://twitter.com/seafarersupport)

BASW England

The professional association for
social work and social workers

BASW England Criminal Justice Group

The Criminal Justice Group recognises the important interface between social work and the criminal and youth justice systems. The Group values the contributions of members from a range of social work backgrounds to influence BASW policies and formulate responses to relevant government consultations and reforms.

Members are concerned with a range of issues including: the protection of rights, ethical offender management, working with children and families and the integration of social work interventions in the rehabilitation of offenders.

2020 meetings date:

3 August (1:30-4pm) Skype

5 October (1:30-4pm) Skype

Chair Vacancy

For further information and to apply visit:
www.basw.co.uk/jobs

Face-to-face meetings take place at the BASW Birmingham office and lunch is provided. Skype access is available for face-to-face/office meetings.

www.basw.co.uk/england



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