

PROFESSIONAL Social Work

November 2021



Inside a food bank

Preparing for the hard winter ahead

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social work and social workers

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David's story

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

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



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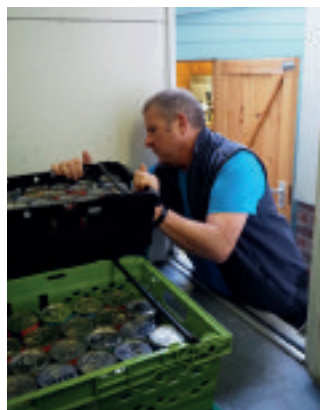


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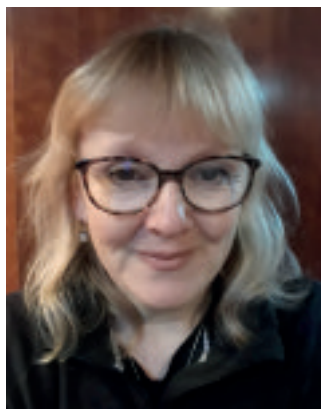


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From the Editor
SHAHID NAQVI



The blame game in which we all ultimately lose

Ailsa Pearce's article on page 16 is uncomfortable reading. It is also important reading.

For it's a measured account from a committed, competent and professional social worker who has served in child protection for 20 years – way longer than most.

Now, however, she's leaving because she's had enough of the blame culture. As she says: "Every child protection social worker has to learn what it is like to spend 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with the nagging fear that a child is being abused, or may even die, on their watch."

We have all seen how this can play out in public, most awfully after the death of Peter Connolly in 2008 and the politically-driven vilification of social workers in Haringey and the authority's then head of children's services Sharon Shoesmith (see page five).

That, as is well documented, led to risk-averse practice and an increase in families investigated and children coming into care.

The continuing presence of blame cultures and a lack of understanding that social work isn't an exact science anymore than preventing terrorism remains an issue. It also, ironically, makes children less safe by creating a more unstable workforce. This is something policymakers should reflect upon and seek to address.

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

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BASW
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Other:

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

NEWS



Media criticism of social workers saw a 129 per cent rise in section 47 investigations after Baby P

Vilification of our profession must end - or lose workforce

A blame culture that sees child protection social workers vilified when tragedies occur must be challenged if the sector is to retain experienced practitioners.

That was a key message from social workers at an online event last month featuring Sharon Shoesmith, Haringey's director of children's services when Peter Connolly – 'Baby P' – died.

It comes as child protection social worker Aisla Pearce writes a powerful account in this edition of *PSW* on why she is leaving the sector after 20 years, saying she's "tired of living a life of constant fear".

Shoesmith was dismissed from her job in 2008 by then education secretary Ed Balls following a political and media witch-hunt – a sacking later ruled unlawful in the High Court.

She drew a contrast between how social workers and the security services are treated when a tragedy happens involving individuals known to services.

"If you look at the London Bridge attack and Manchester Arena, the security services said, 'yes, we knew the guy, he was on our books'.

"Like them, we had Peter on our books. What happens in the two cases is the social worker gets destroyed but they will say about terrorism, 'We are on high alert, this will happen again'. We don't know the names of anyone in the security services. They aren't challenged. Even though there are such huge atrocities, we accept we didn't intercept those guys. Compare that to what happens to social workers."

The parallel was given extra resonance last month with the murder of MP Sir David Amess. Speaking after it emerged his killer was known to MI5, home secretary Priti Patel said: "We have the best security forces in the world." Ray Jones, emeritus

professor of social work at Kingston University and St George's University of London, said: "If someone dies in hospital, we don't have to blame a doctor. If someone creates a criminal offence we don't have to blame a police officer. If someone fails an exam we don't have to blame a teacher. But it looks as though if children are abused and neglected there must be someone to blame beyond the abusers. And often that lands on the social workers."

Lucy Butler, a director of children's services in West Sussex, said child protection was "one of the most complex jobs you can do" and constantly under scrutiny.

"We are one of the most highly regulated professions and directors often lose their job when Ofsted says the service is inadequate."

She added: "It's not just the social worker that makes a decision to take a child into care but it is just so easy to blame social workers."

Section 47 investigations have gone up 129 per cent and the number of children coming into care has nearly doubled to 80,000 in England and Wales over the last decade. That has been blamed on risk-averse cultures due to local authorities fearing the next Baby P case on their watch.

Sharon Evans, a social worker of 30 years, said: "It made it harder to retain experienced social workers in child protection. We are damned if we do and damned if we don't."

The online discussion was hosted by the slow news platform Tortois and can be viewed at www.tortoismedia.com.

Read Aisla's article on page 16

See also a social worker's diary - page 37

Mindfulness interventions don't work

Attempts by employers to improve workforce mental health with coaching and stress management classes are ineffective, a study has found.

Classes in relaxation, mindfulness and stress reduction are "not satisfactory" when trying to address worker wellbeing, the University of Cambridge research claims.

By analysing data on 26,471 employees in 128 UK organisations, researchers found "the primary finding from this research is that, across the board, there is no effect on employee wellbeing".

William Fleming, author of the research report, said: "These types of interventions appear to be a convenient option for employers concerned with mental health, including the government, which as an employer implements various wellbeing programmes throughout the civil service and NHS.

"Merely offering short-term programmes or classes is not satisfactory for solving long-standing problems of worker wellbeing."

Time to invest in early years

A £500 million package to help families was announced in the autumn budget. It includes plans to create a further 75 family hubs in England. The announcement came after a coalition led by the National Children's Bureau and including BASW urged the government to invest in prevention and early intervention to stop 'levelling up' becoming a "hollow phrase".

NEWS

Database will hold councils to account over care leaver offer

An online resource informing care leavers of the support they are entitled to under their local authority has been launched.

The Care Leaver Local Offer website was created by businessman Terry Galloway, himself a care leaver, to expose the postcode lottery of provision in England.

Galloway submitted Freedom of Information requests to create the database which is also aimed at social workers and personal advisers.

There are 99,855 care leavers in England, cared for by 332 councils, from combined authorities to district councils.

The website lists all the services provided to care leavers.

Galloway asked all 181 district councils in England if they took responsibility for publishing a local offer and found only 11 per cent did.

Only 20 of the councils who responded said they accept responsibility for care leavers, and less than half (43 per cent) provide mentors.

Less than a third act as guarantors for housing and only 43 per cent cover mobile broadband costs.

Most respondents cover passports, birth certificates, council tax exemption and driving licence costs and around a third to half of councils provide access to leisure services.

Disparities exist, Terry says, because of confusion around the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which sets out a requirement that district councils have to create local offers for care leavers.

He says: "The problem is the tier system. Many think the responsibility is only on the councils that have social services departments, but the legislation is clear. It applies to district councils and the nine combined authorities in England – they all have to produce a Local Care Leaver offer in consultation with care leavers. If they don't have one, they are breaking the law."

Galloway was motivated by his own childhood experiences – he lived in more than 100 homes as a child, and was moved around the UK with his brother and sister.

Galloway added: "I decided there has to be



Terry Galloway, creator of the database

some meaning out of it all, to have been through all that suffering for a purpose.

"I understand what needs to be done in the system, having been through it. In order to fix the care system, we need to help young people move into communities and become interdependent, rather than independent – where often they will become isolated, mix with the wrong people, and get into trouble.

"What's needed is linking housing services with work opportunities and building relationships that get young people into work and thriving, with the right support."

It is hoped the website at www.careleaveroffer.co.uk will help individuals and campaigners to lobby local authorities to provide better services.

99 'homes' by the age of 14 - see page 26

mental health support failing in kinship care

Thousands of children in kinship care are not getting the support they need for issues arising from previous abuse or neglect, research has found.

Almost two thirds of kinship carers believe their children have long-term mental or physical health needs but only 33 per cent received a formal diagnosis.

Of those that did, 40 per cent were diagnosed with anxiety or depression, 38 per cent with behavioural issues, and 38 per cent with an attachment disorder. Thirty-six per cent had special educational needs – three times above average.

More than 1,650 responded to the survey by charity Kinship. It believes health assessments should be mandatory for children in kinship care as it is for those in foster care.

Lucy Peake, chief executive of Kinship, said: "The children growing up in kinship care will have faced similar childhood traumas as those in foster care or adoption, yet the support to help them cope with their experiences and to thrive in the future is missing."

Some 200,000 children are estimated to be in kinship care in the UK. Unlike foster carers, kinship carers do not get paid.

Virtual awards

England's Social Worker of the Year Awards is to take place virtually on 17 November.

The event includes two new categories – social justice advocate of the year and university of the year. Awards chair Peter Hay said it will also feature "stories of compassion, resilience, uplifting creativity and reflection".

www.socialworkerawards.com

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'Rising insecurity, debt, homelessness and hunger is not the context for families in which levelling up can succeed' **From Build Back Childhood - The Case for Investment report**

NEWS



The price cap on energy increased by 12 per cent last month and is expected to leap further in April

Workforce concerns amid rise in cost of living and Covid toll

A charity providing financial support for hard-up social workers says it's preparing for an influx of applications this winter.

The Social Workers' Benevolent Trust (SWBT) said rising energy costs could particularly impact on the large numbers of social workers working from home. This comes on top of reduced household incomes as a result of Covid, including job losses.

The charity warned that next spring's rise in national insurance under the government's health and social care levy would further impact in the wake of rising food and petrol prices and stagnant wages. Unions have branded a 1.75 per cent pay increase offer for council staff "derisory" and representing a real-term salary cut.

SWBT has received 174 applications this year. An increasing number are coming from people struggling financially while in work.

Co-chair Su Roxburgh said: "This has already been an extremely challenging year for social workers with increased work pressure.

"Some will have seen their household income drop, perhaps as a result of a partner losing their job because of Covid.

"And with many social workers continuing to work from home, their energy bills are now set to rise with the cost of gas going up."

The charity called on employers to ensure they support staff, including providing financial compensation for those working from home during the winter months.

"No one becomes a social worker to earn a high salary," said Roxburgh. "But it is crucial that

employers at the very least look after their staff so that they are able to give their best to the people they work to support without having to worry about their own welfare.

"While we are here to support social workers experiencing financial difficulty, employers must also play their part. If staff are working from home this winter due to the pandemic, they shouldn't be expected to pay for it."

A survey by PSW last month found 90 per cent of social workers who responded are still working from home. Six out of ten expect to be mostly home-based in the future and more than a third are aware of plans to sell or permanently close offices.

Concern for the wellbeing of social workers was also highlighted last month in the *Health and Social Care Workforce* study.

The research found declining mental health and quality of working life. More social workers said they felt burnt out by May to July this year compared to earlier phases in the comparative study over the pandemic.

Some social workers said they missed being able to share work pressures with colleagues as a result of the shift to working from home.

Carolyn Ewart, national director of BASW Northern Ireland, said the "relationship-based" nature of social work meant working from home was taking its toll on workers.

To find out more about SWBT visit its recently relaunched website at www.swbt.org/about-swbt

The working from home revolution - page 24

The sharp end of food insecurity - page 14

'UC uplift end does not stop our campaign'

BASW chair Gerry Nosowska has urged social workers to continue to speak out against the removal of the universal credit uplift.

In a statement marking the end of the £20-a-week Covid emergency measure last month, she said: "Social workers will know only too well the impact this will have on communities.

"After a decade of austerity, social workers have seen the impact of cuts on people living with a disability or long-term illness, on older people, on families and on children.

"We didn't get the answer that we wanted, but we will keep on talking about this.

"We will continue to support you, will continue to stand up for social work, and will continue to speak up for an end to poverty in our society. Thank you for all that you do."

'£200,000 for a child place is unsustainable'

The high cost of private residential placements for children was partly blamed for a £3.3 million financial Black hole at Hackney's children's services.

The council's finance director Naeem Ahmed said the authority was "at the mercy" of providers charging up to £200,000-a-year per child.

He attributed the high cost to the small size of the market which was "not sustainable".

Chair of the authority's children's scrutiny committee Sophie Conway said "we could buy them a home for that price".

The authority is looking at "other settings" for children.

ENGLAND NEWS



A parliamentary inquiry heavily criticised the government's handling of the pandemic

Time for accountability as MPs highlight failings over Covid

The Westminster government failed to put enough priority on social care in the early stages of Covid and “unresolved” funding and staffing pressures continue to pose a risk this winter, a cross-party MP-led inquiry found.

It added a law change requiring professionals entering a care home to be fully vaccinated from 11 November is likely to increase staff shortages.

The inquiry labelled the government's handling of the pandemic as “one of the most important public health failures the United Kingdom has ever experienced”.

Last month also saw the start of a High Court attempt to sue the government for discharging hospital patients into care homes without testing resulting in thousands of deaths.

The inquiry report, called *Coronavirus: lessons learned to date*, said: “The pandemic has put massive strain on a social care sector already under huge pressure... Social care had a less prominent voice in government during the early stages of the pandemic than did the NHS.”

The fact that the government failed to recognise the risk of discharging patients into care homes without testing was a “symptom of the inadequate initial focus” on the sector.

The report by the Science and Technology Committee and Social Care Committee welcomed plans for the health and social care levy but said “the long-term future of the sector remains unresolved”.

The MPs highlighted the “uneven” impact of Covid-19, with people with disabilities and those from Black and ethnic minority communities worst affected.

The heightened vulnerabilities of people with learning disabilities was “compounded” by barriers to them getting NHS treatment, it said.

The inquiry said the pandemic had brought the experience of Black and ethnic minority staff “into sharp focus”.

“It is telling that the first ten NHS staff to die from Covid-19 were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds,” said the report.

BASW England national director Maris Stratulis said the government must be held to account for its handling of the pandemic.

“Thousands of lives have been lost and families have been left devastated. There needs to be public accountability.

“Social workers are held to account every single day so the government should now be held to account for these dreadful failings.”

BASW England supports a call by Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice for an immediate public inquiry. The government has promised to launch one next spring.

BASW has campaigned on a lack of personal protective equipment, human rights, care home discharges and issues impacting on the workforce during Covid.

The committee of MPs said failings in the UK's approach to Covid happened “despite the UK counting on some of the best expertise available anywhere in the world, and despite having an open, democratic system that allowed plentiful challenge”.

It added: “Painful though it is, the UK must learn what lessons it can of why this happened if we are to ensure it is not repeated.”

Care review's 'dilemmas' to be the focus

Social care staff are wary of separating child protection from family support work while service users are more likely to favour a split.

That was one of the findings highlighted in feedback to The Independent Review of Children's Social Care's *The Case for Change* document.

The review asked whether a system in which workers have both a supporting and child protecting role impeded “ability to do both well”.

One local authority said: “Separating family help from child protection would be a profound mistake. [It] would mean parents being assessed and judged by people who have no grasp of their journey/needs.”

But a commentator with lived experience said workers were “very impeded”, adding: “Families need support in order to prevent it getting to the stage of child protection.”

Whether to split the roles is one of three “dilemmas” the review's chair Josh MacAlister says are “key to unlocking some of the big problems” in children's social care.”

The second is the “postcode lottery” of services provided in England and whether some would be better delivered nationally and outside local authority control.

The third is whether the system is too prescriptive and bureaucratic versus the need for checks and balances to protect children's rights.

See BASW England's ten priorities for the review at www.basw.co.uk/ircsc-priorities. See also *Public Service, Private Interest*, an online article by Katharine Quarmby in *Byline Times*.



Social work isn't rocket science ... it's more complex than that

“Our members see opportunities in a National Social Work Agency, particularly in improving training and continuous professional development but also raising the status of social work and supporting workforce planning,” SASW said.

It has cross-party support and is being backed by Dignity in Dying Scotland, Friends at the End and the Humanist Society Scotland.



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1

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2

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WALES NEWS



Social workers developed skills and understanding during Covid that no training could have provided

Working in Covid is enough to meet half of CPD - regulator

Social workers who worked through the pandemic will have met 50 per cent of their CPD requirements for re-registration, in alterations by Social Care Wales made to protect the profession.

And former social workers will be encouraged to re-register in a bid to address the chronic recruitment and retention crisis.

Other changes include extending the registration period to four years for all registered social workers. And the temporary register will be kept active.

In a letter addressed to all directors of social services in Wales, David Pritchard, director of regulation, says: "The past 18 months have been the most difficult period for the social care sector in living memory. Understandably, and commendably, those working in social care have focused their energies on delivering the finest care possible during the pandemic. Normal practice, such as formal training and reflection on development, has been secondary to the immediate need to support those in our care.

"In that context, I have been reviewing the expectations placed on our workforce in terms of registration requirements. I do not believe that the workforce should be expected to produce the same type and amount of evidence that would normally

be expected. I am also aware of the very difficult circumstances facing social services now, particularly in relation to recruitment and retention."

New domiciliary care or residential childcare workers will not have to register for up to a year, extended from six months to allow extra time to complete any requirements for registration and complete induction.

BASW Cymru welcomed the concessions, saying: "This is all good news for social workers.

"Social Care Wales have made some decisions which clearly recognises their support for the pressures social workers have been exposed to during the pandemic. They clearly recognise that the last 18 months has been "the most difficult period for the social care sector in living memory.

"They recognise that the pressures of working during the pandemic and supporting vulnerable people in a time that none of us have experienced, will have taken precedence over such things as completing CPD requirements in the shape of formal training. Social Care Wales recognises that working during the pandemic has seen practitioners develop skills and understanding that they would not have done in a formal process of training courses.

"It would still be positive to see formal training on emergency and disaster planning."

Mental health safe places for children call

Mental health 'sanctuaries' for young people are being urgently called for by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Services using this model already exist for adults but are not yet available to young people.

Professor Sally Holland wants to improve support for young people aged 16-17 who currently call the police, go to A&E or use adult services that aren't appropriate.

The Welsh government has made young people's mental health a "top priority" and says it is investing in services.

But Prof Holland says for too long there had been a "Cinderella service" receiving less funding than adult mental health.

"There's been some great work in the community services, but what we haven't cracked at all, anywhere in Wales, is what happens at that point in an emergency – especially at three in the morning or 11 o'clock at night," she said.

"Clinicians have said they know they were not providing the right care for children in a crisis, especially in out of hours, so it's an urgent matter and I would really like to see good progress on this over the next year."

Swansea service seeks 'evidence base for a new model of working'

A radical overhaul of Swansea Council's child and family services department will lead to social workers spending more time with young people.

That's the claim of the head

officer Julie Davies, who wants to see staff spending less time at their desks.

Social workers, she said, had to fulfil certain tasks to comply with statutory requirements, but the

department wanted to create an evidence base for a new model of working.

She added that children helped by the department should have a say in any review and service

re-design. Swansea has 515 looked after children and 257 on the child protection register. Numbers were falling, but the children in need of care and support has risen to 557.



Reform plans mirror those already adopted in England, Wales and Scotland

Adoption modernisation bill aims to cut 'unnecessary' delay

A decline in the number of children adopted from care in Northern Ireland is driving modernisation of adoption legislation.

Only 57 children were adopted from NI care settings last year, almost half the number of the year before.

Most had been taken into care as babies but were not adopted until, on average, three years old.

There are currently around 3,564 children in Northern Ireland in care, an increase of 45 per cent since 2002. Of these, 79 per cent are in foster care, and half of these are with a kinship carer.

The Department of Health, which published the statistics, is working to introduce a new Adoption and Children Bill.

The bill seeks to:

- Mandate support for anyone affected by adoption
- Enhance the focus on the welfare and best interests of the child
- Tackle delay
- Introduce Special Guardianship Orders – a new permanence option for young people for whom adoption is not suitable
- Make care planning and advocacy services statutory
- Offer greater financial support and provide short break care to children with a disability without them needing to become looked after

The Bill will modernise the legal framework for adoption in Northern Ireland and will largely replace the 1987 Order, and amend the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

Speaking following the second reading of the Adoption and Children Bill, Health Minister Robin Swann said: "The Adoption and Children Bill is a critical piece of legislation that will ensure children are put firmly at the centre of the adoption process.

"I want to cut unnecessary delays and uncertainty for children and improve support mechanisms for everyone involved in adoption. I am committed to making the adoption process as efficient and robust as possible.

"The bill will improve support for children in need, children in care and those who have left care. These improvements are particularly vital at a time when there are more children in care than ever before in Northern Ireland."

Reforms mirror changes that were introduced for England and Wales in 2002 and for Scotland in 2007.

BASW NI national director Carolyn Ewart said: "The Adoption and Children Bill is to be welcomed. The system urgently needs the reform it will deliver and the case for review has been well made. There is much to support in the draft bill and BASW NI has urged members of the NI Assembly Committee for Health to accept it.

"The draft legislation is complex and far-reaching and will require a number of new duties. This will necessitate training and there needs to be adequate time allowed for this. Freeing social workers up from frontline duty to undertake training, while essential, will ultimately increase pressures across the system."

Smoking ban when children in cars law bid

Health Minister Robin Swann has outlined plans to progress regulations on smoking in cars when children are present, as well as preventing the sale of nicotine inhaling products to those aged under 18.

Minister Swann said: "The use of tobacco continues to be a primary cause of preventable ill-health and premature death in Northern Ireland. It is vital that we maximise our efforts to reduce smoking prevalence and protect people, particularly children, from the effects of second-hand smoke."

Legislation is already in place which bans smoking in certain premises, places and vehicles, including on public transport and in work vehicles used by more than one person.

The proposed new regulations would extend the current smoke-free provisions to private vehicles where children are present, when there is more than one person in the car and the vehicle is enclosed. It is also proposed that failing to prevent smoking in a smoke-free private vehicle will be made an offence.

Muckamore Abbey inquiry is launched

The Muckamore Abbey Hospital Public Inquiry launched last month.

Muckamore Abbey is being investigated for allegations of abuse involving patients. It provides facilities for adults with severe learning disabilities and mental health needs, and people with autism.

Reports of abuse go back to November 2017.

NEWS

SPEAKING OUT

PSW's sounding board for members' opinions, views and updates

Lost skills of the medical social worker needed in today's world

I read professor Jane Thoburn's article (PSW, October 2021, p18) with interest and agree entirely that social workers should be prepared to 'offend' people where necessary to advocate for the needs of the people they seek to help.

However, to be able to do so with confidence, social workers require the support of informed management and expert supervision. Where these are lacking speaking up can lead to potentially damaging consequences.

Such was my experience as a former team leader who had, for family reasons, retired in 1972 just after the post-Seeborn amalgamation of social services, and almost 20 years later returned to frontline social work in a hospital setting.

My unfortunate experiences as a returnee led me to ponder why, in my view and also BASW's, my managers had not just been unsupportive but positively undermining of my actions to help and advocate for the people under my care. My reflections on the likely contributing factors to weakened management include:

- The upheavals of structural changes at national, local and departmental levels, starting with Seeborn and beyond, including later partnership arrangements with health, the advent of trusts and ongoing changes thereafter
- Fractured lines of professional and management accountability as a result of all the structural changes and new partnership arrangements with health
- Remote management: managers and social workers have, since the arrival of large departments, generally been geographically distanced
- Inappropriate and uninformed appointments to management positions: professor Thoburn's comments that team leaders need "three to

four years at least of practice" are, regarding my experiences, very pertinent here.

However, as in adult social care, social services inevitably abut onto health, I also wondered whether the post-Seeborn demise of the medical social worker (MSW) may have been an unfortunate loss to the social work service that in some way impinged on my hapless circumstances some 20 years later.

Baraclough et al (1996) suggest that the MSW profession had, certainly by the early 1960s if not before, developed expertise in managing health hierarchies at both strategic and professional levels, skills potentially relevant to the new partnership arrangements of 1990s and beyond. Baraclough et al convey a sense that the MSW profession was respected by their health colleagues and able to speak up when circumstances so required.

The above are, of course, personal reflections, many of which are embedded in a particular set of circumstances, though I am confident some generalities also pertain.

I shall be eternally grateful to BASW for helping me through some very dark days and to those who have since enabled me to use some hard experiences in positive ways.

However, those seemingly emboldened MSWs were all members of and supported by the Institute of Medical Social Work, a founding BASW organisation.

BASW membership is potentially an important means of promoting the social policy and advocacy role of social work that professor Thoburn in her article rightly upholds. But I do wonder, have we also as a profession something to learn from our MSW predecessors?

Joan Rapaport

We must dress for court, even if we're online

As a retired social worker I read with interest 'Word of Advice...' in your July/August issue.

There was some very good advice here especially regarding 'virtual' court proceedings. "Ignore theatrics" is always a good reminder. I have seen two 'opposing' barristers in the pub at lunchtime laughing and chatting away like old friends. Theatre indeed.

However point 3 – on dress – disturbed me. The author rightly reminded us that "You are a professional" and to "stay professional". While in the 'physical' court room we 'take the stand'. Standing shows respect for the court and all involved as well as the proceedings.

I don't think sitting during the 'virtual' proceeding is disrespectful at all. But even though we may have a shirt and tie on, what about "sitting in lockdown shorts and slippers"? Does this mode of dress really show that we are giving the court, the proceedings, our service user/client the respect, the professionalism and the seriousness deserved?

I dress with a suit. I wear cufflinks and even aftershave. Why? Because of the mindset I feel is needed to take on such a serious role. While not there in body, dressing in this way helps me to be 'there' in mind and spirit. To me, that is what being a professional deserves.

Vic Peart

HAVE YOUR SAY

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IN FOCUS

Cuts to benefits, the end of furlough and rising fuel and energy prices have created a perfect storm of winter pressures. With the queues at food banks set to get longer, **Louise Palfreyman** visited one scheme in Shropshire to find out how they are preparing

Karen Williams started planning for winter six months ago. It's always like this, she explains matter-of-factly, because food banks have to stay ahead of the game if there's going to be enough to go round.

So back in April this year, as politicians debated the end of furlough and the proposed slashing of the universal credit uplift, Karen and her team of 65 colleagues at the Barnabas Community Project, which runs the Shrewsbury Food Bank, were already hard at work making sure there was enough stock for winter.

The recent energy crisis, however, has been a sharp shock, and it's going to have potentially far-reaching consequences, Karen believes.

"The rising gas prices will affect everybody," says Karen, who manages the food bank. "If you are a family on benefits, there is already support, or support mechanisms, in place. But for those who lose their jobs, or who have to reduce their outgoings very quickly, there isn't as much support out there so readily available."

"It used to be the case that I could tell the difference between a donor and a client when a person walked through the door – that isn't the case now."

"We've set up a new 5-7pm slot on Wednesdays for people who are in work, because increasingly, they need food banks too."

"We are getting more and more referrals from employers, particularly in hospitality and education – referring staff to us because of concerns for their welfare."

Nigel Dauncey, 82, has seen many changes at the food bank since he started volunteering five years ago.

He said: "Things have certainly been much busier – I wasn't packing and sorting like this two years ago. It's gradually increased, and of course, lockdown has made it worse."

Nigel does a three-hour shift of volunteering, arriving before 9am to pack the parcels that will go out the same day to people referred to the service.

"It's a continuous stream," he said.

The Shrewsbury Food Bank helps, on average, 105 people a week and covers the whole of the region. Since 2019 the number of children on free school meals in Shropshire has increased by 48 per cent. And 77 per cent of schools in the region are concerned children are going hungry according to recent research by the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance.

Results from an online benefit calculator for the region



'We have seen a big increase in direct referrals of children from schools worried about their welfare'

CAMERON TAYLOR

showed a rise of 309 per cent in enquiries, and a rise of 648 per cent in the number of homeowners seeking advice.

Karen and her team see the daily realities of people struggling to make ends meet: "We get so many people in here in tears, and they have a huge sense of shame if they find they can't feed their children. They're not doing it through choice."

"We see a lot of dual parent families, as well as single parents – they can't increase their hours because of the additional childcare costs."

Volunteer Cameron Taylor, 55, added: "We have seen a big increase in direct referrals of children from schools worried about their welfare during lockdown."

This is confirmed by Karen, who says: "Nearly half of the people we support are children – 47 per cent. It's gone up significantly. Domestic violence has also gone up during the pandemic, so you have more people who have had to leave home suddenly, needing our support."

Karen is reluctant to 'get political' when asked about the societal and economic forces at play behind the need for food banks, and says: "As an organisation, we will talk to anyone who is a decision-maker, because we are advocating for clients who have no voice."

The Shrewsbury Food Bank tries to address the issues that go with food insecurity through the 360 Community Hub. This includes Barnabas Money Advice and 360 Platform for Life, which supports people back into work and better health.

Karen believes a holistic approach is needed to address the root causes of poverty: "When someone goes to A&E you have to make sure they aren't going to return. It isn't enough on its own."

"Food banks are like A&E in this respect, so the 360 Hub

IN FOCUS



**'We are
advocating for
clients who
have no voice'**

KAREN WILLIAMS



**'Of course,
lockdown
has made it
worse'**

KEITH MILLAR

works with clients for a lot longer, up to two years, to put longer term support in place. It's about life skills and building relationships – helping people realise they have worth.

"At 360 we describe ourselves as professional friends – there to enable people to make their own decisions, rather than just give advice. People are so disenfranchised when they come to us, and we help give them back their sense of control."

She is also an optimist: "You always hope that things will change and get better. A street locally did a thing called Tin Tuesday – they put a wheelbarrow out and filled it with donations for the food bank. Word spread and the message got out and we really saw a big rise in donations. It was a good example of the community not only supporting us, but supporting themselves."



**'I felt so ashamed for having
to ask for help - I have
worked since I was 16'**

CASE STUDY

When Pip Foster went through a difficult relationship breakdown that left her and her two small children facing eviction, she didn't know where to turn.

She was skipping meals to make sure her baby girl and little boy, then aged five, were fed – surviving on little more than £20 a week.

A lifeline emerged through the local church, where she attended a mother and toddler group. It was as she got chatting that someone mentioned the Barnabas Community Project.

"I'd split up from my partner and it had been a hard breakup that left me with a lot of financial problems," Pip says. "Then my landlord put the rent up.

"I was given notice to leave and couldn't afford anything private because I was still on maternity leave – my daughter wasn't even on -years old.

"I ended up homeless and had to move back with my mum and dad. There were six of us living in a three-bed house, with me and the kids in a tiny box room. I was back there for three or four months before I was offered anything else."

Once Pip started talking to the community project, she was able to access advice on universal credit, and with help she got a flat locally and was able to start afresh.

"We needed to use the food bank on a few occasions," Pip says. "I had been really struggling to provide."

Those days are behind her now, but Pip is still worried about how losing the £20 universal credit uplift is going to affect her finances: "I am looking for work now, so if I get a job soon hopefully I won't be too bad. But I sometimes wonder, can I afford to run a car now?

"Karen was a lifesaver. I felt so ashamed for having to ask for help – I have worked since I was 16. But Karen was at the end of the phone any time of the day for me."

**'Karen
was at
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IN FOCUS

Ailsa Pearce's frank and honest explanation of why she's leaving frontline child protection after 20 years is essential reading for anyone with an interest in improving work conditions

I qualified in 1995 and have accumulated 20 years as a frontline child protection social worker. I have extensive experience of managing cases of all levels of complexity, hard to manage or dangerous parents, complicated care proceedings, child protection and children with every kind of complex need.

I'm sad to say, I don't know any other social worker with the years of experience I have. In my last team, earlier this year I was one of five social workers: four ASYE's and myself.

In 2020, I left my last permanent role as a team manager to move to a new part of the UK. I'd been working around 50 hours per week, everything above 38 hours as unpaid overtime with, of course, no capacity to take it back as time off in lieu. I was exhausted. But more than the physical and mental fatigue, I was mostly tired of living a life of constant fear.

Every child protection social worker has to learn what it is like to spend 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with the nagging fear that a child is being abused, or may even die, on their watch. You don't get annual leave from that. If you can't live with this constant fear, you don't belong in the profession of child protection social work.

However, this fear is not the inevitable result of working in child protection. It is the direct result of the hostility towards the profession from other professionals, the press and the general public, and of being over-worked, under-supported, under-paid, and very often, inadequately trained.

When you're juggling tasks, making a hundred little choices every day about what you have time to do and what you don't, when the manager who shouts the loudest gets their form prioritised, when you have four or five assessments on the go and you work late to complete the one needed by the independent reviewing officer (IRO) you're most scared of, or the one needed first rather than the one most worrying you, when tasks are added to your list of urgent things to do more quickly than you can cross them off, the anxiety and fear increases exponentially.

This cycle ends with the social worker taking time off work, perhaps handing in their notice, or going off sick with stress.

I know of very few social workers who have not had time off work due to stress at some point in their careers. If a social worker has a personal issue, divorce, bereavement, difficulties with their own child, for example, they're really stuffed.

And every social worker quickly learns that when you make a mistake or when you don't finish work on time, you

'I'm sick of living with the fear of the next Baby P'

IN FOCUS

will be blamed personally. The system is not at fault; you are. You are not competent. If this upsets you, you need to learn to be more resilient.

I am resilient, I don't need help to become more so. I am a positive, cheerful, 'glass is half full' type of person. This is the reason I have been able to accumulate so many years in the trenches.

However, I have never worked for more than four-and-a-half years without a significant break from the job. In my younger years, I had babies and extended maternity leave. In later years I just quit, took a break and lived without my income while I mended myself. I'm an agency social worker now, finally earning an appropriate wage, almost £1,000 more a month that I was earning as a team manager, managing the cases of 120 children. I took the summer off in 2021 and planned to return to work in the autumn. However, I dread it.

I'm sick of living with the fear. I'm exhausted by the relentless stress. My family dread losing me to unpaid overtime and me being grumpy through stress and sleepless nights. I can't face going back to work. Don't get me wrong, I love my job and, in my view, I'm very good at it. On my last day at work this summer a heroin addicted mum whose baby I had removed and placed permanently away from her phoned me to thank me for doing so much to support her and her baby through this heart-breaking process.

The children on my caseload, who sometimes make this job worthwhile, hugged me when I said goodbye at my last visits, one child wouldn't let me go. I know many of the amazing children and families I work with miss me.

In September, I read an article in *Professional Social Work* magazine written by an ASYE titled, 'An Awful and Stressful Year in Employment'. This talked about being overworked, under supported and poorly trained.

I can tell ASYEs that it doesn't get any better. No social work training courses teach students how to write court ready assessments, how to argue against a part 25 application, what level of contact is safe, how to manage hostile IROs or other professionals, how to ask rude and intrusive questions to angry parents who think you personally killed 'Baby P'.

You're expected to learn that on the job, while managing a high caseload and having no experienced social worker to mentor you. The article stated that over a third of social workers quit in the first two years, following their three years and £50,000 spent at university. I am not surprised. I am the only social worker I know with 20 years under my belt. I remember reading that social work had the highest turnover of staff of any public service profession, including prison officers. Most people don't make it to four-and-half years.

I know many local authorities desperately in need of experienced child protection social workers. When I went agency, I was in demand. I would love to go back if the job was manageable.



'I know of very few social workers who have not had time off work due to stress at some point in their careers'



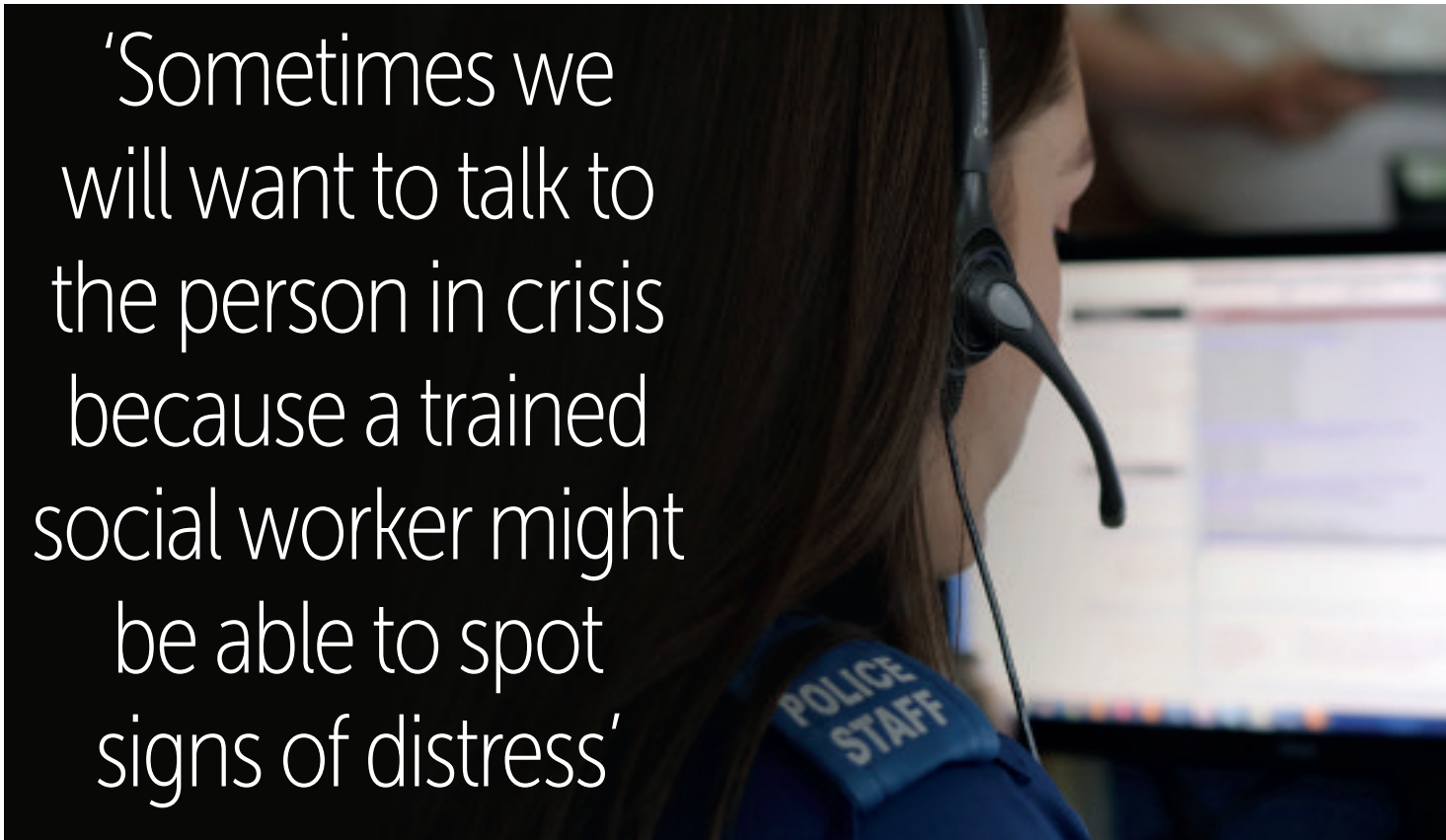
I can't face it and I can't bring myself to go 'over the top' again.

As an agency worker the money is better and helps; as a permanent worker, the wage is simply not worth it. I've finally learned that life is too short to have it blighted by fear. Fear of the media, fear of being blamed by our own managers and system, fear of some very dangerous parents, and most of all fear of losing a child you care about to abuse.

The next 'Baby P' file is getting closer to referral, and the Russian roulette of allocation could send that child's file to you and your life will be destroyed.

When I tell people I'm a child protection social worker, they often reply, "Oh, I couldn't do your job". They're right. Very, very few people can. It's such a shame that the profession I love and respect won't make it fulfilling and safe enough for trained professionals to want to stay. This time, I won't be going back.

IN FOCUS



'Sometimes we will want to talk to the person in crisis because a trained social worker might be able to spot signs of distress'

A call comes into Gwent police's control room in Cwmbran, Torfaen. It's a man saying he is going to kill himself.

Without specialist triage support and vital access to records, the situation could potentially escalate to the point that police officers are sent out to the address.

But because Gwent police has a mental health triage team sitting alongside call handlers, things are quickly brought under control.

The man is known to live in 24-hour supported living accommodation. The triage team can see that he has called before, and that he regularly threatens to kill himself. Because he is in a supported living environment, the force is able to use this vital information to talk the man through his crisis, suggesting he gets help from a member of staff at the complex.

The triage team will make sure the caller's care coordinator is alerted and the appropriate action is taken to ensure the man is safe.

Calls to 999 and 101 calls increased by a third (34 per cent) in Gwent in the first half of 2021, and a significant number involved mental health.

The figure is in line with forces across England and the rest of Wales – 999 call-outs involving mental health in England have risen by 41 per cent in five years, according to Freedom of Information data published by *The Guardian*, with some police forces seeing more than a twofold jump since 2015.

David Richards is a mental health triage manager with a background in social work at Gwent police.

It was back in 2018 that the force first set up a specialist

As calls to 999 from people with complex mental health needs continue to soar, one police force in Wales tells **Louise Palfreyman** how a team of specialist social workers has helped the operators who pick up the phone

'We are there to provide background support, but sometimes we will want to talk to the person in crisis'

mental health team to sit alongside call handlers in the control room.

The team now has five social workers, whose expertise in a police setting is equal to, and at times more urgently required, than the expertise of mental health nurses.

David explains how triage works in a control room setting: "Calls can come through on 101, 999 or social media, and if there is a mental health factor, the call handler will tag it.

"The triage team will keep an eye on the system and will check to see if the person is known to mental health services. We don't take the call over. We are there to provide background support, but sometimes we will want to talk to the person in crisis because a trained social worker or other mental health professional might be able to spot very subtle warning signs of distress.

"There was a case where a person had been reported missing in England, and was located because they called 999 to say they had lost their car. Initially, the mental health concerns weren't picked up, so I said: 'Let me speak to him', and within a very short space of time I became aware this man was acutely ill. He said he didn't need help, but he clearly did, and on that occasion a

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FACT FILE

- ▶ Calls to Gwent Police rose by 34 per cent in the first half of 2021
- ▶ Between January and July this year, 24,000 people called Gwent Police via 101 – 8,000 people dialled 999 for help in July alone
- ▶ The easing of Covid restrictions in July led to a 22 per cent rise in 999 calls
- ▶ Mental health-related incidents attended by the police rose by 41 per cent across 23 police forces in England, from 213,513 in 2015 to 301,144 last year
- ▶ British Transport Police dealt with double the number of incidents last year on Britain's rail and motorway system – 16,234, up from 8,107 in 2015



Mental health triage manager David Richards

instantly check the database and see they are known to mental health services.

“We can then contact their team and tell them that their service user is on the phone to us making threats to harm themselves.”

David is keen to point out that the police don't actually want to encourage use of 999 in a mental health crisis.

“We have to be very careful about that. So it's important to note that increases in calls can also be a measure in terms of uptake of service – the number of times we get tagged into instances.

“There are times when it isn't appropriate for the police to be tagged.

“But of course, a significant proportion of calls will be entirely appropriate and we will respond accordingly. So if someone is suffering from dementia and is reporting a theft by calling 101 or 999, to them it is absolutely real.

“There are circumstances where we wouldn't want to go out to them, because there may be records of similar calls, and we do need to be very careful when accessing medical records.

“But if there is a person on the phone with longstanding delusions saying there is somebody up in their attic, we will get in touch with their care coordinator. And that's a great example of joined up working – where a care coordinator will go out to them after a service user has alerted us.”

Mental health teams now sit on all four Welsh police forces and in 2019, Gwent became the first Welsh force to add a social worker specialising in safeguarding children and young people.

David observed: “If you go back ten years, no police force had a triage team. Now it's been rolled out so every force in England and Wales has some form of triage, whether it be street triage or in the control room.

“Originally, there was a perception that Section 136 was leading to an overuse of police custody, which is an inappropriate setting for someone in a mental health crisis.

“But use of police custody has decreased dramatically due to a change in legislation and there is also evidence mental health triage has led to a reduction in the use of Section 136 by the police. We are more responding to an increase in mental health demand. Our team helps manage the mental health calls that are taking up police time.”

Section 136 was appropriate.” Calls to 101 and 999 can involve acute episodes of depression, psychosis, dementia and substance misuse. The pandemic has only added to existing pressures on services struggling to respond to the sheer volume of people in urgent need.

It is routine for the police to assist other emergency services if a person in crisis poses a risk to themselves or other people.

But the sharp rise in calls means that forces are increasingly needing triage teams to help with the volume of people calling in distress.

David has seen for himself how bringing on board advanced mental health practitioners (AMHPs) and other workers with specialist skills can ease pressure in the control room.

He said: “I'm very proud of the work we do. Two things are unusual about our team – we are directly employed by Gwent police, not seconded from local authorities or health boards. And of the six people in our team, five of them are social workers.

“It was during a pilot project that an AMHP became interested in working with the police. When they came to work in the control room it really opened people's eyes in terms of how knowledgeable they were on mental health legislation.

“If someone absconds from a psychiatric inpatient setting, for example, an AMHP will know the legislation to cite.

“In a control room setting, the need to respond appropriately and quickly is paramount. And one of the main performance indicators is avoiding inappropriate police dispatch.

“With regular callers threatening suicide, we can

‘If someone absconds from a psychiatric inpatient setting, for example, an AMHP will know the legislation to cite’

IN FOCUS

By the time someone is arrested, society has already failed. Those coming into contact with the criminal justice system are then failed again by punitive processes – and a third time by the social stigma of having a criminal record.

That's the view of Caroline Bald and Helen Woods, co-chairs of BASW's criminal justice group.

They believe criminal justice should be a central concern for social work. Yet too often those who work in this area feel disassociated from the "mainstream" of the profession.

That has been fuelled in England and Wales by the separation of social work and probation education in the late 1990s.

"If I had a magic wand I would ask for two things," says Caroline, a social work lecturer at the University of Essex who has spent 20 years working in the criminal justice system. "I would ask for justice social work to be seen as social work and I would ask for criminal justice social work to be reinstated as part of social work education."

"If I had a bigger magic wand I would like probation training to return to social work or both social work and probation education to be transdisciplinary. Removing criminal justice as part of social work education has meant we have 20 years of a workforce that weren't taught criminal justice social work as social work."

From the Conservative policies of the 1990s onwards, probation work has focused more on enforcement, rehabilitation and public protection.

A separate Professional Qualification in Probation was created in England and Wales, with social work education providers excluded from applying to run it. Helen, who has spent more than 20 years working in probation and youth justice, recalls the impact of the shift.

"When I was in youth offending, there was a real divide between child protection and youth justice social workers. A misunderstanding between the two roles, yet we were working with the same group of people."

The skills of social workers in navigating risk and



'Removing criminal justice as part of social work education has meant we have 20 years of a workforce that weren't taught criminal justice social work as social work'

CAROLINE BALD

building relationships are essential in the justice system, says Helen. But inflexible and punitive approaches do not fit well with that.

"If we are talking about relationship-based social work, that relationship cannot be bound by those kinds of bureaucratic procedures. There needs to be some subjectivity because that is where the humanity is."

Latest figures for October show there were 78,789 people imprisoned in England and Wales, almost double the number in the 1990s. Scotland's prison population has gone up by 60 per cent since 1990 and Northern Ireland's by 36 per cent.

The Westminster government is investing £4 billion to deliver 18,000 extra prison places.

Caroline says: "The long and short of it is that in the UK and England in particular, we have aligned ourselves more with the United States in terms of being punitive."

"We have one of the lowest ages of criminal responsibility at ten and we still make children go into an adult court. We imprison more women for non-violent offences. It was only last year we stopped imprisoning women for non-payment of TV licences which accounted for quite a proportion of women in prison."

"We punish the poor. It is no smarter than that."

Caroline strongly believes incarcerating more people does not create a safer society.

"This idea that you have to catch out the bogey man doesn't make sense. Conviction is only one indicator of risk."

"Wayne Couzens [the murderer of Sarah Everard] was a family man with two children. For the vast majority of people who commit serious sexual harm it is the first time they were convicted."

"There are no easy answers but we know we can't hit someone over the head and make it better. More punishment doesn't do the job, yet we still feel a need to focus on that."

Deeply engrained societal attitudes are partly to blame for this, suggests Caroline: "I remember standing at a bus stop in a rainy Glasgow years ago and the talk of the bus station

CRIME & PU

It's time social work's vital role in criminal justice is recognised, say Caroline Bald and Helen Woods who lead BASW's criminal justice group. Shahid Naqvi reports

IN FOCUS

was that they had decided that Barlinnie Prison was going to allow prisoners televisions in their cells for the first time on Christmas Day and how this was an aberration. It's this idea that not only do we remove liberty, we expect to see people in prison do hard labour.

"If you go back and look at theories around criminology, it's a real indication of what society thinks of itself: it is maybe a lack of trust that you somehow have to up the punishment stakes to make people feel safer.

"There are some countries that are more enlightened. A prison in Jaipur, India, has a wall that was waist height. People come over the wall and spend a day at work and then go back over the wall."

It's difficult to imagine such an approach in Britain. Yet if we are to reduce crime, changing our conception of those who commits it is key, says Helen.

"We often conceive of people either as the offender or the victim. And we struggle with the idea that people are often both. We know young offenders are often victims of serious crime such as domestic abuse and sexual harm, bullying, knife crime.

"Often it goes unreported. But we struggle to identify them as vulnerable young people once they have committed an offence.

"We need a more compassionate approach. Coming to the attention of the police and criminal justice is quite far down a person's road of vulnerability. If we saw it as a symptom of vulnerability for young people rather than a deviance, that would improve things."

According to Caroline, people with criminal records are seen as a part of society that it is still "okay to discriminate against".

"We punish people with a criminal conviction by not letting them back on the ladder. There are consequences of having a criminal record such as maybe not being able to get rented accommodation. Not being able to get a job, not being able to get education.

"But what does that actually achieve?"

Social work needs to look at itself too, adds Caroline.



'It was only last year we stopped imprisoning women for non-payment of TV licences which accounted for quite a proportion of women in prison'

HELEN WOODS

A recent paper in the British Journal of Social Work highlighted "limited opportunity for those with a history of incarceration from studying and practising social work".

In 2019, a newly qualified social worker was dismissed by East Sussex Council because it saw her 18-year-old drugs conviction as a "reputational risk".

Caroline is currently researching how social work education responds to people with criminal convictions. She says: "The concern is that social work is presenting itself as for people who have only done good. The regulator Social Work England asks social work education providers to check course applicants have good character and criminal records. Inevitably, we are finding different courses do this differently.

"What I am finding in my PhD is that social work academics see themselves as the gatekeepers to the profession – to becoming the child protection social worker, not just a student. There is a sense that we are somehow responsible for those coming into the profession.

"Almost one in four adults in the UK has a criminal conviction. And they are proportionately men and disproportionately Black men.

"So there is something intentional about not grasping the nettle on this in judging who we work with and who does the working with."

Going forward, Caroline and Helen are keen for social workers with "lived experience" of criminal justice to get involved with the group and help change attitudes.

Other areas of focus include government plans to create 500 prison places for women in contradiction to the Female Offender Strategy. The group is also concerned about plans for a new secure school for young offenders, fearing it may result in this route being more readily pushed rather than community support options.

The treatment of pregnant mothers in prison and an over representation of autistic adults and adults with brain injury in the prison system are other areas of concern.

If you are interested in joining BASW's criminal justice group email wayne.reid@basw.co.uk

PUNISHMENT

IN FOCUS

Social worker **Eddie O'Hara** shares what he's learned after nearly four decades of court work and more than 200 cases

Picture the scene if you will. It's 1985 and a fresh-faced young social work student all dressed up in a second-hand suit and brown kipper tie (provided courtesy of the probation office administrator), walks into Plymouth Youth Court on day one of his first social work student placement.

Now picture the same young social work student half-an-hour earlier vomiting in the court car park, because of his increasing fear and anxiety about not knowing how his stammer would hold up during his first mysterious court appearance...

That was the inglorious beginning of my social work career 'advising, assisting and befriending' and later assessing, all manner of children and adults who have had the misfortune to find themselves at the mercy of our judicial system.

Whether as part of criminal, private or public law cases, my role has always been to advise the court (youth, magistrates, criminal, family, county, crown, high court) on how, within the confines of the law, to ensure the best interests of some of society's most vulnerable people might be safeguarded.

Looking back, I cannot help but think how unprepared I was for what lay ahead and how much better I could have been at fulfilling my role if someone had sat me down beforehand and shared a few of the following insights:

1 When working with a family, if it is safe to do so, avoid at all costs the need to initiate legal proceedings. The energy, time, emotions and money involved in legal proceedings are far better spent working together in partnership to reach mutual agreements to provide support and protection for children and adults alike.

2 Be under no illusion that our court system provides unparalleled world class justice, fairness and protection in equal measure to all concerned... it doesn't. The harsh reality for most is very different. The primary function of the court and wider judicial process has always been to settle disputes, disagreements and where necessary deliver orders and sentences within a changing legal framework. For many, especially the poor, alienated and the increasing number of people who cannot afford to get access to legal representation, the notion of 'justice and fairness' is simply a cruel illusion peddled by those who govern us.

3 Court work, although necessary at times to protect the most vulnerable children and adults in society, is rarely an enjoyable experience for anyone involved. Stay focused, remember what your role is and why you are there and make sure you have someone who can support you through the process.

4 Don't worry – there will be lots of more experienced staff around (other social workers, guardians, lawyers) to answer questions. Be honest, polite and humble about your experience: no one expects you to be an expert in your early years.

5 Everyone has butterflies in court. The magistrates, judge, lawyers, ushers, parents, children. Afterall, this is a serious place where very important decisions are being taken.



6 If you have not been in court before then ask a senior colleague to arrange a court visit beforehand and to point out who sits where and does what.

7 Dress for the occasion. Like it or not jeans are not cool in court.

8 Preparation: re-read your statement before and when you are waiting in court and take your file/paper notes with you.

9 On arrival in court seek out the court usher and let them know you are there.

10 Make sure you say hello to the family you are working with. If appropriate, ensure that they are okay and that they know where to be and who to speak to. In court, you should always strive to work in partnership with families in a courteous and professional manner.

11 Understand (carry a hard copy if need be) your local authority policies and procedures concerning court processes.

12 Understand the processes outlined in the Public Law Outline 2014 and other court related protocols such as the Public Law Working Group Final Report 2021.

13 Never use words or terms in your statement you do not fully understand, such as: significant harm, child in need, neglect, good enough parent, additional need, BS compliant.

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recommendations, feel free to ask them repeatedly, if need be, to explain.

21 Check, check and check again that your phone is turned off and placed in your bag before you go into court. If you only turn your phone to silent, then the odds are that your vibrating phone will be heard echoing in the court room.

22 Never leave court unsure of what has been agreed. Ideally, ensure you have a written outline of what has been agreed before you leave court.

23 Avoid idle chat with friendly lawyers outside the court room. Lawyers are professionals whose primary role is to represent their clients, not you.

24 Before giving evidence in the witness box decide whether you will affirm or take an oath on a religious book.

25 If you are standing in the witness box and feel nervous place your hands on the witness box to steady the nerves.

26 Most nerves go away after five minutes once you settle down into answering the questions.

27 When standing in a witness box, try to stand with your feet pointed to the magistrates or judge and turn to the lawyer who is asking the questions, before naturally swinging back to face the magistrate/judge when answering the question.

28 When in the witness box answer the questions slowly and keep an eye on the magistrates/judge's pen in case you need to slow down for them. Once they have finished writing their notes turn back to the lawyer for the next question.

29 Be aware that the judicial system is creaking at the seams due to underfunding, increases in workload and staff shortages.

30 If you are wary of going to the loo in case a client might follow you then go to toilets on a different floor or ask a colleague to accompany you.

31 If you have even the slightest concern for your safety going to and from court then ensure you inform your manager and insist on being accompanied by a colleague, police or security staff. If needed, you can always give evidence remotely.

32 If you have the slightest concern for your safety in the court building, ensure that you inform your manager and alert the magistrates/judge and security staff.

33 Take a good book or paper to soak up the hours you will be sitting waiting to go into court... sometimes this can be days.

34 Look forward to treating yourself after court to a nice coffee, tea and/or cake as a treat.

14 Never make a professional judgment in your statement without justifying it with evidence, experience, a legal context and, where possible, backing it up with current professional research.

15 If you are in the witness box giving evidence and you do not know the answer to a question, say so... court is no place to bluff it.

16 Never sign a statement you do not agree with. It's your statement. You may be representing the local authority, but you still must take professional ownership of your reports/court statements. If there is disagreement between you and what your colleagues think that is okay; highlight these differences in your statement. If your employer does not agree with this, then go and work somewhere else.

17 Remember that the local authority legal representative is there to represent the local authority, NOT the child. You and the guardian are the ones there to ensure that the best interest of the child is met.

18 Ensure that you are part of any professional discussions which take place outside the court room.

19 If you are not accompanied by your manager to court, ensure that you have their mobile number.

20 If there is an expert witness involved in the case and they do not clearly explain the basis for their opinions/

Good luck!

IN FOCUS



Shahid Naqvi finds out how social workers are navigating the highs and lows of working from home

Virtual yoga with colleagues in a staff meeting. Sitting at the back of a room writing up a report while your child's in a ballet class. Working late into the night to make up for a bit of time doing chores during the day. Cooking instead of commuting. Sneaking off to the fridge for just one more snack...

Welcome to the wonderful world of working from home. According to a survey by *PSW* last month, it's a shift brought about by Covid that looks here to stay.

More than 90 per cent of 236 social workers say they are still working from home and only 6.5 per cent anticipate returning to being mostly office-based.

So how are social workers finding life in this new normal?

"There are positives and negatives," says Naomi Salawu, a London-based social worker.

"What I found hard in the earlier stages was not being able to switch off. You did 12 hours instead of six. But now people have created their own office spaces and you know that you work from this hour to that hour.

"Flexibility always has to be seen as a positive though. I've been on maternity leave since June but the pressure of returning to work with a child seems different now. There's a lot more flexibility and that saves on childcare."

As a manager, Naomi believes having a better work-life

balance is good for the wider workforce.

"As long as you are doing the work I don't really care about when the work is getting done.

"If you have a doctor or bank appointment you need to get to, go to it, as long as there isn't a meeting or you are supposed to be seeing a client and you have your work phone on you. That day you might work until 8pm."

Greater flexibility, however, can lead to an unhealthy blurring of the line between work and home.

"One of the things that irritated me was people sending emails at 11pm," says Naomi. "That creates stress on other people who might think they should be working at this time."

Naomi says working from home has improved her health.

"I walk my dog. The dog is used to me being at home so will come to my computer and start howling at certain times of day."

Work colleagues also help each other to stay healthy. "In our meetings twice a week it was up to a team member to plan something – it could be yoga or dancing or a physical activity for an hour.

"We would be on camera and come together which was team-building. That's dwindled now but still it's part of team meetings during our working day."

Jill Watson, a children's social worker, says she finds it easier to concentrate working from home.

"I have found there to be far less distraction and have benefited from starting early when I would usually spend an hour driving to work. I can travel to visits outside of the rush hour, and then work later at the end of the day because meal preparation can be started during the commute time."

Sharon Chell, a fostering supervising social worker, also

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enjoys the greater flexibility from her employer.

"If I want to take my son to a hobby or a club and there is a confidential desk free at the back of the room where I can type up notes, they are happy for me to do that. Before, I'm not so sure that is something that would've been okay.

"Our management have realised now we are really efficient at home and are quite happy for us to work as we want in an independent capacity as long as we get the work done.

"It actually suits me because social work takes such a lot of time. It is really nice between visits to be able to do something like chuck a load of washing in knowing you haven't got to do it in the evening, which is time you want to be with your kids."

She does, however, miss the face-to-face contact with colleagues.

"Social is in the title. That's why we came into this job. I was lucky in terms of being able to manage my time on my own having been an independent previously – I understood how to work without that team structure behind me.

"The local authority I'm now at is where I have worked since qualifying so being surrounded by people I have known for years was one of the joys of moving away from being independent.

"It is actually very difficult being away from your team. I ring colleagues every couple of weeks, sometimes for a work thing, sometimes to catch up, because it is good for our mental health."

The risk of social workers becoming isolated is something Ann Collins, a practice lead for a parent advocacy network in Swansea, has concerns about.

"It can be easy to become disconnected from colleagues. My kids have flown the nest so being on my own at home does mean I miss that human contact.

"For me it is more important to see colleagues because I haven't got that social interaction at home. And I don't have the domestic responsibilities that motivate me to want to stay at home."

Having said that, Ann also welcomes the greater flexibility from employers: "I think there was a mistrust in the past. If you said you had a report to write, they'd say 'Why can't you just go into a room in the office?' It has challenged past practice."

Keeping fit is another of the challenges of working from home for Ann.

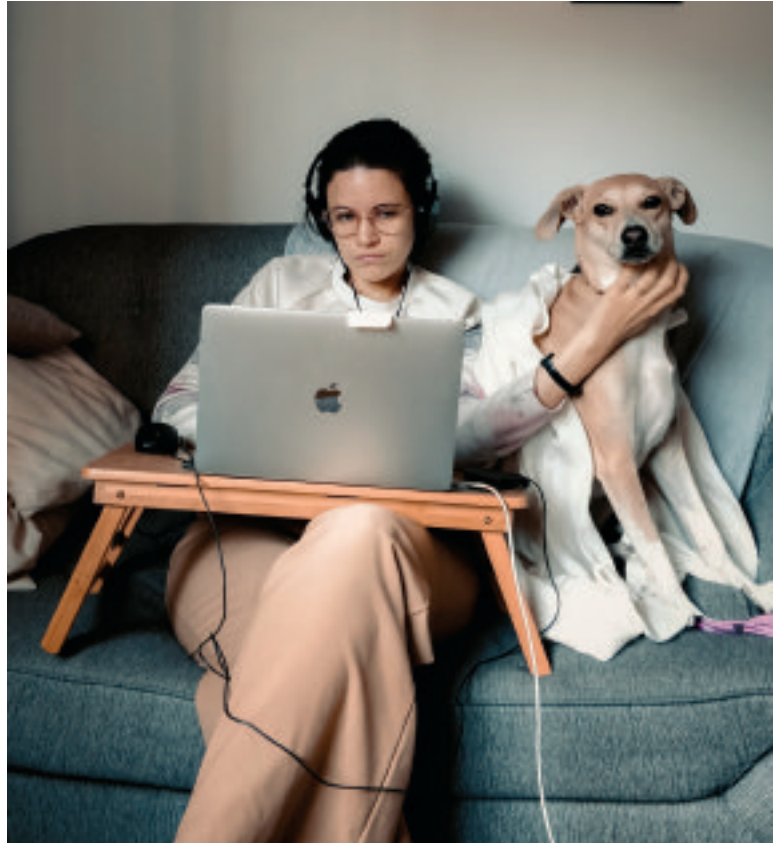
"My problem is getting a sore backside from being glued to my seat for six or seven hours.

"You don't have those natural breaks and get drawn into the screen and forget to make a cup of tea.

"It's easier to neglect yourself when you are at home because there are no conversations or discussions around you to remind you to have a break."

She would prefer there to be an expectation for social workers to be office-based for at least half of the time.

Mark Willis, who runs WillisPalmer, a provider of independent social work, psychological, therapeutic and family support, says switching off can be a problem when working from home.



"The emotional and stressful nature of social work makes it a difficult profession to switch off from anyway, regardless of where you are based," he says.

"That can become heightened if you are working from home and it can be tempting to do increased hours or log on when you remember something. This is not a problem occasionally but if it becomes a long-term trend it can be detrimental to social workers' wellbeing as they need time to wind down, switch off, spend time with their families or friends and recharge for the next day."

He advocates having a dedicated work room, if possible, so you can switch off your computer and "leave" work at the end of the day.

He adds: "Then do something to mark the transition between work and down time. It may be cooking, it could be a shower, or doing homework with the children. What I would highly recommend is some form of exercise.

"Once you have finished work for the day, go for a walk, run, cycle or even do some yoga at home to de-stress and wind down."

The working from home revolution does, however, present challenges when it comes to nurturing the next generation of social workers, warns Mark: "When I was an assistant social worker, the knowledge and experience I gained from discussing cases with colleagues, attending court with them and generally learning by osmosis in an office environment was invaluable.

"I think it is essential that newly qualified social workers have the opportunity to work alongside experienced colleagues in an office environment to learn and, importantly, for support. We do not want NQSWs to feel overwhelmed and leave the profession prematurely."

'I ring colleagues every couple of weeks, sometimes for a work thing, sometimes to catch up because it is good for our mental health'

IN FOCUS

Terry Galloway tells **Louise Palfreyman** about his tough experience of leaving care and why he's created a website to support care leavers

Growing up, Terry Galloway lived in more than 100 homes. He was placed in care as a baby, along with his younger brother and older sister, and moved up and down the UK.

"We were taken into care because our mum was epileptic and dependent on drugs and alcohol. Our dad had left, and my first time in care was at six months old.

"We were moved around all over the country, from Manchester to Devon. I was 14 when I entered my 99th place."

The children were abused while in a foster placement and the experience left lasting damage. Terry's sister Hazel was murdered by a violent partner in 2008, and his brother is in and out of jail.

Now 46, Terry is a successful businessman and entrepreneur, living in Nottingham with his wife.

As well as building a life for himself, he has also built a website to help others. Care Leaver Offer is a vast online resource listing the support provided by local authorities in England.

Terry submitted Freedom of Information requests to every local authority in England to create the database, which will also be of great use to social workers and personal advisers.

He adds: "I want to empower care leavers so that if a care leaver living in a London borough needs a parental guarantor, they can use the website and see that Kent offers this to its care leavers.

"They can then go to the resources section and locate all the relevant documents that made the Kent guarantor offer happen. They then take this to their own council to make their case.

"The site can also help a social worker or personal adviser to find similar services elsewhere, and evidence their case for expanding their own offer."

Terry says he was motivated to help change the system by the suffering he experienced.

"I understand what needs to be done, having been through it myself. To fix the care system, we need to help young people move into communities and become interdependent, rather than independent – where often they will become isolated, mix with the wrong people, and get into trouble.

"What's needed is linking housing services with work opportunities and building relationships that get young people into work and thriving, with the right support."

Terry is director of a lettings agency and chief executive officer of a housing association which provides accommodation for care leavers and other vulnerable groups.

His break came when a sympathetic landlord introduced him to market research, igniting latent business skills.

His early experiences of leaving care, however, stayed with him: "When we left care, me and my brother and sister were



99 'homes' by the age of 14

Pictured:
Terry
Galloway

just dumped with no support and left to fend for ourselves.

"It took me ten years to find myself and work things out. I ended up okay – I didn't turn to crime or drugs or end up in prison.

"I would look at my sister and know that I didn't want to end up like that."

What happened to Hazel is still hard for him to talk about.

"Hazel, like a lot of people who've been through the care system, just wanted love and the family she'd never had.

"When we were in foster care we were abused, and the local authority didn't believe us.

"Our foster parents were quite sinister. They were taking kids in and grooming them. For me it didn't have much impact – I was the one who raised the alarm – but for Hazel, it went on a lot longer.

"She would sit in her room cutting herself to pieces. No one knew what to do. Every other day we would be at an A&E, with doctors and nurses not understanding what would drive a 14-year-old child to such despair.

"I was close to my sister. We planned on changing the care system together so that children would not have to go through what we had to endure. They would have better lives and fulfil their dreams – that was our promise to each other.

"But Hazel was broken. She suffered so much. She lost her children, and she eventually lost her life.

"That's why I'm asking people now to please join me and my late sister in our ambition to change the care system."

'When we were in foster care we were abused, and the local authority didn't believe us'

Visit the website at www.careleaverlocaloffer.co.uk

How to work with children who show harmful sexual behaviours

With a rise in reports of sexual harassment and assault in schools and colleges

Carol Carson, a social work specialising in this area of work, gives guidance

There is increasing evidence of pervasive pressures among the young to appear to be sexually active.

In March this year, 8,000 incidents were reported to the 'Everyone's Invited' website, created in 2020 in the UK to "expose and eradicate rape culture".

It sparked discussions around 'school abuse' – including verbal sexual harassment, demands for 'nude' images, sexual assault and rape.

Effective interventions reduce the possibility of further harm to others and help to develop the social, emotional and mental health of the child or adolescent who has caused the harm.

Initial responses

Managers and practitioners can be under pressure to make initial decisions with little information, training or guidance available. The fear of getting it wrong either by being too cautious or overreacting can be disempowering.

Children and adolescents exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours should always be held to account, but assessments should also be holistic and trauma-informed, with a focus on understanding why the behaviour happened and what interventions will be most effective.

The following common causal factors are drawn from research and practice knowledge:

1. **Trauma** – many of the children and adolescents have themselves experienced trauma, which includes all forms of abuse. This is not solely sexual – violence is a significant factor. The trauma may be intrafamilial or external from trusted adults such as teachers, sports coaches, adult family friends, or from peers. Having a trauma-focused approach is essential.

2. **Attachment deficits** – these are linked to disrupted living environments and changes in caregivers or problems with bonding. Problems of self-esteem, anger, resentment, and frustration can arise at not knowing how to create and maintain healthy relationships.

3. **Adverse Childhood Experiences** – multiple disadvantages and adversities in childhood can leave some children and adolescents struggling to achieve positively in life, school, friendships and relationships.



Pupils at exclusive Eton College were among those called out for alleged sexual assault on the Everyone's Invited website

Poor role modelling can lead to acting out sexually as a dysfunctional way of coping.

4. **Poor or no intimate/sexual boundaries** – leading to a lack of awareness of what is socially acceptable and frustration at not knowing how to get needs met. Some may be reluctantly engaging in harmful sexual acts because of peer pressure.

5. **Deficits in social, emotional and communication skills** – these create problems with education and developing friendships and relationships, leading to social isolation and depression.

6. **Puberty** – strong sexual drives but a lack of ability to engage others in a relationship with them can lead adolescents to be frustrated and angry.

7. **Impact of internet, social media and societal pressures** – there has been a significant change in attitudes to gender, sexuality and sexual activity, with unlimited access to sexual imagery and information that no previous generation has experienced. This has amplified problems such as consent, coercion, respect, misogyny and reputational damage.

Intervention - what works?

Assessments need to encompass wider functioning and familial and social networks to understand what is driving the behaviour and what would be most effective to stop it.

Initial safety plans for managing harmful sexual behaviours usually carry high levels of supervision, restrictions and removal of digital devices. But if left unchanged they become detrimental and counter-productive, exacerbating problems such as social isolation. Importantly, they place the responsibility for stopping the behaviour with the adults and not the individual.

What works better is building the resilience and insights of the child or adolescent so they can begin to understand and control their own behaviour, in conjunction with working with their family to provide a strong, safe, supportive base for them.

Multi-agency partner working is essential, particularly with education professionals. Achieving good outcomes also requires support from key adults in the individual's network.

Carol Carson has been a social worker for more than 35 years and specialises in children and young people who sexually harm others. She has written several books on the topic and is also manager of the AIM Project, which provides education, training and resources in this area of work. See www.aimproject.org.uk

IN FOCUS



The social work virtual pals

Social work academics AMANDA TAYLOR from the University of Central Lancashire and LAUREL IVERSON HITCHCOCK from the University of Alabama live on opposite sides of the world.

But they combined the traditional concept of pen pals with newer technologies to establish #SWVirtualPal on Twitter. Here, they reveal how being virtual pals enables them, and others, to share ideas, develop new projects and create a teaching and learning space that is global...

How did you get in touch?

Amanda: Laurel and I met on Twitter where we were each involved in a social work discussion. We found that we shared many interests and talked about how great it would be to catch up at some point.

Laurel: The hashtag #MacroSW was hosting weekly Twitter Chats about social work practice (www.macrosw.com/). We started chatting via tweets around our common interest in technology in social work practice.

What method do you use to stay in touch regularly?

A: We use a host of platforms and mobile applications and a mix of synchronous and asynchronous contact. I find sending Laurel video recordings a really helpful way to follow up on what we might be working on or thinking about.

L: Direct messages via Twitter, email, video recordings via Marco Polo, WhatsApp. Asynchronous videos are my favourite way to communicate with Amanda. It is fun to record messages while I am driving to work and I love to watch her videos as she takes me on her walks.

What do you enjoy about being virtual pen pals?

A: The sharing of ideas from across jurisdictions – learning from each other and providing each other with a safe space to test out ideas.

L: I enjoy learning about the differences and similarities in social work practice between our two countries as well as educational systems. Amanda is great with brainstorming and helping me think through problems.

How do you support each other?

A: By not putting pressure on each other – understanding that we will be in touch when we can.

L: As Amanda said, by being flexible with each other. The six-hour time difference means we have to work asynchronously a lot. Our communication happens with a time delay, which allows us to let go of urgency.

How has being pen pals helped during the pandemic?

A: We have checked in with each other, sometimes prompted by the news and concern about how the other is doing.

L: For me, the past year of communication with Amanda has been more about our personal lives than work projects. When I had some health issues in March 2021, she would check in with texts. We also checked in frequently around big news events and holidays.

How has the pandemic highlighted the benefits of virtual communities

A: I think the world became a virtual space pretty much overnight and any concerns or reservations about the use of technologies subsided for a significant amount of the social work community. I remain pretty concerned about people without internet access or devices throughout the pandemic and how they can become even more invisible due to the need for physical distance.

L: I agree. I think those individuals who were already connected with virtual communities were able to maintain connection and also showed others how to connect virtually. The pandemic showed us the technological inequities; from the expense of owning the hardware and software to the lack of internet connection in some communities and countries. Digital human rights will be an important issue for social workers in the next decade.

What are the benefits to social workers in a global network like this?

A: We have always said that SWVirtualPal needs to be experienced to feel the benefit of it. Laurel and I can go for weeks without contact, but at some point one or both of us will reach out to say, "Hey it's been a while". SWVirtualPals can be a one-off connection, a longstanding connection like ours, or a connection for as long as is needed. There is no script other than to connect about social work.

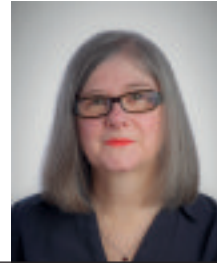
L: There are so many benefits in connecting with other social workers from around the globe – professional development, peer mentoring, learning about cultures outside of one's own country or community. For me, the best benefit has been the emotional support and connection with another social worker from a different part of the world. Being a Social Work Virtual Pal with Amanda reminds me about the value of human connection in my professional life.

The hashtag #SWVirtualPal can be used to connect with social worker students in any location. The hashtag is also registered with the Symplur Healthcare HashTag Project

'We started chatting via tweets around our common interest in technology in social work

RUTH ALLEN

BASW's chief executive on an eventful month and a key climate summit ahead



The future of social work - and the world - is with the young

October gave me, BASW members and colleagues powerful opportunities to connect with international social work and contribute to wider efforts on human rights and social justice.

Last month I represented the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Europe region in the Council of Europe's (CoE) Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (CINGO).

The purpose of CoE is to promote human rights, democracy and rule of law across all 47 states of wider Europe including the UK (yes, still – this is nothing to do with the EU!). CINGO represents the voice of civil society across Europe and influences politicians in all states.

The CoE is also the custodian of the European Convention on Human Rights on which our Human Rights Act 1998 is founded. And CoE in Strasbourg is the home of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

As I write this, it is the 40th anniversary of a landmark ruling on gay rights. In 1981, the Strasbourg Court was the first international body to rule that laws criminalising sexual orientation violate human rights, namely the right to respect for private and family life. This ground-breaking judgment led to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Northern Ireland and Europe at large, recognising the human rights of millions of people.

Bodies like the CoE and CINGO can feel far away from day-to-day social work. But as this example from 40 years ago shows, they impact our work and legislative framework every day. They can change and save lives.

Why we still need Europe

We heard this week that UK Justice Secretary Dominic Raab is planning to review the Human Rights Act 1999 – a fundamental enabling piece of legislation for social workers across the UK – and limit the powers of the ECHR by allowing the UK government to 'correct' judgments from Strasbourg that ministers consider 'wrong'. How important, then, that we are involved, through IFSW, at the heart of European and international commitment to rights and democracy. We may need CoE and CINGO to stand up for fundamental human rights and the rule of law in the UK.

IFSW Europe

IFSW Europe also held its 2021 European Conference on Social Work last month. Though online, it provided rich opportunity to make connections, progress ideas and tangible work, and to gain inspiration.

I want to pay tribute to a few people who have contributed enormously to international social work. They represent the later and early parts of social work careers.

Huge thanks first to Ian Johnston and Fran McDonnell who stood down from their long and sterling work representing IFSW and in the European Anti-Poverty Network (where Ian was latterly vice-president). Their recent evidence to the UN rapporteur on the rights of people in extreme poverty was reflected in his recognition of social workers and the need for social care funding.

Huge thanks also to all involved in the exciting, innovative and powerful 'A Social Europe is Possible! New Social Workers' project of IFSW Europe, particularly Omar Mohamed, a student in the UK, and Siobhan Maclean, a well-known and respected social work educator and author. We heard how the project is gaining insights into the way the next generation of social workers across Europe is being educated, assessed and supported in early employment.

This brings me to the end of October and COP26 – which if it is about anything is about generations to come and the part young people can play in educating us and being part of tackling the existential climate crisis.

We have come to expect failure or minimal progress from global political leaders. I turn to Professor Lena Dominelli for inspiration and hope on environmental justice and the role of social workers who will be at COP26. She looks in turn to the next generation for the future on climate and environment, just as we must on the future of social work.

Lena says: "Children, adolescents and young people become powerful change agents when engaged as valued partners in creating new sustainable futures. Let us adults work with them by engaging with their perspectives rather than the other way round! Let's build our futures together. We will be more successful that way."

VIEWPOINT PARTICIPATION

A seat at the table for lived experience...

Chair of the BASW North East branch
Christian Kerr on why service users should be allowed affiliate membership of the association



Participation, co-production, doing with not to – all these concepts are at the same time viewed as noble aims and sentiments, and also almost as givens in social work practice, policy and research.

It is, unarguably, what we as social workers should be doing and there is a growing body of research supporting the view that greater involvement from 'experts by experience' or 'educators by experience' (EbE) leads to better outcomes for people who need care and support. However, in reality the field of 'user involvement' remains troubled and contested terrain.

It seems self-evident that the people social workers hope and aim to support should play a major part in designing, shaping, developing, reviewing and refining not only their care and support, but also the policy and theory underpinning social work.

The term 'co-production' is used freely in everyday practice, and is cited as an underpinning principle in organisational and public policy, suggesting that we have made strides in recognising and addressing the disparity between those who create, enact and embody policy and those whose lives are affected by it.

But we still have some way to go and involving people in shaping and defining what we do is not straightforward. Questions of power, privilege and ethics mean there is high potential for mistakes, missteps and, yes, abuses.

Take, for example, the charges of exploitation levelled at organisations, including social work education and training providers, who pay EbE at lower rates than 'professional staff', or even don't pay them at all. I am aware that as I write I am constructing the people who 'do' social work and the people who have lived and living experience of it as distinct groupings – us and them.

But are the lines so clear? Many social workers also have lived and living experience of care and support and are willing to share those experiences in order to shape and influence social work from the inside. But why should you have to be a 'professional' to have the opportunity to influence things that profoundly impact you and yours?

I am not suggesting that we can ever completely do away with such distinctions, which may or may not be

'Why should you be a professional to influence things that profoundly impact you?'

protective of all those concerned. Professionals make a vital contribution and are accountable for their actions and decisions. Does that mean we are more important than non-professional experts?

As a social worker I have learned a great deal from people who have had social work and other forms of support and/or interventions in their lives. Often these messages are difficult for a social worker to hear. But from such unvarnished, unfiltered experiences we can learn much.

I have wondered whether, in order to better hear these voices, BASW should be not an association *of* social workers but a British Association *for* Social Work, opening its membership to people with lived or living experience of social support and services.

User involvement and participation are important in other fields, too, such as health, but social work is surely a profession particularly well-placed to work with and negotiate the ethical issues and power differentials arising, and which in turn give rise to unequal, tokenistic and exploitative 'participation'.

The BASW North East branch committee, which I chair, was pleased that its motion on this was passed at the recent BASW AGM. The motion calls on BASW to transform the way it learns from those with lived and living experience of social work, including by opening up the association to affiliate membership from people with lived and living experience of social work.

Affiliate membership would allow experts by experience who are not social workers to sit on committees and councils, as equal and valued partners, to shape the organisation and set the agenda from within.

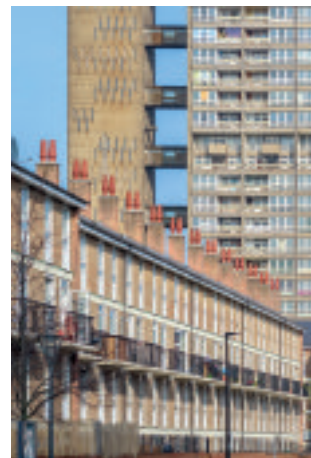
It would undoubtedly lead to us hearing some uncomfortable truths. But, if we are serious about realising fuller participation of people with lived and living experience, we must be open to hearing those truths from people who have a permanent seat at the same table.

Christian Kerr works with adults affected by mental health issues, learning disabilities, neurological conditions and brain injuries. He is currently on a lecturing secondment

VIEWPOINT RIGHTS

We must draw attention to housing crisis scandal

Members of BASW's Black Country branch explain why they believe poor housing is a social work issue that the profession should be campaigning on



At the recent BASW UK AGM, the Black Country Branch successfully argued that housing is a social work issue and the association should be doing a lot more to highlight and campaign on this.

We have a housing emergency because there is a lack of social housing, because housing is unaffordable to many and because the alternatives are unstable and too often unfit. This has significant and damaging effects on people's health and wellbeing. Housing costs, quality and availability are a major contributor to the poverty that leads to children coming into the care system.

The consequences of this emergency are not just about homelessness however serious that is – there are serious equality issues at the heart of this crisis.

Housing is unaffordable – private renters pay 38 per cent of their income on housing compared to 31 per cent for social renters and 19 per cent for owner occupiers and private rental costs have increased rapidly in the last decade.

Costs of mortgages are also high and people prioritise paying rent or mortgage over paying for other essentials like food, child care, fuel and repairs. Housing benefit has failed to keep up with need and supports landlords rather than tenants.

Shelter estimates that 17.5 million people are trapped in this housing emergency. People from Black and Asian communities, those who are LGBTIQ, people with disabilities, single parents and those on low incomes all disproportionately report problems in obtaining and maintaining decent housing.

Legislation around private rented housing creates tenancy insecurity and individual instability – and destroys positive social networks. This disrupts access to employment, education and integration into the community. Inconsistent support services can have serious consequences for mental health, family support and educational attainment, resulting in increased marginalisation.

More people are living in damp, unsafe or cold housing and they are spending their income on the basic rent for property which is making their health worse.

Age UK shows that most owner-occupiers are older

'Housing needs to be identified in assessments and in the help and support provided'

people and that a majority are on lower incomes. They also show that in England there is no policy to address poor housing and previous policies had less impact in private sector housing than elsewhere.

So, older people are more likely to live in poorer housing which is cold and that they can't afford to heat or maintain, leading to health problems such as falls and respiratory diseases. If they sell they will find that their capital affects their housing benefit for the high cost of supported housing so they often feel trapped.

Homelessness is the worst consequence of our housing emergency. At the end of December 2020, 121,340 children were homeless in England and living in temporary accommodation. Shelter estimated that in 2019, 280,000 people were homeless in England. Often the figures are hidden. The Everyone In scheme did try to deal with the street homeless during the pandemic but there has been a rise of people in temporary accommodation.

There are real issues about the regulation and quality of supported housing. Over the last decade there have been big increases in planning-exempt multi-occupied houses and in the numbers of providers marked as poor by the regulator.

There are questions over affordable housing, with developers often avoiding providing this in developments and a question of whether the government definition of a 20 per cent discount is sufficient.

Clearly we need more social housing. There are a million people on the waiting list and we need ways to make access to other housing options more affordable, safe, stable and fit for purpose.

The level of ill-health, discrimination and loss of opportunity which are endured because of this crisis has severe consequences and seriously affects many of the people social workers try and help.

Housing needs to be identified in assessments and in the help and support provided. As social workers, we must draw attention to the impact of the UK's scandalous housing crisis.

And we need BASW to campaign with members, tenants and non-government organisations on behalf of those who are suffering the most because of it.

KNOW YOUR HISTORY

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

'Scientific charity'

The hearts of social workers across the country sank last month when the £20 uplift to universal credit was removed, despite a rising cost of living and ever-increasing food bank queues. Those who work with the poorest people understand the crushing struggle to survive; fear about how to pay the rent, long hours in poorly paid insecure jobs and the impact on the mental and physical health of parents and children alike. With limited resources at their disposal, social workers can feel powerless to help.

Such dilemmas were all too familiar to 19th century social workers, like Cheltenham Charity Organisation Society (CCOS) worker Miss B Roberts, whose 1893 patch was the poorest streets of Cheltenham, known as Dockem. In an era before birth control, large families were common. Mothers like 32-year-old Mrs Timmins (who had nine children under 16) carried water and coal up several flights of stairs, sometimes to a single room in which the whole family slept, cooked, ate, nursed sick children, birthed new babies and carried out piecework such as making paper flowers.

The CCOS case records detailed the families' pitiful circumstances, as in the case of Mrs Hayward, a widow with weekly rent of 3/6 and "a great many" pawn tickets, subsisting on 2/6 and two loaves of bread granted by the Poor Law Reporting Officer. Up until 1893, CCOS had given this family a little extra money for several years.

CCOS workers had limited resources which they were tasked to allocate only to the deserving poor using the new social work approach of 'scientific charity', rather than religious philanthropy. In the current century benefit claimants are criticised for their purchases of wide-screen televisions and cigarettes; in the 1890s, it was expensive funerals that



Duke Street, one of the poorest areas of Cheltenham in Victorian times, as it is today

annoyed the middle classes. For working-class communities, a decent burial, particularly for a baby, was a mark of respect and dignity. Mr and Mrs Young, who were "very poor", approached CCOS to ask for 5/6 to bury their stillborn baby, having been refused by the Poor Law Reporting Officer.

The child was one of twins and there were six older siblings living at home, one of whom "suffered from fits". Mr Young had lost his job for the bus company after services were cancelled and Mrs Young went out charring to make ends meet. The request was declined because the father was judged "a drunken, worthless fellow".

Former director of social services, Chris Perry recently criticised the use of social workers as gatekeepers to practical help, looking back to the 1960s and 70s as a time when they were seen as agents of change.

But the origins of social work date back to this earlier time, when the Charity Organisation Society was set

up to enforce the rigorous limitations on assistance required by the Poor Law, "co-ordinate charitable relief, eliminate mendicity (begging) and prevent pauperism", using methods regarded as innovative to uplift the poor.

When Miss Roberts joined the Cheltenham branch in 1893, fresh from her training in London, she reviewed Mrs Hayward's eligibility in line with procedures and recommended that assistance be stopped. This was agreed by the funding panel. Mother and children went to the workhouse.

Miss Roberts was not an unkind person but her resources were limited. She used the most up-to-date theories about how to avoid intergenerational reliance on charity. The ghost of these ideas persists today when we speak about avoiding dependency on services. Now as then, abject poverty is the backdrop to the lives of many of the families served by social workers.

Polly Baynes is a social worker turned history student and writer

REVIEWS

BOOKS

Powerful stories are a reminder of why we must redouble efforts

Title: The Anti-Racist Social Worker**Editors:** Tanya Moore and Glory Simango**Publisher:** Critical Publishing**ISBN:** 9781914171413**Price:** £14.99**Website:** www.criticalpublishing.com

It took me just three days to read this book, so that should tell you how engaged I was with the content. The stories and reflections jumped out and resonated with me, and reminded me of my past experiences and current challenges. I was sad when I reached the last page as I wanted to read more, to understand more, to feel the shared commonalities and to have my emotions played with, and moods changed with each chapter. I sincerely hope that there is a follow up to this book in the near future and I would be more than happy to contribute.

One of the things that I was drawn to was the reflective questions at the end of each chapter. These not only forced me to stop and reflect on my own practice and lived experiences, but also to evaluate my own actions towards others. Had I misread the actions or attempted approach of an ally? Was I doing enough to challenge and call out

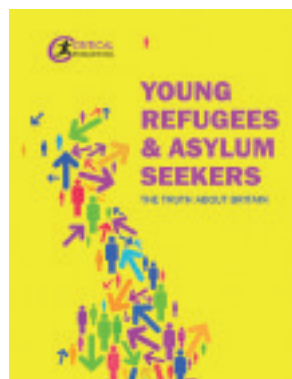
racist behaviour at work? Am I truly satisfied with the response or level of support I received from senior managers after I reported incidents of racism towards me? These were just some of the questions that came to mind.

It was also particularly comforting to read about the lengths allies are going and willing to go to ensure that BAME voices are heard and that BAME representation is not just a tokenistic gesture. I was pleased to see that action is being taken within all professions under the social care and social work banner, and that there is a commitment to continue this work. My pledge is to redouble my efforts in making sure that racism in the workplace, in any form, is called out and addressed. If I am to be called a troublemaker for doing so, then that is a badge of honour that I will proudly accept and wear!

Aleski Brandy-Williams

BOOKS

A social worker's take into the reality of a marginalised group

Title: Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers**Author:** Declan Henry**Publisher:** Critical Publishing**ISBN:** 9781913063979**Price:** £19.99**Website:** www.criticalpublishing.com

The subtitle of this book is *The Truth about Britain*. Authored by a social worker, it highlights Westminster doublespeak: social workers, in helping traumatised child refugees to assimilate, learn and become citizens, do so within a cruel, broken system.

Millions of children globally have been displaced from countries such as Sudan, Eritrea, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, Vietnam. They have suffered war, famine, poverty, the ravages of climate breakdown. They may be trafficked. Those arriving in the UK after long, dangerous and traumatic months and years may be separated from any kin, and have lost personal possessions and mementos of their past.

This book dispatches hostile tabloid and politically-generated myths that claim, variously,

refugees and asylum seekers are ISIS terrorists, taking jobs and housing from local populations. The book's nine chapters start with facts and definitions that frame what follows. Chapters 2 and 3 look at social work practice with refugees and asylum seekers building a new life in the UK. Chapter 4 considers trauma, laying bare its impacts on young refugees, and the 70 million people displaced globally. Remaining chapters include stories of young asylum seekers that illustrate asylum pitfalls and the resettlement challenges they face.

This is a very much the author's personal take. It's also a work for practitioners working with young refugees to connect with, in solidarity.

Angie Ash

TV/RADIO

Dark material that makes us laugh and cry

Alma's Not Normal
BBC iPlayer

Alma's Not Normal – no she's bloody fantastic! Or rather creator Sophie Willan is. A six-part BBC series, this comedy-drama delves deep into Sophie's real life, which sees her growing up with a heroin addicted mother, care experienced and working as an escort. Dark material indeed, but in the hands of Willan it is delivered with a sideways look that makes us laugh and cry at the same time – reminding us of the humanity and brilliance of often overlooked people.

Keep an eye out for the references to social workers as although brief and often critical, they're so much better than the usual cardboard cutouts that turn up in soap operas.

On a side note, credit should be given to the BBC. While Sophie clearly did the leg work in getting her comedy noticed and turning it into TV gold, we should recognise – especially as attacks on the BBC continue – that it still has the capacity to give opportunities to those well outside the Oxbridge crowd.

Digested review: The working-class *Fleabag* (cringe).

Anthony Dhadwal

BASW Northern Ireland

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WORD OF ADVICE

NQSWs: what not to say in a social work job interview

Alasdair Kennedy's advice on how to sparkle rather than fizzle out on the big day

1. Baby your not a firework

If you're a NQSW don't talk about your mum, dad or pets in interviews. You'd be surprised how many people do. One young NQSW, when asked about being organised, said in an interview: "My mum thinks I am more organised now as I tidy my room up." Another said: "I was allowed a pet recently to help me get out of bed early." Stay professional.

2. Don't wheel like Catherine

Make sure you know what job you have applied for. Yes, seriously. You will be attending a lot of job interviews so make sure you don't get your job interviews mixed up. A NQSW once stopped me interviewing and said they thought the job was for adoption... it was a fostering role. Keep a note of all the roles you apply for. Also make sure if you're using a recruitment agency you have a current job description, job specification and you have done your background reading.

3. Remember remember

I have said many times in this column it isn't acceptable if you can't verbalise the legislation that underpins your practice. You would be surprised at the amount of people who don't. Knowing dates helps, but isn't essential. Linking legislation to practice is extra points. Don't mix up guidance with legislation.

4. Sparklers essential

I forgot in a recent interview about change management theory. I work in a change management environment every day but when asked the question I stumbled. I said to the interviewer: "I

should know this with my experience", trying to give myself space to think but it didn't wash. They said: "Yes, you should." So, if you're a manager, think about Honey & Mumford, Kotter, and Belbin. If you're a NQSW, remember Maslow's hierarchy of needs, though this is overly used by most NQSWs in interview. Challenge the interviewer with newer theories; be different and you will be remembered.

5. Bonfire days

Remember your personal and professional bias. I had an interview recently that I thought I was acing. I said to myself: "I have this in the bag", until I got to a question about kinship and special guardianship orders in the UK and I let my professionalism slip for one second and my personal unconscious bias crept in and it was devastating. Yes, I kept my own views intact but it was a little too strong for the interview panel. It is a salutary lesson that I should have read more about the local authority's development plans. Poor planning meant I lost out on a job I really wanted.

6. Whizz, bang, fizzle

You might get a left field question. I once got asked what vegetable colour I liked. This can be a great opportunity for you to prove your critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Try telling the interviewer you need a minute to think about your response or even ask for more info but never say: "I don't know".

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

LIVING IT

Reflections of a service user
by Jodie McLoughlin

This winter we will need our community groups

Many older and disabled people are going to face a miserable winter for a variety of reasons. Utility and fuel bills are going to increase and poorer pensioners and people having to claim benefits such as universal credit and disability benefits are once again going to have to make the brutal choice between putting the heating on or eating. Food banks already report record surges in usage.

I would like to tackle the subject of loneliness though. Those who cannot or do not work full-time anymore often find themselves struggling to make connections in the community since the easing of Covid restrictions, when more people are meeting face-to-face. Yes, some online meetings will still be going ahead but others are being cut back and not every form of communication suits everyone's needs. I'm talking more about the face-to-face social interactions that can help to combat loneliness and isolation and thus exacerbate depression. Things like support groups, hobbies, funded service user groups and charities, informal meetings, community centres. With less money people are less likely to go out, be able to afford the bus fair, taxi or petrol and in my area there are no evening bus services after 8pm any more nor are there services on Sundays.

As the NHS struggles under immense pressure, groups in the community will be more important than ever. Groups such as my mental health peer support, Mind A Chat, which provides lunch on a donation basis but also the chance to chat, network, signpost and share lived experiences.

Many people still can't see their GP face-to-face and experience long waiting lists for services, particularly mental health. When I last spoke to my GP I was told to chase my own referral to Healthy Minds and phone the Samaritans if I needed to.

I'm not attacking GPs who are being consistently undermined by both government and media. I'm suggesting that other safety nets and forms of support are severely lacking at the moment and unless funding significantly improves and more professionals are swiftly trained to do these jobs, I cannot foresee them clearing the treatment backlogs any time soon.

Social prescribers, community link workers, mental health nurses, charity workers, councils, citizens advice, food banks, schools, community centres, GPs and other signposting agencies would do well to link with smaller community groups. In my experience a mixture of both community support and statutory services are often needed and one cannot cope without the other.

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Let's Talk Social Work continues to take a unique and thought provoking look at issues impacting the social work profession and the people we support.

Recent episodes have explored how social workers can better assist those affected by the climate crisis and speak out concerning matters of environmental injustice, how the profession can respond to antisemitism, the Social Workers Union campaign to ban smacking in England and the relationship between problematic substance use and domestic abuse. There has also been two special episodes exploring the implications of the independent review of children's social care in England which examine how social workers can feed into to the review process.

Find us wherever you get your podcasts
Just search for **Let's Talk Social Work**.

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A SOCIAL WORKER'S **DIARY**

November, 2021

Sometimes I sit and think I cannot do this anymore. The things I see and experience build up, accumulate. We would not be involved in families' lives if there was not a need for us and I don't feel the need to give specific examples. I think it's well known in the social work community that as child protection social workers we deal with abuse and neglect.

I become more despondent at the attitudes of in-house staff towards us, where even our child protection chairs feel they can speak down to us and treat us as incompetent. A job where it is accepted for us to be on the receiving end of verbal abuse and threats from service user and it also seems acceptable for other agencies to speak to us in a dismissive and disrespectful manner.

Yes, I am feeling figuratively beaten up at the moment. I cannot see things improving for our profession. The government is not making any changes to our work conditions and I feel we almost have a gag order on speaking out on social media or in the press. We don't strike, we don't rise up and march or go on television. We are not

seen in the public eye as the profession we are.

I work so hard every day in my job to achieve the best outcome for the children and families I work with. There have been many happy endings for the families I have worked with and I like to think they will remember me. I certainly keep the cards that have been given to me by families and children thanking me.

But I cannot keep being a cog in this system. I feel a need to be a part of instigating positive change. A part of being a voice for the profession, perhaps working with a non-profit or similar organisation. I see my newly qualified colleagues and wish they could have a more supportive journey and career where their mental and physical health is not taken for granted.

So I am looking for an opportunity and will continue in my role until that time comes. This is part of the advantage of being agency. That and I was able to afford a break away the other weekend. Rather than living month-to-month off my salary, I can actually save now and have not had to panic that my boiler broke down.

This is a bit of a despondent entry but this is real life as a social worker in this time, for me anyways.

THE APPRENTICE



Kylie Barton is working as a family keyworker while studying to become a social worker

As I approach my first placement, I have begun to ponder the process of closure and how best to address this with families I am working with. I have a caseload which rolled over with the job I was in before I became an apprentice, and for some families this means a long working relationship of six months or more.

I know my placement will start towards the end of January, and so, for the first time in my career, I will no longer be working with these families beyond then. Their cases will either be closed if outcomes are achieved or handed over to a colleague. This has given me a unique opportunity to really plan my closures, which I think are an important and often neglected part of a family's journey.

Too often a case closure is a formal meeting or a handover with a colleague. I have been guilty of this in the past, perhaps when the working relationship with a family isn't as strong, or when time constraints means it's a necessity.

I believe every person we work with deserves proper closure. Throughout the apprenticeship I have reflected on how I would like to do this, what sits with my values, and my style of practice.

Recently I have started writing thank you cards to families. I toiled over whether a thank you card or a good luck card would be most fitting. However, as soon as I asked myself that question it was clear the latter could be construed as patronising or glib. Instead, a genuine thank you for sharing their stories, their worries, and their lives with me as a practitioner feels more sincere.

This will not always be appropriate, and the message inside, of

course, is tailored to the person or family. Where I feel it would be in the best interest of the service user, I may do one for a whole family, or the child or parent individually depending on the work carried out. I believe this 'softens the blow' for families who may have started (despite your best efforts to maintain boundaries) to feel dependent. It gives them something physical to look at to remind them of the achievements they have made and the journey they have been on while you were by their side.

When studying to become a social worker (whichever route you take, but more so with the apprenticeship) you must also navigate a wide field of professional relationships both outside and inside your organisation.

I have worked with my team for almost four years; I am lucky to have a brilliant mentor and a case supervisor with whom I have had long, positive relationships. I am aware that some apprentices on the programme have had up to three different mentors, and the same number of supervisors just in their first year.

What impact will this have on their learning process? Are those key colleague relationships critical to success? Soon, the stability I have experienced so far will also be shaken, and I will need to build up trust and understanding with new supervisors and mentors on placement.

I believe this challenge will itself be a key learning curve, about getting outside of my comfort zone, and learning other ways of working which will benefit my professional development.



ASK DEREK

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

Q: Any tips Derek for how I can continue to pick my nose, belch and engage in other inappropriate but enjoyable habits once formal meetings are no longer held on Teams, and I have no access to mute buttons?

I'm worried that after so many months of these familiar pleasures during meetings, I won't be able to hold it all in once we return to the office.

Anonymous of Windsor

Derek says: I feel your pain Anonymous. Perhaps you can ask your employer to sign you up to some refresher training on office etiquette. Or alternatively, just take the advice of Elsa in the Disney hit movie *Frozen* and 'Let it go...'

Q: Derek, Help! Worrying about shortages at Christmas is giving me sleepless nights. I toss and turn: Will I get a turkey? Mince

pies? Baileys? And what about a Chocolate Orange? They're my favourite.

Jack, London

Derek says: I'm alright, Jack... I stocked up in August. Got a spare turkey on eBay – it's yours for the right price.

Q: Now that Daniel Craig has stepped down as James Bond I wonder whether it's time 007 was reinvented as a social worker.

We are, after all, good at remaining calm in a crisis, have strong investigative skills and are always getting into trouble with authority. Some of us like a drink as well. What do you think?

Celia, Inverness

Derek says: The name's Bond, Derek Bond....

Q: I'm all for spending more on social care

but I didn't expect to have to pay for it out of my wages! Haven't us social workers already given enough? I believe we should be exempt from the health and social care levy.

Jacqui, Birmingham

Derek says: Good point. While we're at it we should ask for a decent pay rise. And computers that work. And a manageable caseload. Oh, was that a pig I just saw flying past?

Q: As the cold weather sets in and the Covid rate rises we're all living in fear of more restrictions. Is there any advice you can give, Derek, to help us through this winter?

Aiden, Cardiff

Derek says: John Lennon once said life is what happens when you're making other plans. Does that help?

Email your dilemmas to derek@basw.co.uk

Clare Classics



From Harry Venning's back catalogue of cartoons for *The Guardian* spanning a quarter of a century

ENGLAND VIEWS

Black History month for many is a 'filtered window of remembrance'



Black History Month (BHM) took place last month and the usual fleeting spotlight was in place.

As I said last year, I'm Black all year round – not just for one month. BHM is not really a celebration of Black history. It's more a filtered window of remembrance to pacify us. If those in power were serious about Black history, they would integrate it into all aspects of mainstream education.

There is a very real danger of BHM, the Black Lives Matter movement, and anti-racism all being caricatured and side-tracked by the insidious multi-dimensional forces that exist to suffocate them. Namely, different manifestations of white supremacy and institutional 'whiteness'.

National frameworks and initiatives to support Black and ethnic minority social workers are fragmented and optional. This creates confusion in both coherence and implementation in practice. Social work has a long history of committing to anti-discriminatory practice, but less in terms of practical mandatory implementation or robust challenge on these issues. Social work leaders need to

move this agenda forward to establish a mandatory 'anti-discriminatory national framework' that is universal across social work.

An important first step would be to reintroduce anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive practices and anti-racist values and ethics into education and training standards.

Key stakeholders need to work in partnership to enforce these values and ethics across the professional landscape. Aims and objectives need to be about ensuring consistency, introducing mandatory requirements, emphasising 'anti-racist' values and ensuring they are universally applicable to all social workers (like the Professional Capabilities Framework and the professional standards).

We all know organisations can be avoidant of anti-racism, but we must recognise that silence (or inaction) on racism is complicity with existing layers of oppression.

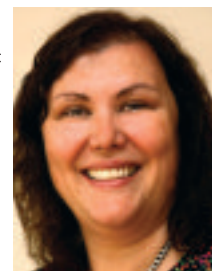
Unfortunately, as a profession we have much more to do to cultivate equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and with service users.

Wayne Reid, professional officer and anti-racism visionary

'Silence on racism is complicity'

NORTHERN IRELAND VIEWS

Calling members - chance to make a difference by joining our committee



Four new committee members are invited to join BASW NI as we say goodbye to those who have helped shape and influence our work over the past four years.

Committee is a fantastic way to get involved in the work of BASW on a local, national, or international level.

We are seeking social workers who are enthusiastic and passionate about social work and about making a difference for your fellow social workers.

We campaign for improved working conditions and seek always to deliver change for those who use our services.

By campaigning on issues including poverty, restraint and seclusion, Mental Capacity Act implementation, workforce vacancies, and bureaucracy you will make a difference, because together we make a difference.

You might be interested in the work of our two sub-groups – the equality, diversion and inclusion group and our lived experience group.

Alternatively, you may want to help take forward our work with the Jordan Association of Social Workers or to help us realise our ambitions of an associate membership

scheme with the Irish Association of Social Work.

If so, then we want to hear from you. As a committee we meet four times per year, usually in a face-to-face setting, but this has not been possible over the past year and a half, during which time we've relied on Zoom meetings. While not ideal, like everyone else we've made it work.

Our committee is led by chair, Orlaith McGibbon and vice chair, Kerry Malone. We have members from the voluntary and community sector, the health and social care trusts, independents, mental health, children's services, the education authority, older people's services and academia.

So, if you'd like to join the team and become a committee member, we'd like to hear from you.

Please get in touch with Lindsey Bates at lindsey.bates@basw.co.uk for all the information you need on how to apply.

Lindsey can also arrange for you to have a chat with Orlaith, Kerry or me to find out more information about what's involved.

'We are seeking social workers who are enthusiastic and passionate'

Carolyn Ewart, national director

SCOTLAND VIEWS

Our members have given a strong message on National Care Service



Change is coming and the future of social work in Scotland is unknown. The National Care Service (NCS) consultation ending on 2 November 2021 has been an opportunity for social workers to contribute their views, including on its scope and the proposal to establish a new National Social Work Agency.

One consultation question which has caused perturbation amongst social workers is whether the support planning process should be different depending on the level of support a person might need. The response options offer the choice of a "light touch conversation" if clients need a little bit of support or a more detailed conversation with a qualified worker "if their support needs are more complex".

This raised the question about what social work assessment will look like under the new arrangements. Social workers have expressed concern that qualified social workers will be assigned only to statutory duties, constraining the use of their social work skills, causing burnout and large numbers of social workers leaving.

Social workers have told us that the working environment, decision-making processes and professional leadership

will be important in the new arrangements. They want to have access to professional support and supervision from qualified social workers, have more staff resource (including admin support and an IT system fit-for-purpose), better joint working, shared responsibility for funding decisions, shared assessment tools and joint commissioning practice.

Social workers are keen to see bureaucracy substantially reduced and have caseloads that are manageable. They want to work in a person-centred way, have more time for face-to-face work, building relationships with clients, and to intervene early to prevent crisis and minimise harm.

More than anything, they have told us they want to feel valued and to have their values and ethics respected by other professional disciplines, to be able to use their full range of social work skills and experience, and to regain their professional identity, which they experience as lost in integration with health and social care.

The SASW response to the NCS consultation is guided by the views of our members and they have given a very loud and clear message.

Anne-Marie Monaghan, adult services lead

'They want to work in a person-centred way'

SOCIAL WORKERS UNION VIEWS

Lengthy weight of investigation hanging over social workers



Fitness to Practice Investigations can be a hugely stressful time for a social worker.

More often than not they are effectively cut off from their employment while the investigation is underway.

BASW's advice and representation service hears daily how these situations impact on physical and mental wellbeing. While a social worker sits at home awaiting their fate, the investigation can go on for months.

I was particularly impressed by a case I am working on at a regional council where a member who has been suspended has been offered a support person from the council who contacts them weekly.

But sadly this is only the start of the journey for many social workers who are then referred onto their regulatory body for them to carry out their own investigation.

It is not uncommon for regulatory bodies to take years to come to a decision and in some cases this can conclude in 'no case to answer'.

While this is a favourable outcome for the social

worker, we are concerned about the damage done to the social worker's career.

Not only has a fitness to practice investigation been professionally embarrassing for them, all too often we also hear of social workers having difficulty gaining employment or progressing their careers because of the investigation hanging over their heads.

The process is unjust and unfair.

I wonder how public confidence is maintained when cases take years to progress, while the worker remains in employment.

What's more, if a worker's fitness to practice was allegedly impaired and yet they have been allowed by the regulator to continue in their employment for years, how can it be justified all this time later that their fitness to practice remains impaired?

Understandably, there is a need to protect both the public and services but this must be balanced with a person's human right to a fair hearing in a timely manner.

Beth Kinnell, A&R officer



WALES VIEWS

Betty's refusal to let racism hold her back is an inspiration to all of us



This October we have been celebrating Black History Month. Although there are legitimate questions about why we need such months when black history and contributions should be mainstream, having it provides a vehicle for reinforcing that this should be the case, to educate and celebrate.

Wales witnessed a historic moment in black history for two reasons: with the unveiling of the Betty Campbell statue (see photo) as Wales' first Black head teacher and Black history campaigner, and the first statue of a named non-fictional woman in an outdoor space. How fitting that this should happen during Black History Month!

Betty Campbell's dream was to be a teacher and she was reduced to tears when her teachers told her that her dream was not possible, that it was "insurmountable".

Betty was told this as a Black girl, born to a Welsh Barbadian mother and Jamaican father from the Tiger Bay area of Cardiff (a docks area, later called Butetown, where immigrants from all parts of the world lived alongside one another), because they had low expectations of her. This was structural racism. Betty's teachers were,



of course, wrong and did not count on her strength, determination and self-belief and she went on to forge a successful career as a teacher and then headteacher at Mount Stuart Primary School in Butetown.

Betty Campbell was a true role model for Black children and championed all of Wales' multi-ethnic heritage. Betty was a leader and visionary in placing Black history on the school curriculum and would be thrilled to know that Wales is now making the teaching of Black, Asian and minority ethnic history compulsory on the new school's curriculum in Wales.

Betty went on to increase the range of her influence as county councillor for Cardiff's Butetown ward and was a member of the preparation committee for the opening of the National Assembly in 1998. She was also on the race relations board between 1972 and 1976, a member of the Broadcasting Council for Wales from 1980 to 1984, a member of the Home Office's race advisory committee and served in many educational roles.

Be more like Betty!

Allison Hulmes, national director

CYMRU VIEWS

Mae gwrthodiad Betty i adael i hiliaeth ei dal yn ôl yn ysbrydoliaeth i bob un ohonom

Yn ystod mis Hydref eleni, rydym wedi bod yn dathlu Mis Hanes Pobl Croenddu. Er bod yna cwestiynau dilys i'w gofyn pam bod angen cynnal digwyddiadau o'r fath pan ddylai hanes a chyfraniadau pobl groenddu fod yn ganolog, mae ei gael yn gyfle i ni atgyfnerthu mai dyma ddylai digwydd, i addysgu ac i ddathlu.

Gwelodd Cymru foment hanesyddol yn hanes pobl dduon am ddaud reswm, gyda dadorchuddio cerflun Betty Campbell (gweler y ffoto) sef pennaeth ysgol gyntaf croenddu yng Nghymru ac ymgyrchydd dros hanes pobl groenddu, a'r cerflun cyntaf o ferch ffeithiol a enwid mewn safle allan yn yr awyr agored - mor briodol bod hyn wedi digwydd yn ystod mis hanes pobl groenddu!

Breuddwyd Betty Campbell oedd bod yn athrawes a wylodd dagrau pan ddywedwyd wrthi gan ei hathrawon na fyddai hyn yn bosibl a bod ei breuddwyd yn "anoresgynno!"

Dywedwyd hyn wrth Betty, fel merch groenddu a anwyd i fam o gefndir Cymreig Barbadaidd a thad Jamaicaidd o ardal Tiger Bay o Gaerdydd (ardal y dociau a adnabyddir nawr yn Tre-Biwt, lle daeth mewnfydwyr o bob rhan o'r byd i fyw ymysg ei gilydd) oherwydd na ddisgwyliid llawer ohoni - dyma

beth oedd hiliaeth strwythurol. Wrth gwrs, roedd athrawon Betty yn anghywir ac nid oeddynt wedi ystyried ei chryfder, ei phenderfyniad a'i hunangred ac aeth ymlaen i lunio gyrfa lwyddiannus fel athrawes ac yna fel pennaeth Ysgol Gynradd Mount Stewart yn Nhre-Biwt

Roedd Betty Campbell yn wirioneddol yn batrwm ymddwyn i blant croenddu gan bledio achos treftadaeth amlhiliol Cymru gyfan. Roedd Betty yn arweinydd ac yn weledigaethol wrth osod hanes pobl groenddu ar gwricwlwm yr ysgol ac mi fyddai wrth ei bodd o wybod bod Cymru nawr yn gwneud hanes pobl groenddu, Asiaidd a lleiafrifoedd ethnig yn bwnc gorffodol ar gwricwlwm newydd i ysgolion Cymru.

Aeth Betty ymlaen i gynyddu amrediad ei dylanwad fel cynghorydd sir dros ward Tre-Biwt yng Nghaerdydd ac roedd yn aelod o'r pwyllgor oedd yn paratoi at agor y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol ym 1998. Roedd hi hefyd yn aelod o'r Bwrdd Cysylltiadau Hiliol rhwng 1972 a 1976, yn aelod o Gyngor Darlledu Cymru o 1980 i 1984, yn aelod o bwyllgor ymgynghorol y Swyddfa Gartref ar hiliaeth a bu'n gwasanaethu mewn nifer o swyddogaethau addysgol.

Byddwch yn fwy tebyg i Betty!

'Roedd Betty yn arweinydd ac yn weledigaethol'



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.

HOW TO MAKE DONATIONS:

JUSTGIVING

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

PAYPAL

Donate to: Social Workers' Benevolent Trust

LEAVE A LEGACY

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

BANK TRANSFER

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

STANDING ORDER

Download the form SWBT-Gift Aid and send to:

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

CHEQUE

Cheques should be made out to SWBT and send to:

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

More details are available on the website:

swbt.org

Charity No. 262889

DIARY DATES

3 November

Talk to SWU: Work place issues webinar

3 November

BASW NI Community of Practice: 'Crash & burn? Let's talk about social workers' mental health'

3 November or 8 December

Professional Resilience

See advert page 4

4 November

SASW Student & NQSW support and mentoring group

8 November

Revisiting Social Work Theory for Contemporary Social Work Practice Training

See advert page 4

8 November

Living good lives: Creating a positive and therapeutic culture in hospitals with a rights-based approach for adults with learning disabilities and/or autistic adults

9 November to 7 December

Safe & Together™ Training by SASW

11 November

Safeguarding in faith-based communities

See advert page 4

15 November

Living good lives: Effective hospital discharge planning for adults with learning disabilities and/or autistic adults to prevent future admissions

17 November

BIA & DOLS Refresher Training

See advert page 4

17 November

BASW NI CPD Seminar Adult Mental Health

24 November

International Symposium on Social Work Practitioner Research: Contributions to Theory and Practice

See advert page 4

25 November

BASW England Criminal Justice Group: Bridging the Wall: social work practice with imprisoned parents

1 December

Safeguarding Adults Level 4: Named Professionals Training

See advert page 4

1 December

BASW – Becoming Allies in Social Work: Understanding LGBTQIA+ Inequalities – Key Concepts

See advert page 4

1 December

BASW NI Community of Practice 'Calling out all forms of oppression & discrimination in social work'

2 December

BASW England Mental Health Group meeting

2 December

SASW Student & NQSW support and mentoring group

2 December

BASW England Student & NQSW event: "Celebrate and share around the table"

7 December

Direct observations, gathering feedback and reporting progress training for Practice Assessors

See advert page 4

8 December

Emotional Intelligence & Professional Resilience Training for NQSWs Cohort 3

15 December

BASW NI CPD Seminar Youth Justice & Children's Services

12 January or 10 February

Analysis into Assessment and Evidence-Informed Decision Making

See advert page 4

Upcoming BASW Branch events

3 Nov **North Yorkshire**
Network Meeting

23 Nov **Buckinghamshire**
Branch Meeting

11 Nov **West Yorkshire**
Branch Meeting

7 Dec **Black Country**
The Kindertransport and social work with today's child refugees

17 Nov **Greater Manchester**
The REIGN Collective: Power not Pity

Information is correct at time of going to press.

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

Delivering Recovery from Childhood Trauma



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

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

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

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

Halliwell has developed the **Restorative Parenting®**

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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THE QUEEN'S AWARDS
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GIVING BACK

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

