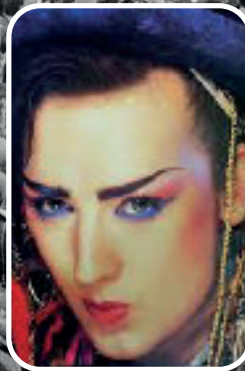


# PROFESSIONAL Social Work

November/December 2022



Rising interest rates, strikes, cuts to services,  
homelessness, neoliberalism, Boy George  
and Ben Elton back on TV... Are we going

# Back to the future?

**BASW**  
The professional association for  
social work and social workers



# National Trauma Conference

(TISUK and TRUK)

Trauma Informed to Trauma Recovery:  
Relational Skills for Transformational Change

Friday  
24th February 2023  
9.30am to 5.30pm  
Online event: Zoom  
Fee: £75

For schools, communities and public services; or anyone working  
with children, teenagers and adults who have experienced trauma

All proceeds  
donated to student  
bursary scheme for  
TISUK's community  
training

## About the event

A cutting-edge conference with practitioners and experts with lived experience who work with vulnerable people who've experienced trauma. They will speak about effective relational skills for trauma recovery with refugees, asylum seekers, the homeless, people in the criminal justice system, children/young people vulnerable to being permanently excluded, and/or joining gangs/gun crime, and people suffering from addictions to deal with their emotional pain.

## Speakers

### Dr Margot Sunderland

**Trauma recovery: Relational skills for transformational change**

- Director of Innovation and Research Trauma Informed Schools UK
- Co-Author of *Helping People Talk about Trauma*.
- Author of *Conversations that Matter*

### Paul Dix

**Working with vulnerable children at risk of permanent school exclusion: relational skills for all school staff**

- Author of *When the Adults Change Everything Changes* and *After the Adults Change: Achievable Behaviour Nirvana*

### Dr Dan Hughes

**Trauma recovery after developmental trauma**

- Founder of Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) and PACE.
- Author of *Healing Relational Trauma with Attachment Focused Interventions*

### Mark Johnson OBE

**Trauma recovery from addiction and prison**

- Founder of the charity User Voice – giving voice to people in the criminal justice system
- Author of *Wasted*

### James Doherty

**Trauma recovery from addiction and violence**

- Development Officer within the Violence Reduction Unit, Glasgow.
- Mentor of people with convictions seeking to re-create their lives and supporting change.

### Sheetal Amin

**Trauma recovery work with children and young people exposed to war, seeking asylum, who've been tortured, sold, or victims of sexual trafficking**

- UKCP Child College Chair and Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity for children and young people.
- CAMHS Lead: Looked after children/ children seeking asylum

### Tanayah Sam

**Trauma recovery work with young people vulnerable to extremist influences/part of or at risk of joining gang culture**

- Founder of two non-profit organisations, Tanayah Sam Associates and One 2 Engage, working with young people in schools and prisons who are part of, or at risk of, joining gang culture, as well as those vulnerable to extremist influences
- Author of *After Hardship Comes Ease*

### PC Sharon Tarling

**Trauma recovery: the role of the police as front-line service**

- Consultant for Young People within the criminal justice system working to prevent offending and re-offending
- Qualified Trauma informed Schools and Communities practitioner

### Reverend Frances French

**Trauma recovery in the community. Church as pastoral presence**

- Working in pastoral ministry for twenty years



## Booking

Eventbrite: [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/trauma-informed-to-trauma-recovery-relational-skills-for-transformational-tickets-383882381537](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/trauma-informed-to-trauma-recovery-relational-skills-for-transformational-tickets-383882381537)

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From the  
Editor  
**SHAHID  
NAQVI**



## A quiet battle for the soul of social work?

The relationship between social work and government can be tricky at times, particularly when ministers pursue policies that conflict with the values of social workers – or make it harder for them to do their job.

The current gloomy economic climate and looming threats of cuts to services is a case in point.

There's also the power imbalance, a sense at times of being done to by government rather than with, something good social work tries to minimise in practice.

Power is at the heart of the current disquiet in some quarters of the profession towards Social Work England.

Whether imagined or not, there is a sense among some of a 'power grab' by the regulator over the profession's education and its voice.

This is explored in our features section, with a response from the regulator.

Whatever the reality, it's not hard to understand the profession's paranoia. The last decade or more has seen attempts by Westminster to control and define social work into a more practical role focused on just helping individuals, rather than being concerned with politics and things like structural inequality and social injustice.

But the truth is that the two are connected. For without the latter, the former is just sticking plaster on old wounds.

## BASW

Wellesley House, 37 Waterloo Street,  
Birmingham B2 5PP  
Tel: 0121 622 3911 [www.basw.co.uk](http://www.basw.co.uk)

## Editor

Shahid Naqvi  
Email: [shahid.naqvi@basw.co.uk](mailto:shahid.naqvi@basw.co.uk)  
07747 845098

## Production assistant

Susan Hatton  
Email: [s.hatton@basw.co.uk](mailto:s.hatton@basw.co.uk)

## Editorial Advisory Board

Daniel Keeler and Laura Davis (co-chairs),  
Yvonne Boyle, Lindsay Giddings,  
Sumayya Hanson, Bill Stone, Nicola  
Sylvester, Tim Parkinson, Emma Taylor-  
Hill, Sally Parker (adviser)

## Advertising

David Nelmes, Winterburn Media Ltd  
Tel: 01309 690063  
Email: [david@winterburnmedia.co.uk](mailto:david@winterburnmedia.co.uk)

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The professional association for social work and social workers

**International Development Fund**

**Why just think about international exchange and development when you can do it?**

At the 2014 BASW AGM, a motion was carried to create a fund whose aim would be, *"to put international exchange and development in a more accessible place than currently is possible and ensure support to BASW members in international exchanges of skills, knowledge, and expertise..."* (Ordinary Motion 1, AGM 2014).

The International Development Fund (IDF) is sustained with a £2 per annum, per member levy on the BASW membership, with a view to:

- Facilitate the international exchange of skills, knowledge, and expertise.
- Assist social workers and others to develop their knowledge and skills on international issues.
- Provide opportunities to network with international professionals.
- Examine research and models of practice outside of the UK.
- Build a database of international contacts.

The fund was temporarily repurposed in March 2020 to provide funding for overseas groups of social workers with support in their response to Covid-19. However, BASW is now accepting again, individual and partnership applications to the fund.

There are two ways you can apply:

**Individual Applications\***

Individual applicants may want to consider field trips, study visits, conferences, and other activities. Applicants must be a BASW member and can apply for funding **up to a maximum of £1000**

**Partnership Projects\***

To initiate and support international social work partnerships involving groups and agencies, with BASW members in key roles. Applications need to be made by partnerships, not individuals. The partnership must be initiated by a BASW member. Partnerships may apply for grants of **up to a maximum of £10,000**

**\* Please note:** Terms and conditions apply. Funding is not given retrospectively

**For more information, full criteria, t&cs, submission deadlines, etc. visit the BASW website:**  
[www.basw.co.uk/what-we-do/international-work/international-development-fund-idf](https://www.basw.co.uk/what-we-do/international-work/international-development-fund-idf)  
**or contact Helen Randle: [policyadmin@basw.co.uk](mailto:policyadmin@basw.co.uk)**



## NEWS



## Winter alert on rights in care homes as lockdowns continue

**P**eople in care homes and hospitals are still being denied regular visitors during Covid outbreaks, despite a relaxation of government rules.

The findings, from a survey of 650 families by The Relatives & Residents Association and Rights for Residents, raises renewed concern for the rights and wellbeing of older people this winter, with Covid rates expected to rise.

Almost 60 per cent of families reported lockdowns in care homes between April and September. Government guidance says in the event of an outbreak, care home residents should be able to have one visitor at a time inside the care home.

This does not need to be the same person throughout, and could be a volunteer or befriender.

But the survey found more than 60 per cent of homes applied additional restrictions over and above what is required by government guidance.

Most commonly only one named visitor per resident was allowed, seen in nearly a third of cases.

Homes implementing the 'one named visitor' rule told families they were following advice from local public health teams and/or the local authority in 71 per cent of cases.

In 11 per cent of cases, residents were not allowed any visitors at all during an outbreak.

One survey respondent said: "I have to meet my relative in a pod outside during outbreaks [of Covid]. We have to wear a mask, gloves and apron. We are not allowed inside the home, and if anyone else has booked the pod, we are not allowed to visit."

Campaigners are calling for the right to a care supporter to be enshrined in law, in response to severe, detrimental isolation practices still ongoing.

Diane Mayhew, co-founder of Rights for Residents, said: "Our survey underlines the urgent need for the rights of residents, young and old, to be legally upheld."

"We must ensure those in care homes and hospitals have a legal right to at least one essential care supporter that can visit them in any circumstances."

"Families have been forced to stand aside and witness the devastating effects that isolation has had on their vulnerable loved ones throughout the pandemic. On being forcibly separated from their closest family members many simply gave up the will to live."

Helen Wildbore, director of The Relatives & Residents Association, added: "Older people in care have been forgotten about – out of sight and out of mind – [and are] still suffering the harmful impact of isolation which has destroyed so many lives."

In October, MPs debated creating a new legal right to ensure people can maintain contact with their family across health and care settings and supported ending unnecessary restrictions in care homes.

BASW England's 'Homes not Hospitals' campaign is calling for social workers to be recognised as 'professional visitors' in health care settings to support the rights and wellbeing of residents.

BASW England professional officer Liz Howard said: "Social workers have an essential role in responding to the human rights challenges of Covid-19 to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of people and families."

"We need to ensure the right to private and family life as enshrined in Article 8 of the Human Rights Act is upheld for those in care and health settings."

**Six-year fight to get autistic adult out of hospital - page 22**

## It's never been as bad as this, warn directors

Directors of adult services predict the "worst ever" winter, blaming "decades of policy paralysis", the cost of living crisis and high staff vacancy rates.

Sarah McClinton, president of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, warned: "Be under no illusion, things have never been so bad."

An average of 5,400 new requests for help are received each day in England and more than half a million people are waiting for assessment or review, or for support packages. The Care Quality Commission warns of a workforce gap of more than 150,000 in social care.

Speaking at the national Children and Adult Services Conference, McClinton said: "If we could have traded all the sticking plasters we have seen over the past ten winters for one proper bandage, we might have started to heal the wound."

She called for long-term investment and better pay.

## A real-term cut to pay

Social workers in England and Wales are to get a pay rise of between 4.04 and 6.6 per cent, backdated to April following an agreement between employers and unions.

However, with inflation running at nine per cent it represents a real-term pay cut.

New figures show social workers earn on average £39,053 a year and health and social care workers £30,038.

**Rise of the unions - page 28**



## NEWS

# Anti-racism template aims to stop 'colour-blind' approaches

**A**n anti-racist supervision form for social work has been created in a bid to “integrate anti-racism in the supervisory space”.

The new form, which puts a strong emphasis on wellbeing, has been shaped by members of BASW's Black and Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium (BPS), practitioners, social work students, managers and practice educators.

Shabnam Ahmed, a member of BPS who led on the project, said it will help to eradicate “colour blind approaches in supervision”.

“I created this template because I believe that good social work supervision serves as a nourishment for social workers and is fundamental to their wellbeing and practice,” she said.

“However, if supervision is not reflective of anti-racist principles, then it can do more harm than good and, in my opinion, has the potential to reproduce inequalities.

“The template is therefore aimed at supporting supervisors to practice anti-racist principles through supervision as it encourages that all forms of oppression, including racism, are considered and discussed as part of supervision.”

The form starts by talking about health and wellbeing, such as stress, feelings and self-care and adds: “Discussions should include any impact and barriers around protected factors, for example, race/disability discrimination”.

Ahmed consulted with “hundreds” of social workers and found that race, racism and anti-racism are rarely part of supervision.

She said: “I wish such a template was not necessary, however events in 2020 – the pandemic and police brutality in the US – shone a light on the disproportionate impact on people from Black and other Global majorities.

“It also broke silences around racism and reinvigorated the Black Lives Matter movement. The wide-ranging impact of structural and institutional racism on Black and ethnic minority social workers' wellbeing, morale and progression became clearer than ever before.

“This led to me becoming curious about the supervision space and recognising that supervision will not be benign to the ills of society.”

The form is intended to be a generic template that can be easily adapted to suit specific demographics, levels and areas of practice, and not just aimed at Black and ethnic minority social workers.

Ahmed added: “I heard someone recently say, ‘If you can do good anti-racist supervision, you can do good supervision – it is as simple as that.’

“I could not agree more and encourage all supervisors to reflect on the supervision that they provide and start by asking themselves: ‘Do I provide supervision that incorporates the principles of anti-racism?’”

**See the BPS page on BASW's website to download template**



Shabnam Ahmed, creator of the anti racist supervision template

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**‘In retrospect I can see the cuts to social care were the most silent but also the most devastating.’  
Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt speaking about cuts to public spending in 2010  
when he was health secretary**

## Racial disparity revealed in MH detentions

Black people are over 4.5 times more likely to be sectioned under the Mental Health Act than white people in England, new NHS statistics reveal.

Figures for the ‘Black or Black British’ groups show 307.3 detentions per 100,000 population, compared to 72.4 for the ‘White’ group.

And ‘Black or Black British’ groups were over 11 times more likely than the ‘white’ group to be given a Community Treatment Order or CTO (75.5 per 100,000 compared to 6.8 for white).

Detentions varied from 42.1 per 100,000 in the least deprived areas to 153.3 in the most deprived areas of the country.

In 2021-22 there were a total of 53,337 new detentions under the Mental Health Act.

Detentions were higher for males at 93.8 per 100,000 compared to females (86.4).

Rates for younger people aged 18-35 were 67 per cent higher at 144.2 per 100,000 than those aged 65 plus (86.3).

Lucy Schonegevel, associate director of policy and practice at Rethink Mental Illness, said: “We need urgent investment in social care and community services to ensure people are prevented from falling into crisis in the first place.”

## Shout out for student voices

Do you want to get the voice of social work students heard? If so, why not join BASW's student ambassador scheme? Applications are now open. See BASW's website for details.



## NEWS



President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services Steve Crocker

## Cuts to children's services can not be an option - sector leader

**T**he government must not scrimp on children's services spending, a sector leader has warned as new figures reveal the extent of pressures upon the system.

Analysis by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) found an estimated 2.8 million initial 'front door' contacts were made in England during the year to the end of March 2022 – a ten per cent rise over the last two years.

The figure, highlighted in ADCS's Safeguarding Pressures Phase 8 report, is equal to an average of 7,575 contacts a day.

More than 650,000 referrals were made – an increase of 8.8 per cent on the previous year and up 21 per cent since 2007/08. Section 47 enquiries have risen 9.6 per cent on the previous year to 217,800, a massive 184 per cent rise compared to 2007/08.

The analysis, based on data from 125 authorities, comes as the government warns of spending cuts across all departments to plug a £40 billion "fiscal black hole".

England's Independent Review of Children's Social Care published earlier this year recommended a "system reset" focus on early help backed by £2.6 billion investment in the first five years followed by £1 billion a year thereafter.

ADCS president Steve Crocker said: "More and more families are experiencing hardship, or have reached crisis, and we know that there is a strong correlation between poverty, deprivation and involvement with children's social care.

"With the cost of living crisis beginning to bite many more children and families will fall

into poverty. Local authority children's services are responding to needs which, under normal circumstances, should have been met earlier in the system and not escalated to the point of crisis.

"Funding is not keeping pace with this reality, neither are the foundations needed to make the system a success, such as workforce, placements, legislation and regulation."

Crocker accepted there were competing economic pressures, but added: "I can think of nothing more important than investing in a system that protects and cares for our most vulnerable children."

Statistics from the Department for Education published last month show a 4.1 per cent rise in children in need over the last year to 404,310.

There were 82,040 children in care on the 31st March this year, a 35 per cent rise since 2008.

In a separate thematic report on children's mental health ADCS found a rise in emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression and increases in eating disorders, self-harm, suicide and suicidal ideation.

The proportion of assessments where children's mental health was a factor rose from 9.1 per cent in 2017/18 to 13.6 per cent in 2021/22.

The release of this year's data comes as soaring demand has seen spending to protect vulnerable children increase by 25 per cent, according to the Local Government Association.

More than two thirds of councils are overspending their budgets to keep up with rising demand. Councils overspent by £800m in the year 2020/21.

## Social worker recovering after stabbing

A social worker had to have intensive surgery after being stabbed in the back of the head by a 16-year-old service user.

The worker was unpacking groceries for the teenager in her home when the attack happened in Dungannon, Northern Ireland. Her attacker has been charged with attempted murder.

BASW said it was "vital social workers are kept safe as they safeguard others".

## Kinship carers facing poverty warns charity

Nearly two thirds of kinship carers will not be able to put the heating on this winter and four in ten are skipping meals and using food banks.

A survey by charity Kinship also shows 45 per cent have had to give up work to care for children, 58 per cent borrow money or use short term loans and credit cards and 26 per cent are unable to pay bills.

## No austerity II urges BASW

BASW chief executive Ruth Allen urged Prime Minister Rishi Sunak against further cuts to public services in the forthcoming budget.

She said: "There is desperation that spans generations and communities as a result of the cost of living crisis, years of falling real time pay and the lowest level of benefits in four decades."

She said public services were being "expected to deliver the impossible" already.



## ENGLAND NEWS



Winners of the 2022 Social Worker of the Year Awards for England

# Generous, kind, persistent - the social workers to take pride in

**A** practitioner who spends her free time supporting refugees and asylum seekers has been named social worker of the year.

Kirstie Baughan also won the social justice advocate award for her “generosity with her time” volunteering with refugee charity Care4Calais and Refugees at Home.

Kirstie gained the accolades at England’s Social Worker of the Year Awards held in person for the first time since the pandemic in London.

Judges praised her “huge commitment” to social work and promoting the rights of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

An audit manager at Central Bedfordshire Council in her day job, Kirstie says she was a big fan of the Jacqueline Wilson *Tracy Beaker* books and TV programme as a child.

The Camden Integrated Learning Disability Service was joint winner with Kirstie and also named team of the year. It was praised for “dogged persistence” in changing lives. A notable success was the case of Kasibba (not her real name), featured in this edition of *PSW*, an autistic Black African woman who was inappropriately detained in hospital for more than 40 years.

Camden’s director of adult social care and integrated commissioning Jess McGregor said:

“Their refusal to accept the status quo, to call out the racism that has built up around Kasibba and their ability to articulate and embed a narrative of home and achievement to replace that of danger and savagery is, in my experience, beyond compare.”

Children’s social worker of the year was Annmarie Nero from Achieving for Children. Despite only just completing her first year in practice, managers said she demonstrated “the insight and analysis of a more experienced social worker”.

The adult social worker of the year award went to Bhavna Maher, of Leicester City Council, who was praised for her work supporting vulnerable people on the streets.

Colleagues describe her as someone with “unwavering kindness and resilience” who never gives up on those she supports.

Student social worker of the year Solomon Tugbiyele overcame self-doubt and dyslexia to graduate with first class honours. In his first placement, at a rural primary school, he was credited with helping to change the culture and delivering an anti-racist whole school initiative.

The life time achievement accolade went to Sarah Lowe for more than four decades spent improving the lives of adults and children with disabilities.

Colleagues described her as a “very special person”.

## Manchester Mayor pays tribute to social workers

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham paid tribute to the “dedication and passion” of social workers, particularly during the Covid pandemic, in a recorded

message at BASW England’s annual conference. Burnham thanked BASW England for its endorsement of the ‘Hillsborough Law Now’ campaign. He stressed

the importance of social justice in social work and praised BASW England’s ‘Homes not hospitals’ campaign.

Conference report in next bulletin

## Concern over mandatory reporting

Making it law for professionals to report a disclosure or signs of child sexual abuse could lead to “unintended consequences”, leading social work academics have warned.

The measure was a key recommendation of the Independent Inquiry into the Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) final report last month.

Professor Ray Jones, who is currently chairing an inquiry into children’s social care in Northern Ireland, said: “The unintended consequence of adding to the remedies already available and creating a specific criminal offence with the possibility of imprisonment is that children’s social services and the police might be overwhelmed by referrals of those who are insuring themselves from possible criminal charges by flooding child protection services with any and every possible low level concern.”

Professor June Thoburn also urged caution, highlighting a submission by social work academics to a 2018 government consultation that ruled out mandatory reporting of all forms of child abuse.

The paper warns of the danger of “false positives”, adding: “Large numbers of reports investigated that lead to no further action result in the protection systems becoming so overloaded that serious cases are inadequately responded to.”

The IICSA report acknowledges mandatory reporting in other countries has led to an increase in referrals but concludes it is a “powerful weapon against child sexual abuse”.



# SCOTLAND NEWS



## Call for fair bursary funding by students using food banks

**S**cottish social work students are having to use food banks to survive, prompting a 300-strong letter of protest demanding bursaries be extended to all.

The current system means not all third or fourth-year students can access funding while on placement, unlike nursing and paramedic students. In addition, postgraduate social work students have to be nominated for funding.

Nursing bursaries are up to £10,000 a year, lasting the full duration of placements. Social work students have to submit year-round applications for awards.

Tales of hardship have been featured in a campaign on behalf of the 1,966 social work students in Scotland to make the Student Awards Agency, Scottish Social Services Council, and government officials change the rules.

One student said: "We have ended up needing to use food banks to live. I also had to stop doing some visits and sessions due to financial difficulties, as it was too difficult to work while on placement."

"Having more of a bursary would have taken pressure off basic living needs as well as being able to complete it without any additional difficulties."

Students also told of intolerable pressure, with one adding: "During placement I have had to work two jobs to be able to afford rent, food, travel and other bills."

"A social work bursary would have let me spend more time focusing on my studies and placement."

"Not all students have family who are able to financially support them."

"A lot of students are also unpaid carers who have caring responsibilities on top of studies and this affects their ability to pick up shifts."

Their campaign has the backing of the Social Workers Union, and the Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW).

Alison Bavidge, national director of SASW, said: "You can't survive on a student loan. If you are expected to do a significant amount of placement and studying, it is very difficult to hold down. It leads to uncertainty and additional stress."

"In Scotland's integrated environment it is really time to look at some parity with health professions, especially as we know we don't have enough social workers."

The letter, sent to Jamie Hepburn, minister for higher education, says: "Without reform we risk not having enough social workers in the future to meet the statutory roles they play, let alone enabling social workers to help 'Keep the Promise' to those in need and play a full role in ensuring Scotland is a fairer, safer place to live."

"Indeed, with 20 per cent of the social work workforce approaching retirement age and 25 per cent leaving the profession within their first six years of starting, Scotland faces recruitment and retention challenges which this proposal will help address."

## National Care Service is not adding up

The Scottish government has received warnings over the costing of the proposed National Care Service (NCS).

Michelle Thomson, MSP for Falkirk East, said she was "completely surprised" by what she describes as a lack of detail in government documents about the NCS.

An independent analysis of the SNP's flagship policy reveals it could cost up to £1.3 billion to deliver, far in excess of government estimates of between £24-36 million for 2022/03, rising to £232-477 million in 2025-6.

Holyrood's finance committee also criticised the proposals. Convener Kenneth Gibson said: "It is a sledgehammer to crack a nut."

The government last month launched a review into whether children's services should be part of the new service or remain within local authorities.

## Transgender bill passes first stage

A bill making it easier for people to change their legal gender passed the first stage in the Scottish Parliament following debate in Holyrood.

The Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill removes the need for a medical diagnosis, shortens the time a person must be in an acquired gender from two years to three months with a further three months 'reflection', and reduces the age for application from 18 to 16.



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## BASW Student Ambassador Scheme

**Calling all student social workers – free BASW membership and more when you become a BASW Student Ambassador!**

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- Gain skills including building relationships and being an approachable support to other student colleagues.
- We will provide a BASW staff member point of contact for ongoing support.
- Support through regular online UK network meetings.
- Discounted access to designated sessions on BASW's Student CPD online training programme co-produced with students.
- A hoodie and a badge identifying you as BASW Student Ambassador in your university.
- Statement or reference of your work in the role on request.

If you would like an informal discussion about the role, please contact [gabriella.zavoli@basw.co.uk](mailto:gabriella.zavoli@basw.co.uk)

**The closing date for applications is 28 November 2022.**

[www.basw.co.uk/basw-student-ambassador-scheme/](http://www.basw.co.uk/basw-student-ambassador-scheme/)

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The Social Workers' Educational Trust (SWET) was established as an independent charity in 1972 on the initiative of the British Association of Social Workers. It is registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales (Registered Charity number 313789) and operates throughout England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. It remains independent of BASW, with its own Trustees.

SWET aims to assist qualified social workers to develop their knowledge and skills, encourage research into social work practice and education, and educate the public in the nature of social work.

Subject to criteria\*, registered social workers who have completed at least two years post-qualifying practice and who are working or intending to work in the UK, can apply for funding from the Trust.

SWET provides grants of up to **£500** to individuals and up to **£1000** to assist team learning. SWET also awards three annual scholarships of **£3,000** each (usually in June). Applicants need to complete a simple application form if they wish to be considered for a grant or scholarship\*

The Trustees consider grant applications at three meetings each year (usually February, June and October).

**The next meeting to consider applications will be on 22nd February 2023, with the deadline for submissions being midday on Wednesday, 15th February 2023.**

\* Full criteria, FAQs, guidance, and application forms can be found here:

<https://socialworkerseducationaltrust.org.uk>

## WALES NEWS



'It's looking pretty grim' warns one councillor amid fear of cuts to social services in Wales

### 'Catastrophic' council finance shortfall puts services at risk

**C**ouncils in Wales face an £802 million shortfall by the end of 2024-5 as they await news of further potential cuts to services that will impact on the most vulnerable.

The situation has been described as "potentially catastrophic" by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) which revealed the shortfall. It said: "Schools, social care, public protection and other community services are in a perilous position."

A combination of higher energy bills – costing Welsh councils a projected £200 million – surging inflation and expensive pay settlements mean cuts to local services are now a reality.

Swansea Council faces a shortfall of £44 million, driven by a rise in energy bills.

Conwy Council has described the situation as "perilous" and Councillor Alun Lenny, cabinet member for resources at Carmarthenshire County Council, said: "It's looking pretty grim to be honest. It's austerity on steroids."

Cllr Andrew Morgan, leader of the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, said: "If you closed all our leisure centres, all our libraries, laid off all our litter picking staff and never cleaned the streets again, laid off all our refuse workers and shut down all our parks... all those services combined would still leave me £20 million short of balancing

the budget next year."

Hundreds of public services from waste management to libraries to social care to education and housing are under threat.

A report by the Finance Sub Group of the WLGA warns: "Cumulatively the pressures building up in the system are starting to look potentially catastrophic."

"Recent experience tells us that pressures in local government budgets vary from anything between £250 million to £300 million in any one financial year."

"Other than the experience of the early months of the pandemic, there is no precedent for pressures of this scale escalating so quickly. Without additional funding the risks to all local government services, including the larger ones of education and social care, cannot be understated."

Allison Hulmes, national director for BASW Cymru, said: "Wales has some of the highest levels of deprivation in the UK."

"Cuts to social care at a time of growing need is not only morally wrong in a country that calls itself civilised. It also makes no financial sense as it results in far greater and more costly intervention further up the road."

The UK government says it has provided record funding to Wales.

### Private homes turning down Welsh children

Privately-run care homes are discriminating against children from Wales due to the Welsh government's plan to ban using profit-making firms.

The Welsh government is currently consulting on eliminating profiteering from children's social care by 2027.

The radical step is in response to concerns expressed by children in care about big business profiteering from them.

However, Swansea Council said it was finding it harder to place children from Wales as the aim of profit elimination is being "driven at pace".

Existing private providers will need to move to not-for-profit by April 2027 and new private providers will need a not-for-profit status when registering from 1 April next year.

But evidence has emerged of providers reacting to the proposals by turning away children from Wales, a Swansea Council scrutiny committee has heard.

Chris Griffiths, principal officer for residential services at Swansea Council, said: "This is already having a massive and immediate impact in an already challenging placement market - providers are making the decision to pause or not continue with any of their plans or even withdraw from offering placements."

### Basic income scheme for care leavers showing signs of success

A Basic Income pilot paying nearly £20,000 a year to care leavers in their first two years of adulthood is getting positive feedback.

More than 500 care leavers are benefiting from the pioneering scheme, which is backed by financial advice to help them manage their money and develop

budgeting skills.

Wales' Deputy Minister for Social Services Julie Morgan said: "It has been heartening to hear from the young people the impact

the pilot scheme has had on their lives. The life choices of looked after children should not be determined by the circumstances of their childhood."



# NORTHERN IRELAND NEWS



Getting the Covid vaccine and flu jab is among ways in which the public are being told they can help

## Public urged to ease pressure on health and social care staff

**T**he public has been asked to help prevent Northern Ireland's health and social care system being overwhelmed this winter as workers in the sector prepare for strike action.

The appeal came from outgoing health minister Robin Swann who also expressed regret that the political impasse had prevented a pay deal being reached.

Unison NI has been balloting members on strike action, citing the below inflation pay rise from the Pay Review Body as central to worsening winter pressures.

Swann wrote a letter to health and social care staff on his last day in office in which he recognised challenges impacting the workforce.

He wrote: "Unfortunately, there are currently significant political and budgetary obstacles in the way of progress. I deeply regret that these obstacles have so far held up a pay deal for [Health and Social Care] staff this year."

He said his hands were tied by budget uncertainties and a lack of a fully functioning executive in the country.

In his statement to the Assembly, he appealed to the public to support health and care staff and updated MLAs on winter resilience planning being undertaken across the system.

He said: "Health and social care services have been under extreme stress and are likely to remain so for a considerable period. The pressures we used to see mainly in winter months are now being experienced

all year round. With winter approaching, those pressures are likely to worsen, with Covid-19 cases expected to rise alongside increased levels of flu and other respiratory infections.

"We can all play an important role in supporting our staff this winter. That includes getting our Covid-19 and flu vaccine jabs if eligible.

"Please use health and care services appropriately and remember that hospital emergency departments are for conditions that are urgent and/or life threatening. Please also cooperate with hospital discharges when you or a family member are medically fit to leave hospital.

"I would also appeal to everyone to respect health and social care staff as they care for us during this extremely difficult period."

But Anne Speed, Unison Northern Ireland's head of bargaining and representation, said: "The below inflation pay rise recommended by the Pay Review Body will not protect working families against the spiralling costs of living.

"The absence of any funding behind that recommendation and the absence of a government in Northern Ireland has denied workers here access to this increase."

Unison NI regional secretary Patricia McKeown added: "In the face of a cost of living crisis, our members need a decent, fair pay rise.

"We do not advocate for strike action as the first option. It's always a measure of last resort. But for our members there is no alternative left."

## Covid makes temper flare in workplace

Signs of jaded and increasingly angry health and social care workers were highlighted in a study into how staff have coped during Covid-19.

The findings come from the final phase of a UK-wide Health and Social Care Workforce survey led by Ulster University, Queens University Belfast, Bath Spa University and Kings College London based on a questionnaire and focus groups during May and July this year.

It found "an increase in negative coping strategies" such as displays of anger and substance use.

It noted "in some cases an increase in incivility at work and tensions with co-workers and managers, as well as an unwillingness to go above and beyond".

Measures offered by employers, such as online support, were seen as "tokenistic" by staff who felt burnt out by "increased job demands as well as persistent staff shortages" due to Covid-19 and its legacy.

The report said: "These are worrying trends. It is worrying because of the very real risk of mental and physical health problems developing among many members of the workforce.

"It is also worrying because this level of job dissatisfaction might lead to even higher staff turnover, with many leaving their health and social care work for less stressful or more fulfilling (and higher paying) jobs in other sectors."

It called for improved pay and work conditions to make jobs in the sector "financially attractive and sustainable".

## IN FOCUS

# Inclusion or **EXCLUSION?**

**Kierra Myles** was labelled a violent young offender after entering the care system, experiencing school exclusions and time in prison. Now she works as a mentor, and argues more needs to be done to ensure professionals with lived experience are employed, heard, and respected

**I** was in my first year of secondary school when I was arrested for shoplifting from HMV. I was eleven years old. Older boys would tell me which CDs to get. I thought I was good at it and stole a lot before I was caught. When I was caught, I was taken to the police station; although police had been on the estate before, I had never been in an interview room. I was given a warning, told not to do it again and banned from HMV.

I was used to warnings and exclusion. The first time I was excluded from school I was just eight years old. I started a new school and by the middle of year five I was excluded again.

I went to a behaviour school where I excelled with smaller classes and more tailored activities. I moved back to mainstream education in the middle of year six, ready to move onto secondary school. However, in year eight I was permanently excluded from mainstream education, aged 12 years old.

By now I was living in a children's home. I moved between alternative education facilities and custody for the remainder of my secondary education.

On my estate, crime was the norm. People around me were taking or selling drugs, involved in crime, and those closest to me were violent. My home was fuelled by anger, fear, addiction and violence, with different men moving in and out.

I didn't know what stability was. I had to be tough; there wasn't another choice. The day after my 13th birthday I



was sentenced in court for what was described as a serious assault.

I spent the next two years in and out of secure homes.

I had learnt from a young age not to trust the services around me – probation, social workers, secure or care home staff. I lost count of the amount of people who tried to 'fix' or 'change' me, while labelling me aggressive, oppositional, and lacking in empathy.

I didn't meet a single person who had similar or shared experiences with me.

How could I trust the same people slamming me on the floor and shoving me in a cell? Professionals trying to tell

*Continued over the page*



# IN FOCUS

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me to change friends, walk away from confrontation and count to ten when they had absolutely no idea about my life experiences.

The secure environment didn't teach me a lesson, it only made me worse. I didn't have words for how I felt so I reacted in anger, a language I understood.

When I was 15, I was given my first prison sentence. I was put on an adult female wing in a Young Offender Institution (YOI). It was the first time I met older people who had shared experiences. They tried to make me believe I could achieve more, in a way that I could take in.

I built a few relationships, not all of them positive, but I connected with one woman. She didn't ask me questions, tell me what to do or try to change me. She gave me her time; I knew she cared; I could sense it. She is still my friend today - she helped me get a job when I was 21 when no one would employ me.

Why did I have to wait until I went to prison to meet someone who had walked the path I had, who understood all the things I couldn't yet say?

When I speak to people who were involved in the youth justice system about navigating their way out and building lives away from crime (and sometimes their friends and family), the story emerges of relationships, hope and inspiration.

They found support, acceptance and guidance in new relationships that did not involve shame, judgement or people trying to change someone.

The path is not linear; it is up and down. It requires strength, determination and positive consistent relationships.

Everyone's experiences are different, but those who have had to navigate through care and the criminal justice system will understand the challenges and emotional effort it takes to even start.

## So why are people with lived experience of the youth justice system often excluded from services?

When in prison, I told the teachers I wanted to work with young people like me. They told me that I wouldn't be able to work with young people because of my criminal record. I told them I would one day, watch me.

I was naturally ambitious and determined, but I had no self-worth or self-belief. Anger fuelled my ambition to not become a statistic. I didn't have the ability to channel that emotion until I met people who understood why I was angry, not just because they had compassion and empathy, but because they had been there and felt that pain.

I tried to volunteer to work with children when I was 21. I was at college trying to get my maths and English GCSEs, and despite not having been arrested in three years I was told to come back after five years.

I found a job in an office, and after five years I rang, emailed, and rang some more - despite promises, no one got back to me. I went back to the children's home I used to live at to ask if I could volunteer there.

They said they would investigate it, but never got back



to me. I bumped into someone who worked in a secure home and asked them too, but again, no one ever came back. It was difficult not to feel the same as I felt all those years ago when I was being passed between care homes because they didn't want me.

During this time, I found martial arts and put all my energy into training. I had finally found a sport I loved. I remember lying in bed and thinking, these medals, the buzz I get from competing, I love it. But this wasn't my purpose, my purpose was to work with children who, just like me, faced barrier after barrier, with no one to properly help them navigate through challenges, build a relationship and be there no matter what.

Surely all this stuff that happened was for a reason, otherwise I'd be dead or still in jail like many of the people I grew up with.

It took me ten years to break down the barriers within services preventing me from working with children.

I had no hope, only ambition. I had to hunt opportunity. I was constantly knocked back and ignored. I was told that the criminal record I had accumulated as a child was going to stop me working with children, despite having never been seen as a risk to children.

At the age of 31, I eventually managed to secure a role within children's social care services working with children in care and care leavers.

There were a couple of people that really went above and beyond to help me work within the service and stay there, and for them I am truly grateful.

## I thought I'd won the battle, but it had only just started

When you become a lived experience professional, some people want you to help them because you can build

Top, Kierra as a child; above, as a teenager and right, at a Jiu Jitsu tournament

## IN FOCUS



trusting relationships with young people quickly.

In my experience this often served to fulfil their needs rather than the needs of the young person. Not all professionals have this intention, however, too many do.

Young people gravitate towards you because they know you get it. The way you hold yourself, talk, understand, and don't ask certain questions says a lot – you can't fake it because they know.

Lived experience professionals are often very passionate, including children in everything, empowering them to speak up and have a say in their lives.

This is where the exclusion of lived experience professionals can start. I have found no one wants to listen to you when you try to tell them why what they are trying to do won't work.

Lived experience people are being pushed to the side and seen as just a tool that can be used to build trusting relationships through shared experiences, or identity.

There is a clear power imbalance, even from the inside as a professional. I have had people try to push me out of meetings to prevent me sharing thoughts and feelings of young people that rarely get listened to, included or valued.

I have had to avoid certain places because other professionals have become confrontational because I have built relationships with children where they were unable to.

Surely the fact that these children have one person they can trust is a positive thing.

**Some of the strongest relationships I have are with children who have struggled to trust professionals or adults around them.**

My lived experience has allowed me to break down some of the barriers and I have had the privilege to get to know some amazing children. I get them and they get me; like them, I came from a background of trauma, exclusion

and custody. When things have become difficult, I have gravitated towards other lived experience professionals. I have built solid relationships based on connection, honesty and trust.

Some professionals think they hold all the answers, which further embeds the idea that the professional believes they know more than the young person about their own life experiences.

Yet professionals will have limited knowledge about this because they haven't had to navigate those spaces. The skills developed to survive and then find a way out of the youth justice system are invaluable.

If any service that works with justice-involved youth is to become inclusive, people with experience of these services should be included.

I am still the same person, trying to use my experiences to help others. I learnt through sport, martial arts in particular, how to breath and remain calm under intense pressure.

The very thing I was being discouraged from doing because I was labelled a 'violent young offender' was the same thing that helped me learn how to manage, understand and control my emotions.

It is easy to pass judgement on a child sitting in a cell when you haven't been there yourself or experienced the factors that led to being sat there.

**How are we supposed to create hope, inclusion, and opportunity if adults with these experiences are still being excluded?**

They are still having to fight to be heard, included, and employed.

Sharing knowledge creates an equal playing field for academic professionals and lived experience professionals; this is how we start to address the power imbalance.

Lived experience professionals shouldn't only be employed as volunteers expected to work for free, but as front-line practitioners with the same opportunity to develop as other professionals, enabling progression into roles where they are able to influence practice and policy.

This is where we will start to see real change.

We need to be able to use knowledge and skills in our communities, with children and families involved in the criminal justice system.

We know that children who have pro-criminal families, often with generational trauma while living in poverty, are going to find it difficult to move away from their reality. This is their normal, it's not that they need to change, it's that they need the right relational support to show them that they can achieve and have the same opportunities as people who are not involved in the youth justice system.

Navigating out of the youth justice system and recovering from trauma is not an easy task.

Everyone has their own individual story and I do not know one person that said they did it alone. It all started with that one relationship that made a difference.

Don't just be that person, be fully inclusive. Create opportunities for people who have been there to be that person too.

► Kierra Myles is currently studying a Youth Justice degree with the University of Suffolk. She works as a mentor coordinator with children in care and care leavers involved in the youth justice system.

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in the Early Career Academics Network newsletter published by the Howard League for Penal Reform.



## IN FOCUS

## Stepping on

## CAPES

More than a decade of cuts has resulted in higher thresholds for services and social workers being told to work more creatively to meet rising demand.

**Amira Haque** outlines the impact of this within children's services while suggesting ways in which the profession can challenge the status quo

**W**hen working in children and families social work we often find ourselves struggling with the increasing cuts to resources that we desperately need for our families.

We are told to turn ourselves into 'resources' and to be 'more creative' to navigate the rising cuts to vital services for our families. With austerity on the rise, and seemingly only to be rising in the post-Covid era, we find it ever more challenging to create safety for our children and families.

Cuts predominantly affect areas that are essential for interventions, which are vital for keeping families together. With months to years of wait times for counselling services, a lack of supply of social housing, a deficit of discretionary budgets for school transport and the lack of specialist interventions at our disposal, we are left struggling to support our vulnerable children and families.

Furthermore, rigid frameworks informed by policies and legislation stifle innovation, further amplifying the helplessness we feel when we, social workers, struggle to progress cases and effect change.

On many occasions we find ourselves relaying the message: "Sorry, we cannot help you" from hand-tied leaders, when deep in our hearts we are desperate to offer more. We are here to help, but we often cannot help or can

only offer very limited support, which can seem tokenistic.

A budget to support children at risk of extra-familial harm such as exploitation could be the difference between life and death, providing transport and incentivising engagement for at-risk children.

But with Section 17 discretionary spending more tightly managed, these critical interventions cannot be used and children are at further risk. Exploitation cases are rising significantly and the outcomes for these children can be fatal. Early intervention and wrap-around services need to be adequately funded to prevent children from suffering significant harm.

As for intra-familial risks to children, domestic abuse is the most prevalent factor for intervention from children's services. However, critical domestic abuse programmes and perpetrator programmes disappeared into thin air in many local authorities during the pandemic. Furthermore, the cuts to early interventions mean more families require reactive support from children's services, which ultimately results in more children being taken into care.

Higher caseloads stemming from the lack of preventative services mean that social workers have limited time to build relationships with children, or to deliver intensive and specialised care packages independently. What was previously delivered as a team is now incorporated into the role of the social worker and we are left feeling like we are failing our families.

These problems stem from the longstanding austerity policies spanning almost a decade, and the divestment from public sector services into the private sector, where the primary goal is monetary rather than prioritising positive outcomes for children and families. It becomes clear, in any event, that we social workers must urgently come together to lobby for these essential services and ensure that they remain in the public sector, where they can

## IN FOCUS

be better protected. Capitalism also plays a role in the increasing harm to children, by compromising collectivist culture in favour of individualism, meaning that children and families are more isolated and have fewer friends and family members to rely on.

Coupled with the unprecedented increase in cost of living, families are under more pressure than ever. This means that families ask local authorities for section 20 voluntary placements for their children when they can no longer cope.

Limited resources mean that social workers are caught in the crossfire between families and the local authority who both feel they cannot support any more children. Some local authorities have even resorted to sharing the cost with families which may, in fact, make the services more accessible to those who are in need, though more exploration is needed to draw conclusions.

These may be adequate short-term measures, but the long-term focus must be placed on restoring collectivist values to build resilience within families, so they are less likely to require intervention.

We social workers often find ourselves navigating thresholds to obtain resources for our children and families. High thresholds mean that local authorities will not intervene or accommodate children even in cases where the situation is dire.

This might be perpetuated by the fact that one in five children are referred to children's services and high thresholds are the only way to protect the resources of local authorities.

Some research shows that families can resolve situations with minimal social service intervention. However, this research does not consider underreporting and the lived experiences of the children. Furthermore, inspections show that children's service's interventions often result in good outcomes for children.

We know that many lives are saved by children's services and many children are protected from abuse and significant harm, though this is difficult to quantify.

For the past century, society has been changing at an unprecedented rate with rapidly increasing extra-familial risk to children. In an article published in *Critical and Radical Social Work* last year, social work academic Dr Carlene Firmin and others argued that in a system designed to protect children primarily from parental deficiency, social care services are not well equipped to deal with contextual safeguarding. The authors challenged whether this is an opportunity to reform current child protection practice.

There have been some reforms, such as the ban on unregulated placements for under 16s, which mean local authorities can no longer leave under 16s in vulnerable places such as caravans. However, there are already



Being told to make yourself the 'resource' or work more creatively is no solution to cuts, says Amira Haque, pictured above

not enough regulated placements for young people and disallowing unregulated places means that local authorities cannot place children in safe accommodation even if there is an acceptable unregulated option available.

There is also a fear of creating dependency on services and wanting to encourage families to be autonomous, but in order to do so, social workers need time to deliver interventions, especially because of the decrease in universal and preventative services.

Lord Laming recommended that social workers should have a maximum caseload of 12 when holding complex child protection cases and called for national guidelines to uphold this. Fewer cases would mean that social workers would have more time to assist families and deliver the interventions needed.

Despite the multiple challenges that social workers face, including the massive increase in workload and accountability, social workers may hold

more power than initially thought.

In reality, it appears most social workers practice politically on a macro-scale by voting for more favourable political parties, but 'meso-politics' is required to ensure that we can achieve good outcomes for our families.

This means demanding services internally and ensuring that there is a quality paper trail. This necessitates working in partnership with colleagues to lobby for services collectively which, if attained, would result in decreasing the workload of social workers.

Some creativity may be useful in shaping interventions. However, as we have explored, increased core service provisions are required to assist our families.

There is limited research on the value of child protection in terms of the number of lives saved and the effectiveness of interventions – primarily because these are difficult to assess.

But it is clear that positive outcomes are being achieved for some of our families. If research on those outcomes could be generated, this could support the case for more resources and funding. And this may reduce government spending in the long term.

Meanwhile, rigidity in policies and legislation must be challenged by us social workers to ensure that we can work flexibly and creatively to keep children safe. We must also demand lower caseloads so we can offer the families the support that they need.

New models such as 'Sharing the Costs' require more research and may be key to moving forward in the future. While many of our pleas may fall upon deaf ears and it may take some time before we see results for our families, it is imperative that we continue to practice meso-politically and work in partnership with unions to create movements.

Amira Haque is a children's and families social worker



# Whose side is Social Work England on?

As the regulator approaches its third birthday, **Shahid Naqvi** looks at growing disquiet from within the profession

**I**t started off so well. A few months before its official launch, Social Work England's new chair Lord Patel and chief executive Colum Conway – both social workers – visited BASW's head office in Birmingham.

Conway told BASW members: "This is a specialist regulator that is going to be established only for social work. So there is a real opportunity for us to work with the profession to raise its value and profile and also have good quality intelligence."

Lord Patel said he wanted to move from "a regulator that inspects to a regulator that engages". He also indicated intelligence would be used to advocate for the profession, adding he would be "happy to go and talk to people and say the data is suggesting the following".

The future looked bright. Social workers in England were again to have a specialist regulator taking over from the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). There were many who felt the latter, which regulates 15 other professions, did not have the expertise to understand the unique complexity of social work.

Fast forward four years and things look a little different.

You only have to take a look at BASW England's response to Social Work England's new guidance for the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSB) it's proposing educators should equip students with to see the level of dissent.

One social worker giving feedback to BASW England's consultation said: "There has been no real sector engagement in developing the KSB statements. Social Work England's closeness to government makes it difficult to know how much is influenced by social work and how much is government pressure."

Another respondent said: "Social Work England have shown that their consultations are merely rubber-stamping exercises."

At the heart of this dispute is a sense that the regulator is undermining BASW's own Professional Capabilities Framework and other social work educator-led definitions of what a qualifying social worker should look like.



Left, Colum Conway and Lord Patel



It marks a significant moment in cooling relationships between the regulator and the profession's professional association and educationalists.

Emeritus professor of social work June Thoburn said: "The regulator should have a fairly modest role, focused on fitness to practice and who enters.

"But it could seem from this consultation that they see themselves as having the lead role in rewriting the curriculum for social work education. That is not their job. That is the job of schools of social work, collaboratively with BASW, the departments of health and education, employers and Social Work England.

"They now also appear to be wanting a role in determining

# IN FOCUS

the curricula for post-qualifying education, as a precursor to 'annotations' on the register for some specialist roles such as 'child protection social worker'."

Jenni Burton, chair of BASW's Professional Capabilities and Development group, said she understood the need to simplify guidance to students but added: "I just think we should be working together. Sometimes it feels it is a bit tokenistic and paying lip service and they [the regulator] are going to go ahead and do their own thing."

"There is a real missed opportunity to collaborate with Social Work England to retain and refresh professional standards such as the Professional Capabilities Framework, which are valued by social workers and students."

To understand such disquiet, you have to go back not only to the circumstances around the creation of Social Work England but further still. The creation of the College of Social Work is a good place to start.

The College of Social Work was set up in 2012 backed by £5 million in government seed funding to be a new social work-led voice for the profession.

At the time, the move represented an existential threat to BASW, the long-established independent voice of social work.

The College also claimed to be independent, though its dependency on government funding made this a moot point. At any rate, it was viewed by many as an attempt to create a representative body for social work that was less political and more palatable to a Conservative government whose then education secretary Michael Gove believed social work training was dominated by "idealistic" leftwing dogma. (The launch of the heavily government-funded Frontline social work training programme in 2013 was seen by some in the profession as a challenge to its education base, but that's another story).

Three years after its launch, the College was shut down due to its inability to become financially viable through membership fees.

Having failed in this attempt to create a more government-friendly representative body for social work in England, ministers appeared to try a different approach.

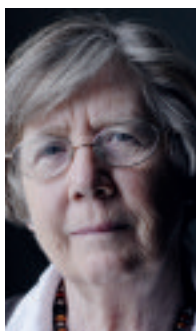
This time the plan, announced in the 2016 Children and Social Work Bill, was to create a new regulator that would be "closer to government": an executive agency within the Department for Education, directly accountable to the secretary of state for education.

Opposition from the social work sector, including BASW, forced a U-turn. Instead, then children's minister Edward Timpson announced plans to "establish a new, bespoke independent regulator for social work".

And so, in December 2019, Social Work England took over from the HCPC. Fast forward to today, however, and there are concerns that a "closer to government" regulator has been achieved through the backdoor.

Moreover, critics also claim Social Work England is promoting government agendas while positioning itself as the authoritative voice of social work.

In a consultation on its new strategy for 2023-2026, Social Work England indicates an ambition to be a leading voice and to have "a broader leadership role".



**'The regulator should have a fairly modest role, focused on fitness to practice and who enters'**

**EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL WORK JUNE THOBURN**

Key to succeeding in this, it says, is the "position we hold as an authority voice on social work".

But Joe Hanley, a social work lecturer with The Open University, has accused Social Work England of "marginalising organisations that have traditionally represented the profession".

In an article published in the *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work* journal, he claims the regulator "acting as the representative for social workers allows the government to exclude these organisations from key events and decision-making, while still claiming to be listening to the voice of social workers through engagement with the regulator".

Hanley also highlights other ways the regulator seeks to position itself as the voice of social work. These include a podcast called 'This is Social Work'; the production of a regular newsletter and the "co-option of World Social Work Day", a global event started in 2007 by the International Federation of Social Workers.

"Since taking over as regulator," says Hanley, "SWE has appointed itself a lead role in dictating how this day is celebrated in England, a role that no previous regulator held."

Prof Thoburn asks: "Why are they spending their money being the voice of social work? BASW, with its 22,000 members, surely has a bigger claim to that."

Others, however, believe the regulator should be speaking out much more strongly for the profession.

"Where are they gaining the confidence of the public in the social work role?" asks Tina Waas, an independent social work consultant.

"They are looking at individual social workers to blame, not what makes social workers resort to copying and pasting, and ending up in fitness to practice panels because they are under so much pressure and do not have enough time to respond in the way they would wish. The context in which statutory social workers work is not something Social Work England wants to talk about."

Other regulators have been more outspoken. The Care Quality Commission, an executive non-departmental public body which regulates health and social care services, recently gained widespread media coverage after declaring the health and social care system is "gridlocked".

The Nursing and Midwifery Council, perhaps a more comparable regulator to Social Work England, responded by calling on the government to create a "long term, sustainable workforce plan".

But despite employing ten regional engagement leads to be the eyes and ears of the profession, Social Work England has to date been markedly quiet on the issues bedevilling the profession. The regulator stresses its job is primarily to protect the public and raise standards in the profession.

But it could equally be argued that pushing for better working conditions for social workers is part of achieving this. Particularly so as it gets around £9 million a year in registration fees from social workers in England, a sum that pays the regulator's staffing costs, including more than half a million pounds to its executive team.

Social Work England's third big report reflecting on its first three years and setting out an ambition for the future is due out next year.



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**SOCIAL POLICY FOR  
WELFARE PRACTICE IN WALES  
THIRD EDITION**



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## IN FOCUS

# We're here to protect the public

**Sarah Blakemore**, executive director of professional practice and external engagement at Social Work England, gives a response to concerns and spells out the role of the regulator



Committed to collaboration: Sarah Blakemore

**A**s the regulator, Social Work England's central focus is public protection. We work to achieve that in several different ways. All include working in collaboration to raise standards and increase professionalism so that the public have confidence in a trusted and skilled workforce.

One of the core reasons we were established was to particularly look at social work education and training provision and to ensure that social workers were emerging from training ready to meet the challenges of the role. We developed and hold the standards for safe and effective social work education and training in England and inspect all courses against them. As part of this work, we require education providers to demonstrate that their courses equip students to meet the professional standards for social workers. This means that we assure the public's confidence that graduating students are capable of practising safely and effectively when they apply to join the register.

Our unique view across the full breadth of the social work profession in England helps us to understand key issues affecting the sector. We are committed to ensuring that we understand how those issues might impact on the profession in terms of the high standards of professional practice, rightly expected by people who need support.

We were not established to be a lobbying organisation and we are not a membership body. It is not our role to advocate on behalf of the profession on any particular issue but to take a broad view on the areas that carry regulatory risk to the public. However, we recognise our central role in highlighting these regulatory risk areas, and work to shine a light on these. We are currently looking closely at workforce issues and holding conversations with social worker leaders about our collective responsibility to work to address recruitment and retention issues in the profession, including issues around agency work and the impact of workforce gaps and practice issues on the public.

We are committed to continuing to collaborate, learn and influence policy and practice through our engagement with all those who have an interest in social work.

You can share your thoughts on our strategy for 2023 to 2026 on our website until 5pm, 1 December.

## Readiness for practice guidance consultation

In June we published our new approach to social work education and training to set out our future proposals to streamline the complex landscape. These are long-term ambitions which include a number of areas for consultation, the first of which was 'readiness for professional practice,'

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**'We were not established to be a lobbying organisation and we are not a membership body'**

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guidance that will set out the knowledge, skills, and behaviours we expect student social workers to demonstrate to apply to register with us. The consultation ran from 29 June to 7 October 2022 and was open to anyone with an interest in social work, including social workers, students, education providers, people with lived experience and organisations. We held three public pre-consultation events to inform our initial work, including separate meetings with key stakeholders and social work leaders. We gathered views at a further five public consultation events, as well as receiving responses by survey and email.

The current education and training standards outline the specific skills, knowledge and behaviours that are required through initial education and training so that a student can demonstrate the professional standards upon qualifying. Currently education providers use several frameworks to guide the design and delivery of courses, including the professional capabilities framework and the post qualifying standards. Our work too points to these frameworks, such as their adoption in the sector and ongoing use in the design and delivery of social work courses.

While these frameworks have provided a valuable frame of reference in the years without specialist regulation, they pre-date the professional standards. Crucially, they are not held nor administered by the regulator for the profession. This means that social work courses are not and will not be approved or monitored against these frameworks as part of our course approval or monitoring processes. The regulatory standards, developed with the sector and those who use social work, are the foundation of our approach.

We will continue to build on this collaborative approach by engaging with key stakeholders, who we hope will work with us to streamline the current landscape and avoid further complexity. Additionally, we have recently appointed an education and training associate, and we will be establishing a newly configured education and training advisory group to support this work onwards into 2023. We will publish a full consultation response on our website in due course.



## IN FOCUS

Kasibba\* was inappropriately detained in a mental health hospital for 40 years. **Andrew Reece**, head of Camden's Integrated Learning Disability Service, describes how a group of professionals, including social workers, worked tirelessly for her release

**K**asibba is autistic and was placed in the care of Camden Council as a child, most likely after being trafficked into the UK to work as a domestic 'servant'.

Autism was not understood in the 1970s, and as a child of West African heritage, the statutory response to Kasibba and her sensory seeking behaviours came to be distorted by racist tropes of 'savage', 'wild' 'dangerous' and 'primitive'.

As a result, Kasibba was kept in long term segregation for much of the more than 40 years she spent in hospital.

In 2016, the Camden Learning Disability Service's (CLDS) took part in the pilot scheme for named social workers run by England's chief social worker for adults. Building on our learning from the pilot, CLDS developed a model of relationship-based practice in which we ensured that all people detained in a hospital would always have a named social worker. This included Kasibba.

The named social worker worked alongside Kasibba's NHS care coordinator (a clinical psychologist) with the support of our nurse consultant, our commissioners and a rights-based advocate funded by CLDS.

The six year programme has involved thousands of hours of work from a team of around ten professionals, some of whom came and went as the work developed.

It has taken a collective system-wide effort to overcome the huge systemic obstacles to get Kasibba out of hospital, requiring us to engage consistently with the medical and clinical teams at the hospital, supporting them to see Kasibba differently, to ensure they did not sabotage our plans.

The challenges presented by a Court of Protection and official solicitor-led process added about two years to the time Kasibba spent in hospital. An official solicitor acts on a person's behalf if they do not have mental capacity.

Then there was the huge investment in time: our combined staffing input over six years amounted to around 2,500 hours or 1.5 years of work from the equivalent of a senior social worker or clinician. This equates to about £90,000 in staffing resources. That figure does not include an estimate of the cost of commissioner time (another £15,000) and the council's legal costs (£50,000).

No teams are resourced to deliver this, and Kasibba's outcome only came about due to huge personal commitment from across the service and because we are an



# Six years, a team of ten and thousands of hours of work to get her home from hospital

integrated team.

Kasibba was assessed by our clinical psychologist who put her behaviours in the context of her sensory needs and her lack of speech. This enabled us to slowly change the racist 'savage/wild/dangerous' narrative and labels such as 'the eye gouger' that the hospital had built around Kasibba. This racist narrative had developed as her quality of life slowly declined. Wards in the hospital were closed and Kasibba was inappropriately forced to share space with people she was not compatible with.

Slowly we were able to work with the hospital to move away from a medical model of support to a psychosocial

## IN FOCUS

model in which 'dangerous' behaviours could instead be understood in the context of Kasibba's sensory needs, understanding that her behaviours were her mode of communication.

At times, powerful vested interests risked overwhelming the team. The Court of Protection had previously intervened to prevent another person from leaving the hospital. The official solicitor suggested to us that this prevented anyone else from leaving.

For several years this advice was taken at face value. Moving Kasibba into the community was 'parked' as too difficult, and there was no active work to plan for her moving on or after care.

The allocation of a named social worker gave us the time and space to fully consider the implications of the clinical psychology assessment, namely that Kasibba was not a danger to herself or others. With a properly planned process, centred on the meaning and function of her behaviours, she could live a safe and fulfilling life in a community setting.

The process to plan for Kasibba's move had to be case managed in every detail via the Court of Protection. This was despite commissioning a person centred plan for Kasibba, designed by Lucy Dunstan, an advocate from rights-based organisation Changing Our Lives.

This plan supported our assertion that Kasibba did not need to be in hospital. The involvement of the rights-based advocate was key in helping the Court to agree the outline of a three-stage moving on process, with each stage having to be agreed in Court and supported by all parties, including the hospital and official solicitor.

Recognising that both the judge and official solicitor were sceptical about this assertion, we commissioned the advocate to continue to act for Kasibba to ensure her voice was heard.

CLDS works to a model we call the Three Pillars of Autism: People, Place and Activities. This model asserts that, like a three-legged stool, it is only safe to change one of the pillars at a time. This meant our 'move on' plan needed to ensure continuity of staffing across the transition into the community, by developing a plan for her to move to somewhere close to the hospital.

The named social worker and care coordinator therefore needed to find a specialist agency that could both recruit new staff to get to know Kasibba in hospital and recruit the right staff from the hospital team who could also transition with her. The social worker identified and arranged the purchase of a house near the hospital.

The advocate had agreed it was in Kasibba's best interests for her to purchase a car with her savings, but her quality of life in hospital was so poor she has never had the opportunity to spend her 'personal allowance' and the involvement of the official solicitor meant these savings had to be used to pay legal costs.

Therefore, a successful bid was made to the DHSC by our commissioner to fund the purchase of a car because it was so central to the second stage of the transition plan – Kasibba being able to visit her new home with her new staff team.



Opposite page, Kasibba visits her new home before moving in, and above, Andrew Reece (left) with the team who helped gain her release from hospital after being named team of the year in the Social Worker of the Year Awards 2022

**'In my professional experience Kasibba's story is as bad as it gets'**

Despite ongoing 'wobbles' and delays from staff at the hospital, the judge finally agreed that Kasibba could move into her own home this August. Prior to this, Kasibba had visited it on multiple occasions and was clearly seen to feel safe and 'at home'.

Lucy, who acted on behalf of Kasibba, said: "In my professional experience Kasibba's story is as bad as it gets, merely existing in long term segregation for a quarter of a century. A Black African woman with an impoverished life, feared and mythologised through a lens of racism.

"The 'law' kept Kasibba segregated and vulnerable, resulting in untold damage.

"Working as a rights-based advocate, you are often a lone voice, fighting against systems that don't work for people who have been labelled as 'challenging' and 'dangerous', dehumanised by the very institutions that are meant to support them.

"However, working alongside Camden I have not been a lone voice but an element of their wider vision.

"Their dedication to and ambition for Kasibba is unrivalled and their relentlessness has furnished her with an ordinary life. They have never strayed from the end goal of giving life, freedom and dignity to Kasibba."

Jess McGregor, director of adult social services in Camden, said: "I have been constantly amazed and humbled by the dedication, diligence and determination of the social workers, the clinical psychologists, and the leadership shown by the nurse consultant and the head of service.

"Their refusal to accept the status quo, to call out the racism that has built up around Kasibba and their ability to articulate and embed a narrative of hope and achievement to replace that of 'danger' and 'savagery' is, in my experience, beyond compare.

"This project pre-dates the post George Floyd #blacklivesmatter movement by several years, but to me it is emblematic of the institutional racism that still exists in the health and care system and shows how a predominantly white team of social workers, health professionals and commissioners can demonstrate and put into practice the concept of allyship in helping overcome such systemic prejudice."

**\*Name changed to protect identity**



## IN FOCUS

# The trouble with **SOCIAL PRESCRIBING**

Too often people are getting what's available rather than what matters to them, writes **Rob Mitchell**

**A**bout 20 years ago I worked with an older person called Florence. Florence was in her early 80s and had been known to social services for many years.

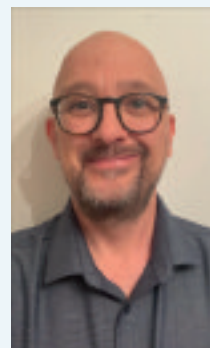
Each November Florence would – much to the concern of her family and the plethora of community social workers, nurses and carers who supported her – take herself off via a series of taxis, buses and National Express coaches for a two-week holiday in Skegness.

She would stay at the same B&B, which she described as “lovely and empty” and on her return from the holiday would describe how each morning she would sit alone in the empty dining room and eat a full breakfast “in total peace”. She would relate how the weather during the weeks was “bitter” and how quickly the town became pitch black in the evening, well before teatime, how anything open during the day (which sounded like not a lot) would be closed by 4pm.

Florence would always smile when describing the wind as “bracing” and the waves as “rough as hell”, watching with delight as I would wince with each meteorological description.

She would spend her days on holiday either walking through Skegness, stopping at empty cafes to drink tea and read discarded newspapers, or travelling around the Lincolnshire coast by bus, visiting other resorts that were equally closed down or at least very much out of season. One day she would go to Mablethorpe, another day Ingoldmells, and she always had a day in Cleethorpes – her highlight.

It was Florence's thing. It worried professionals and perplexed her family in equal measure. But she lived for it. She counted down the days to it. And when she returned it was abundantly clear to those around her – she loved it.



Rob Mitchell



# IN FOCUS

It always struck me just how nuanced that holiday was. Very few of us would choose it. But crucially, when it comes to what makes people tick, it's an example of how unique we are, how tailored our own particular needs, and how difficult it really is to prescribe a good time or an outcome or a service for someone else.

Evidently, a cold, wet fortnight in Skeggy to some is a Caribbean paradise to others.

I remembered Florence and her annual holidays a few weeks ago when I attended an online discussion on social prescribing. The webinar speakers knew loads more about the subject than me and made a lot of sense. Most were talking about social prescribing in positive terms and there were examples where area coordinators and connection leads had clearly made a difference.

My own experience with social prescribing up to that point had been limited.

I do recall working with a GP practice who had linked up with the local Bowling Club. I remember the practice lead jauntily telling us that their ambition was for "bowling on prescription, rather than anti-depressants". That line alone was enough to put me off social prescribing for life.

But the webinar led to me looking online to see if things had moved on any. The first site that comes up on social prescribing is the NHS website. Only about a paragraph in and you come across words like general practice, pharmacies, multi-disciplinary teams, hospital discharge, allied health professionals, complex care needs and ultimately, of course, service users and patients. The site explains how essential a "link worker" is, and how they take a "what matters to me approach" before "connecting people to community groups and statutory services".

Isn't that a huge contradiction? The assessment is person centred (what matters to me) but the outcome (or is it the prescription?) is connecting people with "community groups and statutory services" – whatever best fits.

It's the classic Henry Ford quote that "any customer can have a car painted any colour that he wants, so long as it's black". There appears to be no room for the "what matters to me approach" concluding that "the very last thing I ever want is a community group or statutory services thanks very much".

While we might have some good intentions around social prescribing, we still seem to be missing the point of personalisation.

The state, preoccupied with assessment, prescription, link workers and a Mary Poppins bag-of-tricks approach, fundamentally misses the point of our uniqueness, our quirkiness, our deep-rooted personal wants that cannot ever be reimagined for us by people paid to momentarily know us and assess and prescribe for us.

The choices people make, including things as outlandish as Skegness in November for Florence or a fortnight watching Newell's Old Boys football matches in Rosaria in Argentina and hoping for a glimpse of Marcelo Bielsa (my

choice), are so nuanced and personal that they cannot ever really be prescribed.

I get I am part of the problem. As a link worker or a social worker or anyone else who is administering the process, we don't come into the assessment conversation from a neutral perspective. Whether we are browbeaten into assessing the bare minimum for people for fear of exceeding budgets, whether we think assessing is or is not a primary function of social work, or whether we have made a career out of the usual stock answers to people's

presenting circumstances via day care, home care, respite or permanent care, the apparatus of the state is so badly placed to understand genuine uniqueness and personalisation.

The very best social assessor that anyone can have is themselves – by a million miles. And the best support for the person who cannot articulate their own personal, quirky, uniquely tailored social care outcomes? That's more likely to be family and friends than anyone else, although not always, of course.

In my experience paid support such as link workers, social workers and other professionals are at the bottom of the list of people who make

this stuff work well because we are not neutral, and we have neither the time nor the love for the person to ever get close to someone's uniqueness. And the process ensures we will (as the NHS website clearly tells us) jump seamlessly from a "what works for you approach" to a "here's a list of community groups and statutory services" in a nanosecond if it helps us deal with volume and service the industry.

That isn't to say the state doesn't have a role to play – it does. As always, the role must be in trying to ensure the right environment so that people exercise their rights and not our processes.

Social assessing and prescribing, whether it's day care with fake shopping trips, bowling clubs linked to GPs, exercise classes, walking clubs, links to social clubs or other well intended affairs, are probably genuine attempts to aim in the right direction but they are steeped in all the biases, pressures and expectations that are inherent in the state. Surely only I can socially prescribe for me in the same way that only Florence can for herself.

People are the experts of their own lives, and our role is to help them and their families properly meet the individual outcomes that suit them. We should seek to deliver them from the burden of bureaucracy, suspicion and in some cases outright and open hostility when they attempt to take this on.

The support we can give to people is to broker a helpful, friendly, grateful and trusting environment between themselves and the state so they too may find their own unique version of two weeks away in cold, late autumnal Skegness.



The beach at Skegness

This article originally appeared at the *Social Work, Cats & Rocket Science* blog, a collaboration of social workers and social work educators inspired by the coffee house debating scene. For more, visit <https://socialworkcatsandroketsscience.com/>



## IN FOCUS

**Lynda Sullivan** reflects on a case that demonstrated some of the key traits of social work, including empathy, perseverance and resilience

**I** was asked by my team manager if I would accept a case from another member of the team. It transpired it was an elderly woman living on her own who refused to let any professionals into her house, including the current case holder.

I realised there must be a rational reason for this, and the handover informed me the client's daughter said her mother was a prolific hoarder. Some people find it very hard to dispose of things they collect, and yet can also feel ashamed of it. Hoarding has been recognised as a mental disorder since 2013 and was acknowledged as a medical condition by the World Health Organisation in 2018.

I knew if I rang the lady in question to arrange a home visit she would decline, so I turned up unannounced. As expected, there was no answer to the doorbell, nor on knocking on the door or window.

However, I spotted her peeping out behind the curtains, and knew that was a promising sign as she had taken the trouble to check who was there. Fortuitously for me it started to snow.

I stood on her doorstep for 15 minutes while being snowed on. I said through her letterbox that I would remain until she was happy to open the door. A few minutes later she let me in.

I consequently spent a number of months working with this lady and eventually she was voluntarily admitted to a residential home a stone's throw from her own house.

This experience reminded me of the importance of the 'use of self', which social work academic Archana Bharat points out includes personality traits. In this case I used personal traits such as positive stubbornness and high standards, when I felt other colleagues had effectively given up.

In retrospect they perhaps felt she had the right not to let them in (which she had), whereas I felt using values such as empathy, unconditional positive regard and compassion could assist.

Reflecting on this case, I realised that by persevering with this lady I was able to achieve what others before me had not, to the betterment of her and her family. As the only person her mother would allow in the home, her daughter was becoming very low with carer stress.

Social workers often have to 'think outside the box' so when this client declined respite I felt it was not because she did not want to go but because she was frightened

# Sometimes social work means standing out in the snow

of leaving her 'safe space', regardless of how unhappy she was.

I tried to think creatively, and so took photos of the room she would be given in the residential home, showing it as cosy as possible. This was not to coerce her but simply to encourage her to look and decide for herself if she wanted to trial it.

Psychotherapist Karen Carlucci describes thinking outside the box in social work as adaptability, which includes versatility. She gives examples

## IN FOCUS

of resilience, stamina, flexibility, self-confidence and self-direction, which again brings us back to the use of self.

Carlucci states saying “yes” to things outside our comfort zone opens a door “rather than remaining within the four walls we know so well”. The pertinence of those words did not escape me in this case.

The use of self, personality, values, perseverance, and thinking outside the box all contribute to building a rapport with clients, which is vital in order to practice social work.

In 2022, the Social Care Institute for Excellence asked service users and their families about building rapport with professionals and one said: “Some people go beyond.” I hope I did that by standing in falling snow rather than giving up.

As I built up trust with this client she began to leave her door unlocked when she knew I was due to visit. This act ended up saving her life (but unintentionally risking mine also).

One day when I arrived and let myself in there was a clear smell of gas. However, on hearing me enter the room she jumped up to switch the light on and I had to rugby tackle her back onto the sofa.

I got her out and when the gas engineer arrived and checked everything over, he confirmed as the electrics were very old in her house there was a distinct possibility switching the light on could have caused an explosion.

This is an example of why we should never become complacent, and always be alert to the unexpected in social work. Workplace consultant Samantha McDuffy points out individual complacency has many sources, including the absence of a major and visible crisis, as was the case in the above example.

My client moved into the residential home and after she had been there for two weeks, I took her home to

retrieve clothes and other belongings. She asked me angrily: “Who has done this to my house?”

I realised straight away from a hoarding course I had attended that she had normalised her home environment. I used my professional judgement and was honest and explained this to her, as I did not want to undo the positive relationship we had established. Thankfully she understood and took it very well.

Back in 1977 Charles Horejsi, a professor in social work, highlighted that normalisation is “a way of thinking” which means it can be changed with appropriate intervention.

This case highlighted the client’s resilience to her environment and situation. Paula Silva-Villanueva, a consultant in social resilience, describes resilience as the ability to thrive despite adversity.

My opinion is that this elderly lady did just that because she survived the Second World War. Without resilience, social workers themselves can suffer from compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and eventually burn out.

This case made me think how that client must have felt when she had ‘busy bodies’ coming to her home making an assumption she would let them in, and how she thought her surroundings were perfectly normal until she was out of them and in a minimalistic space for a few weeks.

Putting oneself in another’s shoes is having empathy – understanding another person’s thoughts and feelings – something as social workers we are expected to have.

However, social workers also need to be able to anticipate responses and I realised I had not done this when we returned briefly to her home. If I had, I would have expected her to think someone had ransacked it. I now view this as primary and secondary empathy.

On discussing this case with my colleagues, our lovely team secretary named the client ‘Snow Lady’. This made me conscious of labelling theory and the stigma attached by stereotyping.

However, the sociologist Bernard Berk says labelling theory derives from groups, deviance, and societal reaction, and according to psychologist Saul McCloed, it includes self-fulfilling prophecy.

This client’s ‘label’ gave her anonymity, and therefore I did not see it as having a negative connotation on this occasion. I have since discussed this case with students and have been comfortable using the term ‘Snow Lady’ to protect her identity. I will never forget her.

**Lynda Sullivan has worked in the health and social care sector for over 35 years, firstly in psychiatric nursing and then social work, specialising mainly in the care of older people**

**‘I stood on her doorstep for 15 minutes while being snowed on. I said through her letterbox that I would remain until she was happy to open the door.’**



## IN FOCUS



# RISE OF THE UNIONS

**D**uring her short stint as Britain's most disastrous Prime Minister, Liz Truss vowed to stop "the militant trade unions disrupting our railways".

It was just another example of how hopelessly out-of-step with public opinion Truss was. For a large proportion of the British public does not see strike action by railway workers, nurses, doctors, teachers, paramedics and postal workers as militant action: they see it as a beleaguered workforce saying enough is enough.

Many of these workers have been at the frontline of a decade of austerity cuts that have decimated services. Many worked selflessly, sometimes at risk to their own health, during the pandemic. And now these modestly paid workers are feeling the pressure yet again from the cost of living crisis.

A YouGov poll in August found 64 per cent of the public support nurses taking action. A similar poll found 53 per cent of the public think industrial action by postal workers is justified.

Six in ten parents support teachers taking action and 35 per cent support walkouts by rail workers.

So what's going on? Is something happening at a societal level that's moving the dial in favour of unionism?

James Burchill, SWU board member, thinks so: "There is an increasing understanding of the huge disparities in society and that some people are incredibly wealthy and getting wealthier while there has been a huge increase in the number of people who are poor.

"This has now grown to such a large extent that you can't ignore it and it is including some of the so-called middleclass in it.

"I think this will put back power into the unions to be more active and to be more popular. And I do think we are heading towards a general strike."

Ann Marie Hayes, a SWU board member who describes herself as an activist, also sees a shift: "I was speaking to an activist in Canada who was talking about the importance

As we head for a winter of discontent, public opinion towards strike action appears to have shifted.

**Shahid Naqvi** spoke to members of the Social Workers Union to find out what's going on

of voice. I think that is one of the reasons why unions are increasing in popularity because they are amplifying the voice of those who haven't been heard for a long time."

Ann Marie believes Margaret Thatcher's famous pronouncement about society rings increasingly hollow.

"I think there has been a shift from the idea that there is no such thing as society and individuals do what they need to do to make their situation better regardless of what is happening to everyone else.

"There is a sense of unions becoming more visible. I think people are interested in unions because they represent some of the ideology about how we are as humans working together."

The campaigning work of unions helps amplify the voices of "those who are marginalised, vulnerable and unheard", says Ann Marie, adding: "It is that collective action, that sense of solidarity: those ideas have really come to the fore. Echoes of social justice, humanitarianism."

News reports on the current threats of industrial action have reflected this change in tempo, observes Malcolm Jordan, honorary president of SWU.

"I was impressed by the vox pop interviews on TV which showed there is wide support for trade unionism. Because inflation is going up so fast people are saying, of course they deserve more."

SWU chair David Callow, a senior social work lecturer at the University of Lincoln, believes the popularity of Mick Lynch, secretary general of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, is indicative of the public mood.

"Many people feel lost, whether in work or wherever that may be, and they are looking for a figurehead, a direction and an ideology.

"Mick Lynch has charisma and people are looking for that, someone who is saying come with me, we will sort it out and make things better."

SWU board member Tina Peterson agrees: "Mick Lynch is a good speaker and people are listening to him and



## IN FOCUS

watching him. People are talking about him on the street and in the pub and sharing videos of him.

“He is making an impact and people are starting to talk about unions once again. As a former nurse, I never thought I would hear the Royal College of Nursing talking about strike action but that is something that is being considered.

“Obviously it’s because of what’s gone on during the pandemic, and how the NHS is struggling, like social care. Nurses have never gone out on strike in the history of nursing since the NHS was created. They have never talked about strike action, but they are now.

Whether social workers will follow, who knows.”

Board member and consultant social worker Anna Collins believes current public sentiment is also linked to a growing sense of outrage at the excessive profits made by multi-national companies, including energy firms at a time of rising fuel costs.

“People are beginning to wake up and recognise the growing inequality where there has been the biggest transfer of wealth from the public to private sector, for example, with children’s homes being owned by hedge fund companies,” she says.

“It is just immoral and I think people are waking up and realising we have stepped into a nightmare where shareholders are calling the shots and people are less important than profits.”

Anna talks about the “moral harm” done to health and social care workers attempting to support people in increasing difficulty with diminished resources.

“This happens if you abide by our code of conduct and have those values of being there to support and empower people and what you are witnessing is a demonisation of people who find themselves in disadvantaged situations.

“Recruitment has never been more difficult for social workers. The sickness rate is through the roof. Even without strikes, people are not working because of the moral harm they are experiencing both in terms of their own wellbeing

and being taken advantage of with poor work conditions and working longer hours than they are being paid for and also witnessing what is happening with poverty which is almost mainstream now.”

Board member Angie Naylor believes Truss’ description of unions as militants is similar to the demonisation of people on welfare benefits a decade ago when austerity measures were introduced.

“Maybe it’s our turn to get the beating,” she says. “We went into austerity and demonised a whole lot of people and used that as an excuse to pull away the National Health Service, pull away pensions. We have stopped using the term austerity, which is wrong because it is man-made – or government-made.”

Board member Chrissie Beatty, a social worker in Bournemouth, believes the union movement should do more to harness the energy of the youth movement.

“Younger people are seeing people like Mick on social media and thinking ‘these people are saying what we’re feeling’. But they are not necessarily putting these thoughts and views with trade unions.

“We are missing a trick and we need to find a new way of engaging young people because shouting with banners isn’t engaging them.”

Ann Marie adds: “In online forums I have been reading, it is not about formal action but riots. Young people are actually talking about having a much more impactful role.”

Given the difficulties facing young people with low-paid employment, the impossibility for some to get on the housing ladder and uncertain pensions, perhaps this is hardly surprising.

Gerry Madden, SWU’s Northern Ireland executive representative, agrees. “I live with my daughter who is in her early 30s. If we don’t make a stand now, there will be no state pension, there will be no National Health Service.

“It is not only a fight for what is going on now, but also what society is going to look like in 20 or 30 years’ time for the generation coming up behind us...”

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**‘People are waking up and realising we have stepped into a nightmare where shareholders are calling the shots and people are less important than profits’**



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*Child Safeguarding Practice Review panel, 2022*

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\*Key Findings from Home Office analysis of domestic homicide review published March 2022 identified coercion and control present in 65% of deaths



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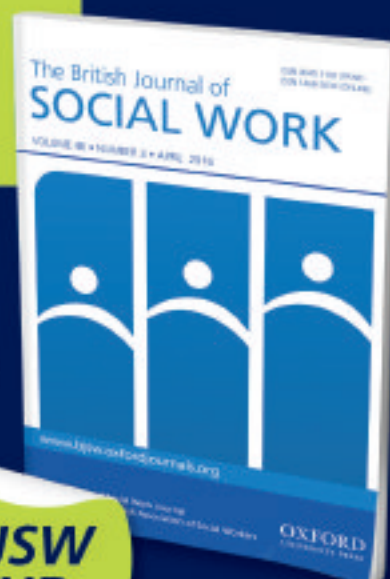
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## IN FOCUS

# In a medical model, we can't ignore the spiritual

**Soyeb Aswat gives advice to social workers working with people who have religious responses to mental health**

**M**y experience of working as a newly qualified social worker within a large south Asian Muslim community has led me to realise there are misconceptions and barriers to accessing and providing culturally appropriate interventions.

A major dilemma can be summed up as the medical model vs the spiritual model, which can be observed when engaging with a client presenting with mental health symptoms.

We may term their state psychosis, but the client believes that their voices are attributed to Jinn possession and the intervention they want is spiritual healing or exorcism.

This can present a challenge to professionals working within a Western medical framework.

When these alternate views are dismissed without consideration, the individual client, or indeed groups of individuals with the same belief, can become alienated and unwilling to access services.

This in turn creates a barrier to building a therapeutic relationship and to engage at an early intervention stage.

As professionals and as individuals we do need to be aware of the different views of mental health within different cultures and countries. To try and bridge these two concepts or views of treating the same set of symptoms, there are some key areas that need consideration.

Some of the key areas that I feel need consideration are:

- 1) Culture: an individual's understanding of mental health, medication and their cultural acceptance of this. Is there any stigma to address around mental health? Does the individual understand simple terms like 'depression'? If English is not their first language, is there a direct word within their language that can interpret the word depression, or does it need to be explained?
- 2) Diversity: religious beliefs mean a person may feel that all good and bad comes from God and therefore it needs to be just accepted and no support is needed. Does some work need to be undertaken around this? Does a Chaplain need to be involved for spiritual support? What are the parents/families understanding of mental health? What is the professional's knowledge and understanding of a person's interpretation of mental health?
- 3) Spirituality: this can be a huge part of someone's inner resource. It can aid

and speed up recovery, it can help reduce risk, and give someone motivation, strength, resilience and determination to continue recovering. A paper by Wiseman et al says that those with greater spirituality have better self-esteem, less drug and alcohol abuse, less sexual permissiveness and less suicide.

- 4) Unconscious bias: check your own stereotypes, prejudices and privileges which may cloud or impact on understanding someone's needs. This can be a challenge for many of us, especially if we are not religious or very spiritual.
- 5) Equality: can individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds access services? Are you as an organisation able to meet their spiritual needs? Do you have interpreters on hand, or access to religious/spiritual advice? Have you made links with local places of worship?

We need to work within a framework that supports safe practice within our professional standards, and that means paying attention to legal and evidence-based practices. Consider authentic and verified research, policies, procedures, legislation etc...

Using evidence based research we are able to consider someone's spiritual needs alongside the traditional medical model interventions.

A study undertaken by the multi-cultural expert Professor Gopaul-McNicol states: "In many cases religion succeeds much more in bringing relief to those who seek psychotherapeutic intervention."

Social work academics Alean Al-Krenawi and John Graham write that it is possible and beneficial for practitioners to be involved in both systems and act as a broker between the two.

Parliament has acknowledged that minority groups need better access and outcomes to mental health services.

Stakeholders responding to proposed reforms to the Mental Health Act emphasise the need to improve access, experiences and outcomes for minorities in mental health care.

Undertaking research within your organisation can help evaluate how well the service you work for is meeting both the mental health and spiritual needs of those you work with and support.

Soyeb Aswat does quality governance for social work at the South West Yorkshire Trust and social work lead for the Leeds NHS Trust



## IN FOCUS



# How do we build the perfect social work system?

**T**his question has been asked of me many times over the last decade in both my time in local government and in the private IT sector.

It seems easy and logical to me to immediately respond by saying we need a system that:

- Is a seamless system across social care, health and education, and third-party services, with open access to children and families for the system to allow them to be heard and involved from day one to case closure
- Allows any professional involved in a child's plan to see the latest information at any point in time regardless of their organisation. This way there is one plan, and everyone is working at the same speed, with the same information
- A system that allows social workers to return to the community and not be completing forms in an office environment, not to be dealing with finances and legal matters. They are not an administrative worker, an accountant or a solicitor

In order to build a perfect social care solution, firstly we must acknowledge that social care is an ever-evolving sector, where nothing stands still. This means the perfect solution is only perfect at a specific point in time and must evolve with the sector or it will hold practice back and not provide the outcomes we desire.

We then need focus on three basic principles – people, data/information and accessibility.

**People** – Should always be at the heart of the system, from

**Paul Clark,**  
a former  
children's  
social work  
manager who  
is now an  
IT systems  
specialist,  
outlines  
the key  
ingredients

the child, parent and family member to the social worker and all other professionals that have access to it.

If I access a child's record and I can't easily understand the story of the child so far and their plan, then the system does not serve the child or me as the worker wanting to support them.

The system should be designed around groups of professionals and provide them with the best user experience for their specific role.

**Data/Information** – As a social worker you are making recommendations and decisions about another person's life daily and this is done by taking all the information available to you at that point in time.

What we often find is that new information that already existed only comes to light after a recommendation/decision was made. Sometimes, if we knew that piece of information it would have changed how we proceeded, the support we would offer and how we engage with people.

The social care systems need to be able to extract data from various services to give everyone the best chance possible to move forward, to be safe, to be supported. This must start from the front door of social care at the point of a contact/referral and when new information is made available, such as a housing concern or a police report on an open case.

Without good data being recording in the system, it makes it almost impossible to see:

1. what the concerns are/were
2. what is/was the plan
3. what is the desired goal/was it achieved (distance travelled)?

**Accessibility** – A significant portion of those two areas will fail if accessibility is not considered.

When we talk about accessibility, we are not just talking about professionals across different services having access to the system that is tailored for their roles. We are also talking about the children and families we are working with.

The system should allow collaboration and ownership of the children and families we are working with. Social care needs to lose the stigma of 'social work is done to a child/family' and reinforce that it is done **with** a child/family.

We also need to acknowledge the technology around us and how we integrate with it every day via our smart phones, tablet, laptops etc. and how we use social media and communication apps.

It was often in my mind when I logged onto a system as a social worker that I was taking a step backwards from the technology I would use in personal life.

### Summary

Life is not static and neither is social work. Technology is changing every day around us. The perfect social care IT solution needs to do this too, and councils wishing to purchase new software should keep those three basic principles in mind – people, data and accessibility.

Paul Clark is currently social care account director at OLM



# The People's KITCHEN

As the cost of living crisis deepens, the People's Kitchen in Newcastle is supporting an increasing number of people, many of whom have experience of the social care system



**I**t was the death of a rough sleeper back in 1985 that means the People's Kitchen exists today.

That single, lonely tragedy reached the ears of Alison Kay, a 76-year-old grandmother from Heaton. Registered blind and in frail health, she made it her mission to help others and launched a soup kitchen in the heart of Newcastle.

It has been open 365 days a year ever since, providing free hot meals, essential clothing, and welfare support to marginalised people in the city.

In recent months the number of 'friends' seeking support every night has nearly doubled to 300 due to the cost of living crisis.

People's Kitchen volunteer Colin Herron said: "A lot of people are using People's Kitchen as their sole source of

*Continued over the page*



## IN FOCUS



### From previous page

food. They are coming in and having a meal and also taking a meal away with them as well.

"We used to do 120 meals on a busy night, but we are now doing around 250 meals on an average night. We are getting more and more people in."

The current crisis means the charity is now running a corner shop giving out food parcels to families struggling with soaring bills.

Trustee Maggie Pavlou said: "Many people we help are really struggling to afford the costs of even heating food up and so we are trying to also provide food that can be cold or heated quickly with just a kettle or a microwave. It's a serious situation that is affecting more and more people and not just those that we would say are 'homeless.'"

Alleviating the impact of homelessness nevertheless remains the central remit of the organisation. David Harrop is a registered social worker and team leader for the welfare teams at the Peoples Kitchen. He is struck by how many homeless people have had previous involvement with social services.

"We try to seek out those who are rough sleeping and find hostel accommodation through the emergency homeless services," he says. "Through this we learn of so many stories of hardship, distress, and futility.



Volunteers  
at work

"Often, we find lengthy histories of previous and current agency involvement. Many have previously been in the looked after system and safeguarding as children, while others are in the adult safeguarding system because of current vulnerabilities.

"There is a high incidence of mental ill health, learning disability, vulnerability, and dependency, and many are ill equipped to navigate the various support systems and fall through any safety nets.

"If we fail to get somebody accommodated overnight and we know that they will be rough sleeping, we will ensure that they have a clean sleeping bag and a flask of coffee as well as advice or signposting to the relevant support agencies for them to follow up in the morning, and we alert the city homelessness team."

The charity's growing operation is a response to rising homelessness and poverty in Newcastle against a backdrop of reduced statutory services. David adds: "Increasingly initiatives in the third sector such as the People's Kitchen have had to step up to the plate out of necessity.

"As the Kitchen is only open in the evenings or for weekend breakfasts we are operating when the majority of support agencies are closed and so are left to negotiate with out-of-hours emergency providers. We also raise awareness with daytime providers about what we do."

### Homeless crisis

A recent study commissioned by the homeless charity Crisis

## IN FOCUS

found that in the UK there are about 300,000 people who could be classed as homeless. Of this 25 per cent are care leavers, according to a recent Homeless Link report.

David said: "In our welfare induction programme we have a module looking at the Adverse Childhood Experiences Index (ACE) as we know it is frequently those who have had the most traumatic and impoverished childhoods who end up as vulnerable adults.

"Much of this links to stress and poor mental health, leading to withdrawal from social interaction."

According to Crisis, 66 per cent of homeless people cite drug and/or alcohol use as one of the causes of their homelessness. Self-medicating comes to be a coping mechanism once homeless, causing a vicious circle.

**'Friends speak of great loneliness and isolation and will come into the kitchen seeking company'**

David added: "We know that many friends will avoid seeking help as this means engaging with systems which they often experience as bureaucratic and administrative. We know that there are many compassionate and committed staff in these agencies who are actively striving to reduce homelessness in the city,

nevertheless many of our friends feel as if doors are closed to them."

Some of those seeking help from the People's Kitchen are stuck in an exploitative, damaging private rented sector.

The housing charity Shelter recently reported that two million renters are at risk of being made ill by housing worries. In addition, 45 per cent of private tenants experience significant mental health issues through living with stress, fear, and uncertainty.

Cuts to drug and alcohol services mean that increasing numbers are struggling without necessary support.

David added: "These tenancies are often fraught with a range of issues and very often represent impoverished housing provision. People share concerns about dampness, poor repairs, infestations, overcrowding, of having their flat taken over by dealers (cuckooing) and insecurity of tenure."

### Tough times ahead

As The People's Kitchen prepares for another tough winter, and volunteers plan the annual Christmas meal, the need for the service in Newcastle is greater than ever.

David said: "Friends speak of great loneliness and isolation and will come into the kitchen seeking company and human contact.

"Many others will speak of their history of multiple moves within the care system and of their fractured life stories. For many, winter is particularly attritional with darkness coldness and pain.

"Given the fuel crisis this year, this hardship can only be more of an issue in the months to come, and we will need to think of creative new ways to support people through these hardships."



'I am Somebody' exhibition staged by Mark Carr at Newcastle Arts Centre

## 'They deserve to mean more than mere statistics'

Artist Mark Carr volunteered at the People's Kitchen in Newcastle upon Tyne for three years, preparing hot meals for those needing the service.

He staged an exhibition, 'I am Somebody', at Newcastle Arts Centre, celebrating the lives of more than 30 of the friends who gave their permission to be featured.

Mark sought to capture the suffering of the people he came to know through his volunteering. He describes the

"1,000-yard stare" that can result from long-term trauma and destitution. He says he aims to give dignity and respect to those he works with, adding: "They deserve to mean more than mere statistics."

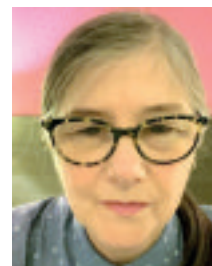
The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recently highlighted the threat to voluntary work during the cost of living crisis.

It warned people can no longer afford the bus fare to travel to work they do in their communities.



# RUTH ALLEN

BASW's chief executive on how we can keep ourselves motivated



## In these tough times we must ensure we let inspiration in

**T**he end of 2022 is looming with economic, social, financial, climate and other troubles filling the news and affecting our personal and professional lives. How do we stay hopeful and purposeful as social workers in the current context?

Hope is the stock in trade of social work. This means holding hope vicariously when people feel hopeless, helping people re-find their hope, and sustaining our own personal hope through self-care, relationships, professional support and being true to our ethics and values.

Our distinctive challenge and opportunity as social workers lies in staying close to the emotional and practical realities that people are living through, while keeping our heads, hands and hearts above water, looking up and out, taking time and creating space within ourselves to let inspiration in. For the people we work with, we must stay active and engaged in finding solutions and recognising their strengths. This is sometimes tough, often rewarding and always a privilege.

In recent weeks, I have had the chance to hear many hopeful, brave stories from social workers, activists and students. They have been admirable and humbling. I have tried to focus on the inspiration they can offer – and I am sharing a few of them here.

**IFSW Europe developing a community social work and participation project in Western Ukraine:** IFSW Europe President Ana Radulescu was invited by local social workers, community leaders and politicians to support them in developing a community project in a small town in Western Ukraine. There are thousands of internally displaced people there now and it is struggling to provide basic services, food and housing.

With input, planning and funding from IFSW member associations – including BASW's international development fund – local people have been employed and others are volunteering to deliver a renovated community centre providing support and education for children and adults, a kitchen producing vacuum packed meals for sale and a 'social investment partnership'. The project is being built on innovative, locally determined social work approaches

### 'Hope is the stock in trade of social work'

– not 'aid' and not importing models of community or social work from elsewhere. The project is shaped from the grassroots up and is founded on enabling local people to be active and mutually supportive, not recipients of services.

It will meet practical needs – such as renovating housing to cope with the Ukrainian winter – and stimulate the local economy through enabling access to supplies through mutual exchange and social partnership rather than aid 'giveaways' which can undermine the local economy in war zones. A new Ukrainian Association of Social Workers is in development and we met the first President, a social worker from the town.

**Kirstie Baughan winning the BASW sponsored social justice advocate award and joint overall social worker of the year in England:** Kirstie won recognition for her dedication, on top of her day job, working with refugees in the UK and abroad and volunteering. She is an inspiration at a time when a home secretary refers to migrants as "invading" our shores. She exemplifies the practical and emotional efforts social workers and others are making to providing direct help, advocating, pressing the authorities, raising awareness and fundamentally humanising the inhuman experience of UK immigration policy and discourse. Kirstie has been funded to undertake a PhD and inspires in her ambition to research as well as to practice with such integrity.

**Social worker and BASW member Dominic Watters speaking on the New Statesman podcast:** Dominic turns reflections on his own experience of poverty and food insecurity into advocacy, writing, presenting and campaigning for the unacceptability and dehumanising nature of inequality. Finding and using his voice, in part through his experience of a social work training, is an inspiration for us all and for BASW's anti-poverty campaigning which is ramping up from November – as ending poverty is and has always been core to social work.

Let's remember to breathe in what we need to feel strong, inspired and able to hold hope, while supporting each other to remain motivated.

## VIEWPOINT RIGHTS

# Human rights in the UK are not secure

A likely fresh impetus to introduce a UK Bill of Rights threatens the people social workers work with, warns Amnesty International chief executive **Sacha Deshmukh**



**T**he Human Rights Act has had quite the year – for the first six months of 2022 it looked to be in real trouble.

The government, armed with a large majority and Secretary of State for Justice Dominic Raab, looked set to repeal it and in so doing gut the UK's human rights protections.

The Bill of Rights Bill was lodged in Parliament. Then the Johnson administration collapsed taking with it, or so it appeared, the threat to the HRA. Then the Truss administration announced it would suspend the Bill of Rights Bill and would be reviewing its contents to find the best way of pursuing its core elements.

Human rights defenders around the country breathed a cautious sigh of relief, while preparing to respond to the relaunch of a new slimmed-down attack.

Then a further twist: the Truss government collapsed and was replaced by Rishi Sunak, who reintroduced Dominic Raab as Justice Minister. And so it seems the HRA may not be out of the woods yet.

The prospect of the Bill of Rights Bill returning is a very serious concern for all those who promote and protect the human rights of people in the UK, social workers included.

It would have cut the duties on public authority management to actively protect rights (so called 'positive obligations'); reduced public authority leadership's accountability for breaches of human rights; and muddled the human rights duties on private contractors performing public functions. No wonder, then, that BASW stated that the HRA would "roll back human rights rather than uphold them".

However, even if this full nightmare scenario does not ultimately come to pass, it does not mean that human rights in the UK are secure. It may be that smaller, more targeted attempts will be made to remove human rights protections from unpopular or marginalised communities, or areas causing governmental headaches.

Top of the list seems to be a new Immigration Bill, first floated by Home Secretary Suella Braverman before she too was forced out of office. Braverman has now returned. Details of this bill have been sparse, but it has been

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**'It cannot be that vulnerable groups are stripped of universal human rights protections'**

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pitched as a means of preventing people who arrive in the UK in small boats from claiming asylum, including unaccompanied children; curbing protections for victims of trafficking; and "stopping European judges overruling us" on immigration. The latter is a reference to the European Court of Human Rights' role in stopping the Rwanda deportation flights but also the role the Convention right to private and family life plays in helping people regularise their immigration status in the UK and appeal against deportation.

These moves would be disastrous for the people social workers work to support every day. Children in families excluded from public funds, unaccompanied children seeking asylum, and children in care with rights to citizenship would all be without the legal safeguards they depend on and which their social workers turn to in order to help rebuild their lives.

The rights found in the European Convention, made into practical duties on public authorities by the Human Rights Act, are fundamental to meeting the welfare needs of children and to fulfilling the UK's duties under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to act in their best interests.

With public authority budgets being what they are and an absence of clear legal duties, support regarded as 'optional extras' simply does not happen.

At the same time, losing this robust rights framework will weaken social workers' attempts to push back against the encroachment of the Home Office into their caring and support responsibilities and, in turn, its co-option of social workers into its immigration control priorities.

Whichever of these directions the new government takes us in, we will be watching closely and campaigning for the human rights of everyone in the UK to be protected.

It cannot be that vulnerable groups or individuals singled out by politicians are stripped of the universal human rights protections that we are all entitled to.

Doing so flies in the face of the whole principle of human rights.

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Sacha Deshmukh is the chief executive of Amnesty International



## VIEWPOINT HOMES

# Narrative on children's homes is a disservice

Critical reports obscure the 'daily magic' that takes place in the children's residential care sector – and ignore the real issue of resources, says **Jonathan Stanley**



**N**egative commentary on residential child care presents itself assertively, but what is argued is not necessarily always so.

Is your current understanding of children's homes that 77 per cent are good or better, and 97 per cent meeting required standards? These are the Ofsted figures of March 2022, figures that are consistent over many years.

This is an insight into how the daily magic and miracles of most children's homes, the result of knowledgeable and skilled work, goes uncommunicated.

There is rarely an opportunity to provide balance to negativity when the evidence is presented partially, or not at all. Maybe some of the things you associate with children's homes include; high costs, high profit, poor outcomes, a long way from home, not the right sort of homes, missing children...

Sometimes it is presented that we don't have enough early intervention because children's homes cost a lot. The truth is there is not enough money for children's services, and this is something we all should be campaigning about.

Managing scarcity is not good child care and we should be making the reality and effects very clear to government.

Not intervening makes a need more extensive. Today, no child comes to a children's home without high level needs that benefit from intensive care.

Profit making is a choice for government. It does not have to be the way it is in England. Northern Ireland and Scotland do not have for-profit homes. Wales intends to join them. Very few of us in England are working on the practicality of a transition to not-for-profit planned provision avoiding potential gaps as current private providers exit. But it can be done.

'As local as possible and specialist as necessary', proactive provision from a granular needs analysis results in specificity, planned, relational, child-centred responses, not market-based speculation. It comes with a choice to spend more – the result of increased pay, terms and conditions.

Outcomes of children in children's homes are often not the same as for the rest of the population.

Why? This is a particular group of children whose needs

**'Children's home outcomes are the correlation of all that has happened previously'**

may not have been met for years, arriving at children's homes in their teens, staying a short period of time.

Children's homes outcomes are the correlation of all that has happened or, crucially, not happened, previously.

Understanding distance as a factor is complex, it can enable access to specialist provision regionally or nationally, or a feeling of safety.

Distance is as much psychological as geographical.

Virtual communication can be more regular, allowing face-to-face contact with family and social work teams to be quality time.

What does 'not the right sort of homes' mean? Maybe an implication that what we have are not good enough?

The role and task of children's homes is created by us all. We have all created the circumstances for the homes we now have; it is a shared responsibility to be clear what we do need.

Some needs cannot be met by current homes – the staffing, knowledge and skills to safely meet a child's needs are not present and so a referral is declined. This is as required by the current set of standards and regulations.

If the question then is that we do not need 'more of the same' homes that 'do not take our children', as has been said, then let the Department for Education invest in local authorities to open what will be the 'right sort' of homes.

Let's avoid contention and focus on solutions.

In a seminar about children who go missing, an understanding emerged that children go missing when the grown-up's preoccupation is reduced.

"They are lost," said one participant.

"So what did they want from us?" asked another.

"To be found," was the reply.

Profound silence filled the room.

"Being lost" and "wanting to be found" is a million miles from "missing" and "listing".

You get positive children's homes in positive children's services.

Jonathan Stanley is principal partner of the National Centre of Excellence for Residential Child Care

## REVIEWS

### BOOKS

## A inspiring journey from early trauma to career in social work

**Title:** Both Sides of the Track

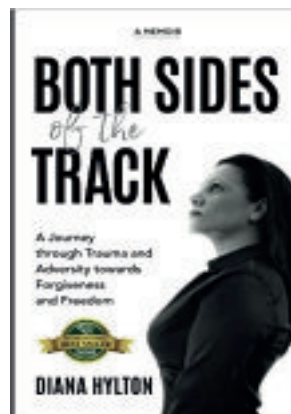
**Author:** Diana Hylton

**Publisher:** Hasmark Publishing

**ISBN:** 978-1-77482-164-0

**Price:** £10.99

[www.hasmarkpublishing.com](http://www.hasmarkpublishing.com)



I try to avoid TV and radio accounts on the abuse of children, disabled adults and older people in care homes and institutions. There is enough awfulness in our day-to-day work experience without letting it overwhelm our down time as well.

So I had a little wariness, and weariness, when it was suggested I might read this new book by Diana Hylton. But I am so glad that I have read it.

Diana was seriously neglected and abandoned as a young child, along with others abused in a children's home, and had an adolescence of trauma, turmoil and tragedy. And then through personal strength and stamina, and not a little perseverance and commitment, she did an access course, a university degree, qualified as a social worker, and is in the midst of a career as a practitioner, manager and now as a personal coach.

This book is insightful, illuminating, and inspiring.

It is personally informed and professionally informative. It is lovely, lively and enlightening. It is a personal but also a professional biography, all the more graphic as Diana reflects on her experience of working as a social worker in Haringey at the time of the killing of Peter Connelly and recounts the impact of the scandalous media reporting.

I recently met a care experienced young woman whose life has also been really tough and, so far, uphill all the way. She also is about to commit to doing an access course en route to wanting to become a social worker. I gave her my copy of the book and hope she too finds it inspiring.

Diana does not duck the horrors of her early life but then shares so much wisdom about resilience and recovery. This is a book for all of us – students and old hands as well. Thank you Diana.

Ray Jones

### BOOKS

## A mighty tome about working with people and their problems

**Title:** People Skills

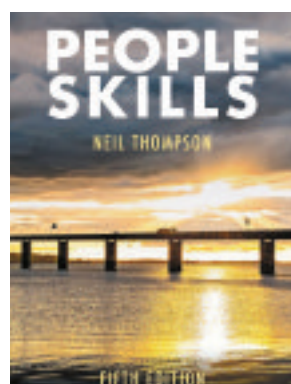
**Author:** Neil Thompson

**Publisher:** Bloomsbury Publishing

**ISBN:** 9781352012248

**Price:** £31.99

[www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com)



This is the fifth edition and 25th anniversary of this tome, providing a comprehensive guide for working successfully with people. Though not aimed directly at social workers it remains a valuable resource for working with people and their problems.

The book is divided into three parts. First, personal effectiveness skills, which are important because they underpin all the other skills in working with people. Ten aspects of personal effectiveness are outlined, including self-awareness, time and stress management, and using supervision. Second, interaction skills such as valuing diversity, verbal and non-verbal communication, and influencing skills. And third, intervention skills include managing risk, reflective practice and, importantly,

anti-discriminatory practice. The latter caught my eye because it is a key component of critical social work. The point is made that social workers need to acknowledge the impact of discrimination and oppression in people's lives, avoid reinforcing this and challenge the oppressive structures, attitudes and actions that disadvantage certain groups.

The chapter on reflective practice emphasises practitioners avoiding standardised, formulaic responses to the situations they come across. This is all the more important in the managerial dominated climates workers have to negotiate.

A comprehensive, accessible text which will be welcomed by social work students and practitioners.

Dr Steve Rogowski

### TV/RADIO

## Shining light on child protection

**The Boy in the Woods: The Discussion**  
Radio 4 iPlayer

Rikki Neave was a six-year-old boy known to social services when he died. His killer, James Watson, was convicted and jailed for his murder this June – nearly 30 years later.

In wake of a ten-part *Radio 4* series on the case, 'The Boy in the Woods', presenter Winifred Robison brings together three eminent figures to discuss why such deaths still happen.

They are Lord Laming, who reviewed child protection after the death of Baby P; Louise Casey, who led the government's Troubled Families programme and former *Guardian* journalist Polly Curtis.

The discussion explores what's going wrong with the current system. Laming says we are "operating a crisis driven service", and waiting too late to intervene.

Casey says we have a social work system that's "dealing with everything" due to a "withdrawal" of services from communities.

Curtis talks of a "double failure" where we are "intervening more than ever" at huge cost but not doing enough to help families stay together.

The show also discusses the impact of domestic abuse, the blaming of mothers and the "shadow" men in their lives.

From all three comes a sense of frustration that lessons aren't being learnt. As Casey says: "We know what to do, we just don't do it."

Shahid Naqvi



## A WORD OF ADVICE

# How to survive toxicity in the workplace

Top tips from **Alasdair Kennedy**

### Cut it off at source

As Brittany Spears said, toxicity is dangerous and its infectious. It can be pervasive if left unchecked. But there is an escape. If you are a manager, cut off bad behaviour at the source. Tension can arise from anything. I once had to deal with a toxic work environment that started over buying too much milk for the office! Who started it? I didn't care. It had to be stopped. Spotting the signs isn't easy if you don't speak to your staff daily in this virtual world. But tiny issues can become full scale war. As a manager I watch out for grumblings about small things: moaning in teams, people being left out of Teams meetings or emails, and competitiveness. Sometimes you may feel like a parent as a manager. Speak to the people involved, don't take sides, and don't resort to HR straight away. Resolution and mediation is best.

### Toxic neutrality

Avoid the mood hoovers and nay-sayers, create friendship groups that think the same way as you – positively. People who will watch your back and only share good news. Stay away from infighting and paranoia as well as office gossip and rumours. Take stock every day of the positives in your work, write them down. You can lose track of the good and focus only on the bad.

### Gripes go up, not down

You need to set a baseline of behaviours and ones you stick to yourself to create a positive atmosphere. In one role I had, the work environment was so toxic staff were swearing and bullying in online meetings. I had to remind social workers of their Professional Standards

from Social Work England, explaining to them that one of its tenets is to “act safely, respectfully and with professional integrity”. Virtual work has degraded human interactions and things are said online that would never be said in person due to the imperceptible barrier of cyberspace. In all my interactions with teams as a manager the first thing I outline is we respect one another, we are always civil, and we are always friendly. Also, if we have a gripe, we always gripe to our managers: gripes go up not down. As a manager you never, ever, gripe about your work to your staff.

### Praise you like I should

Praise is the key to avoiding toxicity. People fade if not told the work they do has a positive effect or that they are doing well. Don't hide the fact that times are tough. I like to encourage people in advance. It always lessens toxicity – people do better when praised. Also, praise is free. I did it today in a team briefing. I said: “I can't do this without you”, and added: “You can do it.”

### Freedom to fail is key

It's reported that 70 per cent of UK workplaces in 2020 were toxic. Cambridge University's business school teaches that a ‘freedom to fail culture’ is key to innovation and getting a team out of toxicity. The economist Ed Mayo says: “In a positive culture, incidents of potential cheating or bullying are addressed early” so there is “no repeating of bad behaviour, the hallmark of a toxic culture”.

**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**

### A happier society is better for business

With yet another new prime minister, it is hard to see anything changing for the better for disabled people, service users, carers and low waged people.

Meanwhile we are in recession and inflation is way beyond what most public sector workers can cope with. That's even before we scratch the surface of how rising costs all around, from utility bills to food, affect those already most vulnerable.

Foodbank usage in Birmingham was already astronomical before a recession, before the war in Ukraine, before Covid – but who spoke about it then? Charities have been gagged as a result of the lobbying act and have been slow to make politically motivated comments due to funding.

In my experience charities are often run by well-meaning but slightly out of touch middleclass professionals who are not at the sharp end of being in crisis. Empathise as they might try, it's not the same as lived experience, ever. Holistic wellbeing practices try to individualise distress and trauma and also shy away from critiquing difficult and seemingly unsolvable topics that touch on the socio-political as that would involve very deep analysis, structural change and admitting that the individual needs community, connection, humanity and support which goes beyond what some programme or algorithm can offer.

Perhaps one of the reasons people are so unhappy is not all down to capitalism and the cost of living crisis. Perhaps in an increasingly digitised world more and more people miss and crave that human connection and interaction. It's one of the reasons I continue to run my peer support groups face-to-face for people who struggle with their mental health and experience other health inequalities and impairments.

It feels like everything is in crisis and in turmoil at the moment, from immigration services to the NHS, from a privatised care service to education funding, transport and manufacturing and imports following Brexit. So many people have been duped into blaming others over the years and making the super-rich richer. I support striking workers and believe that everyone deserves a pay rise, and that includes a rise in the minimum wage. We need to force change in order to survive – however that is achieved – and we do not need a return to austerity as there is literally nothing else to cut. More disposable income equals not only happier people but it is better for business and the economy, and social issues such as crime will not be so endemic. Everything is connected.

## A SOCIAL WORKER'S **DIARY**

November, 2022

So I started my new role. I am consciously using this as an opportunity to grow in my practice and reflect on my journey so far. I still plan on being a part of positive change in the system but for now want to process everything that has happened so far and learn. I particularly want to observe the politics without being involved, a step back from it all.

I have reflected and learnt that I give everything to my job, and now I am going to hold back. I am not going to engage in any politics and let go of any that comes my way. Only a few days in and it has already come my way. It is not easy, however, I am so burnt out from my previous experiences that I don't care what impression people have. I am focusing only on the job at hand.

This is a new approach for me and I think it will help me in the long run, especially if I decide to return back to management. I am someone who does lose sleep over the job and will work all the hours to sort things out and do the best I can for the children and families and the social workers, family support workers, the whole team. Unfortunately, adding the politics on top of that really gets to me.

This new local authority appears similar in that there is new upper management and a director who has brought in with them brand 'new' ideas and promised to bring about fantastic changes for the children, families and workers. Unsurprisingly these are exactly the same as the ones used previously, just under a different name.

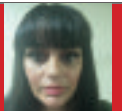
I am really hoping this place will be supportive, friendly, honest, and not toxic. I recently found out a job I had

been offered has been withdrawn because it appears my manager at the last place I worked bad mouthed me. Neither the prospective employer nor my former manager will be open with me about this; they won't respond to my calls or emails. It was my agency who informed me. I don't understand why this has happened. I worked hard in my previous role, got a good reference, made positive changes, went above and beyond. I was left to manage the service, which was not my role, with low staff numbers and raised the dangerous staffing level and the risks associated to upper management. When my former manager returned, I can assume she was not happy about this as she announced she was leaving the local authority and now seems to blame me for whatever it is I have done. I do not know what it is because she will not tell me but appears to be happy to try and destroy my name, ability to gain work and my career.

This has caused me upset, worry, confusion, shock, and loss of trust in my workplace. So, my union advice was to get subject access requests in for the prospective employer and my old job to find out what is going on. I have also been informed that I have a case for defamation of character due to the emails sent to my agency and the reply from my previous manager stating they had not made any allegations to my agency and that there were no problems with my practice and thank you for my time working there.

When I share what is going on with my loved ones they tell me to get out. They tell me my workplace is toxic and my job is too hard. I believe in it though, the values, the whole foundations of our profession and what we are trying to achieve. This is why I want to find a way to work with other social workers to change the current situation and what it is like to be a children's front-line social worker.

## STUDENT NOTES



Georgiana Ndlovu is an MSc social work student

### I ask myself: what could I have done different?

It's been a challenging month where I've found myself battling a nasty head cold and I'm not alone. All around me colleagues and peers have been fending off flu.

As a student social worker I've also needed to regroup. Returning from an extended holiday meant utilising those all-important organisational skills so important in social work practice. While theory may well often inform decision making, I've realised it's reflection and supervision that really counts.

While I'm proud of the positive impact I have made on individuals as a fledgling social worker, one thing I've never done is rest on my laurels – in social work there is no place to do that!

Whether you have mediated to bring an estranged family back together or safeguarded a child who was at serious risk, your next challenge is just around the corner and I am always reflecting on how I can do better this time.

I ask myself, what could I have done differently? Did I set my tone right? Could I have adapted my toolkit better? Did I miss something critical? Did I forget to ask an important question? Was there another individual who I could have got involved in the process?

I also question any bias I have in my work. Whether there are any cultural or personality issues. It is brave, exposing, and frank work, but I enjoy it and I learn so much about myself.

I am now thinking about how we really must also reflect on how we talk to children. Serious case reviews like those of Daniel Pelka and Victoria Climbié repeatedly declare that not enough was done to establish the voice of the child. Whether it be not having a translator for a child for whom English is not their first language or not using specific tools to gather the child's feelings and wishes when they are non-verbal, it undermines the child's voice gathering process.

I aim to build a personal toolkit of methods and approaches for gathering the feelings and views of the individuals who really matter – the service users. I have even started a 'theory bible' – a place where I keep details of the core theories alongside every new theory I discover as I practice, including new and obscure theories that I had never heard of. Using theory is another great chance to reflect as is using reflective tools like Kolb's Learning Cycle or the Gibbs' Reflective Practice Model.

Maybe in years to come, I might add some theories of my own!





# ASK DEREK

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

While staring out the window the other day I watched as a neighbour swept up the leaves outside his house only for the wind to scatter them again. I think this might be a metaphor for my work.

Bill, Gwennap Head

**Derek says:** I think you've got a touch of the winter blues, Bill. Don't worry, it'll be spring soon.

With young people seeming to only be able to communicate via social media these days, I think it is important that we as social workers enter this space. With this in mind, do you know how to use filters to make myself look ten years younger?

Claris, Liverpool

**Derek says:** Do you think I'd be using the image on the top of this page if I knew how to do that?

What with all this talk of strikes and rising interest rates, it sometimes feel like I've gone through a time warp and am back in the 80s. How has it come to this?

Jenni, Wigan

**Derek says:** I know what you mean Jenni. They've even got Boy George on *I'm A Celebrity* and Ben Elton back on the telly.

I've been a social worker for many years but have never come across the sheer level of dysfunction and chaos seen in Westminster this year. Surely there's now an argument for an intervention from social services at Number 10?

Ella, Suffolk

**Derek says:** I know what you mean, Ella. And in the case of Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng some basic money management skills wouldn't go amiss.

As Christmas approaches, can we spare a thought for those for whom this time of year brings added emotional stress, turmoil and feelings of loss and regret?

Samantha, Carlisle

**Derek says:** You're talking about the office Christmas party, aren't you Samantha? My advice to you would be to lay off the red wine. And keep away from the photocopying machine.

I'm furious, Derek. After acting up as interim manager for six weeks, the job has been given to another colleague! What should I do?

Liz, Westminster

**Derek says:** I feel your pain, Liz. I Truss they're not still paying you for acting up?

Email your dilemmas to [derek@basw.co.uk](mailto:derek@basw.co.uk)

## Classics Clare

Why shouldn't you Trick or Treat as a 'Psycho in a straight-jacket'? First, because it reinforces a negative stereotype of people with mental illness. Second...



... because you've got nothing to hold your sweets with.



Thanks for joining in with the 'Take The knee' anti-racism protest, Brian, but you can get up now.



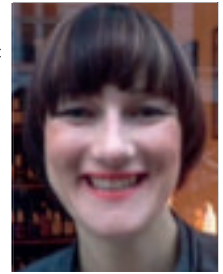
No I can't.



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

## ENGLAND VIEWS

# Is surveillance ever acceptable to keep people safe from harm?



**T**ragedically, over the last few months we have seen some very dark days for our profession.

Both the recently aired *Panorama* investigation at Edenfield and a *Dispatches* programme investigating Essex Partnership University Trust have forced us to question the culture, systems and practices within state-funded services.

As with previous scandals, it is bereaved families fighting for justice for their loved ones who are calling for a statutory inquiry into people's safety.

As social workers we are part of the system and therefore part of the problem. When abuse is exposed, we occupy an uncomfortable space.

And as a profession, we must face the reality of what we are presented with. We must honestly reflect on whether these safeguarding incidents would ever have come to light without the intervention of undercover surveillance.

The current guidance from the Care Quality Commission about the use of CCTV and surveillance uses the language and terms we associate with Article 8 of the Human Rights Act – in promotion of dignity and respect, and protecting

privacy by the avoidance of recording intimate care.

Surveillance poses huge moral and ethical dilemmas and human rights challenges not just for social work but for society as a whole.

Widely used across the globe, it is found in communal areas of care and health settings and in people's own homes. In children's social work, surveillance has been identified as a method used to gather information covertly about family members via their social media accounts.

These are challenging times, and there is a debate to be had as a profession.

Should the qualified right to privacy under Article 8 be upheld and protected at all costs? Or is there a balance to be struck to defend and uphold Article 3 which provides an absolute right to be free from inhuman and degrading treatment?

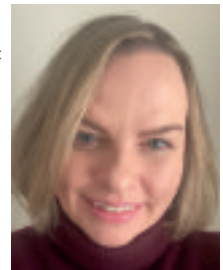
If we are ethically opposed to surveillance as a solution, we must ask ourselves how we stop the normalisation of care and treatment, which dehumanises and "others" people at a time when they are in the greatest need.

**Liz Howard, BASW England professional officer**

**'We are part of the system and therefore part of the problem'**

## NORTHERN IRELAND VIEWS

# Our collectivism is vital at a time of unprecedented pressure on services



**L**eaving frontline social work practice after ten years in various statutory roles within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has left me in no doubt of the urgency facing our sector.

As I take up the post of professional officer for BASW NI, I am conscious of the responsibility to advocate on behalf of the profession.

We need to continue to speak up and out for those colleagues working across all sectors of social work practice in Northern Ireland.

From my own recent experience and early engagement I have had with members, it is plain that social workers and services overall are under unprecedented pressures. They are dealing with high levels of need, the impacts of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, while struggling with resourcing and staffing issues.

Our members are seeing ongoing vacancies within their teams, as demand for services continues to rise and caseloads remain high.

The clear message I am hearing from colleagues is that they need and want BASW NI to be by their side.

**'They need BASW NI to advocate on behalf of the profession'**

They want to be supported in their practice, have access to advice and representation, and connect with fellow social workers.

They need BASW NI to advocate on behalf of the profession, promoting social work and its values at a time when social workers are playing a critical role.

In my new post, I have been engaging with the next generation of social workers, our students. We have had conversations about the importance of collectivism and the unique position that social work brings to inform policy conversations and campaigning. Their commitment to being a force for good has given me even more drive in my role to advocate for a better future for social work and the people we support.

Over the coming months I will continue to meet with social workers across all areas of care. It is vitally important as we face a difficult winter that BASW NI continues to work in conjunction with our members, while encouraging others to join us, so we can effectively address the issues being faced by the profession.

**Noeleen Higgins, BASW NI professional officer**



## SCOTLAND VIEWS

# Turning the tide on poverty shouldn't rest with communities



**S**ince the last Challenge Poverty Week, the situation for social workers and those they support has worsened.

Many more people are impacted, with no end in sight. Not only have prices increased without a rise in salaries or benefits, but there is great political upheaval, with little indication of how the government will lead us out.

This year's theme was how we 'Turn the Tide' on poverty. We shared powerful stories on our website: how the mother of a disabled daughter, working full-time, wondered how she will power her daughter's essential medical equipment and heating; how adults with disabilities are anxious about bills; people who fear hospital admission as they can no longer afford to manage their home care. Add to this NHS waiting lists, retention and recruitment of carers, the impact on public services, and the unaffordability of nutritious foods, and a bleak picture emerges.

Social workers are seeing people having to make choices that are increasingly limited, at times between eating or heating. We hear of social workers themselves struggling to afford groceries and bills, turning to food banks.

In a recent poll, 70 per cent of social workers reported debt due to the cost of living crisis.

SASW worked with Jackie Baillie MSP to lodge a motion in the Scottish Parliament to increase the mileage allowance for social workers to 60 pence a mile. So far 20 MSPs have supported it. Please urge yours to do so too. The impact of the current crisis is particularly felt in rural and island communities. All these factors influence mental health and wellbeing, which spills over into the workplace.

There are solutions. A short film produced by the Poverty Alliance, 'Dignity', proposes a move away from the system which traps people in poverty, towards another founded on self-worth and respect. The film captures a community's strength in creating a market offering affordable food and connection with others.

But solutions should not rest with communities trying desperately to survive. Ultimately, we need strong government to lead us forward, bringing society along by understanding experiences, ensuring human rights, and empowering all to live a fulfilling, dignified life.

**Sarah McMillan, SASW professional officer**

**'We need strong government to lead us forward'**

## SOCIAL WORKERS UNION VIEWS

# When a formal complaint or a grievance seems inevitable...



**A**s I write this, Guy Fawkes night is almost upon us, with heavy symbolism of betrayal, conspiracy, treachery and skulduggery.

A representation also, perhaps, of clashes in belief, culture and values. There are times in life and in workplace situations where we can feel that we are surrounded by fireworks, bonfires and people with radically opposing values or views.

Perhaps you have a problematic relationship with a colleague, a manager, or you are at odds with the organisation you work for. Sometimes the situation may be so difficult or serious that the only route is to take out a formal complaint or grievance. In the A&R team we would advise you to check policy carefully before embarking on that route, to think about advantages, disadvantages, and the outcomes you are hoping to achieve. A benefit of submitting a grievance is that issues which have been interfering with your ability to perform at your best may be identified and resolved organisationally. It is a way of ensuring that your employer is alerted to your concerns. If you feel your

situation is so serious that it may warrant court action, filing a grievance is the first step in that process and even if your grievance is not upheld, your employer cannot claim that they were unaware of your concerns.

To format your grievance, write a clear chronology of events, 020



## WALES VIEWS

# In the room is better than in a Zoom for teaching social work



**F**or the first time since 2019 I have returned to teaching social work undergraduates who are just starting out on their social work journey face to face.

I can't overstate how enjoyable and enriching the experience has been and how it highlighted what we've missed out on, through the move to remote platforms, and also what, as a profession, we should resist.

I'm not against remote ways of doing things as it can be inclusive in a way that face-to-face meetings can't achieve. This is why blended approaches are so important.

I continued to support social work education on courses using remote platforms through the pandemic, and know the effort involved for students and educators – especially where a topic is skills-based and experiential – to ensure that students were getting the learning they needed.

We are social beings and there is no substitute for the energy and creativity inherent in face-to-face contact. What is more, teaching remotely is tiring! Trying to maintain good eye contact, checking out the chat function, seeing oneself on the screen, all leads to what we

colloquially call 'Zoom fatigue'.

Then there's the need for silence – a fundamental of good communication, it happens naturally when teaching face-to-face, but can feel overly laboured in remote communication.

It's worth remembering that not all students have access to a quiet space, or the basic kit needed to support home learning.

With face-to-face teaching there are no issues with bandwidth and the 'life interruptions' which are inevitable when we work from home.

Plus, you get to have the post-teaching chats or cups of tea, which are golden moments for making important human and professional connections.

How I have missed those moments!

These have been tough years for our profession, we are in a recruitment and retention crisis, and we are struggling to fill places and retain social workers on qualifying courses.

Remote learning may seem like the brave new world in some sectors, but not for social work, please!

**Allison Hulmes, national director, BASW Cymru**

**'Post-teaching chats and cups of tea - golden moments!'**

## CYMRU VIEWS

# Mae bod yn yr ystafell yn well na bod ar Zoom ar gyfer dysgu gwaith cymdeithasol

**A**m y tro cyntaf ers 2019 rwyf wedi dychwelyd i ddysgu israddedigion gwaith cymdeithasol sydd newydd ddechrau ar eu taith gwaith cymdeithasol wyneb yn wyneb.

Ni allaf orbwysleisio pa mor bleser ac mor gyfoethog y mae'r profiad wedi bod a sut mae hyn wedi amlygu'r hyn yr ydym wedi'i golli, drwy symud i lwyfannau anghysbell, a hefyd yr hyn, fel proffesiwn, y dylem ei wrthwynebu.

Nid wyf yn erbyn gwneud pethau o hirbell gan y gall fod yn gynhwysol mewn ffordd na all cyfarfodydd wyneb yn wyneb fod. Dyna pam mae dulliau cyfunol mor bwysig.

Fe wnes i barhau i gefnogi addysg gwaith cymdeithasol ar gyrsiau sy'n defnyddio llwyfannau o hirbell trwy'r pandemig, a gwn am yr ymdrech sydd ei angen gan fyfyrwyr ac addysgwyr - yn enwedig lle mae pwnc yn seiliedig ar sgiliau ac ar brofiadau - i sicrhau bod myfyrwyr yn cael y dysgu y maent ei angen.

Rydym yn fodau cymdeithasol ac nid oes unrhyw beth all gymryd lle'r egni a'r creadigrwydd sy'n gynhenid mewn cyswllt wyneb yn wyneb. Yn fwy na hynny, mae dysgu o bell yn flinedig! Mae ceisio cynnal cyswllt llygad da, gwirio pwrpas y sgwrs, gweld eich hun ar y sgrin, i gyd yn arwain at yr hyn rydyn ni'n ei

alw ar lafar yn 'blinder zoom'. Yna mae angen am ddistawrwydd - elfen sylfaenol o gyfathrebu da, sy'n digwydd yn naturiol wrth addysgu wyneb yn wyneb, ond gall gyfathrebu o bell deimlo'n or-lafurus Mae'n werth cofio nad oes gan bob myfyrwr fynediad i ofod tawel, na'r offer sylfaenol sydd ei angen i gefnogi dysgu o adref.

Gydag addysgu wyneb yn wyneb nid oes unrhyw broblemau gyda lled band a'r 'amhariadau bywyd' sy'n anochel pan fyddwn yn gweithio o adref.

Hefyd, byddwch yn cael y sgysiau ar ôl dysgu neu baneidiau o de, sy'n eiliadau euraidd i wneud cysylltiadau dynol a phroffesiynol pwysig. O! Fel rydw i wedi colli'r eiliadau hynny!

Mae'r blynyddoedd hyn wedi bod yn flynyddoedd anodd i'n proffesiwn, ac rydym mewn argyfwng recriwtio a chadw, ac rydym yn brwydro i lenwi lleoedd a chadw gweithwyr cymdeithasol ar gyrsiau cymhwys.

Gall dysgu o bell ymddangos i fod fel y byd newydd dewr mewn rhai sectorau, ond nid ar gyfer gwaith cymdeithasol os gwelwch yn dda!

**Allison Hulmes, cyfarwyddwraig genedlaethol, BASW Cymru**

**'Sgyrsiau ar ôl dysgu a phaned o de - eiliadau euraidd!'**



# DIARY DATES

## 22 & 23 NOVEMBER

SASW Conference 2022: The Right Time: Relationships & Equality in Challenging Times

## 23 & 30 NOVEMBER/6 & 13 DECEMBER

BASW England Adult Social Work Forum: Strengthen your human rights-based practice

## 29 NOVEMBER

Neurodivergent Social Workers Special Interest Group (NSW SIG)

## 1 DECEMBER

SASW Student and NQSW Support and Mentoring Forum

## 1 DECEMBER

Reflective Connections

## 6 DECEMBER

Wellbeing in the Workplace and Professional Leadership Training for Practice Educators & Assessors

## 8 DECEMBER

Emotional Intelligence & Professional Resilience

## 12 DECEMBER

Developing Creativity as a Practice Assessor / Supervisor / Practice Educator

## 13 DECEMBER

BIA & DOLS Legal Update

## 10 JANUARY & 8 FEBRUARY

Analysis into Assessment and Evidence-Informed Decision Making

## 18 JANUARY

Trauma Informed Interventions

## 23 JANUARY

Principles for Assessing and Quality Assuring Provisions and Practice

## 23-24 JANUARY

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

## 20 FEBRUARY

Principles of legal literacy for PE's, NQSW Assessors, PEPS Assessors/ Mentors and Coordinators

## 1 MARCH

Professional development and reflective supervision: Managing expectations and workloads

## 7 MARCH & 19 APRIL

Ethical dilemmas, legal literacy and professional discretion

## 3 APRIL

Direct observations, gathering feedback and reporting progress training

## 3 MAY

Assessing the quality of evidence and addressing concerns training for Practice Assessors

## 4 MAY & 13 JUNE

Cultural competency, diversity and inclusion

## 14 JUNE

BASW UK AGM

## BASW BRANCH EVENTS

### WEST YORKSHIRE BRANCH:

**22 Nov:** Engaging Together in Trauma Informed Care

### BLACK COUNTRY BRANCH:

**22 Nov:** Breaking the mould to break the cycle - Family Drug and Alcohol Court led by Her Honour Judge Carole Burgher

### WORCESTER BRANCH:

**24 Nov:** Branch Meeting

### NORTH YORKSHIRE BRANCH:

**6 Dec:** Network meeting: Harmful Sexual Behaviour? Speaker Indie Larby

**7 Feb:** Network meeting with BASW UK Chair Julia Ross

### NORFOLK BRANCH:

**8 Dec:** December Reading Group: Social workers with lived or living experience

INFORMATION IS CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS. VISIT [WWW.BASW.CO.UK/EVENTS](http://WWW.BASW.CO.UK/EVENTS) FOR FULL DETAILS

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

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

The online Jobs Board can be found at [www.basw.co.uk/home/vacancies](http://www.basw.co.uk/home/vacancies)

1

Use this Jobs Board yourself when looking for a career move

2

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

# Trauma-Informed Practice Training

At Rock Pool we look beyond ACE's to consider recovery from childhood trauma in the context of compassionate and relational based practice.

We have been delivering evidenced based and successful training programmes across the country to a wide range of professionals who are passionate about supporting children and adults in a trauma-informed way since 2016.

We provide 4 levels of training to meet all needs in your organisation:

- Tier 1** An introduction and awareness of trauma and its impact
- Tier 2** An understanding of trauma and how to work in a trauma-informed way with children or adults
- Tier 3** An enhanced level providing deeper understanding of trauma, and its impact on ourselves as practitioners
- Tier 4** For practitioners who wish to become Trauma-Informed Educators in their own organisation



For more information, visit our website: [www.rockpool.life](http://www.rockpool.life) or contact one of the team: [admin@rockpool.life](mailto:admin@rockpool.life) | 01803 659191

Join us at our  
Birmingham Road Show  
on 19th January 2023.

For further information  
or to book your place,  
please visit  
the website.



## PAACE Toolkit

For those wishing to deliver a trauma-informed psycho-educational programme to groups of children or adults, we also provide facilitator training for The PAACE Toolkit (positive and adverse childhood experience).

This provides opportunities for individuals to understand the impact of their experiences and learn strategies to manage this that supports their own emotional well-being and resilience moving forward.

*"Improving mental health  
and life opportunities"*



## Children's Social Care ASYE Programme

At Devon County Council, we believe Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) are our future workforce. That's why we are heavily invested in ensuring that NQSWS that work with us get the best possible start in their chosen career.

The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) is designed to support each NQSW develop their knowledge and competence to step confidently onto the career ladder. At the Children's Social Care Academy, we have developed our programme over many years to respond to both national requirements and individual needs. We offer a bespoke programme that recognises NQSWS will start at different points on their professional journey and will need different forms of support to develop their professional capability and confidence.

The ASYE programme provides regular reflective supervision alongside key learning and development opportunities within a core curriculum framework. We also offer opportunities to work within the different areas of our Children's Social Work service, enabling NQSWS to engage with casework that will provide a range of rich practice learning experiences, supporting their developmental journey. Our supportive programme promotes progression to ensure each NQSW is equipped with the knowledge and skills crucial to improving outcomes and protecting vulnerable children and their families across Devon.

From the start of the ASYE programme, NQSWS will have an extensive support network, including their line manager and ASYE Practice Development Advisor, who will support and guide their progress throughout the year and help to identify any areas of further development. A social work 'Buddy' will also be assigned, and groups of cohorts will be encouraged to support and help each other, having another soundboard to develop better outcomes.

*"The ASYE guidelines, group sessions, mentoring, supervision, and smaller caseload allowed me to develop my confidence, skills, and knowledge. The gradual increase in cases worked well for me, so I can now manage a higher caseload. In addition, I was able to use my protected time for my portfolio, which allowed me to critically reflect on my work with children and their families. I also really enjoyed being part of a team, who are supportive, restorative and really care about the work we do. Challenges were present over the year; however, reflecting on this, these challenges supported me to get to where I am today." (Hannah D, Experienced Social Worker)."*

There are three intakes of candidates each year; these are usually in May, September and December. To find out more information on our programme and future start dates, please visit our website: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/workingfordevon/work-in/children-and-families/newly-qualified-social-workers/>. Or contact [childrensocialworkacademy-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:childrensocialworkacademy-mailbox@devon.gov.uk).



We are committed to equal opportunities  
in employment and service delivery, and are  
only interested in your ability to do the job.





# BASW'S TAUGHT SKILLS - GENERAL



## ONLINE TRAINING

18.11.22 **PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY, RESILIENCE & SELF CARE TRAINING**  
MEMBERS £49 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £75 + VAT | CPD: 3 HOURS

01.12.22 **REFLECTIVE CONNECTIONS**  
MEMBERS £59 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £99 + VAT | CPD: 5 HOURS

13.12.22 **BIA & DOLS LEGAL UPDATE**  
MEMBERS £99 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £175 + VAT | CPD: 6 HOURS

18.01.23 **TRAUMA INFORMED INTERVENTIONS**  
MEMBERS £49 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £75 + VAT | CPD: 4 HOURS

## STUDENT PROGRAMME



23.01.23-  
24.01.23 **BASW - BECOMING ALLIES IN SOCIAL WORK: UNDERSTANDING LGBTQIA+ INEQUALITIES KEY CONCEPTS**  
MEMBERS £10 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £20 + VAT | CPD: 3 HOURS

## BASW'S TAUGHT SKILLS PROGRAMME FOR NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS



08.12.22 **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE & PROFESSIONAL RESILIENCE**  
MEMBERS £49 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £99 + VAT | CPD: 6 HOURS

10.01.23/  
08.02.23 **ANALYSIS INTO ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE-INFORMED DECISION MAKING**  
MEMBERS £49 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £99 + VAT | CPD: 6 HOURS

07.03.23/  
19.04.23 **ETHICAL DILEMMAS, LEGAL LITERACY AND PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION**  
MEMBERS £49 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £99 + VAT | CPD: 6 HOURS

04.05.23/  
13.06.23 **CULTURAL COMPETENCY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**  
MEMBERS £49 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £99 + VAT | CPD: 6 HOURS

## BASW'S TAUGHT SKILLS PROGRAMME FOR PRACTICE EDUCATORS & ASSESSORS



06.12.22 **WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR PRACTICE EDUCATORS & ASSESSORS**  
MEMBERS £29 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £59 + VAT | CPD: 3 HOURS

12.12.22 **DEVELOPING CREATIVITY AS A PRACTICE ASSESSOR / SUPERVISOR / PRACTICE EDUCATOR**  
MEMBERS £29 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £59 + VAT | CPD: 3 HOURS

23.01.23 **PRINCIPLES FOR ASSESSING AND QUALITY ASSURING PROVISIONS AND PRACTICE**  
MEMBERS £29 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £59 + VAT | CPD: 3 HOURS

20.02.23 **PRINCIPLES OF LEGAL LITERACY FOR PE'S, NQSW ASSESSORS, PEPS ASSESSORS/MENTORS AND COORDINATORS**  
MEMBERS £29 + VAT | NON MEMBERS £59 + VAT | CPD: 3 HOURS

Full detail of all BASW CPD events available at: [www.basw.co.uk/events](http://www.basw.co.uk/events)