

Significant progress



As a member of the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) we are developing every year in strength and numbers, and I look forward to seeing further growth as our campaigns and union activities continue to

increase. The GFTU have launched their free training courses which all SWU members can access. There are more to come but a flavour of what is on offer can be found on page 11.

I am presently working on a new year 3-year development plan with SWU staff and our National Executive. Do let me know directly what you as a member would like from SWU as your voice is important in this planning and future direction. We will be engaging further on this and directly with our SWU Union Contacts and Executive members.

Already our campaign fund has created so many terrific opportunities for direct campaigning and raising awareness of important issues. Similarly, the work on media representation of social work has been progressing significantly as you will see from the updates on this. If you do get a chance it is also worth watching the recent 'Talk to SWU' session (page 5) which once more highlights the high knowledge base which we have within the A&R Team. The additional session with Neil

Thompson is also a great addition to the 'Talk to SWU' series.

In these challenging times our members need the best protection possible. I believe that together, BASW and SWU provide the best protection and advice for social workers, from social workers.

For me, a Professional Association is an organisation established to unite and inform people working in the same profession. There are many advantages to joining an association as we all know as BASW members. It can also offer many further member opportunities linked to advice and representation, but it has no legal right to provide employment representation which was the very reason why SWU was formed in 2011 as some employers were choosing not to recognise BASW and refusing to allow A&R Officers to represent BASW members. Thus, your present SWU membership is important as only trade unions have the statutory right to represent their members. Belonging to a trade union is also a unique way to strengthen your social work identity and activism.

As a paid up SWU member you have guaranteed access to all the legal employment conditions held under The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and importantly, the legal right for accompaniment. It has additional benefits and a real uniqueness over other unions such as: It is the only UK trade union exclusively for and run by a team with significant knowledge of social work. It doesn't depend on employers to provide union representation and staff seconded time, so we are completely independent.

John McGowan
General Secretary

j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk

Stress Awareness Month 2023



Talk to SWU Social Workers Union
workplace issues webinar

**Interview with
Dr Neil Thompson**
Social Worker • Writer
Educator • Wellbeing Expert
SWU Ambassador
BASW Cymru Ambassador



Let's Talk About Stress in Social Work

Talk to SWU interview with Dr Neil Thompson for Stress Awareness Month 2023

[Stress Awareness Month](#) has been held every April since 1992 to raise awareness of our modern-day stress epidemic. It is an opportunity to have open conversations on the impact of stress and a time dedicated to removing the guilt, shame, and stigma around mental health; to talk about stress and its effects; and to open up about our mental and emotional state with friends, families, colleagues, and professionals.

Social workers will deal with about 10 stressful work situations a day, with an average of 50 interactions a week. This chronic work-induced stress can have a significant negative impact on every aspect of our lives including our physical health, mental health, and relationships. Social workers have told us in the [joint research on working conditions and wellbeing from SWU, BASW, and Bath Spa University](#) that their main sources of stress are related to caseloads, resources, workload, respect, and payment. These stressors, combined with poor working conditions, are causing problems for our members.

Social Workers Union (SWU) General Secretary **John McGowan** has interviewed **Dr Neil Thompson** for Stress Awareness Month in a new [Talk to SWU](#) video. Dr Neil Thompson is a social worker, writer, educator, wellbeing expert, [SWU Ambassador](#), BASW Cymru Ambassador, and is currently a visiting professor at Open University. In this interview, John and Neil discuss the impact of stress and burnout on social workers and examine some of the common myths about stress.

During the interview Neil said:

"I want to emphasise that a lack of support in the workplace also contributes to stress. There is an expectation that, in any employment situation, employers provide some degree of support for their employees. Under the health and safety legislation, for example, it's essential that employers make sure that employees are not being harmed in some way."

“When the legislation was developed, what they had in mind was avoiding things like physical accidents - making sure there are signs warning you if there’s a wet floor, making sure that electrical items are properly earthed, and so on and so forth. But what’s developed over the years through case law precedent is an acceptance that stress can act as a health and safety issue as well.”

You can watch the video on the SWU YouTube Channel here: <https://youtu.be/owHLQM1Omq8>

You may also be interested in the SWU leaflet “[Ten ways to thrive in social work](#)” (PDF) which distils top tips from John and Neil’s book *How to Survive in Social Work* mentioned in the interview.



SWU Social Workers Union

Campaign Fund

Regulator’s Readers’ Panel discusses coverage of social workers

SWU has launched a new rapid reporting mechanism for social workers concerned about media coverage, following a discussion of the topic by the IPSO Readers’ Panel.

The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) Readers’ Panel provides added perspective to IPSO on how reporting and press regulation impacts on the general public. Members reviewed a series of articles in a variety of national and regional publications which focussed on social workers.

While it noted that several articles supported the profession and only a minority were negative, the Panel also examined issues with the reporting of it, such as:

- Press releases which do not delve deeply into the issues being raised or ask harder-hitting questions. These are common in local papers which have fewer resources to investigate more complex issues.
- Potentially misleading headlines which are designed to shock readers (such as “Parents lose children over TV”).
- A lack of signposting to organisations like the NSPCC in articles about child abuse.

The panel also noted that experts can always be found to provide quotes to back up whatever point being made by the journalist to give credibility to reports.

The Panel’s discussion comes after [the Social Workers Union \(SWU\) met with IPSO](#), the regulator of most press and associated digital media in the UK.

John McGowan, General Secretary of SWU commented:

“The IPSO Readers’ Panel has found significant concerns at how social work and issues related to the profession are reported in the media.

“If any social workers spot media coverage which misrepresents the profession or reveals personal details of social workers, which may be in breach of the Guidelines we have published they can now report them directly to the Union and we will take action.”

Social workers can submit links or images of media reports for investigation to: campaigns@swu-union.org.uk

An online [information session for social workers on the IPSO complaints process](#) has also been arranged for June 8th from 2:30-3:30pm.

The Social Workers Union will continue to work with IPSO, [IMPRESS](#), the [National Union of Journalists](#), and other bodies to address issues in the coverage of social workers in the media.

SWU Assignment: World Social Work Day 2023 Essay Competition now open for entries

Social work students and apprentices: submit your best argument for this year's question for the chance to win one of four grants of £500.

The Social Workers Union (SWU) has announced the theme for our annual essay competition for World Social Work Day and we are excited to see what social work students and apprentices have to say!



The SWU Assignment question for this year is:

“How can social workers best support the diverse communities across the UK who are making change through joint social action?”

The SWU Assignment competition is open to undergraduate and postgraduate social work students and social work apprentices across the UK. **The competition opened for entries on World Social Work Day (March 21st).**

All completed assignments will be judged by a Panel. Up to four of the most compelling arguments within the word limit of 750-1000 words will win a grant of £500 each.

[Click here to see the flyer with further competition details.](#)

You can also visit the [SWU Assignment webpage](#) to see winning essays from previous years.

John McGowan, General Secretary of SWU, said, “Last year’s World Social Work Day Assignment Competition was a great success and I am happy that this will be continuing this year. The quality of entrants last year was excellent and hopefully interest will remain high once more. Please share with as many Social Work Students and Apprentices as possible.”

Please be sure to forward your completed assignment before the closing date with a covering letter giving your name, address, university, year of study and academic tutor (if appropriate) to: joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk

The assignment should be typed, have your full name, the assignment question as the title, and must follow an academic process; such as word count and Harvard Referencing System.

The closing date for the competition is Friday 23rd June 2023 at 5pm.



Watch the latest Talk to SWU session from World Social Work Month 2023

Talk to SWU Social Workers Union
workplace issues webinar

SWU hosted our most recent Talk to SWU webinar during World Social Work Month 2023 and we are pleased to share the recording of this session. This free webinar series is a chance for social work professionals, students, and apprentices to talk directly with the Social Workers Union about any workplace issues they have been experiencing.

In this session a panel of Trade Union Advice and Representation Officers along with a SWU Legal Advisor answered anonymous questions from the UK social work community. The topics that we discussed included:

- Can I, as a local authority social worker, support the strike of a union that I am not a member of?
- Do agency social workers have fewer employment rights?
- Does discrimination law extend to trans people?
- Can my employer simply reject my request to work part-time, or do I have a right to insist on a change of hours?
- My employer has changed a lot of my terms and conditions without consulting me - is this constructive dismissal if I left employment due to this? / How can I challenge workplace restructuring plans?
- What are my rights to request flexible working?
- How long after restructuring do you have to ask for a redeployment if your original job focus has changed?
- I've been off work sick with work-related stress - am I protected by disability discrimination law? / Can I pursue a personal injury claim against my employer?
- I've been sick during my holidays - can I take the time as sick leave to preserve my holidays? / Can I carry over holidays to the next holiday year if I've been too ill to take them? / Do I have to disclose everything to my manager when requesting occupational health?
- Can I be turned down for a position because, at age 45, I am not perceived as having a "vibrant, dynamic, and youthful approach to work"?
- I have dyslexia and have been criticised by my manager for slow report production - am I entitled to extra support?
- I've been bullied in my workplace, but I did not go through the work procedures due to a bereavement - is there a time limit to make a complaint?

This Talk to SWU: workplace issues webinar was recorded on 30th March 2023.



30th March 2023
18:00 – 19:00
Opportunity for questions to
Legal and Advice &
Representation

@SWU_UK
*The only specialist union for
Social Workers in the UK*

You can watch the recording on the SWU YouTube Channel at:

<https://youtu.be/YZ2ODb-ako8>

Everyone in the UK social work community is invited to attend and engage with this online advice and representation webinar series hosted by SWU, regardless of membership status. You can watch all [previous Talk to SWU sessions](#) on the SWU website.

Follow SWU on social media for updates to find out when the next Talk to SWU webinar will be announced. You can find us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

Today's class is about "class"

As Dennis Skinner (former Labour MP) said on 16th April 2013 - *"It's all about class - we must never forget that."* He was right. When we refer to intersectionality "class" deserves to be acknowledged and sit alongside "race" and "gender" as well as the many other personal characteristics that "intersect" with one another. In doing so, we ask social workers to be mindful of the layers of societal oppression when working with families and individuals.

And yet as so many of the above factors have been used to oppress or in some sense deny people of a just participation in society, class attacks were particularly evident when referring to an "underclass" in the 1980s when the "new right" approach positioned a section of society in what was viewed as a dependency culture on social security and intergenerational "poor" parenting. The language within some sections of the media on this suggested "underclass" is still very much with us today with a message that serves nothing other than to segregate and disempower people labelled "underserving".

But what does class mean? - well it is generally accepted that class refers to a group of people within society that inhabit the same socioeconomic status. However, it is much more than this, it is a sense of belonging and identity for some, an aspiration for others, but for many it is a word perhaps not as familiar as it once was. What is universal though is the impact of a class system upon society. Perhaps there is no escaping this but if we consider the class system as oppression then we are therefore asking social workers to be mindful of this in their practice.

So how does this relate to social work degree education? Well, for learners on our apprenticeship and master's degree programmes, it is important to explore, consider and reflect upon class in terms of the system in which it resides and how poverty and austerity have impacted upon and continue to impact disproportionality upon the working class. Some might describe this as class warfare. Ecological Systems Theory and Social Capital Theory can offer a class perspective and a theoretical understanding for our learners and future social workers but as the Code of Ethics (BASW, 2021) states:-
"Social workers have a responsibility to challenge oppression on any basis, including (but not limited to) age, capacity, civil status, class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, gender identity, language, nationality (or lack of), political beliefs, poverty, race, relationship status, religion, sex, sexual orientation or spiritual beliefs".

In the UK where the gap between the wealthiest and poorest is at its largest for more than a decade, class is everything and is everywhere. While "class" has been spoken with a whisper in recent years, Social Workers, guided by an intersectional compass and the call to make a difference, can ensure it is heard with the same volume as the beast of Bolsover, Dennis Skinner.

Dave Callow
SWU Chair and
Senior Lecturer in
Social Work at
University of Lincoln



Employment law changes in April 2023

It's that time of the year when employment law changes traditionally take effect, and this year there have been significant increases in several rates and limits. Here is our summary of the most important changes taking effect next month.

Increases to the UK National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage

The government will implement the Low Pay Commission's (LPC) recommendations in full and the National Living Wage (NLW) will increase by 9.7% in April 2023 to £10.42. This is consistent with the government's target of two-thirds of median earnings by 2024.

The LPC has estimated that an increase of 6.3% will be required in 2024 (when average wage growth is expected to have slowed).

The new rates that will come into force on 1st April 2023 are as follows:

- National Living Wage (Age 23 +) - £10.42
- Age 21 - 22 - £10.18
- Age 18 - 20 - £7.49
- Age 16 - 17 - £5.28

The accommodation offset will also rise to £9.10 per day.

This significant increase may mean that businesses that have previously paid little attention to NLW compliance on the assumption that their staff are paid comfortably above NLW levels will now find that more employees are on the cusp of statutory minimums. In practice, this means that more employers may need to pay closer attention to the details of the legal framework. For example, you may want to review contracts and arrangements for lower paid staff to identify areas of risk and areas where your existing practices might not take sufficient account of the NLW framework.

Increases to other employment limits and statutory payments

The limits in relation to unfair dismissal/redundancy pay are increasing as follows:

- England and Wales unfair dismissal/redundancy pay: From 6th April 2023, the limit on a statutory week's pay will increase to £643 (up from £571). This means that the maximum statutory redundancy payment and unfair dismissal basic award will be £19,290. The cap on the compensatory award for unfair dismissal will increase from £93,878 to £105,707.
- Northern Ireland unfair dismissal/redundancy pay: From 6th April 2023, the limit on a statutory week's pay will be £669 (up from £594). This means that the maximum statutory redundancy payment and unfair dismissal basic award will rise to £20,070. Meanwhile the cap on the compensatory award for unfair dismissal will increase from £94,063 to £105,915.

The capped weekly pay amount is used in calculating statutory redundancy payments, so the increase is of particular relevance to businesses who are in the process of restructuring their workforce as a result of the challenging economic climate that the UK is currently experiencing. When determining which cap applies in relation to a dismissal, the relevant date is typically, but not always, the date upon which employment effectively ceased. If the employee has accepted an offer of alternative employment and leaves during the trial period, you should look at when the original contract ended.

From early April, other limits and statutory payments will increase as follows:

- Family related benefits: The prescribed or flat rate of statutory maternity, adoption, paternity and shared parental pay will rise from £156.66 to £172.48 per week.
- Statutory sick pay (SSP): SSP will increase from £99.35 to £109.40 per week.

Conclusion

This year we have seen significant increases in several rates and limits, with the increase in the NLW being particularly noteworthy. This reflects the high rate of inflation that we have experienced recently and, assuming that this starts to slow, we may well see increases return to lower levels next year.



Reshuffle prompts social work students in Scotland to write to new ministers

The Scottish Government reshuffle has seen previous education ministers move on as they were considering a petition to introduce social work student bursaries.

Prior to the election of Humza Yousaf as the new First Minister, a [powerful cross-party committee of MSPs](#) agreed to take action to support the need for social work university students to be provided with bursaries during the final years of their courses in Scotland.

The students also now have the backing of Social Work Scotland, alongside the existing support from the Social Workers Union (SWU) and the Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW).

Lead petitioners David Grimm and Lucy Challoner, have now written to new Education Secretary Jenny Gilruth MSP and Higher Education Minister Graeme Dey MSP.

The letter sets out the principle of equality with nursing and paramedic students that the campaigners have called for and urges the new ministers to meet with them to discuss a way to implement bursaries for social work students.

The previous minister, Jamie Hepburn MSP, had [told the Press Association that](#):

“The Scottish Government understands the many impacts that the current cost-of-living crisis is having on students and we have been in dialogue with universities on this issue... we appreciate that this must be kept under review and are working closely with relevant universities and the wider Social Work Education Partnership (SWEP) to explore options for funding practice learning.”

SWU Union Contacts branch out

I love seeing people progress in areas in which they are passionate, and it's very rewarding for me to see this more and more amongst our growing team of SWU Union Contacts. Whilst the primary focus of the role is and always will be about promoting SWU, sharing information, and encouraging colleagues to join; it is wonderful to see Union Contacts branching out into other areas of interest and knowledge within our trade union.

It may not be widely known, but many of SWU's **Executive Committee** started out as Union Contacts within their workplaces or universities. Sitting on the Executive Board enables members to have a real say in the direction and progress of our trade union and provides opportunities to speak on behalf of social work and trade unionism via contributing to decision-making, voting on important issues, attending conferences and writing articles for our Blogs and Newsletters. SWU frequently has opportunities for all members to be part of our Executive Board so please keep an eye out for advertisements within our Newsletters and Website.

Both SWU's current and previous **Chair** started their SWU journeys as Union Contacts, with a passion for rights and equality which are of course fundamental to trade unionism as well as social work. The Union Contact role led both to the Executive Committee which in turn led to their respective roles as Chair.

Several of our SWU Union Contacts have come to the role with a desire to assist colleagues in lower-level representation, and this has led to them training to become **Phase 2 Union Contacts** which enables them to support colleagues in meetings with employers and HR. Other Union Contacts with a knowledge and passion for providing employment advice and representation have gone on to find sessional work with SWU's **A&R Team**.

Perhaps the most rewarding trade union related news I've received in recent weeks was discovering that someone who

started out as a SWU Union Contact has achieved the role of **Assistant General Secretary of the Social Workers Union** which is a marvellous example of a dedicated, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable Union Contact progressing in their area of interest and passion.



It's a well-known phrase that "Unions are as strong as their members", and it's true that encouraging membership and member-led activism is the best way to grow and develop. We'd love to welcome more diverse groups and members to our teams and encourage input and feedback, and I'm always happy to provide advice and information to anyone interested in the Union Contact and/or Phase 2 Union Contact roles.

Not yet a SWU Union Contact?

If you've been reading this and thinking that the role of SWU Union Contact is right up your street, please contact me for further details. The Union Contact role can include as much or as little as you are able to undertake. Simply sharing information with colleagues is invaluable, but if you're inspired by the stories above and you'd like to be involved in campaigning, research, activism, or additional roles, the option is there, and the choice is yours. We look forward to hearing from you!

For more details about the **Union Contact** role and the online induction process (which can be completed in your own time) please drop me an email.

If you are already a SWU Union Contact and would like to train for the **Phase 2** role, please get in touch for further details. **Online training for Phase 2 is scheduled for July 2023.**

In solidarity.

Carol Reid
National Organiser &
Union Contact Manager
carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk



Whatever legal help you need, we're there for you.

We are friendly, professional and affordable. And we work across the Trade Union movement.

In addition to our **free personal injury service**, SWU members receive **exclusive benefits** including:

- ▶ **10%** discount for wills and probate services
- ▶ **10%** discount for residential conveyancing and commercial property services
- ▶ **10%** discount for family and matrimonial law services
- ▶ **10%** discount for criminal/motoring offences and court litigation services

Visit morrishsolicitors.com/socialworkersunion to find out more
or call **033 3344 9600**

GFTU's Education Programme 2023

Keep an eye on our [website](#) for more courses coming soon...



Bite Size Sessions

For new union activists or union members thinking about getting more involved - these modules will form the GFTU's "Passport to Activism". The programme will run over 4 sessions on consecutive days with recordings available after each session.

1. What is a good rep?

1st Run: 22nd May, 12:30pm

2nd Run: 10th July

3rd Run: 16th October

3. The Union Difference

1st Run: 24th May, 12:30pm

2nd Run: 12th July

3rd Run: 18th October

2. Building Solidarity

1st Run: 23rd May, 12:30pm

2nd Run: 11th July

3rd Run: 17th October

4. Getting More Involved - Where Next?

1st Run: 25th May, 12:30pm

2nd Run: 13th July

3rd Run: 19th October

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Standing up for a better workplace

Venue: GFTU Quorn Grange

Residential Course: May 31st - June 1st 2023

Online Follow-on Sessions: 6th, 13th, 20th - 6pm

The course is residential for two days followed by three online 90 minute sessions.

What do you think when you see employers sacking workers so they can reduce pay and conditions?

How do you feel when employers ride roughshod over workers' rights and mistreat their workforce?

Do you want to make a stand for a better world of work?

Any workplace rep who wants to explore more about their role and how they can answer these questions and get greater support in being effective in the workplace should attend this course.

It is suitable for new and more experienced reps who want to see the bigger picture about the challenges faced by workers in the UK and how unions, through their workplace reps, can become stronger.

We will be looking at the importance of the role of the rep in the workplace in defending workers' contracts of employment and ensuring that rights at work are enforced. We will explore where our rights at work come from and the battles fought to secure them and the skills necessary to be organised in supporting members and agreements.

Each rep attending the course will be encouraged to build their own action plan to build back worker power in their workplace and will be supported after the residential course to do so.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Please note: The deadline for applications is Wednesday 17th May.

Introduction to Health and Safety

The course is residential for two days with online 90 minute sessions the following week and 6 weeks later.

If you are a new health and safety representative or thinking about becoming one, then this course is for you.

You'll finish the course understanding your rights as a health and safety representative and how you and other reps can use health and safety to build your union in your workplace.

Participants will be encouraged to build their own action plan and online follow sessions will focus on supporting delivery of these action plans.

Venue: GFTU Quorn Grange

Residential Course: 23rd - 24th May 2023

Online Follow-on Sessions: 30th May - 6pm & 11th July - 6pm

[REGISTER HERE](#) Please note: The deadline for applications is Tuesday 9th May.

Venue: GFTU Quorn Grange

Residential Course: 12th - 13th June 2023

Online Follow-on Sessions: 19th June - 6pm & 24th July - 6pm

[REGISTER HERE](#) Please note: The deadline for applications is Monday 29th May.

A Better Future - GFTU Summer School

Venue: GFTU Quorn Grange

Residential Course: 25th - 27th July 2023

Online Follow-on Sessions: 5th September - 6pm & 10th October - 6pm

The course is residential for three days with online 90 minute sessions later in the year for participants to share progress made on their action plans.

How does the Trade Union Movement move forward and what is the role of workers' leaders in doing so?

The last year has seen an increase in union members standing up for better conditions at work and to oppose austerity. Many of those unions who have organised action have seen an increase in worker power and also in union membership.

The old challenges remain however. Whilst some unions continue to grow, others are in decline. And real wages are falling as pay deals fail to match inflation.

We have good grounds for optimism as we start to win what have been significant battles. And we should celebrate that we have been able to mobilise and organise workers.

This course will look at where we go next and is aimed at union leaders who may be experienced, more senior workplace activists or may be full time officers. We will be developing our understanding of the challenges that face us and how we address them.

[REGISTER HERE](#) Please note: The deadline for applications is Tuesday 11th July.

Understanding Trade Unions

Venue: GFTU Quorn Grange

Residential Course: 21st June 2023 (11am-3pm)

Online Follow-on Sessions: 28th June - 1pm

This short course is aimed at union employees who may not have a background in trade unions who want to understand more about trade unions and how they function.

We will look at what makes trade unions different as an employer, what we aim to achieve with and behalf of members and how we go about doing so. It will cover what we mean by the organising approach, the challenges that face us and how we can overcome them.

The online follow-on session will help answer questions and support participants in delivering their action plans.

[REGISTER HERE](#) Please note: The deadline for applications is Wednesday 7th June.

Train the Trainer

Venue: GFTU Quorn Grange

Residential Course: 2nd - 3rd August 2023

Online Follow-on Sessions: 12th September - 6pm

This course is aimed at any activist or officer who delivers training for union activists. The aims of this introductory course are to equip participants to be able to run training sessions and to explore ways in which they can make sessions lively and interactive.

The broad outline of the course is:

- how adults learn and learning styles
- making group work
- variety of learning methods
- using a scheme of work
- assessment and evaluation
- dealing with difficult situations

At least one follow on session will be held online to support participants in planning and delivering their own session.

[REGISTER HERE](#) Please note: The deadline for applications is Wednesday 19th July.

We have some more courses to follow later in 2023.

This will include; further bitesize sessions, industrial action, union representative stage 1 and 2 + safety representative stage 1 and 2, tackling sexual harassment, lessons in organising, roots of racism, digital organising and engagement, understanding the political economy, working class history and bigger picture online seminars and a T.U.L.I.P programme.

International Romani Day 2023: A time for celebration, a call for solidarity

Senior Lecturer in Social Work Allison Hulmes shares Romani history, past and contemporary struggles, and a call for allyship.



International Romani Day, which takes place each year on 8th April, is a day for celebrating the Romani people, our history, culture and ethnic identity. It's also an opportunity to shine a light on the issues which affect Romani people in the UK and internationally, not least the continued racism, stereotyping and inequality gaps in health, education and housing.



We have officially celebrated International Romani Day since 1990 when it was decided during the 4th meeting of the World Romani Congress in Poland. The roots of this important day can be traced however to a meeting of international Romani representatives in London in 1971, a meeting which is now accepted as the first ever World Romani Congress. [BBC World Service - Witness History, The first World Romani Congress](#)

During meetings of the World Romani Congress, delegates discuss key issues for Romani people. The primary issues remain linked to human rights and advancement our in civil society, preservation of Romani culture and dialects, our identity as a minority of Indian origin and ensuring that the Roma and Sinti Holocaust is never forgotten.



INTERNATIONAL ROMANI DAY TIMELINE

1,500 Years Ago

The Exodus

The Roma start leave northern India

1100s

Arriving Europe

Roma groups begin to arrive in medieval Europe

1971

World Romani Congress

Twenty-three representatives from nine different nations attend the first World Romani Congress in the United Kingdom

1990

An Official Declaration

Delegates at the fourth World Romani Congress in Poland officially declare **8th April** as the **International Day of the Romani People**

It is important to know that British Gypsies are a legally protected ethnicity for the purposes of the [Equality Act 2010](#) and are therefore protected from discrimination based on our ethnicity.

*“The Equality Act 2010 says you must not be discriminated against because of your race. In the Equality Act, race can mean your colour, or your nationality (including your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins. **Race also covers ethnic and racial groups. This means a group of people who all share the same protected characteristic of ethnicity or race.** A racial group can be made up of two or more distinct racial groups, for example black Britons, British Asians, British Sikhs, British Jews, **Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers.**”*

In the UK, Romani people are more familiarly known as Romany Gypsies (although our European Roma Brothers and Sisters have been settling in the UK since the early 1980's) and despite an increasingly hostile environment since the implementation of [Part 4 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) there have been some moments of light in the advancement of human rights for British Gypsies. In September 2022 the Court of Appeal decided that the [2015 planning definition of Gypsies and Travellers in England](#), was discriminatory. [Planning Definition of 'Traveller' Ruled Unlawful and Discriminatory - The Community Law Partnership.](#)

“The 2015 planning definition states that Gypsies and Travellers who have permanently stopped travelling for work due to a disability, long-term health condition or

age will not get planning permission to stop on their own land and will not have their accommodation needs assessed and met through this policy.”

This judgement is a victory for the tenacity of Lisa Smith who initiated the case, the organisations and legal teams who supported the action and significantly, for human rights in the UK at a time when state sanctioned oppression under the present Government in the UK, seems determined to take a steam roller to our fundamental rights and freedoms.

As an ethnic Romani Gypsy and a Social Worker I ask you to honour our important day by learning more about us and defending our human rights by standing alongside us in allyship and solidarity.



Allison Hulmes is a Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Swansea University and a co-founding member of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Social Work Association.



SWU Social Workers Union

Campaign Fund

SWU and BASW call for bursary reform to be included in Labour manifesto

Labour party front bench MPs have been urged to make [reform of social work student bursaries in England](#) a priority for their General Election manifesto.

Students on social work courses often complete front-line work as part of their courses, helping the most vulnerable in society. This means many social work students face unique levels of financial hardship as they are unable to work part-time while completing their studies.

Despite this, student bursaries for social workers in England are currently distributed unequally and only around one in six students benefit from them as they are limited in number.¹ Where bursaries are available, the funding for them has been frozen for over eight years resulting in a real-terms cut in support for many students.²

In addition, bursaries available have been capped at the same numbers (1,500 postgraduate and 2,500 undergraduate) since 2013.³

In a joint letter to Shadow Health Secretary **Wes Streeting MP**, Shadow Education Secretary **Bridget Phillipson MP**, and National Policy Forum Chair **Anneliese Dodds MP**, BASW and SWU argue that if the current

Government is not prepared to act on the issues students have raised, Labour must.

In [response to questions](#) from **Emma Lewell-Buck MP**, Health Minister **Helen Whately MP** said the Government has “no plans” to assess the adequacy of student bursaries in the coming year.

Social work students who want to speak out about their experiences of bursaries in England can email campaigns@swu-union.org.uk to get involved in the campaign.

Sources

1. Undergraduate and postgraduate quota from [GovUK bursary guide, table 3 & 4](#) (accessed 6 April 2023)
2. NHSBA Annual Reports (compare £59.3m in [2014, table 21 p39](#) and years following that with £56.3m in [2021, p22](#))
3. [Community Care 15/03/23](#) (accessed 6 April 2023)

Social Media

If you have not done so then please follow us on Social Media - we post and tweet regular updates about the work and developments of the Social Workers Union.

Monthly Newsletter

Monthly newsletters are emailed to all SWU members. If you are not receiving this then please check what email address we have. The newsletters are also published on the web site.

SWU can be found on the following:

Internet: <https://swu-union.org.uk>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/SWU_UK

Facebook: www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@socialworkersunion>

Instagram: www.instagram.com/socialworkersunion

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/social-workers-union>



Austerity Action Group

service users in the fight for social justice. Commiserating that we are still having to do it!

In the build up to the 2017 Boot Out Austerity 100 mile march the call went out, not only for those who could put boots on the ground and walk but also for poems and songs that sought to illustrate the many ways that austerity had affected the most vulnerable members of society's lives.

Doorway was one of those poems. It was given to me by West Midlands based poet Iris Rhodes. Iris wrote it after seeing a rough sleeper huddled in a Wolverhampton doorway. Fittingly and poignantly I read it out to the assembled crowd in the town's St Peter's Square as we prepared to set off on day two of our march.

Iris and I go back to the 1970s sharing a house in Muswell Hill long before I had qualified and when she was teaching and later advising on drama. On retirement Iris returned to her roots, becoming well known in the area in her own right and as one of the three 'Nailmakers Daughters'. Sadly Iris's health declined and she died four years ago on the very same day that I first read it out. I performed it again last week at the **BASW Black Country** event **Poverty A Black Country Perspective** on the 6th anniversary of the march. The evening skillfully chaired by Steve Moore was an opportunity to once again work with **The Blakenhall Writers**, who offered up a wide range of images of the effects of poverty with Pete Unwin and myself bookending the evening with our Austerity songs. Key note speeches from Pete and Ben Twomey from NYAS National Youth Advisory Service - *It can't be right that so many children have to enter care in order to be (briefly) lifted out of poverty.*

Many of the members of the group had worked with Iris and my reading out her poem prompted lots of memories. Amazingly the images that they had brought mirrored and enhanced Iris's words.

Boot Out Austerity

19th - 25th April 2017 - 2023

This week marks the 6th anniversary of the walk. Should we be Celebrating, or Commiserating. Celebrating that social workers stood and still stand shoulder to shoulder with

Doorway

Rasp of the sweeper's brush
Another day
My blanket smells of frost
and smoke.

Quick march of passers-by
The steps directed -
Purposeful

My eyes knee level
With the sag of jeans
The crease of trousers.

I wipe the night away
Sit up, hold out my hand -
Wound up - a clockwork toy.

I am not bothered
By the turn of heads
The sideways swerve -

Disgust or pity
I am past all that -
Most of the time, that is.

At least the sweeper speaks
"Shift your feet, lad"
He'll say

Obedient I move,
Find tears
Not at brusque command

But that he speaks at all
As though I still am real
Here - in the doorway

(written about a 'rough sleeper'
in Wolverhampton)
Iris Rhodes, 2016

You can find an animated
video of Doorway on
YouTube <https://youtu.be/8JtM5MnN5qE>

In *Doorway* the passers-by sidestepping the seated man - making it very a clear that they were avoiding him, that continues with the added observation of lack of eye contact and turned up noses! Depersonalising them and sanitising our conscience - (this is explored more in the BBC *Thinking Allowed* link below).



BASW Black Country - *Poverty A Black Country Perspective* - 18th April 2023

Whatever

You
Call
It

AUSTERITY

is pernicious
its tentacles
weaving
into every walk of life
and
it is austerity measures
that are knocking
at
all of our doors



We look forward to more opportunities to collaborate with the Blakenhall Writers. Do check out the links to the AUSTERITY PAPERS: [The Austerity Papers \(Short\).mp4 - Google Drive](#)

Poverty

Do you know the difference between Absolute Poverty & Relative Poverty?

Check out *Thinking Allowed* a BBC Radio 4 podcast <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0011294>

Angi Naylor
SWU Vice Chair and
Austerity Action Group Chair



SWU Social Workers Union
Campaign Fund

Event announced to help social workers understand media complaints process

SWU and BASW members are invited to book their place at this free online event

An event organised by the Independent Press Standards Organisation

(IPSO), the Social Workers Union and British Association of Social Work will help the profession understand press regulation and editorial standards.

Taking place on 8th June 2023, the joint event will help social workers navigate the complaints process if they are the victims of unfair reporting by journalists and how media guidelines work to protect the public.

Social workers can sign up to the event here: <https://www.basw.co.uk/events/ipso-press-regulation-editorial-standards-and-protecting-public>

Led by Jane Debois (IPSO Head of Standards and Regulation) and Dr Beth Kitson (Engagement Officer) the session will introduce IPSO and the Editors' Code of Practice and explain the rules the press must follow. It will also include practical advice on speaking (and not speaking) to the press and how IPSO can help social workers.

The event is being organised as part of the Social Workers Union Campaign Fund's work on [media guidelines which was launched in 2022](#) in response to social workers' concerns about media coverage.

The Social Workers Union has recently launched a new rapid reporting mechanism for social workers concerned about media coverage. Social workers can submit links or images of media reports which they believe breach the guidelines for investigation to campaigns@swu-union.org.uk.

John McGowan, General Secretary of SWU, commented:

"We're delighted that IPSO continues to take engagement with us on this issue so seriously. A recent [IPSO Readers' Panel discussion](#) [found](#) significant concerns at how social work and issues related to the profession are reported in the media.

"While we will take action if we find media coverage in [breach of the Guidelines we have published](#), this session will help social workers protect themselves and their families with formal help and support."

The Social Workers Union will continue to work with IPSO, [IMPRESS](#), the [National Union of Journalists](#) and other bodies to address issues in the coverage of social workers in the media.

FORMAL NOTICE

SWU 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FRIDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2023

The 2023 Annual General Meeting of the Social Workers Union will be held online and joining instructions can be found at www.swu-union.org.uk

As per SWU rules, the SWU Executive shall have power to make and provide a provision for an AGM meetings to be held using electronic means, and to provide for electronic communication for members, including facilitating provision for members to vote and speak by appropriate electronic means.

THE TIMETABLE IS AS FOLLOWS:	
3-8-2023	Deadline for receipt of motions
7-9-2023	Notice of any proposed amendment to rules given in writing to members
14-9-2023	Deadline for amendments to motions

Motions must be signed by 10 members and submitted to the Executive Committee by the above date.

Amendments to motions must also be signed by 10 members.

Please visit www.swu-union.org.uk to register your attendance. Entry to this event is FREE for SWU Members.

We are always willing to assist union members with the drafting of motions. Please send an email to joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk for such assistance. Motions should be submitted by email to joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk

Membership numbers must be stated and will be checked.

The Social Workers Union, Wellesley House,
37 Waterloo Road, Birmingham B2 5PP
www.swu-union.org.uk

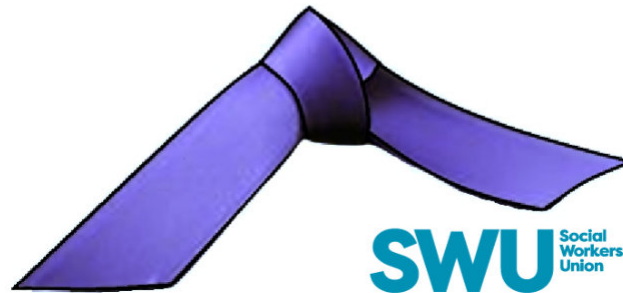
SWU

Social Workers Union

International Workers' Memorial Day 2023

International Workers' Memorial Day

April 28



Organising for health and safety - a crucial part of union action

Workers and unions around the world mark International Workers' Memorial Day each year on April 28th to mourn the dead and fight for the living. This is an important date for the trade union movement as we continue fighting for improved working conditions and workers' wellbeing.

The theme in 2023 is "Organising for health and safety". We said it last year in our [interview with former GFTU General Secretary Doug Nicholls](#) and we'll say it again - the Social Workers Union (SWU) is a proud member of the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) which has always specialised in health and safety. Our union supports, advises, and represents social workers who struggle with a range of health and safety issues from chronic work-induced stress to encountering aggression and even violence.

SWU General Secretary John McGowan said, "*Social work is a key service provided to society and we can't dismiss that. An investment in social work is past due in order to meet the ongoing challenges caused and exacerbated by both the pandemic and over a decade of austerity. Social workers deserve a safe and healthy workplace and SWU will continue to campaign for this on behalf of our members, and to fight for better resources for people who use social services.*"

Balanced media reporting of social work

SWU has produced [guidelines for media reporting of social workers](#) in consultation with the Independent Monitor for the Press (IMPRESS) and with the support of other organisations including the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and the chief social workers of England.

Unbalanced media reporting on the social work profession can put social workers and the people they work with at risk. It can also undermine trust in the profession and deter people from seeking support when they need it.

In one case, the names of social workers were revealed by the media and one social worker required police protection after being tracked down by local Facebook groups that found out where he lived and made repeated death threats to him and his pregnant wife. In another case, a social worker was harassed whenever she came into work by a group with a megaphone and was followed home after leaving the office. Both individuals have now left the social work sector - a sector which cannot afford to lose workers as it is experiencing a staffing crisis with the highest number of vacancies in 5 years.

Building on the guidelines for media reporting, this month SWU has launched a new [rapid reporting mechanism for social workers](#) concerned about media coverage. If social workers spot media coverage which misrepresents the profession or reveals personal details of social workers, which may be in breach of the guidelines SWU has published, they can now report them directly to SWU and we will take action.

SWU will continue to work with the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), IMPRESS, the National Union of Journalists, and other bodies to address issues in the coverage of social workers in the media.

Improving social workers' wellbeing and working conditions

Pressure is to be expected in any workplace and can be a positive, motivating force. However, when pressure becomes excessive it transforms into a harmful force called stress. A [2022 survey conducted by SWU and LBC Radio](#) with almost 1000 respondents starkly revealed the high levels of stress that social workers are experiencing - 82% suffer from stress at work, 65% said that their mental health is suffering because of their job, and 24% admitted to finding themselves suffering an emotional response to their work (crying/feeling unwell) at least once a week.

Stress can have a significant impact negative on our physical and psychological health and, over the years, case law precedent has developed to accept that stress can be a health and safety issue. Dr Neil Thompson discusses employers' responsibilities, the impact of burnout, and common myths about stress in the new [Talk to SWU interview for Stress Awareness Month 2023](#).

Joint research by BASW, SWU, and Bath Spa University shows that social workers will deal with about 10 stressful work situations a day with an average of 50 interactions a week, and on average social workers put in 11 extra hours of work per week. The [Social Worker Wellbeing and Working Conditions Good Practice Toolkit](#) was produced from this research to help practitioners, employers, and leaders achieve better working conditions. It is free to download and includes a practical guide and a supported self-assessment and planning tool/approach.

SWU has also recorded a ["Stepping stones towards decent working conditions"](#) webinar to highlight the challenges social workers face in the workplace, explore what employers can do to support workers, and how we can take small steps to secure the changes we need to see.

It covers key topics such as part-time work, tackling racial discrimination, neurodivergence, tackling burnout, menopause support, and how being part of a trade union can make a huge difference to our working conditions.

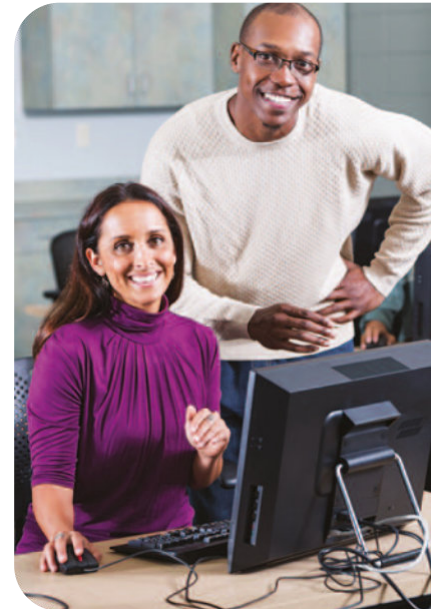
Only **£25** a year with your present BASW membership (**£10** a year for students)

Every year, the Social Workers Union skilled TU Officers help Social Workers with a range of different situations, from the small and easily resolved, to more significant and prolonged conduct issues. Disciplinary and grievance procedures, including representation at internal hearings - this is only guaranteed if you are a SWU member.

Remember - investigations into professional social work practice and allegations of misconduct - where this is done by your employer, representation is only guaranteed* if you are a member of SWU.

SWU sits on the National Executive of the General Federation of Trade Unions. Have a look at the access you get as a member of GFTU training and development. SWU is one of the fastest growing unions in the UK - be part of the progress.

Being part of a strong growing trade union is a vital and recognised way of successfully being part of the Trade Union movement. Help us campaign for better working conditions, pay and professional recognition. If you want to join SWU or learn more about becoming actively involved as a Union Contact get in touch: carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk or email SWU Admin: joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk



Belong to a Social Work union that:

- is lobbying MPs and Peers to improve working conditions for social workers.
- partners with organisations to support good working conditions and with opportunities to be active as a SWU Union Contact.
- campaigns to change legislation bills.
- collaborates with external unions and continue to be active through membership of General Federation of Trade Unions and ongoing union campaigns.
- funds the Austerity Action Group and opportunities to get involved.

As a SWU member you get:

- Full guaranteed employment representation*
- Free advice and support from A&R and Union Contacts
- Free financial health check from Lighthouse Group
- 10% off Morrish Solicitors
- General Federation of Trade Unions free training courses
- Discounted training from Avenue Professional Group (Dr Neil Thompson)
- Opportunity to be active as part of the trade union movement
- Monthly Newsletter

**Terms and conditions apply regarding new members and levels of representation*

Please check your membership to continue or opt in to being a SWU Member through BASW membership

Find SWU on the following:



<https://swu-union.org.uk>



<https://www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/social-workers-union>



<https://www.youtube.com/@socialworkersunion>



https://twitter.com/SWU_UK



<https://www.instagram.com/socialworkersunion>



swu-admin@swu-union.org.uk