

SWU is pleased to announce our new General Secretary: Dave Callow

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me as General Secretary of the Social Workers Union. We believe in solidarity and belonging - the values of social work and of your trade union SWU.

I would like to thank John McGowan for his dedication to SWU as General Secretary this past 10 years and his guidance in ensuring SWU has become a truly specialist union that understands and responds to the needs of Social Workers. I am grateful to our members and activists for their support



as well as the SWU team for organising and running this election.

To my family and friends for their constant encouragement I am very grateful.

Together we will continue to defend social work values, improve working conditions, and ensure your voice is heard, but within all this, I want you to feel you belong to the SWU.

Thank you all for believing in our shared future. The rest we do together.

You are never alone,
Dave

SWU General Secretary Election 2026 Statement

This statement provides an overview of our processes and addresses several of the questions raised. We would like to thank all members who contacted us directly, giving us the opportunity to respond to their queries regarding the election in a constructive and direct manner, rather than through social media. As always, we remain available and welcome any further questions from members following this statement.

Communication with Members

The union used a range of established channels to communicate with members about the election including newsletters, email updates, and the union's website. The election was also covered by several news outlets, including interviews with the candidates. SWU produced candidate guidance and shared information with members through both our website and several email communications.

Some complaints via social media to the union states that some members may have experienced issues receiving emails. While we acknowledge that occasional delivery issues can arise in large membership organisations, there is no evidence of a systemic failure. We have only been contacted by two members regarding non-receipt of emails during the election period; no further members have raised this as an issue. Our email delivery rates typically sit at around 98–99%, which is in line with expected industry standards. In practice, not all sent emails will reach the inbox; a proportion may be affected by soft bounces (for example, spam filtering), employer server or security restrictions, full mailboxes, or temporary server outages.

The SWU website has been consistently maintained and updated to ensure members have access to accurate, current information. The SWU General Secretary role was advertised in editions of the SWU Newsletter, Professional Social Work (PSW) magazine, and on the SWU website from 2nd December 2025 until the close of the nominations period on 2nd March 2026. The role advertisement provided a nomination form and supporting documents that clearly outlined the job description, person specification, and endorsement process.

It is a legal requirement for our membership database to be externally audited. The most recent audit took place on 24th February 2026, with the concluding statement: "We are therefore very happy to report that your membership data is, as it was last year, first class." This confirmation was also submitted to the Certification Office by the independent inspector.

As only eligible SWU members could vote in this election, it was decided that social media would not be used as a channel to communicate election information to ensure that communication about the election remained accurate, constructive, and accessible to members. Not all members use social media or follow union accounts on social media, so using social media as an official election communication channel would not have been an efficient use of union resources. Members and non-members have been discussing the election on social media, and it is their prerogative to do so.

Ballot Distribution

Regarding ballot distribution, we have been advised that only a very small number of members experienced delays, and only a small number of members contacted us directly. Clear guidance was provided to advise members on what to do if they have not received a ballot paper. Processes were in place to ensure replacement ballot papers could be issued where necessary 1st class. Postal delays, particularly during peak or holiday periods, are outside the union's direct control. Importantly, there were established mechanisms to ensure all members were able to participate in the vote.

It is unclear why the deadline of 30th April was considered unacceptable for anyone who had not received a ballot paper. On 13th April, email guidance was issued to all members explaining how, if needed, to request a duplicate ballot paper to be sent and returned via first-class post. We have been advised from the election agent CIVICA that the 29 days between despatch of the SWU voting packs and the deadline for receipt of votes is in line with the voting period for a trade union postal ballot.

The Election Endorsement Committee

The SWU Executive Committee currently consists of eleven elected SWU members. The endorsement process was established initially in 2016 by the then SWU Executive Committee and reviewed by the present Executive for this election. It was included within the documentation directly provided to candidates and made available on the SWU website during the nomination period.

The Endorsement Committee for this election was approved by the SWU Executive Committee and was made up of four Executive Committee members. On the matter of candidate endorsement, the Endorsement Committee undertook an assessment of candidates through a structured process comprising a written personal statement and a skills test. An endorsement process was used in the election of the current General Secretary in 2016 and would also have formed part of the 2021 election process, although only one nomination was received on that occasion.

The purpose of the endorsement process was to assess candidates against objective criteria drawn from the job description and person specification. The General Secretary role carries significant organisational and governance responsibilities, including areas such as SWU operations, financial management, employment law, accountability, and trade union legislation. The skills test was therefore introduced as part of the endorsement process to support a fair and structured assessment. All these responsibilities are not a part of social work practice so that's why we felt it is important to have a skills test for this role and the union responsibilities have grown significantly over the years. It was reviewed and approved by the Endorsement Committee.

Legal advice obtained by the union confirms that a union is entitled to have administrative procedures for nomination, including stipulating appropriate criteria for candidature such as qualifications, experience, and minimum support. It further advises that the union may set such procedures or criteria as it sees fit, provided they do not unreasonably exclude any member from standing. The criteria and procedures must be reasonable in themselves that is, rational, fair, and capable of objective application and must also be applied in a reasonable manner.

All candidates were informed from the outset that completion of both elements - the personal statement and the skills test - was required to be considered for endorsement. The process guidance issued to candidates reiterated this

requirement and confirmed that reasonable adjustments would be made where needed to ensure accessibility and equal opportunity. Candidates were encouraged to request any adjustments in advance with no requests being made. Both candidates also received direct email communication reinforcing these arrangements.

Both candidates were invited to participate in the full endorsement process and were given the same opportunity and timescales to do so, with reasonable adjustments available. One candidate chose not to complete the skills test but completed the written task as part of the endorsement process without any comment; they were informed that, as a result, they would not receive endorsement. This decision was made in line with the published process and requirements.

It is important to note that non-endorsement did not prevent either candidate from standing in the election or affect their eligibility to be nominated. The inclusion of endorsement information was intended to support members in making informed decisions and did not restrict their ability to vote independently.

There is nothing inappropriate in a union providing endorsement information or identifying a preferred candidate, provided the process is transparent, applied consistently, and does not undermine members' free exercise of their voting rights. The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULRCA) does not prevent a union leadership from expressing a preference, so long as members retain full autonomy in casting their vote.

No candidates raised any issues with the two-part endorsement process during the nomination process. We are unsure why a candidate then went on social media to diminish the second part of endorsement process during the election period; particularly as they completed the first part of the endorsement process without any objections and were aware of the skills test prior to submitting a nomination form to stand as a candidate.

Formal Hustings / Q & A

With respect to the formal hustings event, the format adopted was designed to ensure accessibility, consistency, and fairness for all members, particularly given that previous live events had not been well attended. The session was publicly and directly advertised to the membership as a live recorded event. Candidates and members were advised in advance that this would be the main election engagement opportunity, with the recording to be shared with the wider membership.

Both candidates were invited to participate and offered a range of dates and times to facilitate attendance. One candidate chose not to take part. The event proceeded as scheduled to ensure that the participating candidate was not disadvantaged by delay, while also maintaining fairness and equal treatment within the agreed format.

Members were invited to submit questions in advance via communications issued through the SWU Newsletter and member mailings. These questions were put to the attending candidate during the session and a full, uncut recording with subtitles was subsequently shared with members to ensure transparency and equal access to the responses.

This format was chosen to provide an inclusive and practical approach for a dispersed membership; it did not require members to have access to a strong internet connection, to a device with a working camera and microphone, or to be free at a certain date and time in order to participate. All members were invited to participate by submitting questions in advance and could view the recording at a time convenient to them.

A format in which members asked questions directly to the candidates on the day - instead of pre-submitting questions - would have required additional logistical arrangements including real-time membership verification, technical support, accessibility provision, moderation of questions to ensure fairness and balance, and recording management. Given the size of the union staff team and available resources, the chosen format was considered the most effective way to ensure participation remained members-only, for all members to have an equal chance of participation, and that consistency was maintained for all participating candidates.

Social Media Claims

As the union initially announced, we made a pre-election decision to not engage in any election focused discourse on social media platforms during the election period. We have however received numerous screenshots from members highlighting inappropriate and inaccurate content circulating on social media. In our view, it was therefore appropriate not to engage in that forum.

These claims are misleading and do not reflect SWU's work. Over the past 10 years, the SWU Executive Committee with all its representatives elected from the SWU membership has provided strong, values-led leadership with SWU members and social work principles at its core.

International study trips have always been externally funded with minimal cost to the union. As noted in the April 2026 SWU Newsletter, costs to the union for SWU's work as co-secretariat of the Cross-Party Group for Social Work a key part of our joint campaign with BASW to improve social worker working conditions also remain low.

The salary of the new General Secretary has been misrepresented - the widely quoted £86k is not a starting salary, and this was clarified but still repeatedly shared. Claims about funding academics for personal gain are totally incorrect; SWU has a strong history of grassroots activism and has instead benefited from academic support offered to the union free of charge.

Member voices remain central in SWU with clear democratic routes available for members to influence decisions, lead campaigns, and take on leadership roles within the union. SWU's work is supported and highlighted by an active digital presence that continues to engage our membership, the wider social work community, partners and affiliates, and policy makers.

SWU regrets the delay in announcing the election result but it was necessary following the submission of two formal complaints to Civica UK. Civica UK concluded that SWU's election process had been conducted appropriately and in accordance with the required standards.

[Click here for more information on the Independent Review of Election Process.](#)

**As always, we remain available and welcome any further questions
from members following this statement.**

A steadfast commitment to employment and regulatory representation



I am delighted that Dave Callow has been elected as the new General Secretary. His long-standing commitment to SWU as both an active member and, more recently, as Chair has made a significant contribution to the union's growth and effectiveness. I first met Dave over in Palestine where we both participated in an externally funded study trip to the West Bank, Palestine.

Much of the work within SWU takes place behind the scenes, and Dave has consistently demonstrated strong leadership, sound judgement, and a deep understanding of the organisation. His close involvement in supporting the General Secretary role has given him invaluable insight into the demands of the position, which was clearly reflected in his measured campaigning throughout the selection process including the skills test.

At the heart of SWU's work remains a steadfast commitment to employment and regulatory representation. This is a vital aspect of what we offer members, ensuring that social workers have access to expert support when they need it most. It is worth reflecting on this if you ever consider stepping away from membership having knowledgeable, experienced representation can make a critical difference in challenging professional situations. Unlike **BASW only SWU membership, trade union membership guarantees this right to employment representation.**

We also continue to encourage members to take a more active role within the union. Our network of Union Contacts plays an essential part in strengthening our collective voice, and we are always looking to welcome new volunteers. Becoming more involved is a valuable way to support colleagues, influence the direction of the union, and stay closely connected to developments

within the profession. If you are interested, I would be very happy to hear from you.

I continue to support the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) in my role as Vice President, which has proven to be a significant and rewarding learning curve. As part of the senior leadership, I contribute to the GFTU's management team, sit on the Education Committee, and chair the International Committee, each of which has broadened my understanding of trade union strategy and international collaboration.

Since attending my first meeting nearly a decade ago, the GFTU has grown considerably. This growth is reflected in the addition of new affiliated unions, the development of a more structured and coherent training programme, and an expanded range of campaigns in which we have played an active and influential role.

Looking ahead, we are approaching the deadline for the SWU Essay Competition 2026. This is an excellent opportunity for social work students and apprentices to engage with key issues affecting the profession, while also having the chance to win one of four £500 awards. This year's topic builds on important contributions from across the trade union community, and we are fortunate to have an experienced panel of markers ready to assess submissions after the closing date.

As another month passes, SWU remains as active and committed as ever continuing to advocate, support, campaign and represent social workers across the sector.

John McGowan
General Secretary

j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk

SASW Scottish Parliament Election Hub

It's your democracy, use it



Visit the [Scottish Association of Social Work \(SASW\) Scottish Parliament Election Hub](#) for useful resources and information to make your voice heard, including:

- A quick guide to contacting MSPs and candidates to raise campaign asks with your local politicians and candidates at the election
- Promote the Vote 'How To' Guide on supporting others to take part in the democratic process
- Everyone's Vote Matters free voting guides in 20+ languages, Easy Read, Large Print and Audio formats
- Letter templates to write to your MSPs and or candidates
- Policy materials including *One Deal for Social Work* and SASW's manifesto "A secure future for Scottish social work", both of which are backed by SWU

<https://basw.co.uk/about-basw/social-work-around-uk/sasw-basw-scotland/scottish-parliament-election-hub-2026>

Social Media

If you have not done so then please follow us on Social Media - we post 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>

Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/swu-uk.bsky.social>

CAMPAIGN SURVEY



**IN SOLIDARITY WITH
UK SOCIAL WORK ACADEMICS**

SWU Social
Workers
Union

Calling all social work academics working on university-based programmes in the UK! Take this survey to help us create an evidence base for our campaign of solidarity.

Our campaign of solidarity with social work academics is off to a strong start, and we thank all of our colleagues who contributed their knowledge and ideas in the initial planning webinars in January and February 2026. This is real grassroots activism in action!

This short survey will help SWU create a rapid sector snapshot of social work programmes and their staff. The more UK social work academics that answer these questions the better a view we will have of issues including redundancies, funding, loss of support roles, vacancies, student attrition, placement pressures, and workplace wellbeing.

Take the survey by Sunday 24th May and please share it widely:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9Y2L85W>

Call for evidence: Tell us about issues you and your colleagues have encountered.

Let us know about concrete examples of issues caused by redundancies, course closures, department restructures, or other examples of cuts and growing pressures. These examples can be provided anonymously to be used on background. Please email them to: campaigns@swu-union.org.uk

SWU will continue to work with academics and students to develop key campaign asks, build this coalition, and organise parliamentary and media tactics for the campaign. If academics would like to be involved in the campaign, then please contact SWU General Secretary John McGowan at: campaigns@swu-union.org.uk

Artificial intelligence: implications for social work writing

From case notes and formal reports to basic emails, a crucial but time-consuming part of a social worker's job is writing. Dr Gillian Ferguson and Dr Maria Leedham look at the opportunities and drawbacks of implementing artificial intelligence into the role.

Social workers write some of the most important records and reports about people's lives, which have a lifelong impact (Pierre, 2022). Although writing is often mentioned as a burdensome sideline of what social workers do, writing and recording are core aspects of the practice of social work (Rai et al., 2024). The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has led to developments in social work writing. Findings from previous research into social work writing (Lillis et al., 2017) can help us consider the current opportunities and challenges that AI brings. Understanding the core elements of social work writing and how social workers learn to write effectively is crucial. Social workers need to consider how to use AI effectively in their writing without compromising their professional ethics and skills in analytical judgement.

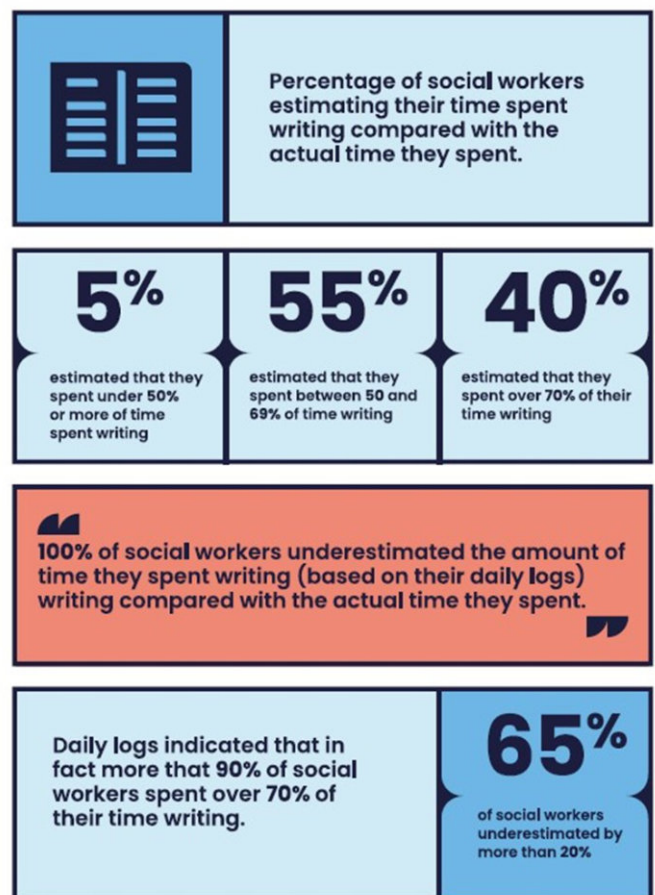
What we know about social work writing

Writing occupies a huge amount of time in social work. The [Writing in Social Work Practice \(WiSP\) project](#) explored exactly how much time social workers thought they spent and how much time they actually spent engaged in writing while at work. The image below shows that 40% of social workers said that they spent more than 70% of their time writing and 100% of social workers underestimated how much time they spent writing (Lillis et al., 2017).

Writing takes many forms from basic emails to case notes to formal reports for decision-making forums. There is much more to writing than simple recording of information; in particular, social workers' texts are a powerful means to progress a case and ultimately reach the best available outcomes for service users. This power is enacted through social workers' choice of words, through the selection of points to foreground or background, and through insightful evaluation, particularly within life-changing documents such as court reports. We should not forget the power of writing and that every word matters for the person who is being written about.

What we know about AI in social work

Many social work services have started to use generative AI systems and tools in the hope that this helps to manage pressured resources.



Widespread use of new tools such as Magic Notes are now common with the aim of reducing the time needed and improving the quality of writing. Technological support in recording can be helpful but there are some challenges. Research shows that AI is not yet reliable in predicting risk or reflecting the nuances of language and context that are essential within social work practice (Gillon and Weaver, 2026; Haider et al., 2026). Social workers are dealing with highly sensitive data so there are also regulatory and legal issues to consider: where any data goes and how it is going to be used now or in the future are key concerns for people using social work services (Haider et al., 2026).

Social work is also rooted in challenging inequality and prejudice. There is evidence, however, that current AI systems and tools can reinforce and perpetuate bias - contrary to the mission of social work (Haider et al., 2026). This means there is a tendency to reproduce biases and eliminate diversity in all shapes and forms. What impact could this have on social work practices?

Of course, we're not the first to raise concerns over algorithmic bias in AI tools. Is there a danger here of sacrificing principles for expediency? Curry et al. (2025) write convincingly about the problem of AI alignment with human values and intelligence. While writing about applied linguistics research, their points are - in our view - highly relevant to social work. For generative AI, 'knowing' is a product of processes built on probabilities and pattern recognition, and this has little to do with human knowledge-making. Perhaps most important - and worrying - is the generative AI inclination to standardise and simplify knowledge (Pragya, 2024).

Some other critical issues concern the ecological sustainability of AI in the context of the climate crisis (Reitmeier and Lutz, 2025), another key area of social work interest (Ferguson and Giddings, 2025). For a profession rooted in prevention of risk and harm, social workers have responsibility to protect and support people across the lifespan with climate issues directly linked to social and environmental justice (Ferguson and Giddings, 2025). What other issues might be important as AI continues to evolve?

Why writing matters as social work practice

Hopefully this article has shown that writing is a core part of the role of the social worker and that using AI is not a simple solution to do this task. Writing isn't purely a means of recording what has been done or observed. It's through writing that social workers process their thinking, communicate their values and build relationships with clients at a human level. Maintaining trust in social workers and other professions relies on human ethical practice. We need to continue to think of the ways that technology can help or hinder us at individual, local and global levels - all of which matters to social work.

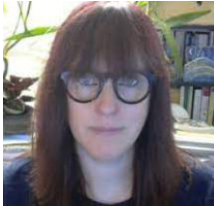
Free course: Effective writing in professional social work practice

The free OpenLearn course "Effective writing in professional social work practice" introduces the importance of writing in professional social work and develops understanding of the different ways that writing forms an integrated part of professional practice in the UK.

The course is designed for social work students and those who are already qualified and who want to develop their understanding and skills in professional writing. The activities within the course are based on extensive research and will help you explore what matters in professional writing. Learn

more here: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/effective-writing-professional-social-work-practice>

Authors



[Dr Gillian Ferguson](#)

Programme Lead for Doctorate in Health and Social Care (DHSC)
at The Open University



[Dr Maria Leedham](#)

Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics and English Language
Studies at The Open University

References

This article was originally published on [OpenLearn](#).

Curry N., McEnery T. & Brookes G. (2025) 'A question of alignment – AI, GenAI and applied linguistics', *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 45, pp. 315–336. doi:10.1017/S0267190525000017.

Ferguson, G. & Giddings, L. (2025) 'Social Work Practice, Professional Standards and the Climate Emergency: Opportunities for Action', *Practice*, 37(4), pp. 313–331. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09503153.2025.2505433>.

Gillon, F. & Weaver, B. (2026) *Generative AI, critical thinking and social work practice*. Available at: <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/generative-ai-critical-thinking-and-social-work-practice> (Accessed: 15 January 2026).

Haider, S., Ferguson G., Flynn A., Giraud, J. & Vseteckova, J. (2026) *Emerging use of AI in social work education and practice: A rapid evidence assessment of the literature*. Available at: <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/about/publications/the-emerging-use-of-artificial-intelligence-ai-in-social-work/> (Accessed: 23 January 2026).

Lillis T., Leedham M. & Twiner A. (2017) "If it's not written down it didn't happen": Contemporary social work as a writing intensive profession', *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice*, 14(1), pp. 29–52. Available at: <https://oro.open.ac.uk/58536/> (Accessed: 30 January 2026).

Pierre, R. (2022) *An Open Letter to the Social Worker Who Wrote My Case Files*. Available at: <https://new.basw.co.uk/articles/open-letter-social-worker-who-wrote-my-case-files> (Accessed: 5 January 2026).

Pragya, A. (2024) 'Generative AI and epistemic diversity of its inputs and outputs: Call for further scrutiny', *AI and Society*, 40, pp. 2341–2342. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-024-02097-6>.

Rai, L., Ferguson, G & Giddings, L. (2025) 'Writing as Social Work: Thematic Review of the Literature', *British Journal of Social Work*, 55(1), pp. 25–44. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcae124>.

Reitmeier, L. & Lutz, S. (2025) 'What direct risks does AI pose to the climate and environment', *London School of Economics and Politics*. Available at: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/what-direct-risks-does-ai-pose-to-the-climate-and-environment/> (Accessed: 15 January 2026).

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH!

How confident are speech and language and social work professionals and students in working with communication needs in youth justice?

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE:

- Current final year MSc or BSc Social Work or Speech and Language Therapy students
- Social Workers
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Available to take part in one online 30-45 minute audio-recorded informal interview, during April 2026
- Willing to discuss your confidence in working with young people who have communication needs in youth justice settings

**To participate, contact
Sarah Curtis via:
Sarah.e.curtis@stu.mmu.ac.uk**

Ethos ID: 86279



Parliamentary monitoring report - April 2026



Cross-Party Group for Social Work

- 32 MPs signed [EDM 2979](#) to celebrate World Social Work Day tabled by Ian Byrne MP, Chair of the Cross-Party Group.
- We will be inviting all those who sign the EDM to join the CPG if they are not already a member.

Campaign Focus - Key Issues and Debates in Parliament

1. Anti-poverty

- [New data shows rise in poverty with more action needed](#) - Comparisons between data gathered between 2023/24 and 2024/25 show that half a million more people are living in poverty. This amounts to around one in five people (20%), or 13.4 million.
- Right to Food Commission - deadline for receiving written submissions is 30th May. Submit evidence at [Right to Food UK Commission - Ian Byrne MP](#) to ask the [Secretary of State](#) for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a statutory right to food for people in poverty.
- Parliamentary Question (PQ) Ian Byrne MP - asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a statutory right to food for people in poverty. Answer: [Govt has taken] “action to expand free school meals, support parents with ... the Holidays and Activities and Food Programme and launched the Crisis and Resilience Fund, which enables local authorities to design schemes that address food poverty.” [Full reply here](#).

- Child Poverty Strategy - the Government [published a new tool for families and schools to cut stigma of child poverty](#). It is designed to support parents and teachers have conversations about poverty in schools and at home.
- [Social workers left to plug the gaps in a “broken system” with their own money | Social Work Today](#) - Research by the Social Workers Union finds many practitioners are continuing to pay for food, travel and energy costs for vulnerable people, raising concerns about gaps in emergency support.
- APPG on Poverty and Inequality has launched an Inquiry into young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)
- Peter Bedford MP - “Conservative Members fundamentally believe that the best path out of poverty is being in work and contributing to society, with all the economic freedoms that a job brings.” (27.04.2026)
- Ben Coleman MP - PQ - Has an assessment been made of the impact on poverty of removing Universal Credit from young disabled people? Answer: We think that better support might help young people more than extra cash. Alan Milburn’s review on the NEET problem more broadly will report in September; we will wait until then to decide whether to delay access to the universal credit health element until the age of 22. [Full reply here.](#) (27.04.2026)

2. Workforce - working conditions, recruitment and retention, sharing research

- [Watchdog escalates Social Work England fitness to practise - Community Care](#) Professional Standards Authority sends letters to Bridget Phillipson and Wes Streeting over ongoing fitness to practise delays, following latest review of Social Work England

3. Social care reform - [Casey Commission \(Independent Commission on Adult Social Care\)](#), private sector funding, and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- Financial sustainability of adult hospices in England - A [new report](#) from the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) warns that some hospices have reduced the volume or range of the essential services they provide and others are planning to do so, at a time when demand for palliative and end-of-life care is rising.
- Financial sustainability of children’s care homes in England - [Govt responded](#) on 1st April to the PAC report published in January that found nearly 800 vulnerable children had been placed in illegal homes. This is around 1 in 10 of all children in residential care at that point in time.
- Community Mental Health Services - Health and Social Care Committee [Chair, Layla Moran MP, criticised the Government’s response to the Committee’s report on community mental health services](#). Said she was “baffled” by a lack of commitment to implement national standards for waiting times for mental health services...”
- The first 1000 days of life - Ministers say health visitor workforce will be strengthened and further updates will come in the 10 Year Workforce Plan. They do not directly respond to the recommendation for families to receive a minimum of six health visitor appointments rather than the current five.
- Casey Commission - no further updates - people can submit views on the Commission’s website: [Contact us | The Casey Commission](#)

Parliamentary Business that may affect Social Workers

Name	Inquiry /stage	Key dates/Action
Public Accounts Committee	Financial sustainability of adult hospices in England	Govt response due 18 th May (see news above)
Public Accounts Committee	Financial sustainability of Children's care homes	Govt response on 1 st April (see news above)
Assisted Dying Bill	House of Lords	Bill falls
Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill Committee	In progress	Disagreements between Lords and Commons
Education Select Committee	Children and Young People's Mental Health	Call for evidence - closed. Awaiting next steps
Education Select Committee	Deliver the Child Poverty Strategy	Oral evidence sessions
Education Select Committee	Early Years: Improving Support for Children and Families	Awaiting next steps
Health and Social Care Committee	Community Mental Health Services	See above.
H&SC Select Committee	Inquiry - The first 1000 days of life	See above.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE

“Working Together in Challenging Times:
Conflict, Complicity, Resistance, Innovation”

Dates: 2-3 July 2026 / Swansea University

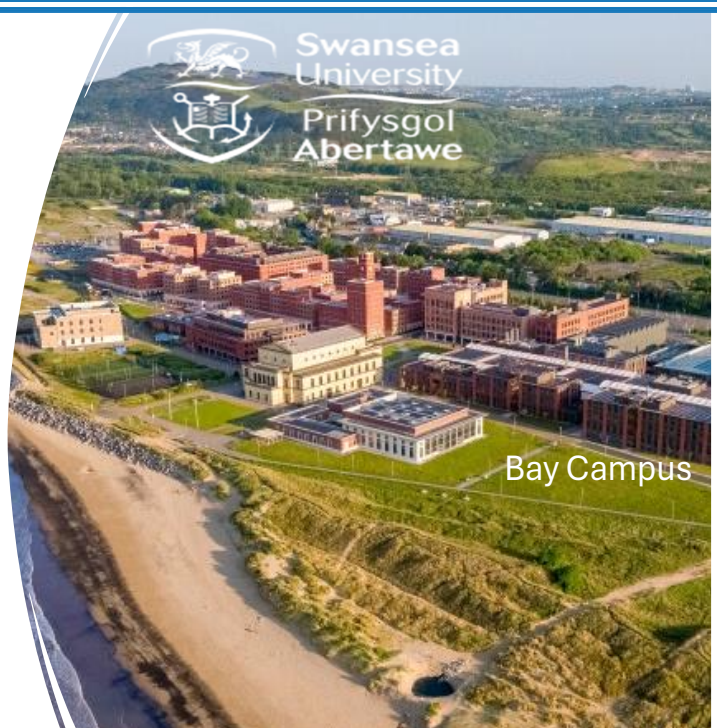
1 July 2026 - Arrival pm / drinks reception / PhD, Early Career Research and Special Interest Groups.

2 – 3 July 2026 - Full Conference

Registration Fees:

- Full conference inclusive of accommodation - **£180** *Early bird offer closes on 15/05/2026. Limited places (first come, first served)*
- Full conference inclusive of accommodation - **£250** for later registration
- Full conference day attendance without accommodation – **£120**
- Day conference attendance – **£60**

For further details please go to [JUSWA click here.](#)



To submit an abstract [use this link](#)

Deadline for submissions: 13/04/2026

See what GFTU Education Programme training courses are being offered this summer

SWU members can access the majority of these training courses free of charge - including accommodation and meals during residential training.

There is something here for everyone who is already active or wants to become active in their trade union. The GFTU Educational Trust aims to inspire, educate and support trade union activists across the UK and beyond. You may be a new union member just finding out about how to get more involved in your union or a seasoned activist, a full-time union officer, or possibly something in between.

Upcoming courses include:

- [Trade Union and Working Class History](#) (online)
- [Strategy Series - How do we Deal with Activist Burnout?](#) (online)
- [Bargaining and Organising for Neurodiversity Part 2](#)
- [Disability Equality for all Trade Unionists](#)
- [Political School – Politics and Trade Unions](#)
- [GFTU Summer School](#)
- [CPD Day for Professional Trade Union Tutors](#)



There are many ways to keep up to date with the Education Programme training courses being offered!

Join the GFTU courses WhatsApp group:
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/DUW5DMizvDVLxt0dLZaHi3>

Sign up to the GFTU Educational Trust Bulletin:
<https://gftuet.org.uk/mailling-list>

You can also [click here to view a full list of the GFTU Education Programme 2025-2026 training courses.](#)

The GFTUET has launched its new TikTok account which you can follow here: <https://www.tiktok.com/@gftuet1899>





55 GUIDANCE SHEETS FOR BASW/SWU MEMBERS

HOW A&R SERVICE WORKS FOR YOU

Information on how to access the service and support available.

DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Advice on what you can do if you're experiencing discrimination.

FITNESS TO PRACTICE GUIDANCE

An overview of how fitness to practice proceedings work.

BULLYING & HARASSMENT

Steps you can take to address workplace bullying & seek support.

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL FAQs

Support and advice on employment tribunal claims.

AGENCY SOCIAL WORKERS

Answers to FAQs and other relevant info for Agency Social Workers



The BASW and SWU Advice and Representation (A&R) Service team has developed 55 guidance sheets to support our social worker members across a wide range of employment law matters, regulatory processes like the fitness to practice processes, and tips on how to approach certain situations or to prepare for meetings.

From the **day you join** you can access these guidance sheets on the 'Advice and Representation' page of the BASW website: <https://new.basw.co.uk/support/advice-representation>

These documents have been created by our skilled A&R team to help you resolve a current issue and to manage the immediate situation. They have been designed to support you in understanding the processes involved and what to expect.

You can learn more about the A&R Service on our website: <https://swu-union.org.uk/how-the-advice-and-representation-service-works>



UK Government



Trade unions' right of access into workplaces - Government Consultation SWU's response to the consultation.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 introduces a statutory right for independent trade unions to access workplaces, both physically and digitally, for the purposes of meeting, supporting, representing, recruiting or organising workers, and facilitating collective bargaining. This reflects the realities of modern working practices, including hybrid and remote working, and provides a clear and predictable framework for access across different types of workplace.

Why this is positive for a social workers union

The introduction of a statutory right of access under the Employment Rights Act 2025 is particularly significant for specialist unions representing professions like social work.

1. Reaching fragmented and hard-to-access workplaces

Social workers are often spread across:

- Local authorities
- Charities and third-sector organisations
- Private and outsourced services
- Hybrid and remote roles
- Health NHS Employment

A legal right of access including digital access allows unions to reach workers who were previously difficult to engage, especially where union density is low.

2. Supporting isolated professional

Unlike large, centralised workforces, many social workers operate in dispersed teams or alone in specialist settings. This reform means unions can:

- Offer direct support earlier
- Provide advice before issues escalate
- Maintain consistent contact regardless of workplace structure

That's a major shift from relying on "word of mouth" or existing members.

3. Strengthening professional voice and standards

A specialist union doesn't just offer employment advice and representation, it also represents professional practice. With guaranteed access, it can:

- Raise concerns about caseloads, safeguarding, and burnout
- Promote ethical standards and safe practice
- Influence workplace culture more consistently

This is especially important in social work, where poor conditions can directly affect vulnerable service users.

4. Boosting recruitment and membership in low-density areas

Where social workers are not yet unionised, access rights make it easier to:

- Recruit new members
- Build presence in underrepresented employers
- Reduce inequalities between unionised and non-unionised workplaces

For a specialist union, this helps grow influence without relying on existing footholds.

5. Earlier intervention in workplace issues

The consultation emphasises resolving issues early and improving industrial relations. For social workers, that could mean:

- Addressing unsafe caseloads before crisis point
- Preventing burnout and retention problems

- Supporting constructive dialogue with employers

Early intervention is particularly valuable in high pressure public service roles.

6. Legitimising the role of specialist unions

Formalised access reinforces that specialist unions are not “outsiders” but recognised stakeholders. For a profession like social work, this:

- Elevates the union’s status in policy and workplace discussions
- Strengthens its ability to influence employer decisions
- Supports long-term professional advocacy

In our view this reform gives our union the ability to consistently reach, support and organise a highly dispersed workforce strengthening both worker voice and professional standards across the sector.

Data and its impact on care

Aaina Amin is an MSc researcher at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). She is researching how data practices shape care in public services in the UK, with a focus on frontline social care work.

She is looking for social care practitioners to take part in a short interview (30-45 minutes) about their experiences of recording, managing, and using data in their work (including reporting requirements, assessments, and digital systems), and how this affects their ability to provide care and support.

Why participate?

This research aims to understand how data practices shape everyday work from the perspective of practitioners.

Participation input will be fully anonymised.

If you are interested or would like more information, please contact:
a.a.amin@lse.ac.uk



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

AGAINST WAR

SATURDAY 20 JUNE 2026, LONDON



CENTRAL HALL
WESTMINSTER



Stop the War
Coalition

SWU and the GFTU are official supporters of the International Conference Against War

This follow-up conference to the Paris Peace Conference held in October 2025 will be in London on 20th June 2026 and could not come at a more critical moment. We are seeing war spreading across the world, and the global economy is in crisis. Talk of war has become preparation for war.

We must create our own international network which will organise for peace, oppose the revitalised US imperial project, and fight for the livelihood, indeed the very lives, of working people. We want peace. We say no to rearmament, no to conscription, and yes to well funded health, education and public services, decent jobs, and higher wages.

There are [five reasons for attending the international anti-war conference on 20th June](#):

- 1. War and the threat of war is spreading.** Trump's attacks and regime change in Venezuela and the siege of Cuba, the war in the Middle East, threats in the Pacific and the ongoing war in Ukraine all show the world is in a perilous state.
- 2. Militarism is on the rise.** Massive hikes in military spending are being seen throughout Europe. Europe is not just rearming but is reindustrialising for 'defence'. In the UK, Starmer has brought forward military spending targets and wants to boost drone and military manufacturing. Macron has called for greater defence cooperation and procurement across Europe, while in Germany, Volkswagen is signalling a move from car production to military manufacturing.
- 3. Conscription is on the up across the continent.** In France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Eastern Europe, the young are being prepared to fight. Here, the government clearly plans to introduce conscription by stealth. We have been told to be 'ready to fight' and to prepare to sacrifice our children.
- 4. Racism is fuelled by foreign wars** - especially Middle Eastern ones. The rise in Islamophobia, the growth of Reform, Labour's pandering to the politics of hate and anti-migrant rhetoric are all corrupting society and politics, leading to a surge in support for far-right political parties here. Similar currents are witnessed across Europe.
- 5. War comes home to bite.** The war on Iran has caused economic shock waves around the world. Oil and energy prices are rising rapidly; fertiliser and food are expected to follow. The cost of living will hit us all, and the poor will pay the hardest.

Read the full conference call here:

https://d30m66y232rpg4.cloudfront.net/uploads/2026/01/260620_INVITATION1_EN.pdf

The General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) and the Social Workers Union (SWU) are proud to back this international anti-war conference spearheaded by the Stop the War Coalition and supported by 8 other national unions, nearly 100 union branches, and trade union councils.

Every student and worker, every trade unionist and anti-war activist is invited to join us in London on 20th June 2026 at 12pm noon at Westminster Central Hall to attend the International Conference Against War.

More information and a link to book your ticket is available on the Stop the War Coalition website:

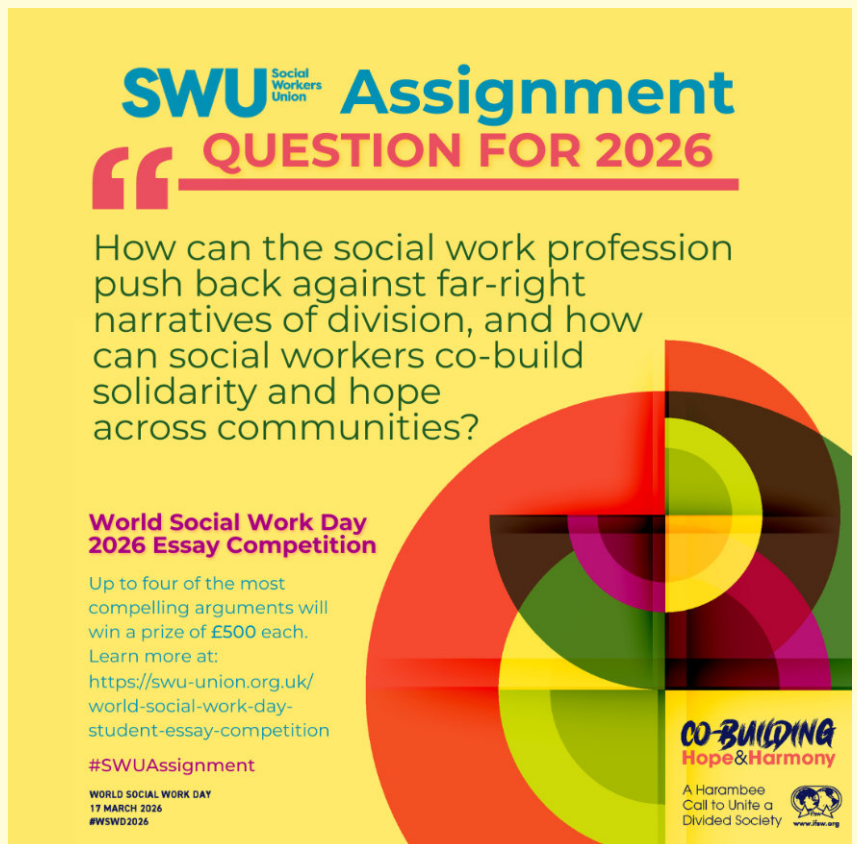
<https://www.stopwar.org.uk/events/european-peace-conference>

There's still time to enter this year's SWU Assignment essay competition - with four prizes of £500 to be won!

Social work students and apprentices in the UK, be sure to submit your essays by **Sunday 14th June 2026**.

Every year the SWU Assignment: World Social Work Day Essay Competition poses a question about current issues in social work. Up to four of the most compelling 750-1000 word arguments will **win a grant of £500** each.

This competition is open to Social Work Students undertaking an Undergraduate or Post Graduate Social Work Degree in the UK and to Social Work Apprentices in the UK. All completed assignments will be judged by a Panel. Further competition details and an archive of winning essays from previous years are available on the [SWU Assignment webpage](#).



The flyer features a yellow background with a large, colorful graphic on the right side consisting of overlapping circles in red, green, purple, and black. The text is arranged in a clear, readable layout. At the top, the SWU logo is followed by 'Assignment' in large blue letters and 'QUESTION FOR 2026' in pink. Below this, the competition question is posed in green. Further down, the title 'World Social Work Day 2026 Essay Competition' is in pink, followed by details about prizes and a link to learn more. The hashtag #SWUAssignment is also present. At the bottom left, it mentions 'WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY 17 MARCH 2026 #WSWD2026'. At the bottom right, there is a logo for 'CO-BUILDING Hope & Harmony' with the tagline 'A Harambee Call to Unite a Divided Society' and the SWU logo.

SWU Social Workers Union **Assignment**
QUESTION FOR 2026

How can the social work profession push back against far-right narratives of division, and how can social workers co-build solidarity and hope across communities?

World Social Work Day 2026 Essay Competition

Up to four of the most compelling arguments will win a prize of £500 each. Learn more at: <https://swu-union.org.uk/world-social-work-day-student-essay-competition>

#SWUAssignment

WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY
17 MARCH 2026
#WSWD2026

CO-BUILDING
Hope & Harmony

A Harambee
Call to Unite a
Divided Society

[Click here to see the flyer with the 2026 competition details.](#)



Local financial advice tailored for you

Tailored specifically for you

Locally based, fully qualified financial advisers who can help you with:

- ▶ Savings and investment planning
- ▶ Tax efficient investing
- ▶ Retirement planning
- ▶ Inheritance tax planning

To learn more about how we can help please contact us using the details below to book your FREE initial financial consultation.

T: 08000 858 590

E: QFAinfo@quilter.com

Approver Quilter Financial Services Limited &
Quilter Mortgage Planning Limited. 02 October 2023.
Q23_0477/September 2023

www.quilter.com

SWU to host online screening of the new version of *The Story of Jenin* and Q&A with director Ehab Ghafri



The Social Workers Union (SWU) will be screening online the new version of *The Story of Jenin* on Wednesday 10th June 2026 starting at 7pm, and attendees are invited to ask questions and engage with the director afterward.

“This is not the cinema of red carpets, but real cinema that must reach the audience directly from the filmmaker.”

The Story of Jenin is a 70-minute documentary by Palestinian filmmaker, psychologist, and stage director Ehab Ghafri. The first 2024 version of this film tells the story of life inside the Jenin refugee camp - located in the West Bank in Palestine under Israeli occupation - from 2013 until present day. In 2025, the occupying army completely besieged the camp and turned its residents into refugees. The new 2026 version of this film includes Ehab’s return to document what Jenin’s remaining inhabitants have to say about this forced exile, their hopes, and their resistance to the occupation.

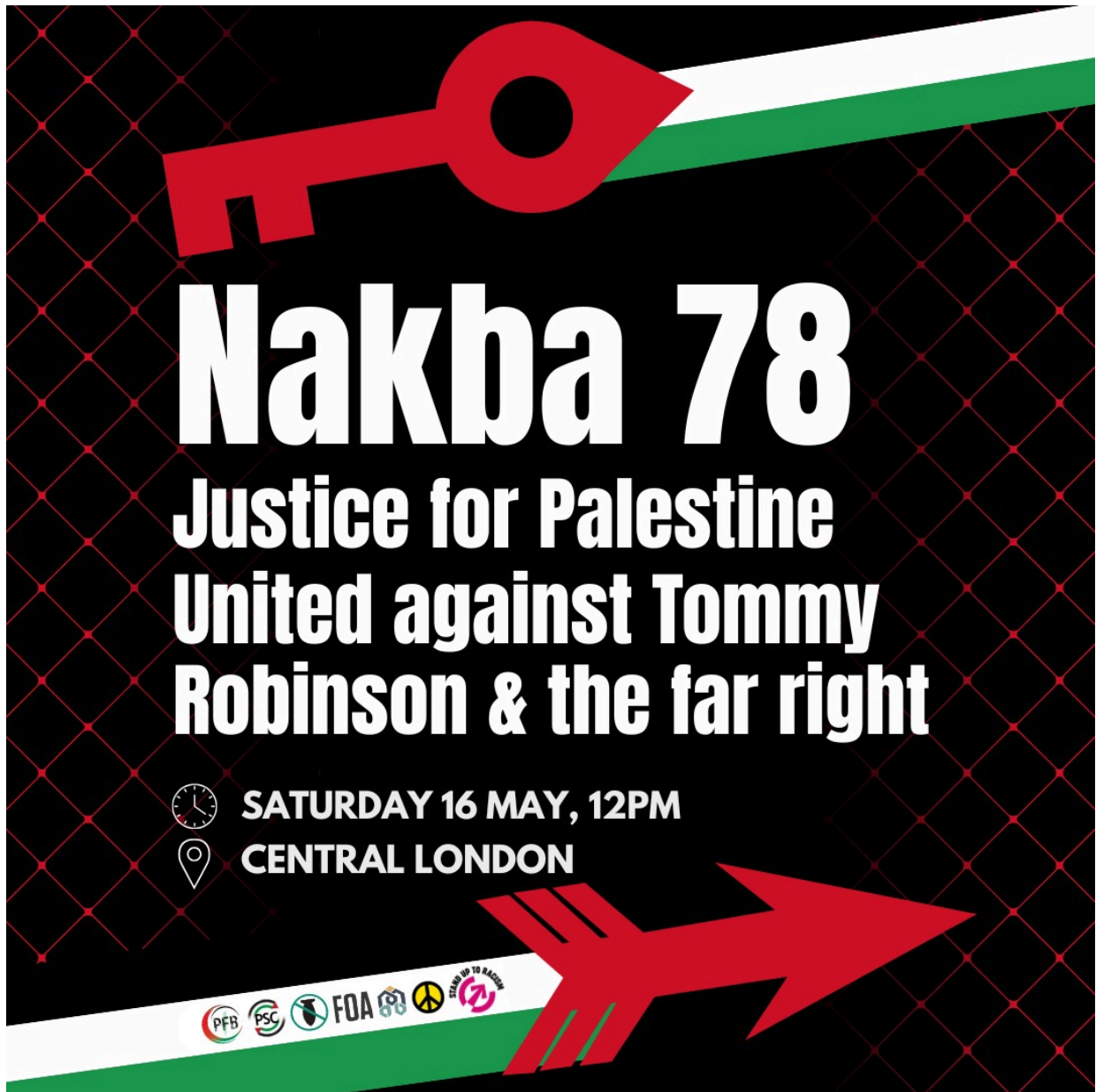
John McGowan, SWU General Secretary, said:

“I am proud to host this event at SWU as part of our ongoing solidarity with Palestine. I first met Ehab several years ago while walking together in Palestine, and I was immediately inspired by his message of hope and resilience in the face of immense challenges. His story reflects the lived reality of so many, and his voice is a powerful reminder of why international solidarity matters. I look forward to hearing from him during the screening and the Q&A, and to continuing to build support for Palestine across the union movement.”

This online screening will help raise money for the WAVES mobile cinema school for children and teenagers across underserved communities in the northern West Bank and is in support of the union’s motion of solidarity with Palestine.

Stay tuned for more updates and the joining link on the SWU website and social media accounts.





Join the Palestine Solidarity Campaign march in London on Saturday 16th May to commemorate the Nakba:

“We will march to commemorate the Nakba - for 78 years, Palestinians have been subjected to a racist system of oppression including ethnic cleansing, settler-colonialism, apartheid and genocide. We march to reaffirm our commitment to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the refugees’ right to return home.

“We march against the far right in Britain who glorify Israel’s racism and brutality. Our unity and solidarity is stronger than their hatred and division.

“Stand with the Palestinian people whose demand for justice is as important now as ever before.”

Visit the Palestine Solidarity Campaign website for event updates and information on booking coach tickets: <https://palestinecampaign.org/events/nakba-78-march-for-palestine-2>



INTERNATIONAL **WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY**

28 APRIL

On International Workers' Memorial Day we remember workers who have lost their lives, been injured, or made ill through work.

This year's theme 'psychosocial risks and mental wellbeing at work' is a pressing issue for social workers. [Research by SWU with ITV News](#) published in 2025 - in the largest survey of its kind with 2,380 social workers across the UK taking part - shows the severe cost of poor working conditions:

- 76% of social workers reported their mental health is in crisis
- 27% reported finding themselves emotionally exhausted at least once a week
- Around half of those surveyed reported wanting to leave social work

One of the key focuses of the Social Workers Union (SWU) and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) [joint campaign to improve working conditions for social workers](#) is to improve mental health and wellbeing support for practitioners. SWU and BASW are using the [Cross-Party Group for Social Work](#) to relay the areas needing improvement across everyday social work practice to those in parliament who can effect change. This includes the challenges and pressures affecting social workers' wellbeing, staffing levels, workload management, and professional support.

Safe work is a right, not a privilege.

We remember the dead. We fight for the living.

May Day is both a commemoration and a reminder: that the conditions people work under were fought for and are still worth defending.

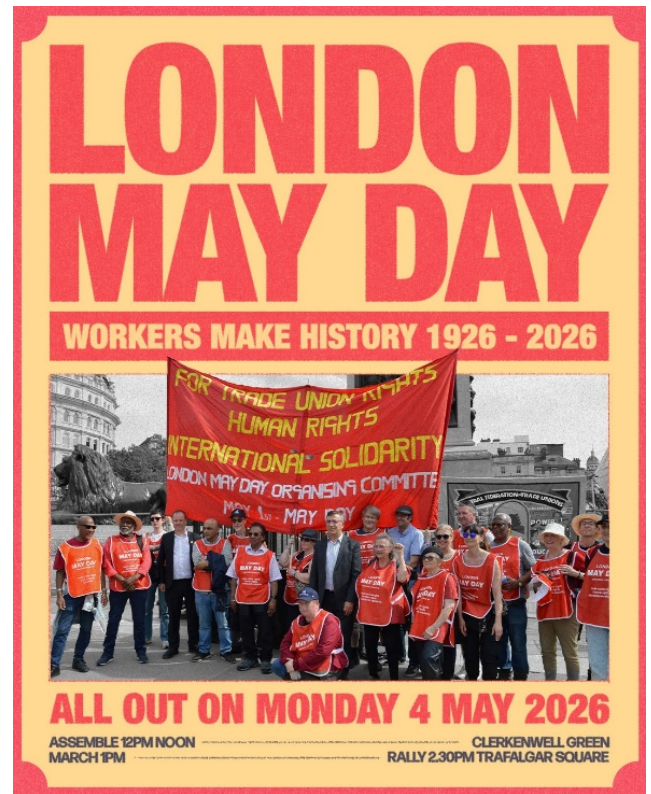
This year's May Day theme is 'Workers Make History' as we mobilise together during the 100th anniversary of the 1926 General Strike.

The GFTU and affiliates will be there in solidarity with workers everywhere to help make this the biggest [London May Day](#) for a generation. Bring your union banners and be a part of special day for the whole trade union and wider labour movement.

The Migrant Workers' Rights bloc will also be marching as part of the wider May Day mobilisation. Updates are available on the [Migrant Workers' Rights Bloc WhatsApp Group](#).

You can RSVP to this year's London May Day rally and march here: bit.ly/LDNMayDayRSVP

The march will assemble on Monday 4th May at 12pm noon at Clerkenwell Green, begin at 1pm, and then there will be a rally in Trafalgar Square at 2:30pm.



Migrants' Rights Are Workers' Rights

A statement for May Day 2026 from the Migrant Workers' Rights Coalition.

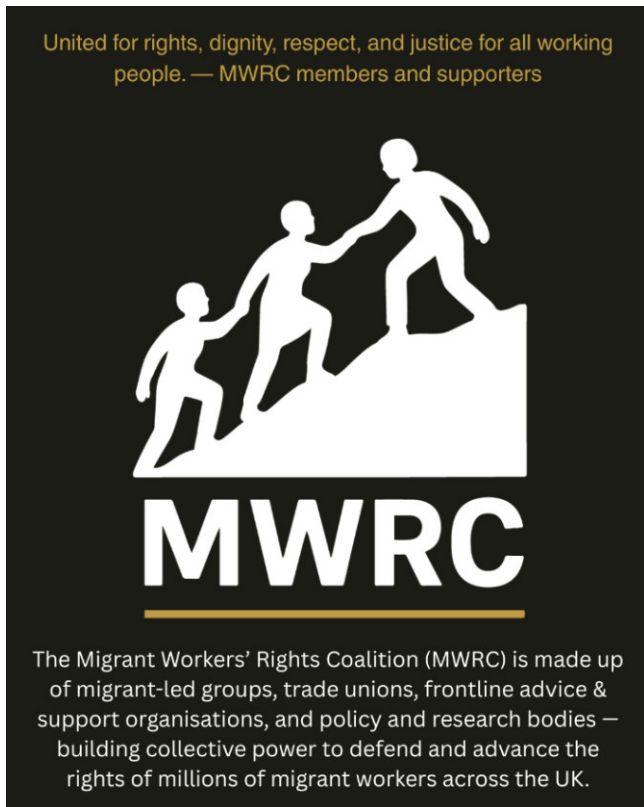
On International Workers' Day, we, migrants and diaspora from around the world, march as part of the working class, in joint struggle for dignity, justice, and freedom.

Migrants are social workers, care workers, cleaners, delivery riders, construction workers, NHS staff, hospitality workers, teachers, domestic workers, artists, transport workers, organisers, and more - across every part of society. Our labour sustains this country. We keep its hospitals running, its cities moving, its homes cared for, its food served, and its children taught.

In the UK today, migrant workers are increasingly marginalised and systematically pushed into insecure and exploitative conditions - from tied visas and unsafe workplaces to restricted job mobility and the constant fear of losing our right to stay. Immigration status, documentation, country of origin, categorisations of "skilled" or "unskilled", and other bureaucracies are used to divide us - to make us easier to silence and easier to exploit. Our labour is essential, but we are denied the security, freedom, and rights essential to live with dignity.

The hostile environment - from "No Recourse to Public Funds" to the Immigration Health Surcharge, from detention to forced removal, from Right to Rent checks to immigration raids, from extortionate immigration fees to the denial of the right to work - pushes migrant workers into precarity and then blames us for the consequences. We are othered, scapegoated, and forced to live in fear. And this government is moving to deepen and expand this hostile environment.

By design, migrants are used as a source of cheap, insecure, easily subdued labour power. And by marking one sector of the working class as easily exploitable, all sectors of the working class suffer. Dividing workers by immigration status weakens our



collective power, while strengthening the position of those who profit from our exploitation. We refuse to be divided. **There are no workers' rights without migrants' rights.**

The same system that exploits migrant workers exploits all workers. Low pay, insecure contracts, unsafe conditions, and attacks on trade union rights affect us all. Even where workers' rights are strengthened, migrant workers are often excluded in practice - trapped in visa systems and immigration controls that make those rights impossible to exercise. Rights that migrant workers cannot safely use are not real rights.

This year marks 100 years since the 1926 General Strike - when over a million workers across Britain took collective action in solidarity with miners. It showed the scale of solidarity workers can build when we stand together.

Today, we call on all workers to stand in solidarity with migrant workers - no exceptions - as our rights come under sustained attack and our lives and livelihoods are put at risk by government policies, dehumanisation, and scapegoating.

We are not outsiders.
We are not temporary.
We are not disposable.

We are here. We are part of the working class. We belong.

We stand together - migrants and non-migrants, unionised and non-unionised workers - to demand:

- **Settlement is a right, not a privilege - 5 years is long enough**
- **End tied and restrictive visa systems**
- **Regularisation now for all undocumented migrants**
- **Abolish No Recourse to Public Funds and uphold social protections for all**
- **End the hostile environment in all its forms**
- **Equal rights and protections for all workers, no exceptions**
- **Abolish the Immigration Health Surcharge and uphold universal healthcare for all**
- **Safe workplaces, decent pay, and full access to justice**
- **Uphold the right to organise, unionise, strike, and speak out without fear**
 - **End all scapegoating, dehumanisation, racism, and xenophobia against migrants**

We strongly reject the racism and scapegoating being used to turn workers and communities against each other. Migrants are not the cause of the economic, housing, and NHS crises - exploitation, inequality, and political choices are.

Our struggle does not stand alone. It is connected to struggles across the world - against war, displacement, climate injustice, and economic systems that push people to move and then punish them for it. Migration is not the problem - people have always moved in search of safety, dignity, and a better life.

Migrants, refugees, working and non-working people, paid and unpaid - on this May Day, we do not just call for change, we organise for it. This is not the end of our action, but part of building the power we need to win. Let's support one another and stand in solidarity across all of our struggles.

We call on trade unions, workers, people out of work, those whose work is not recognised, community organisations, and everyone who stands for justice:

Stand with migrant workers. Join the Migrant Workers' Rights Bloc this May Day - and support our struggle for full rights, however long it takes!

Because when migrants organise and are supported unconditionally, the whole working class is stronger.

Migrants' rights are workers' rights.

**Discounted
legal services
for SWU
members.**



4.7



Rated Excellent

Trustpilot

033 3344 9600

info@morrishsolicitors.com



Always there for you.
28

SWU joins the Lift the Ban coalition

[Lift the Ban](#) is a coalition of over 300 organisations across the UK - think tanks, unions, businesses, charities, universities, faith groups, and local authorities - campaigning for people seeking asylum to be granted full working rights after six months of awaiting a decision on their asylum claim.

People seeking safety in our country are being frozen out of work. Banned from providing for themselves and their families, they're left to live in poverty while our economy could be benefitting from their skills. One of the coalition's key arguments for lifting the ban is that it forces people in the asylum system into exploitation.



The restrictive approach that the UK takes on the right to work makes it an outlier within Europe. Almost all other rich countries give people the opportunity to support themselves at an earlier stage and with fewer restrictions. [Click here to read the campaign report on why it's time to #LiftTheBan.](#)

A message to Government: New migration rules represent a sustained attack on children's rights

A range of migration and asylum policy and proposals recently announced by the Home Office - including earned settlement and the family returns consultation - risk undermining the rights and safety of hundreds of thousands of migrant children and care leavers, and exposing them to poverty, destitution and/or homelessness.

The [Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium \(RMCC\)](#) and [Asylum Matters](#) have coordinated an open letter to the Prime Minister that highlights concerns about the cumulative threat to children's rights from these policies and calls on Government to put the welfare and rights of children at the heart of all migration and asylum policy. [Nearly 150 organisations](#), including the Social Workers Union (SWU), British Association of Social Workers (BASW), social work bodies, and children's charities have signed the letter urging the Prime Minister to rethink planned immigration reforms.

As social workers we can't accept that the ["earned settlement" proposals](#) could trap as many as 90,000 children already living in the UK in poverty. We can't accept the abhorrent ["use of force" plans](#) which are currently under consultation and would pave the way for children to be handcuffed or physically handled onto removal flights, including in instances of "a parent refusing to release a child's hand". We can't accept the reprehensible suggestions in 2025 [Home Office policy documents](#) that migrant parents may be "exploit[ing] the fact that they have had children" or seeking a "personal benefit" from migrating irregularly with children.

Kamena Dorling, co-chair of the Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium, said, "The proposed changes to asylum, removals and settlement raise profound questions about children's rights and welfare and risk undermining the Government's ambitions for the next generation. Every child deserves to grow up safe and secure, knowing they have a stable home, a community to belong in, and a stable path through education. No child

should be facing poverty, homelessness, constant uncertainty about their future, or the terrifying prospect of being handcuffed or physically dragged onto a removal flight. The Government must undertake and publish a Child Rights Impact Assessment as soon as possible to ensure any changes to migration policy do not put the rights and welfare of any children at risk.”

Andy Sirel, Legal Director of JustRight Scotland, said, “Every week we have families and young people contact us, worried about their futures. They are trying to understand how their lives will be affected by the current government’s proposals, and why. That question is key: why? What goal is punishing children achieving? We have clients who arrived as children, have immigration status, and are trying to get on with their lives, who will be in their 30s and 40s before they qualify for settlement. How does that achieve integration?”

Leyla Williams, Deputy Director, West London Welcome, said, “As experts working with refugee and asylum-seeking children and families on a daily basis, we know how difficult their lives already are and are incredibly concerned about the future impact of the government’s new immigration plans on children. The resounding majority of people in this country do not want to see children deported, put in handcuffs or treated with force - we have all watched clips of the violent behaviour of ICE in the United States and people here do not want that on our streets. Children must be treated with care and have their welfare and legal rights protected.”

Read the letter below, and view the signatories here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1da12JEsy8y8d4UKTebDuYWezBuFYsNidTB6cN_rerTQ

Office of the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street,
London,
SW1A 2AA

Re: The rights of children

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you as organisations and charities on the frontline of supporting children in the UK, to raise our concerns about a sustained attack on children’s rights emerging from recent migration policy.

The government has committed to undertake a Child Rights Impact Assessment of its proposals in ‘Restoring Order and Control’ and ‘A Fairer Pathway to Settlement’. However, proposals are already being implemented and this assessment has not been published. We are deeply concerned that proposed radical overhauls of the immigration system and routes to settlement, as well as drastic changes to the asylum system, family returns and asylum support provision, will threaten the safety and security of hundreds of thousands of children, babies and young people in the UK.

Not only do these asylum and immigration reforms disregard children’s rights. They also impede the Government’s ambitions to reduce child poverty, raise the healthiest generation, tackle educational inequalities and ensure 75% of children reach a Good Level of Development when they start school. In Scotland, these proposals risk undermining the Scottish Government’s statutory child poverty targets and duties under the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

Among the measures that threaten the psychological safety, health and life chances of children in the UK are:

- **Earned settlement:** placing over 300,000 children already in the UK on 10, 15 or even 30 year routes to settlement will throw the lives of families who've made decisions about their children's education and futures into chaos, while economic analysis shows up to 90,000 children will be trapped in poverty by these plans.
- **Family returns consultation:** removing support from families refused asylum and increasing family returns - including enforced returns using child detention - risks harming children and leaving families destitute. Meanwhile stripping away Children Act 1989 safeguards will reduce the support available to destitute families in England - leaving children facing homelessness.
- **Leaving care support:** the family returns consultation also proposes to cut off leaving care support in England from appeal rights exhausted young people who have claimed asylum and penalising any care leaver whose local authority has failed to support them to resolve their immigration status. Attempting to remove a group of care leavers from landmark Children Act 1989 protections designed to safeguard and protect all children is a dereliction of what we owe to young people in the care of the state, calling into question the Government commitment to creating a clear pathway for children in care.
- **Use of force:** plans to handcuff and physically handle children in circumstances such as 'a parent refusing to release a child's hand' risk causing distress, trauma and lasting emotional damage to children. To describe such harm to children as 'unfortunate but necessary and justified' is abhorrent.
- **Refugee children:** whilst many of these measures put all migrant children at risk, there are particular threats for refugee children, who already have the lowest educational outcomes of any group of children, and have now seen the safe route of family reunion suspended, face the constant uncertainty of 30-month temporary protection, and have no clarity on how they might be included in more secure work- and-study routes.
- **Language:** It is reprehensible to suggest, without evidence, that children's lives are being risked for the 'personal benefit' of their parents or others. When addressing any instances of child exploitation, policy must be grounded in fact.

This Government's Opportunity Mission is about breaking down barriers for children, not creating more. The Child Poverty Strategy makes a vital commitment to lifting 550,000 children out of poverty by 2030, as well as a specific commitment to ensuring vulnerable migrant children receive the support that they require, regardless of their immigration status. Yet for migrant and refugee children, babies and care leavers, these plans risk entrenching the very poverty you are rightly seeking to eliminate.

We urge you to change course, and create policy that reflects simple facts we all know to be true. Children who grow up here belong here. Children need stability and certainty to thrive. Care leavers deserve love, special care and a clear path to a future. And we must do everything in our power to prevent children from experiencing homelessness, distress and trauma.

We urge you to put the welfare and rights of children at the heart of asylum and migration policy.

Only **£35** 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: unioncontacts@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.instagram.com/socialworkersunion>



https://twitter.com/SWU_UK



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



swu-admin@swu-union.org.uk



<https://bsky.app/profile/swu-uk.bsky.social>