

### SWU Conference reinforced the positives



The SWU Fringe Event, UK Conference and AGM reinforced the positives of being a social worker with some great presentations and discussion throughout all the events.

However, to say that social work is a challenging profession

is of course something of an understatement and this was an important message heard throughout the 2019 Conference and AGM. We all know the impact on social workers of cutbacks to services and staffing. These are an on-going challenge and we will continue our battle to fight them and look forward to working with members over the next 12 months to furnish some of our AGM commitments and ongoing campaigning.

As a SWU member, you will know that Employment Representation from a Qualified Social Worker, who knows the profession inside and out, is important. The Trade Union Advice and Representation (A&R) Team are at the forefront of this organisation and if you ever need their services then you can be assured of professionalism from a service, from social workers, who understand the profession. Hopefully the additional SWU benefits will also add value to the extra you pay to SWU over your BASW membership; and with an increase from £20 to £25 a year (no increase for students) this continues to be terrific value.

The General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) training options available to members are worthy of a look as are the legal and financial discounts and training provided from Dr Neil Thompson. I would urge all SWU members to spread the word and encourage social work colleagues and friends to join. It is much more than just paying your fee as a safety net in case you need representation; as we have lots more going on, and opportunities to be active.

I am delighted to report that the following motions were all passed unanimously:

#### **Motion 1**

This AGM supports the work being done to take the results of the research project into working conditions for Social Workers, conducted by Dr Jermaine Ravalier, to MPs, members of the House of Lords, Councillors, other interested parties and also to discussing it on radio and social media.

#### **Motion 2**

This Union welcomes the recent report of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and urges the Executive to press for action on all the recommendations listed in para 96 of that report.

#### **Motion 3 - Member Motion**

This AGM acknowledges the history, strengths and traditions of the Trade Union movement and commits to supporting, encouraging and empowering our members, and our workplace and university-based Union Contacts, to have a strong voice and an active presence in the Trade Union world.

## Motion 4 - Member Motion

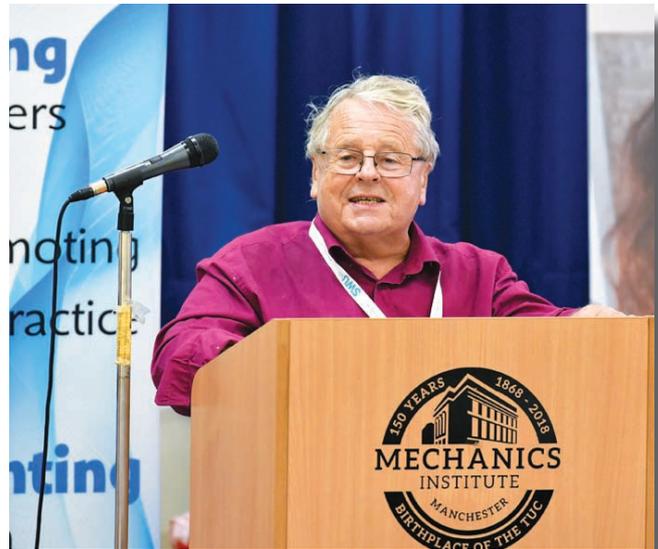
This AGM

1. Notes that 500-700 Palestinian children, some as young as 12, are detained each year by the Israeli military, and that Israel is the only country in the world that automatically prosecutes children in military courts.
2. Deplores the continuing ill-treatment of Palestinian children by Israeli military forces, which has been well-documented, including by the UNICEF report 'Children in Israeli Military Detention' which described the ill-treatment as "widespread, systematic, and institutionalised throughout the process"; the report of a delegation of British lawyers: 'Children in Military Custody'; and by the ongoing work of Military Court Watch and Defence for Children International.
3. Notes further that, being under military occupation, the Palestinians are not able to protect their children from these abuses, and thus need international support; and that the British have a particular responsibility arising from the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the British rule in Palestine from 1917 to 1948.

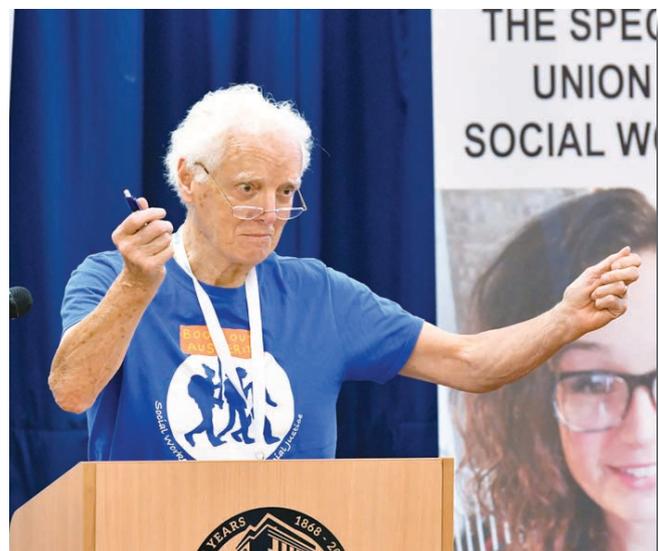
This AGM therefore calls on the Social Workers Union to

- Support the Child Prisoners Campaign organised by the Palestine-UK Social Work Network.
- Encourage its members to sign the campaign petition.
- Support members to join organised visits to Palestine, to raise awareness of the situation there.

Unfortunately, a number of large individual unions have continued to lose membership over the past decade. I am therefore particularly pleased to say that membership of the Social Workers Union has expanded, and we are getting close to 13,000 members. Unions have a representative role in the workplace and challenging poor working conditions.



James Birchall proposing Motion 1



Malcolm Jordan presenting Motion 2



Guy Shennan presenter for Motion 4

Therefore, a more collaborative approach with the British Association of Social Workers - our professional association - will continue to work best for social workers in the long term and this was a clear message presented at the 2019 conference.

Although we continue to develop and grow as a union; you can see clearly that the union is active and terrific value for members. With our

status as an organisation member of BASW we can provide annual membership for BASW members for only £25 (£10 for students).

**John McGowan**  
**General Secretary**  
j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk

Dave Callow presenting Motion 3



# Terms of Contract - Custom and Practice

SWU Trade Union Advice and Representation Officer Julie Long shares her advice



Most of us rarely consider the terms and conditions of our contract of employment until something happens that gives us cause for concern. We're usually happy to go to work, do our job to the best of our abilities, and get paid accordingly.

However, circumstances can arise that force us to consider our employment contract in greater detail, often with little or no prior warning. For example changes to our terms and conditions or breach of contract, to name but two. Conversely, haven't we all thought 'I'm working harder now, seem to be doing more, and don't seem to get any extra pay or benefits'. Well it could be that some of the extra things you do aren't covered by your employment contract and should be. This article looks at custom and practice and considers some of the issues you might wish to consider if you're doing more at work but don't feel your contract truly reflects this.

Our contract of employment is the agreement between our employer and our-selves that sets out the terms and conditions of our employment. The terms and conditions of an employment contract, generally, set out the duties and responsibilities the employer and the employee have towards each other in relation to the specific job or post concerned. Our terms and conditions can be further divided into express and implied terms.

Express terms deal with areas of employment such as working hours, pay, and terms that are part of employment law. Express terms are nearly always explicitly written down within the contract of employment. Implied terms, on the other hand, may not be explicitly stated in a contract of employment as they are often considered to be too obvious to be written down.

Implied terms tend to deal with the presumption that the employee and the employer will act in the best interest of each other, and can include implied terms where there is an expectation of compliance around standards of conduct, health and safety matters, honesty/dis-honesty, etc. However, although the implied terms of our contract may not be written down, in practice implied terms of our contract are often included in the organisation's staff handbook. Staff handbooks are always a useful reference point to start from when we take up a new post, when services we work for are re-organised, or if we feel the job we are currently doing does not resemble the one we started some years previously. Unfortunately, though, some activities we undertake as part of our job, and which may not appear in either our contract or other employment related documents such as the staff handbook may not, necessarily, fall within the context of concept of custom and practice either.

For a workplace activity we feel we carry out on a regular basis to become an implied term within our contract of employment by custom and practice certain factors have to apply. Legal professionals often refer to the mantra of 'reasonable, notorious, and certain' when assessing whether a term has become part of an employment contract by custom and practice. This means that the term must be fair, consistently applied, unambiguous, known to all, and have occurred over a period of time. Custom and practice, therefore, falls within the implied terms of our employment contract and trying to claim that an act we undertake regularly is an implied term of our employment contract can be highly problematic. Hence the importance of knowing what's written into our contract's terms and conditions of service, including our staff handbook. Often employers will include, especially in the staff handbook, phrases and statement such as "ex-gratia", "discretionary", "aim to", or "at managements discretion" allow the employer to claim that certain actions and activities within the workplace do not constitute a contractual obligation to the employee(s).

It's therefore important for us to, firstly, understand exactly what is contained within our contract of employment and staff handbook to fully understand what the employer expects of us and what we can expect from the employer. Secondly, if we feel that we are undertaking activities in the workplace that are not part of our contractual obligations to our employer; and that what we do should be included in our contract of employment, we will need to understand and evidence the job we actually do on a day to day, week to week basis and identify any discrepancies between what we do and what our contract says we should do. Ultimately if our employer will not accept that the issues we have raised do not constitute an implied contractual term by custom and

practice our only recourse under the law may well be to take the issue to an in employment tribunal. However, it is important for all of us to ensure in these politically turbulent times, and if only for our own satisfaction, that we know what we are contractually expected to do whilst at work and that we are able to identify when our employer is allowing a workplace culture to develop that can mean we are working beyond the scope of our contractual obligations with benefit to the employer without benefit to us as the employee.

**Julie Long**  
**SWU Trade Union Advice and**  
**Representation Officer**

## Bath Spa University Conference



Reflecting on the recent Bath Spa University Conference on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2019, I can confidently say that for me, the day was near perfect! Traffic better than expected, glorious weather, beautiful venue, delicious refreshments (especially the vegan options) and most

importantly an excellent opportunity to meet with individuals from a variety of specialisms.

The essence of the day was to provide employers, academics and researchers with actual, feasible changes which can be made at work in order to maintain and improve employee wellbeing. The day consisted of a variety of presentations from various speakers from different specialities, who provided information on research undertaken which supported evidence and ideologies around the importance of well-being for those who work within health and social care sectors.

The day began with an  
introduction

and presentation from Dr Jermaine Ravalier, who discussed his latest research, which I had the privilege to have previously read and provide feedback. Subsequent presentations highlighted and outlined the importance of employee health and wellbeing within the health and social care sectors. Within these discussions some startling statistics were revealed. For example, low job satisfaction, and a desire to leave their profession in favour of a less stressful environment, were just two of the many reasons for poor quality staff retention.

It is no surprise that chronic stress at work can be directly influenced by working conditions, particularly for those who work with the health and social care sector. This stress can lead to many negative physical and mental consequences to the individual which in turn may negatively impact on practice approaches which support the client. It is hoped that research on the effects of stress to the individual in the workplace may contribute to facilitating both short term and longer term practical steps to reduce it. In return, this may positively impact on the retention of employees within both the health and social work sector.

Stress related absences need to be recognised, acknowledged and support

given by all within organisations and practical steps to reduce emotional distress in the first instance. Stress is personable, stress can be felt in different ways and varying intensity, making it difficult to provide a definitive definition, or a provide a generic, practicable solution.

It was once thought that if you struggle at work then it is your own fault, and that the job may not be for you. However, research has shown that this is clearly not true. The feeling of well-being is on a spectrum, swinging from a good sense of wellbeing to that of ill health. This is impacted by many factors including personal resilience, job demand vs job resources, etc.

However, one thing is for sure, just as we as professional practitioners provide and facilitate support to clients with their care needs, we as professionals need support for our needs too, to enable us to facilitate best practice approaches to minimise and prevent ethical and moral distress, and organisational tension.

As employees we have a responsibility to ourselves to admit we need support and not to feel that it demonstrates weakness or that we lack capability as a professional practitioner, we are all human and every one of us requires assistance at times. The responsibility of personal wellbeing has to be balanced with the provision of support from our line managers and senior management to recognise that in this time of limited resources and increasing caseloads, it is inevitable that practitioners on the frontline of practice often encounter challenging situations. This combined with

other factors within the workplace, may contribute to increased and unacceptable stress for employees.

To summarise, there is clear need for support for individuals that work within the health and social care sector, this is evidenced by research heard during this conference. I am fortunate that within my own local authority I feel very supported by my colleagues, senior practitioners and higher management, but this may not always be the case for everyone.

Support should be facilitated for all employees that work within an organisation. The result of improved support will be soon recognised, as it will result in positive impacts not only on service providers (happy people are productive people!!) but also those who require support, advice and guidance from us as professional practitioners.

In conclusion my attendance at Bath Spa University, gave me an opportunity to listen to a variety of experienced and knowledgeable guest speakers, one of them being our own John McGowan - (amazing cat pictures John!!) and network with many experienced practitioners. My attendance certainly improved my sense of well-being.

A big thank you to all staff who facilitated and contributed to the day's events.

**Lisa Cheatham**  
**SWU Executive Member**

## Social Media

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

SWU Updates: <http://swu-updates.org.uk/>

### Monthly ebulletins

Monthly ebulletins are emailed to all SWU members. If you are not receiving this then please check what email address we have.

The ebulletins are also published on the web site.

### SWU can be found on the following:

Twitter: SWU\_UK

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/](http://www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/)

Internet: [www.swu-union.org.uk](http://www.swu-union.org.uk)

# Participants needed for research project !

## Research title: Activism in the field of social work - comparative studies in the UK and Romania

This research aims to investigate the phenomenon of social work activism in the UK and Romania - more precisely, how activism is understood and manifested by social workers in both countries, and what are the factors that challenge, obstruct, and enable activism within social work profession.

Broadly defined, activism represents an action or a set of actions that aim to produce a change at a certain level (individual, local, national) in a certain area (social, political, cultural, or environmental). Moreover, activism, in our days, is often associated with social justice, human rights, empowerment, or challenging the power.

As the International Federation of Social Workers and its affiliated organisations acknowledged, social work is an emancipatory profession aiming to produce social change and to act in favour of the oppressed, while protecting and promoting strong ethical principles and values (eg social justice, human dignity, human rights, respect for diversity). Although activism is not directly mentioned in the conceptualisation of social work, it is a vital component of the profession in both, theory and as a practice.

Informed by the critical and radical theories, this comparative study uses mixed research methods (online survey and interviews) and it has the potential to contribute to a more developed theoretical and empirical understanding of the phenomenon of social work activism.

Moreover, the present investigation can impact social work practice by providing new evidence about the conditions through which activism can be enabled, and therefore ways to facilitate organisational and social change.



This call is an invitation for social workers in the UK who would like to reflect on their status as professionals and as agents of change for people who experience oppression, but also to express their perspectives on activism within social work profession. If you would like to take part in this study, please access the following link and complete the survey:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/WB8XDXB>

Thank you in advance for your contribution!

**Contact:**  
**Ionut Cioarta**  
**PhD student, University of Strathclyde**  
**Glasgow**

[ionut.cioarta@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ionut.cioarta@strath.ac.uk)

# Keep on Practice Teaching!

Social work practice learning remains one of the most effective ways of preparing students for front line practice with an estimated 90% of learning taking place from experiential and social learning (<https://www.702010forum.com>).

Practice teachers have a vitally important role with responsibility for assessing a student's readiness for practice. However, it can be difficult with the increasing demands of social work practice to find both the time and available resources to support a student on placement.

In 2017, Learning Network West (<https://www.westlearningnetwork.org.uk/>) interviewed practice teachers in the West of Scotland. Many reported a need for more support and resources; particularly where there had been a gap between practice teaching.

In collaboration with Glasgow Caledonian University, Learning Network West have introduced a series of free lunchtime workshops which are available to new, current and returning practice teachers.



Each workshop is designed to be interactive with a focus on a relevant area of practice education. Various contributors share their insights and experiences including teaching staff from Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Strathclyde and Learning Network West. Practical resources are provided and signposting to further support including the free ScOPT box provided by the Scottish Organisation for Practice Teaching (<https://practicelearning.info/>).

The first workshop in August 2019 introduced a refresher to practice teaching and was followed in September by a focus on effective supervision. Both workshops were well attended and received positive feedback. The remaining workshops on 7<sup>th</sup> October and 12<sup>th</sup> November 2019 will focus on student assessment and anti-discriminatory practice.

Workshops are currently over-subscribed with waiting lists; this suggests a real need for this type of support for practice teachers. Winter 2020 workshops are being planned and will be launched on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020 by Dr Jo Finch, University of East London. Jo is a strong advocate for practice education and wrote the inspiring SCOPT article 'Reasons to Be Cheerful Part 3' listing 10 reasons to practice teach (<https://www.scopt.co.uk/archives/4755>). These include the opportunity to develop teaching, coaching and mentoring skills; directly influencing the next generation of social workers and reminding us of why we went into social work in the first place.

A rolling programme of free workshops are planned to mirror autumn and winter student placements. Practice teacher feedback will guide the content of future workshops with increased contributions from universities, local authorities, voluntary and private sectors in the West of Scotland. It is hoped that these workshops will help support practice teachers to Keep on Practice Teaching!

**Cath Shaw**  
**Learning and Development Officer**  
**Learning Network West, Scotland**

# SWU President reports on recent work



## IFSW Conference, Vienna

John McGowan, General Secretary, and I attended the International Federation of Social Workers European Conference in Vienna from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September to Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>

September. Entitled *Social Protection and Human Dignity*, it attracted 500 delegates from 85 countries. Sixteen of those countries were outside Europe and included Australia, South Africa, Brazil and the United States.

There were 7 keynote speeches, 3 symposiums and numerous workshops and paper presentations. The symposiums were *Promoting the importance of human relationships in Social Work: the European contribution to the Global Agenda report*; *Resilience and social competence*; (these two were the result of a multi-year project on the resilience of children affected by poverty which was carried out in Russia, Romania and Austria) and *Migration and Social Inclusion*.

Rachel Dickinson, President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, gave an excellent keynote speech on the last day of the Conference entitled *The context of social work in England and the role of leadership in supporting social work to flourish*. Also on the last day of the conference I gave a presentation at the workshop on *The Working Conditions of Social Workers*. The workshop was well attended and presentations were also made by David Jones, Chair of the BASW International Committee and former World President of IFSW; and Ruth Allen, CEO of BASW. I was informed that Rachel Dickinson, who attended the workshop, was very impressed by our work in Parliament on this.

I am pleased to report that both John McGowan and I were able to see something of Vienna and partake in some delicious Austrian food and some excellent Austrian beer.

In conclusion a very impressive conference that was clearly appreciated by the delegates.

## Parliamentary Update - Meeting with Lord Judd

I had the pleasure of meeting Lord Frank Judd in the House of Lords on 6<sup>th</sup> September. Lord Frank Judd is a former Labour Minister for Foreign Affairs and a former Director of Oxfam. It was particularly suitable to meet him because he had recently spoken in the House of Lords on the subject of *The Collapse of Social Services*. It was clear that Lord Judd was entirely on our side. He said he was an "open door" and we should feel free to contact him. If there was anything specific we would like him to do we should let him know. I discussed with him our Working Conditions campaign for social workers and gave him some details from the report on the research by Dr Jermaine Ravalier of Bath Spa University. Lord Judd was very interested in the findings of the research. He said he would write to the Minister and table a question in the House of Lords on this. He said he would consider applying for a debate in the House of Lords provided he could mobilise a sufficient number of people to attend. Regular readers of the SWU Newsletter may remember that Lord Roy Kennedy led a debate in the House of Lords about *Working Conditions for Social Workers* based on the outcome of the first research project which was repeated a year later. It should perhaps be mentioned that the Government has to take notice of these debates. Lord Judd said that although he is not an expert in Social Work, he is a very strong supporter of work we do. It was a very pleasant and valuable meeting.

**James Birchall**  
**SWU President**



# Union Contact Update

Following our excellent and invigorating Fringe event, Conference and AGM, I am now concentrating on our next Union Contact Induction Day which is fast approaching and taking place on **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester.**

Induction Days are always popular and are a great opportunity for SWU members to find out more about becoming active and helping to develop and strengthen your trade union. Our Union Contacts are vital in getting SWU seen and heard in workplaces and we value their time and energy. We cover the cost of travel and accommodation for Induction Days and lunch is included, so if you'd like to come along in November, or have any questions, drop me a line at the email address below (places are going fast but at the time of writing there are still some available).

Important Update ... SWU are in talks with BASW and our A&R Team to look at developing the Union Contact role further for those who would like to undertake lower-level representational work supporting colleagues, which will involve additional GFTU training. This is an exciting advancement to the role, and several of our Union Contacts have already registered their interest. Watch this space for further details.

## Austerity Action Group

I am pleased to be part of the newly formed Austerity Action Group which has developed from the "Boot Out Austerity" Campaign, and which is now overseen by SWU. Our initial meeting was a successful opportunity to discuss future planning and action, and we are pleased to welcome several survivor group representatives who's input we greatly value. Some of our group will be present at the protests in Manchester during the Tory Party Conference, and updates and photos will be shared on social media.



## BASW Branches

Branch meetings are a great place to discuss and plan activism, enjoy social activities with like-minded people, listen to guest speakers, or if you are interested in being more involved you can become join the branch committee. All branch activities are advertised on the BASW website under the "Events" section, and if you'd like to know more about branch meetings or be involved in setting up a new branch in your local area, please let me know and I'll forward your details to the relevant BASW Officers.

## Request for articles for Newsletter

We receive some great contributions to the Newsletter from our Union Contacts, and this edition is no exception. Please try to submit items whenever you can. The Newsletter is produced for SWU Members and we really value your input. If you have anything you'd like to share, whether it be snippets, articles, quotes, or anything of interest that you would like to add to your Newsletter - you can submit a short paragraph or two, or a lengthier piece of around 500 words, the choice is yours and we look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your continued commitment to SWU - together we are strong.

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

# Fringe & AGM Impressions ...

Angi Naylor, SWU Executive Member, provides some reflections regarding the recent SWU Fringe Event

As I listened to the key note speech from Dr Sarah Hallett ( BMA Junior Doctors) on the impact of austerity on health where she explained:

- There is a link between poverty and worsening health, and that this was being made worse by government policies.
- There is a link between family earnings and health throughout life.
- Poverty has long term impact throughout life with increased chance of a variety of health issues from increased likelihood of death in first year of life and increase in respiratory illness.

I was reminded that Maud Pembers-Reeve told a similar story based on a survey conducted amongst women in the south of London (where Sarah works), where the women were all trying to manage to “keep” their families on a basic fixed low income. Her report described as unique in its mixture of factual rigor, wit and polemic, serves as witness to the tragedy that this government’s policies are having on the most vulnerable members of society. Sarah’s words come from 2019 whilst Maud Pembers-Reeve’s book *Round About A Pound A Week* refers to 1913, one hundred years before. A book that every social worker must read and a book that every MP should read. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Round\\_About\\_a\\_Pound\\_a\\_Week](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Round_About_a_Pound_a_Week)

## ... and hope

LOVE  
SOCIAL  
WORKERS

NO you’re not dreaming  
and YES you read it right.

This was a phrase used in  
a tweet at the conclusion  
of the SWU AGM and  
linked to #SWUconf19  
and @SWU\_UK

The tweet also featured the word HOPE - “Hope In Conversation & Action” being one of Solution Focus Practice expert Guy Sheenan’s inspirational phrases.

Hope, that we as social workers can give to each other through being a part of BASW our professional association, and SWU our trade union, for those times when times get very tough.

Hope that I tried to capture in the words of my song *First They Came*.

Giving Hope. Those voices (of our A&R Team) made real by Colin Anderson sharing some of the situations and solutions that they have worked through with members.



*“And my nerves were all a jitter  
As I heard the voice on the phone  
Your through to SWU and BASW  
You were never alone.”*

*First They Came - Angi Naylor 2018*

**Angi Naylor performing at  
the SWU Fringe**

 **Sarah Hallett**  
@DrSarahHal

Great to be invited to speak at this event today with @SWU\_UK, @BathSpaUni and @BASW\_UK about the ongoing impact of austerity on the health of our patients. The social workers I work alongside are remarkable people so was a real privilege.

← **Tweet**

 **Emma Lewell-Buck MP** ✓  
@EmmalowellBuck

After despairing at the state of politics, feeling very uplifted now from spending last night and this am speaking with social workers at the @SWU\_UK #SWUconf19 Thank you so much for asking me to speak and giving me some hope. Love social workers ❤️

Restoring Hope, after being saluted by other professionals like Dr Sarah Hallett.

Carys Phillips hopeful that through Research & Practices we can make improvement in our working conditions.

MP & former social worker Emma Lewell-Buck gained hope from the fellowship of being amongst social workers and restored hope by tweeting LOVE SOCIAL WORKERS.

**Angi Naylor**  
SWU Executive Member

Below: panel guests Guy Shennan, Colin Anderson, Emma Lewell-Buck, Dr Sarah Hallett and Carys Phillips



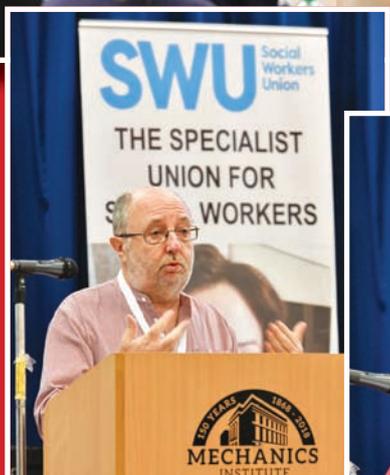
Some of the Fringe guests enjoying the event

**Colum Conway, provides an update to the soon to be regulator Social Work England**



**Professor Keith Gildart provides a historical overview of trade unionism to delegates**

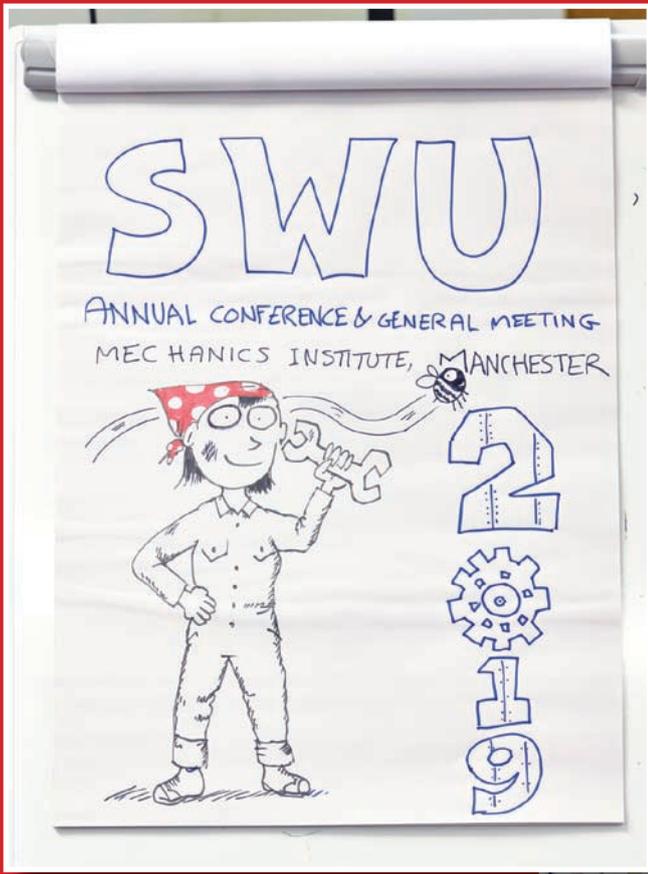
**Dr Neil Thompson facilitating the member discussion**



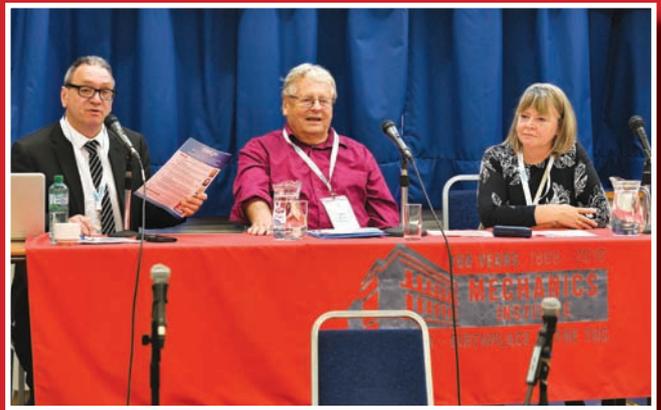
**Emma Lewell Buck MP supportive of the role of Social Workers having been a Child Protection Social Worker**

**Banner Theatre Company live show *Free for All* exposing the privatisers making big profits from the NHS**





Harry Venning covered the conference in his unique way



General Secretary, President and Assistant General Secretary opening up the conference



Conference delegates



John McGowan, General Secretary, presents the Annual Report at the 2019 conference

Jon Dudley, SWU Member and Executive Member on the BASW/SWU Austerity Action Group addresses the People's Assembly March 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019 with the following speech:

## “I bring greetings of support from the British Association of Social Workers and the Social Workers Union.

Two and a half years ago, myself and a group of our members marched the 100 miles from Birmingham to Liverpool to raise awareness of the impact of politically driven Austerity policies on some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and to share their stories. We marched under banners with a simple message: Boot Out Austerity.

Two and a half years on, things are so much worse. Many of the user run supportive services we visited on the march have closed through lack of funds. In our day to day work social workers see the effect of austerity policies on vulnerable individuals. But social work is a profession rooted not only in compassion, but in human rights and a commitment to social justice. That is why we must campaign to Boot Out Austerity.

- We have seen the systematic undermining and underfunding of public services by successive governments



- The destruction of youth services
- The wholesale closure of Children's Centres across the land
- The calamitous introduction of Universal Credit
- The crazy tussle between local authorities and the NHS to fund Continuing Health Care, which, without doubt, should be free for all
- People with disabilities who tell us that they are given the choice to work or die.

And all this against a backdrop of growing inequality and the iniquity of a government that thinks it acceptable to make benefit cuts to the poor whilst making tax cuts for the rich. We must Boot Out Austerity.

The Social Workers Union met last week, right here in the fine city of Manchester, the birthplace of the Trade Union Congress, to debate some of these issues. One of our senior members, now in his 80s, could not hold back the tears of anger and shame at the damning report on our country from the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. He never imagined seeing such a savage indictment of political failure in this nation in his lifetime - a lifetime that has spanned the creation of the National Health Service and the welfare state, both now threatened with destruction.

We must challenge all our our elected representatives at local and national level. What are they doing to turn back the tide, to invest in public services, to combat inequality and to Boot Out Austerity??

And if we don't get a satisfactory answer, what do we do? We use our collective power and our votes to BOOT THEM OUT.”

**Jon Dudley**  
SWU Member

# Austerity Action Group - *Boot Out Austerity* Marches On

Yes, Boot Out Austerity is Marching On and our distinctive banners and T-shirts, along with the amazing SWASUAA (Social Workers and Service Users Against Austerity) banner will continue to be on parade throughout the year. Earlier this month Tory MP Sajid Javid said “We have turned the page on austerity.” As social workers we know that statement does not match the day to day realities faced by many of the vulnerable people that we support. It’s more like the Government austerity policies have stained the pages which have permeated through every part of the fabric of society.

Over the last few months SWU Exec members Malcolm Jordan and Angi Naylor, along with TU Organiser Carol Reid and GS John McGowan have been working hard to get everything in place for **SWU to officially take over the Secretariat of Austerity Action Group**. Funding is in place to support this course of action, which includes one day a week staffing.

By taking on this role SWU continues to honour its 2017 motion **“This AGM confirms SWU’s ongoing commitment to the Boot Out Austerity Campaign and mandates the Executive Committee to seek ways to achieve this.”**

With **Terms of Reference** agreed, and now **underpinning our work**, we have set out some broad aims of what we want to achieve, and how we will achieve it. Our priorities are to re-activate our **social media pages and update our website** and we are grateful for the skills of BASW Comms colleagues Anthony Dhadwal and Steph Davis for taking the lead on this. Like the SWASUAA motto we will be **Side By Side For Social Justice** with our Reference Group made up from social workers, survivors/users, along with other nominated individuals and organisations.

We will build on our successes, follow similar lines to what we know worked ie small events using one or more of the five grouping:

Homelessness, Children & Family, Disabled & Mentally Ill Adults, In Work Poverty and Social Care.



## Malcolm and Angi from BASW/SWU Austerity Action Group



We will continue to use the arts - music, poetry and film.

- Promote the Campaign Action Pack *Leave No Stone Unturned in the Fight Against Austerity*.
- We will work throughout the UK through BASW Country managers, Branches and Sig group, and the SWU Workplace Union Contacts.
- We will build on our alliance and links with other individuals and groups fighting against austerity.

**Angi Naylor & Malcolm Jordan**  
**SWU Executive Members**

# Would you as a SWU Member like to nominate a SWU Ambassador?

## SWU Ambassadors

SWU seeks to appoint a number of goodwill Ambassadors whose role will be to promote the Union, Social Work and Social Workers.

- SWU seeks to recognise individuals social workers and non social workers who have embraced the spirit and values of the Social Workers Union - a special union run by social workers for social workers.
- The role of a SWU Ambassador will be to promote the Union, its values and campaigns as determined by the executive committee.



**Jermaine Ravalier being presented with his award at the recent SWU Fringe Event**



**Neil Thompson is presented with his award by SWU General Secretary, John McGowan**

Ambassadors will be appointed by the Social Workers Union Executive Committee for a two year period which is renewable. There is no monetary reward attached to this title. Expenses will be paid for where planned duties are undertaken on behalf of SWU.

Our first two Ambassadors with their Ambassador awards - presented by John McGowan, SWU General Secretary:

**Dr Jermaine Ravalier - SWU Ambassador**

**Dr Neil Thompson - SWU Ambassador**



Social workers: The calmest of people in the most adversarial of situations.....

