

Collective Action Matters More than Ever

I am writing this General Secretary introduction following SWU's attendance as invited guests at the 158th Trade Unions Congress (TUC) in Brighton. It was a pleasure to be joined by SWU interim Chair Chrissie Beatty.

Congress is the policy making body of the TUC where motions are proposed and discussed and form the basis of the TUC's work for the next year and is usually attended by about 600 delegates from approximately 48 affiliated unions. There was a real sense of collective support within the main auditorium but perhaps more significantly, optimism that there must be a better way in which society works for all its citizens.



TUC General Secretary Paul Nowack welcomed the 'biggest increase

since records began' in respect to trade union membership which remains one of the most effective ways for workers in the UK to protect their rights, improve their working conditions and influence decisions that affect their

professional lives. Beyond representation, unions provide a community of support or belonging, and a collective voice capable of driving positive change both within workplaces and across society. For professions such as social work, specialist unions like SWU also ensure that the unique challenges facing practitioners are understood and represented by people with direct knowledge of the profession.

Discussions at congress reinforced why SWU's mission remains so important. At a time when social workers continue to face significant pressures, being part of a specialist trade union means having a collective voice that understands

the realities of practice and is committed to improving the profession. Together, through SWU and BASW cooperation, we can ensure that social workers are heard, valued and empowered to make a difference for our profession and the people we support. In this respect, our Advice and Representation service is key, and I would like to thank the team for their ongoing support that ensures our members are never alone.

It was also a pleasure to hold our *Talk to SWU* webinar live from Brighton as we shared with members “What we do at SWU and how to get involved”. SWU’s role in social work as a specialist trade union was at the centre of the webinar - essentially what you want SWU to be for you, whether that be advice and representation in uncertain times, or the added opportunity of campaigning and shaping the vision and future identity of SWU, a union run by social workers for social workers.

An example of how cooperation can amplify member voice was demonstrated recently with SWU’s letter to Glasgow City Council and our joint statement with the Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW) calling upon policy makers to reconsider how equal pay reforms will affect social work roles where some social workers will face significant reductions in pay. Any pay cut in our profession will undoubtedly lead to a negative impact on recruitment and retention and employee burnout in an already over stretched system. While SWU and SASW accept the need to address historical pay injustices, 82% of Scottish Social Workers are women, and we feel the proposed changes should not create a new inequality in the attempt to correct another.

SWU and SASW emphasised the importance of recognising social work as the distinct profession it is rather than placing it within a generic local authority job family. After all, social work means all things to all people with statutory duties, public protection responsibilities and the levels of risk that are not reflected in the proposed pay reforms.

SWU is a proud member of the Cliff Edge Northern Ireland Coalition, and I encourage our members in Northern Ireland to attend the coalition’s webinar with us on 16th October launching 4 key asks to protect people and families across Northern Ireland.

I’m also looking forward to hearing the good practice research for recruitment and retention of social workers in coastal communities at the free conference on 13th October in Bournemouth hosted by SWU Ambassador Prof Jermaine Ravalier and his research team.

Finally, it was a pleasure to momentarily return to a previous occupation as university lecturer and speak to BSc and MSc students at the University of Swansea on what SWU can do for its members and how you our members can shape the future of SWU. It was good to once again feel the optimism of a social work cohort that is already making a difference.

The opportunity to advocate for the issues that matter to you is ongoing. Social Justice guides social work practice, and you can expect the same from your union. On a personal level, an issue that has been weighing on me are the extremely callous remarks in the media about migrants and asylum seekers. SWU, BASW, and Asylum Matters are continuing to work together and have started work on a new campaign which we hope to announce in the following months. In the meantime, I am reminded of the following words and wanted to share them with you here

...you have to understand, that no one puts their children in a boat, unless the water is safer than the land...

“Home” by Warsan Shire

See you soon,

Dave

Dave Callow
General Secretary
dave.callow@swu-union.org.uk

Parliamentary monitoring report - to 21st September 2026



Campaign Focus - Key Issues and Debates in Parliament

1. Anti-poverty

- **9th September** - [Removing children from poverty](#): The minister acknowledged that poverty remained uneven geographically. The discussion highlighted housing costs, parental employment and childcare costs as important drivers requiring longer-term action.
- **Fuel poverty**: [MPs raised household energy costs](#). The Government said reducing electricity costs was central to tackling fuel poverty and referred to measures including the Warm Home Discount, reductions in electricity costs and the £15bn Warm Homes Plan.
- **9th September** - [socio-economic disadvantage](#): The Government announced plans to close the Social Mobility Commission and establish a Class Unit within government, with a focus on low-income families and socio-economic disadvantage. It intends to introduce a Socio-Economic Duty requiring public bodies to consider the interests of lower-income families when making decisions

2. Workforce

- **3rd September** - [The Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) - Committee questioned Children and Families Minister Josh MacAlister. He said the Government is introducing:
 - a two-year post-qualifying early-career standard for social workers;
 - funded professional development during those first two years;
 - additional standards and professional development for lead child-protection practitioners;

He also told the committee that the workforce position had been improving, citing falling vacancy rates, increasing permanent appointments and reduced use of agency social workers. He said there were now more social workers employed by local authorities than previously.

The committee also discussed: social-worker caseloads and SEND work taking up social workers' capacity.

3. Social care reform

- **The Big Conversation on Care** is open until November and is focused on the question: When we are old or disabled, or have a serious illness, who should support us and how?
- caseycommission.co.uk/bigconversation/

Parliamentary Questions (PQ)

- A [PQ asked the Education Secretary about the potential impact of placing a qualified social worker in schools](#) to help with early identification and safeguarding of children experiencing unmet need.
- The Minister referred to a randomised controlled trial involving 291 schools in 21 local authorities. The evaluation found no statistically significant impact on measures including child-protection enquiries, child-in-need assessments, referrals, children entering care or days spent in care. It also found the model more costly than standard social-work practice and recommended that it not be continued or scaled up.

Round Up of Committees

- **2nd September** - [The Health and Social Care Committee and Education Committee](#) held oral evidence on children and young people's mental health. This was a practical discussion about the role of social workers within children's mental-health pathways.
- **16th September** - [Children's social care inquiry opens](#) - the House of Lords Public Services Committee opened an inquiry into children's social care, including workforce and service-delivery questions. The inquiry is accepting written evidence up to 26th October 2026.

Cross Party Group for Social Work

The Cross Party Group for Social Work welcomes two new members:

- Wendy Chamberlain, Liberal Democrat MP for North East Fife
- Andy McDonald, Labour MP for Middlesbrough and Thornaby East

SWU and BASW, as joint secretariat of the Cross Party Group for Social Work, will be consulting social workers about the use of AI in social work as part of their campaign to improve the working conditions of social workers across the UK. This webinar on **5th November 2026** will listen to social workers' experience of AI in the workplace and members are encouraged to attend. See the "Upcoming Events" section of this newsletter for more information.

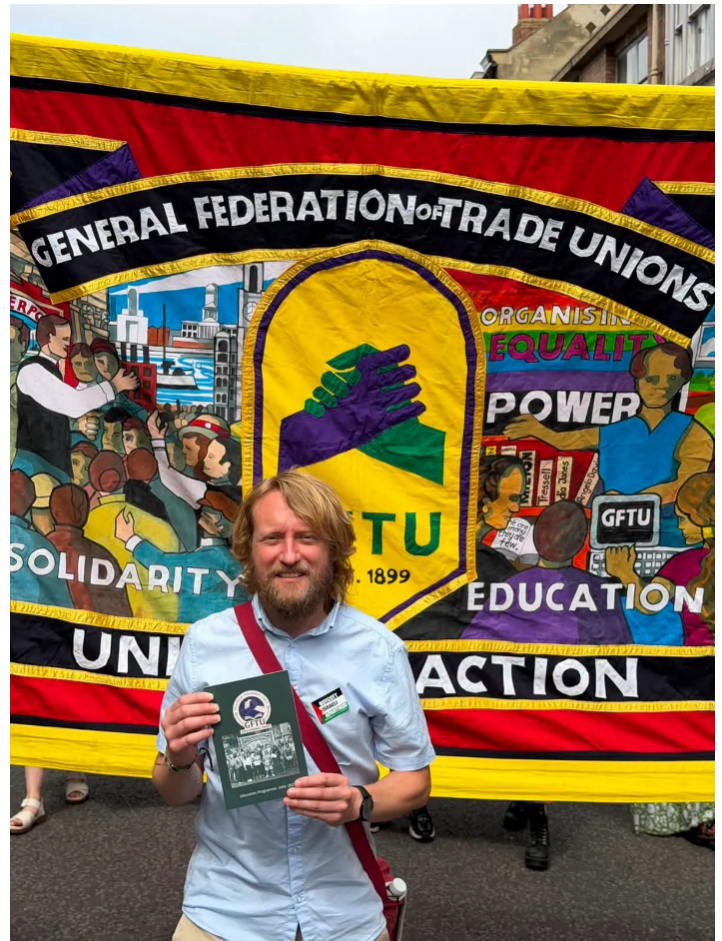
GFTU Education Programme 2026-2027

SWU members can access most of these GFTU training courses free of charge - see what's on offer and register today!

The General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) Education Trust launched their 2026-27 Education Programme at this year's Durham Miners' Gala, with an expanded offer for trade union activists and workplace representatives across our movement. At a time when trade union membership is growing, the development of confident, skilled activists is as important as ever.

The new education programme includes more than 90 courses delivered through a mixture of online learning, residential events and specialist development programmes and includes subjects such as workplace organising, negotiation skills, our political economy and trade union leadership.

For SWU members, the programme offers opportunities to develop knowledge and confidence as well as to work with trade unionists from different sectors, building upon a wider sense of belonging. As a member of the GFTU family, SWU strongly values the role that education plays in developing the next generation of trade union leaders.



The launch of the 2026-27 programme at Durham demonstrates the continued commitment of the GFTU to invest in you and ensure that trade union education remains accessible, relevant and transformative for workers within our society.

SWU members are encouraged to browse the new GFTU Education Programme and take advantage of this opportunity to support your personal and professional development within social work and trade unionism.

You can also see what one of the residential courses is like in [SWU Executive Committee Member Edith Till's report on the 2-day GFTU Summer School](#). This high-octane course taught dozens of workers - including several members of SWU - radical political economy, organising skills, and lessons from our history for today.

[Click here to view a full list of the GFTU Education Programme 2026-2027 training courses](#), [click here for a PDF version of the full timetable of courses](#), or view upcoming courses on the SWU website: <https://swu-union.org.uk/gftu-training>

Being Visible: A Black Male Social Worker's Journey

Black History Month offers an opportunity not only to celebrate achievements and contributions, but also to reflect on the experiences, challenges, and progress that continue to shape our communities and professions. As a Black male social worker and Team Manager within a child protection service, this period of reflection is particularly important to me.

I qualified as a social worker in 2014, and when I first entered the profession, one of the things that immediately stood out was the absence of Black men within social work. There were many talented Black female practitioners, managers, and leaders, but comparatively few Black men. For me, this was significant. I wanted to be part of changing that narrative. I wanted to demonstrate that Black men could not only thrive within health and social care settings, but could also become trusted professionals, leaders, and advocates for children and families.

As a young Black man, born in South London and raised in North West London, social work was not a profession that many people expected me to enter. When people think of social workers, they do not always picture someone who looks like me. Yet I quickly realised that my identity could be a strength. Throughout my career, I have worked alongside children and young people who often remarked on how unusual it was to see a Black male social worker. For many, representation mattered. It provided a different perspective of Black masculinity and challenged stereotypes about who can occupy professional and influential roles.

Representation has always been important to me because visibility matters. When people cannot see themselves reflected within a profession, it can be

difficult for them to imagine pursuing it. By simply showing up, building relationships, and carrying out my role with professionalism and integrity, I hope I have contributed in some small way to broadening perceptions of what a social worker can look like.

However, while I am proud of my progression, the journey has not always been straightforward. Recent data and discussions within the profession have highlighted that Black social workers are disproportionately represented in fitness-to-practise investigations and hearings when compared with their White counterparts. These findings raise important questions about racial inequality and systemic disparities that continue to exist within our profession. For many Black practitioners, these realities are not surprising because they often reflect lived experiences.

There have certainly been times when I have experienced imposter syndrome. Despite being qualified for over a decade and progressing into management, there have been moments when I have questioned whether I needed to work harder to prove my competence, expertise, and credibility. There are times when I have been conscious of how I present myself, how I communicate, and how my actions may be perceived. These are pressures that many Black professionals will recognise.

Even now, as someone in a leadership position, I sometimes reflect on the barriers that remain. Progressing through professional ranks can still feel like navigating a glass ceiling. It raises difficult questions about visibility, opportunity, and representation. Is it easier to be seen but harder to be promoted? Why do we still see relatively few Black men occupying senior leadership positions within social work and beyond?

These reflections have motivated me to continue creating spaces where Black men are visible. Through the Social Work and Mental Health Podcast and other professional platforms, I have sought to amplify voices, share experiences, and demonstrate that Black men belong within these spaces. Visibility should not be the exception; it should be the norm.

As we celebrate Black History Month, I am reminded that representation is not simply about being present. It is about having a voice, influence, and a seat at the table. My hope is that future generations of Black male social workers will enter a profession where they see themselves reflected at every level, from frontline practice to senior leadership.

In addition to my role as a social worker and manager, I have also been a proud member of the Social Workers Union for nearly two years. For me, representation is not only important within frontline practice and leadership, but also within the political and trade union spaces that influence our profession. I wanted to be a Black male voice within these arenas too. Being part of the Social Workers Union has provided opportunities to engage in important discussions and enter spaces that can shape policy and practice, including attending events in Parliament. Through my own professional work and advocacy, I have also had opportunities to engage with the Department for Education. These experiences have reinforced my belief that Black social workers should be visible wherever decisions are being made about our profession, our communities, and the children and families we serve. My journey is still ongoing, but my message is simple: Black men can be visible, professional, compassionate, and effective leaders within social work. We belong in these spaces, and our presence enriches the profession.

Black History Month

reminds us how far we have come, but it also highlights the work that remains. I hope that by continuing to represent, challenge, and contribute, I can inspire other Black men to recognise that they belong in every space, whether that is in practice, leadership, academia, politics, or the trade union movement. True progress comes when our voices are not only present, but are heard, valued, and influential in shaping the future of social work. As Black professionals, we should not only have a seat at the table, but also the confidence and opportunity to help shape the agenda. That, for me, is what representation is truly about.

About the author



Nana Yabbey-Hagan is a Qualified Social Worker for Children and Families of 10 years and a member of the SWU Executive Committee. Nana is currently a Team Manager for a Looked After Children's Team, a Practice Educator, ASYE assessor, University Lecturer, mentor to Social Work Students and NQSWs, and co-host of [The Social Worker & The Mentor Podcast](#).

Let Me Explain - A New Podcast

A lot of social work isn't necessarily complicated. Sometimes, it is simply explained in complicated ways.

What does "safeguarding" mean? What does it mean when someone is assessed as lacking capacity? Why can't a social worker just give someone the service they are asking for? And why does everyone keep talking about "risk"?

If you've ever found yourself wondering about any of these things, you're probably not alone.

Social work has its own language.

Words like capacity, safeguarding, best interests, prevention, assessment and risk are part of everyday professional life. But outside the profession, they can be confusing, intimidating or mean something completely different. And sometimes, I think we make things harder than they need to be.

That is where *Let Me Explain* comes in.

Launching on 1st October 2026 on all major streaming platforms, the podcast explores the language, ideas, laws, theories, systems and decisions behind social work, and asks what all of this actually means for the people involved.

I'm Keleigh, a social work apprentice working in hospital-based adult social care. I found myself having the same conversations again and again: explaining what social workers do, unpacking professional terminology, and trying to make sense of the law and systems that shape everyday practice.

Eventually, I started wondering, what if we did more of that explaining publicly?

Social work is often reduced to "helping people". Of course, helping people is part of it. But social work is much bigger than that.

It involves advocacy, support, challenge, assessment, safeguarding, difficult conversations and decisions about rights, wishes, risks and responsibilities.

It also happens in very different settings, from children and families to adult social care, mental health, hospitals, communities, criminal justice and education.

So *Let Me Explain* isn't simply a podcast about what social workers do.

It is a podcast about why we do it, how we do it, and what it means for the people involved.

Why do we ask certain questions? What does the law actually say? Who gets to make a decision? What happens when professionals disagree with what a person wants? And what happens when the systems around someone don't quite fit the life they are living?

We'll explore social work theory, law, values and ethics, reflection, risk, safeguarding, mental capacity, the Care Act, deprivation of liberty and much more.

But we'll also talk about things that might not immediately sound like social work: grief, dying, social isolation, pets, difficult family relationships and the messy reality of people's lives.

Because people's lives don't fit neatly into professional timescales. They don't wait for services to catch up.

Social work happens in people's homes, families, hospitals and communities. It happens when someone is frightened, when a family disagrees, when professionals see things differently, or when a decision has to be made and there isn't an easy answer.

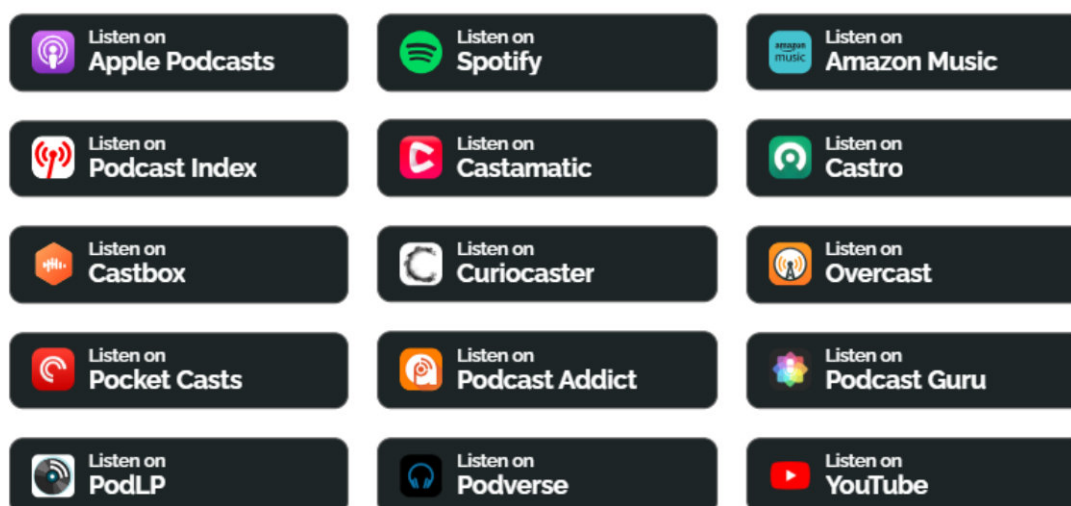
And that means the questions matter.

There are no assumptions here. You don't need to know the terminology before you listen. No question is too basic or simple.

You can listen to *Let Me Explain* here:

<https://rss.com/podcasts/let-me-explain-social-work>

You can listen to this podcast on all these platforms.



The podcast is intended for learning, reflection and professional development. It is not legal or professional advice. Please refer to current legislation, guidance, local policy and professional supervision where appropriate.



About the author

Keleigh Smalley-Willows is a SWU member, a social work apprentice working in hospital-based adult social care, and a winner of the SWU Assignment: World Social Work Day 2026 essay competition.

Points of Departure: A Harry Cleaver Reader Book Launch with Robert Ovetz



Robert Ovetz launching *Points of Departure: Refusal of Work and the Crisis of Capitalism: The Collected Writings of Harry Cleaver* (Common Notions 2026) on 16th July 2026 in MayDay Rooms, London.

“Refuse work. Revolt against capitalism. Read Harry Cleaver. In that order. Repeat.”

Points of Departure: Refusal of Work and the Crisis of Capitalism: The Collected Writings of Harry Cleaver is a definitive collection of Harry Cleaver’s best unpublished, translated, or lesser-known writings on the refusal of work, class composition and “inversion of the class perspective,” the crisis of capitalism. He shows the ongoing necessity of re-reading Marx theory to understand, find points of departure from, and finally end capitalism before it ends us. The reader is co-edited by Robert Ovetz, author, organiser, lecturer and former long-time student of Cleaver, and author and organiser Kevin Van Meter.

Points of Departure was released on [Common Notion Press’s new Class Compositions series in September 2026](#). A special edition has been released to coincide with the June 2026 Labor Notes conference in Chicago and will have a full release in October 2026.

The book launch discussion with Robert Ovetz began with the idea that struggles over work, technology, and management shaped how workers experienced capitalism. Perry’s writing emphasised three core principles: moving beyond capitalism, recognising how workers opened spaces of resistance, and understanding how these spaces revealed glimpses of a possible post-capitalist future. These principles helped explain the relationship between workers’ struggles and the movement of capitalism itself. Instead of seeing workers as merely reacting to capitalist power, Perry argued that workers’ actions often drove change, even when it felt like capital was dominant.

The conversation turned to what people saw as the biggest issues in society - the pressures of work, the anxiety around productivity, and the physical and mental toll that modern labour demanded. One speaker described their own experience: mental health deteriorating, physical pain, worsening eyesight, and exhaustion from constant strain. These conditions had pushed them into the labour movement.

They described alienation not as an abstract concept but as something deeply physical and spiritual - the sense that work drained both body and mind.

Without alienation, people could have been healthier, more present, and more connected to themselves and others. That, they argued, was one of the primary concerns of the time.

Another reflection drew on Marx's idea that a piece of humanity was embedded in every commodity or service produced. Workers literally put their bodies, health, and survival into their labour. This led to resistance - sometimes by changing careers entirely, sometimes by small acts like taking breaks, slowing down, or leaving early. These everyday acts of refusal were often the starting point for collective organising.

Union activists pointed out that many of these issues were framed as "health and safety," but the deeper truth was that workers simply wanted less work. Robert, the co-editor, shared: Even jobs that seemed intellectual or non-physical, like teaching or writing, took a physical toll. Writing could damage the back, strain muscles, and create long-term health problems.

Hidden labour - the emotional, administrative, and organisational work that institutions relied on -was unevenly distributed and often invisible.

Some workers carried far more of this burden than others, and it led to burnout and health issues. Institutions benefited from this hidden labour because wages concealed the true amount of work being done.

Care work and social work were highlighted as examples where the most demanding tasks were undervalued. The therapeutic and emotional aspects of social work often overshadowed the formal duties, consuming personal time and reshaping one's personality. Emails, crises, and emotional labour spilled into life outside work, creating imbalance.

The conversation shifted to the issues young people faced. From the audience, one parent described supporting their seventeen-year-old through school, exams, and the pressure to perform academically while also trying not to overwork. Young people faced contradictory messages: work hard but don't burn out; succeed but stay relaxed; care about grades but don't panic. Alongside this, teenagers were dealing with toxic masculinity, climate anxiety, and social pressures. Law students who wanted to do well often struggled with the same contradictions - striving for success while resisting the stress and panic the system produced.

The group then discussed AI and the fear that it would eliminate jobs.

In Silicon Valley, people panicked about AI replacing human labour. But the speaker argued that this fear was largely propaganda. AI was unlikely to replace all work; instead, it would break down tasks and automate small parts of jobs, increasing productivity and often increasing the amount of work workers had to do. Historically, new technologies - trains replacing horse-drawn wagons, telephones replacing telegraphs, automobiles replacing trains - destroyed some jobs but created new ones. Capitalism depends on labour exploitation, so it continually reinvests surplus profit into creating more work, not eliminating it.

Robert referred to a science-fiction film where the wealthy built a machine that granted eternal life, while Earth became a wasteland with billions of people and no work except building robot police to suppress protests. The point was that such a world would not have been capitalist, because capitalism could not function without labour exploitation. Capitalism required workers; without work, the system collapsed.

The discussion returned to Perry's analysis: technological change always reshaped labour, but it never removed the need for workers.

AI would follow the same pattern. It would destroy some jobs, create others, and intensify exploitation in new ways. The real issue was not whether AI replaced workers but how workers resisted, organised, and shaped the future of labour.

Throughout the book launch event, the theme remained clear: workers were struggling under immense pressure - physical, mental, emotional, and social. Hidden labour, alienation, and technological change all contributed to a sense of crisis. Yet within these struggles lay the seeds of resistance. Workers refused, organised, and carved out spaces that challenged capitalist relations. These spaces offered glimpses of what a different future might look like - one where work did not dominate life, where health and humanity were prioritised, and where collective action reshaped society.

About Robert Ovetz

Robert Ovetz holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Texas-Austin and is a senior lecturer in Political Science at San José State University, where he teaches labour relations in the MPA program and focuses on academic labour organising and the labour movement. He is the author of When Workers Shot Back (Brill, 2018 and Haymarket, 2019), We the Elites (Pluto, 2022), and the forthcoming Rebels for the System (Haymarket), and is co-authoring a book on organising against AI in higher education. Robert is co-editor with Kari Lydersen and Kevin Van Meter of Real World Labor, Vol. 4 (Dollars & Sense, 2024). He is also an editor and contributor to critical labour studies volumes, a labour writer for Dollars & Sense, and has been published widely in multiple languages. His writings can be found at: <https://sjsu.academia.edu/RobertOvetzPhD>



Event report written by SWU Executive
Committee Member Edith Till.

A black and white photograph of a man and a woman walking a dog on a grassy hill. The man is wearing a dark vest over a sweater and jeans, and the woman is wearing a light-colored sweater and a dark jacket. They are both smiling and holding hands. A large, fluffy dog is walking on a leash to the right. The background shows a hilly landscape with some buildings in the distance.

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SASW & SWU strongly insist that Glasgow City Council revoke “fire & rehire” threats

Following news that Glasgow Council is potentially implementing a fire and rehire of 23,000 workers across the city, SASW and SWU have warned of the imminent damage this will cause to staff trust, livelihoods, and functionality of statutory services, issuing a plea to the Council to seriously re-think their actions.

While stressing that a way forward must be urgently found, SASW and SWU also highlight that this is yet another reason why Social Workers require their own nationally agreed terms and conditions, as set out in [SASW's One Deal for Social Work campaign](#).

"Calm & Respectful Negotiation Needed"

It is disappointing that posturing politics between parties is creating what is an unacceptable level of distress and anguish for our members and their colleagues while they are tasked with supporting the most at-risk and vulnerable people in the City. We condemned the recent deal that would leave a large number of our members significantly worse off financially, but we also recognise the need to address historic pay injustices without creating new ones.

Negotiations need to find a way forward that avoids sensationalist and inflammatory options of last resort. This requires calm and respectful negotiation from all involved towards a deal that values our members and their colleagues. If negotiations can't resume and resolve the differences quickly, we will need to see the Scottish Government take an active role in resolving the dispute. As there are such large financial implications for Scotland's biggest city and its public support



The graphic features a large purple double quote icon at the top left. To its right, a quote is written in a sans-serif font. Below the quote, the SASW and SWU logos are displayed side-by-side. SASW is in blue with the tagline 'The professional association for social work and social workers' underneath. SWU is in blue with 'Social Workers Union' underneath. At the bottom of the graphic, the words 'POWERFUL | RESPECTED | TRANSFORMATIVE' are written in a bold, sans-serif font, with each word in a different color (blue, orange, and purple respectively).

“It is disappointing that posturing politics between parties is creating what is an **unacceptable level of distress and anguish** for our members and their colleagues while they are tasked with supporting the most at-risk and vulnerable people in the city.

Negotiations must find a way forward that avoids inflammatory options of last resort. This requires **calm and respectful negotiation from all involved** towards a deal that values our members and their colleagues.

SASW **SWU** Social Workers Union
The professional association for social work and social workers

POWERFUL | RESPECTED | TRANSFORMATIVE

and protection workforce, this dispute needs to be resolved amicably, responsibly, and quickly.

Trust has already been eroded in the authority as an employer, and the goodwill of the workforce, which the system so much relies on, has been undermined. If fire and rehire goes ahead, there is a significant risk to the authority's ability to meet its statutory functions, thereby putting those who rely on support and protection in danger. The position our members and their colleagues are now in highlights why social workers so urgently need their own terms and conditions, like teachers who are exempted from this current action.

SASW and SWU issued a joint statement on the Glasgow City Council pay deal which you can read on the next page of this newsletter.

Joint SASW & SWU Statement on the Glasgow City Council Pay Deal

A long-standing equal pay claim in Glasgow has led to the local authority announcing plans for a rationalisation of pay and job roles as part of a new pay deal for the City. This deal will negatively impact some of our members and their colleagues in social work roles.



Key points

- Social work is in a single local authority job family, which does not recognise the profession's unique responsibilities, risks and statutory duties.
- This deal will destabilise social work in Glasgow and undermine leadership and management roles, creating new risks for vulnerable people at a time of intense pressure on services.
- The undervaluing of social work is a national structural issue, not limited to Glasgow, and reflects long-standing problems in how councils recognise and support the profession.
- CoSLA and the Scottish Government must now work with the profession to deliver fair, sustainable national terms and conditions through One Deal for Social Work.

We recognise the need for Glasgow City Council to implement large-scale pay changes, and we fully support action to rectify historic pay injustices.

There are, however, serious concerns about the way these changes are being taken forward. The inclusion of social work within a single local authority job family means the profession is not properly recognised or understood. Social work carries distinct responsibilities, statutory duties and levels of risk that cannot be captured within a generic job family structure.

It is unacceptable that Team Leaders, Managers and other skilled and dedicated social work professionals are facing significant pay cuts at a time when they have never held more risk, in teams already affected by vacancies, burnout, staff churn and increasingly challenging national agendas for change.

We acknowledge the Accounts Commission report, which warns that failure to act would pose a risk to services. But we are equally clear that this plan, implemented in its current form and applied to these roles, will also create risk. If imposed unchanged, it will significantly increase the likelihood of a serious failure in adult support, children's services or Justice Social Work.

Social work is a unique profession, providing a unique public service. Our members and their colleagues deserve to know that their often-challenging work is valued and their roles fairly remunerated. These changes most acutely affect the sustainability of leadership and management positions. Thriving teams require every role to be supported and valued.

Our members should be able to trust that their pay and conditions are not at the mercy of irregularities in council finances or political tensions between national and local government. 82% of social workers in Scotland are women. Correcting one pay injustice against women should not create another. Our campaign for national terms and conditions, One Deal for Social Work, will put social workers on a par with other comparable professionals. This will create the working environment needed for better practice, improved outcomes and value for the public. CoSLA and the Scottish Government must now work together to put social work on a sustainable path forward. The status quo is unacceptable to our members and their colleagues.

We are jointly raising these issues with Glasgow City Council, CoSLA and the Scottish Government. Our focus remains supporting our members who are adversely affected. If you need advice, representation or any form of support, please get in touch.

The refreshed BASW Professional Capabilities Framework 2026



The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) is a free resource for all social workers and students in England. It is a framework for the nine levels of social work in England which you can use to identify which level you are, define your professional capabilities, and develop your career.

This refreshed 2026 version is structured around three domains - Purpose, Practice and Impact - and the nine levels that apply across career stages from entry to training through to strategic social worker. You can access this framework on the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) website: <https://basw.co.uk/training-cpd/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf>

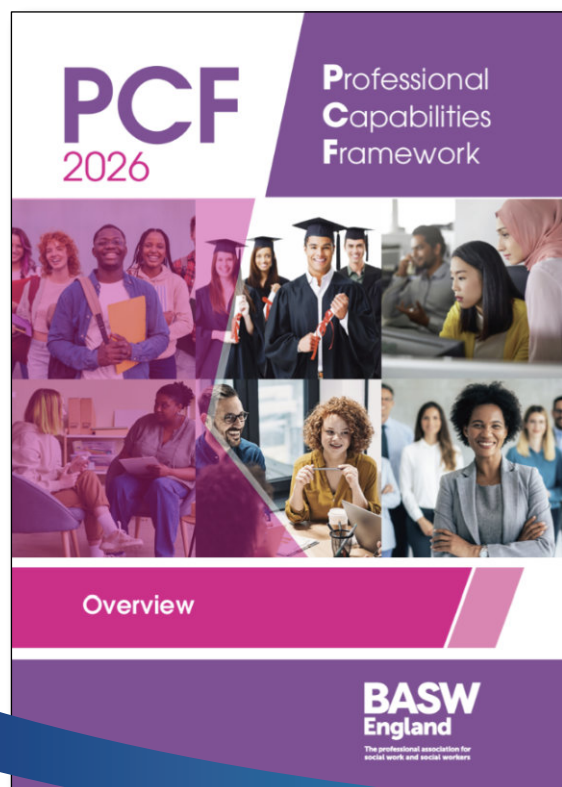
What's new?

While the core principles of the PCF remain unchanged, several important updates have been introduced to reflect contemporary practice:

- **Social justice at the centre:** Social justice has always been central to social work, but participants called for it to be (in the words of one workshop participant) “a golden thread running through the entire framework”. In response, social justice has been introduced as a new foundational principle, reflecting the anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-oppressive nature of social work. This reinforces the reality that social work is an active pursuit of equity and human rights, while recognising the ongoing tension between our aspirations for social justice in the realities of day-to-day practice.
- **Structural renumbering:** To improve coherence, particularly for students and newly qualified social workers, the domains have been renumbered to align with their presentation in the fan. ‘Values and Ethics’ has become Domain 1 while ‘Professionalism’, which has been located at the end of the fan since the 2018 revision, is now Domain 9, creating a smoother and more logical flow.
- **Optimising content:** The language throughout the PCF has been updated to improve accessibility, inclusivity and clarity. Specific descriptors have been strengthened in several areas, including leadership and reflective supervision, whistle-blowing, and political literacy. In recognition of the rapidly evolving digital landscape, expectations around the ethical use of generative artificial intelligence have also been incorporated.
- **The PCF Resource Hub:** Social workers told BASW they wanted practical support to bring the PCF to life. In the next phase of this programme of work, BASW will establish a dynamic and evolving PCF Resource Hub.

Guidance on using the 2026 updated PCF

The updated PCF was launched on 1st July at a webinar led by BASW members of the Professional Capabilities and Development Group, Polly Sykes and Gemma Webb. You can watch it here: https://youtu.be/XUB0xIFTCRo?si=9Dp_voyoEkC2hx_Y



This framework update has been led by BASW England in conjunction with various partnership organisations and people with lived experience. It has preserved the best of the PCF and integrated elements that consultation respondents considered to be most important and useful, while also modernising, clarifying and developing key aspects.

In order to allow maximum flexibility for Social Workers and course providers, many of whom may already be undertaking specific pieces of work in line with the existing PCF, BASW has recommended that the PCF Refresh is adopted over the course of 2026-2027.

You can read BASW England's PCF 2026 Overview here: https://basw.co.uk/sites/default/files/2026-07/pcf-overview_0.pdf

The Social Work Show, Manchester

Meet the SWU and BASW England team at The Social Work Show in Manchester on 28th September 2026:



Left to right: SWU Communications Officer Dr Shawn Major, SWU General Secretary Dave Callow, SWU Operations Manager Joanne Marciano, and BASW England Professional Officer Denise Monks

Thank you to everyone who stopped by the SWU and BASW England stall throughout the day to say hello and have a chat. It was brilliant to see so many of our social worker, NQSW, and student members! We invite you to reach out to us to follow up on anything - from getting more involved with your union by becoming a [SWU Union Contact](#), to all of the free training courses available to you through the [GFTU Education Programme](#), to how to apply to run your own campaign through the [SWU Campaign Fund](#), to activism opportunities. Active and engaged members are the lifeblood of SWU and we are proud to be your union.

The conference programme was packed full and we encourage you to add future Social Work Show events to your calendar as they are free to attend and there is so much to inform, inspire and support your professional development.

Below are a few of the sessions from the day.



SWU General Secretary Dave Callow and BASW England Professional Practice Lead Wayne Reid

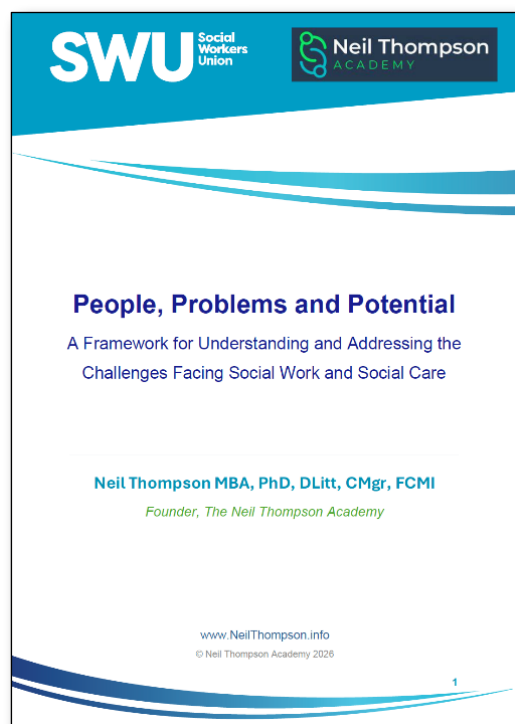
Anti-discriminatory practice in 2026

SWU Ambassador Dr Neil Thompson encouraged a full room of attendees to reflect on how social work can identify and recognise the oppressive barriers that exist within our society. In this context, he explored how language plays a critical role and can be disempowering, while social work values guide us towards empowerment.

Neil clearly explained why tackling discrimination and oppression is not an optional extra - despite the complexities involved in this, including the legacy of earlier oversimplified and aggressive approaches to the subject matter - and offered guidance on how to make constructive progress in 2026. The session allowed social workers time to consider the barriers to finding reflective spaces within their busy working day and the significance of this upon their practice or, as Neil stated, "the more pressure you are under, the more reflective you need to be."



Dave Callow and Dr Neil Thompson



People, Problems, and Potential: Managing change in social work and social care

Social work and social care are under more pressure than ever. In his second session, Dr Neil Thompson offered a framework for making sense of it - and made a case for the kind of leadership development the field actually needs.

SWU has recently published Neil's report "People, Problems, and Potential: Managing change in social work and social care" that examines the situation through the lens of his 3Ps framework: where there are People, there will be Problems - but there will also be Potential. The report sets out the challenges facing all of us in social work and social care and offers the 3Ps as a practical way of making sense of a complex picture. There are no magic solutions on offer - but there is plenty of food for thought to take the conversation further and deeper.

You can download the report for free on the SWU website: <https://swu-union.org.uk/resources-training/swu-leaflets-and-information>

How do we keep our social workers? Recruitment and retention of social workers in England's coastal regions



Left to right: Dr Nazm Berry, Marria Riaz, Dr Joe Hanley, Dr Paulina Wegrzynek, Dr Ciarán Murphy, and Dave Callow

made a measurable difference - and what to avoid. It finished with practical recommendations that attendees could take back to their own teams, plus a look at what this means for how workforce funding and support should be targeted going forward.

The team's article "[Not just a day at the beach: challenges experienced by social workers in England's coastal communities](#)" has been accepted for publication and will appear in a future edition of the *British Journal of Social Work*. It will present findings from interviews with current and former social workers in coastal communities in England, with a focus on the challenges faced.

If you weren't able to attend this session, here's some great news: On **Tuesday 13th October 2026**, SWU Ambassador Jermaine Ravalier and his research team will be bringing together those who contributed to this research - alongside social workers, employers and other key stakeholders - for a dissemination conference at **Key West Bar & Grill, Bournemouth Pier**. This event is free to attend and more details are available in the "Upcoming Events" section of this newsletter. We hope to see you there!

Social work in coastal areas has high vacancy rates, reliance on agency staff, and good people leaving faster than you can replace them. This talk hosted by SWU shared findings from an NIHR-funded programme that set out to understand why coastal areas seem to get hit harder than most - and what's actually working to turn things around.

This practice-focus session laid out what retention actually looks like in the coastal authorities studied - the things managers did that

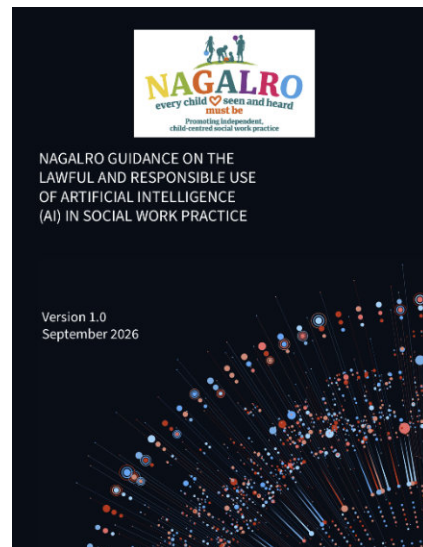
Who Holds the Pen? AI, Professional Judgement and the Future of Social Work

In this session national social work leader, researcher, and author Claudia Megele explored how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is influencing practice. She discussed how it can be used critically, ethically, and responsibly while keeping professional expertise, curiosity, and judgement at the heart of social work.

It was also exciting to learn that Nagalro, the national professional association for guardians ad litem and reporting officers, has very recently published *Guidance on the Lawful and Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Social Work Practice* for their members in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

“When AI is used by social work professionals, the technology has the capacity to increase efficiency by carrying out time-consuming administrative tasks; it also brings with it at least three risks which professionals must be aware of. Firstly, issues about confidentiality and privacy; secondly, the risk that AI can produce inaccurate or false information; and thirdly, an emerging risk that AI can lead to cybersecurity threats.”

Nagalro's guidance is free to download here: https://www.nagalro.com/userfiles/pages/files/version_1_final.pdf



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SHADES of BIAS

Reflective case study template



VICTIMS/SURVIVORS



WITNESSES/
OBSERVERS



PERSON/ PEOPLE
RESPONSIBLE
(WHERE APPROPRIATE)

REVEAL > REFLECT > REPAIR

#CRUSHINGSTEREOTYPESDAILY 🗨️💡

Honouring Our Communities

Written by BASW Professional Practice Lead & Social Worker Wayne Reid

Black History Month invites us to pause, remember, acknowledge and celebrate. However, I would like to see Black history and the reflections it invites being recognised routinely - all year round.

At its simplest, I see 'community' as people connected by location, common interests, characteristics or social identity. Although, 'community' is much more than just geography or categorisation. It's about relationships, experiences, knowledge, stories and values that exist between people - providing belonging, identity, 'tough love', support and opportunity. Communities have the potential to shape us in ways we don't always realise until much later in life.

One person from my own professional community who has had a particularly significant influence on my life was a previous manager at the National Probation Service.

I refer to him

in [OUTLANDERS: Hidden Narratives from Social Workers of Colour](#) (in the chapter 'Ambition Navigation'), because he gave me my first proper frontline role and remains in my orbit.

That opportunity mattered.

Sometimes one person's recognition of potential can change the direction of a career. A manager can open a door, a colleague can build confidence and a schoolteacher can shape aspirations. As a child, a schoolteacher told me that Black people cannot swim... A stereotype perpetuated by [the historic lack of visibility of Black swimmers](#).

Representation matters – but on its own it's not enough. People need authenticity, diverse perspectives and forums to articulate their experiences, share their knowledge and demonstrate their expertise. That understanding has significantly influenced my approach to care and leadership.

My own cultural insights have taught me the importance of valuing the diversity within communities, which is sometimes overlooked in favour of assuming cultural homogeneity. We need to move beyond simplistic assumptions about race, culture and identity and appreciate the shared humanity that exists both *within* and between cultures. This is partly why I founded the [Black & Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium \(BPS\)](#) and created the [Synergy Sessions](#).

This is also where [Shades of Bias \(SoB\)](#) relates to the idea of community. SoB is a reflective case-study framework for documenting, analysing and addressing discrimination, oppression and racism. At its heart, is an invitation to pause, examine what has happened, consider our own perspectives and think about what needs to happen next. Communities don't exist outside the influence of bias. They are shaped by the assumptions, attitudes and behaviours of the people within them.



SHADES of BIAS

Reflective case study template

We all have a unique lens through which we see the world.

Therefore, I would advise anyone starting out in social work to be self-aware: anticipate that others may label, stereotype and categorise you - while recognising your own inescapable racialised lens. Self-awareness isn't about pretending that we are neutral or colourblind observers. Our experiences, identities, upbringings and environments influence how we interpret people and situations.

Reflective practice also means being prepared to ask questions (which may be uncomfortable) - not only of ourselves, but of the people, environments and systems around us. Such questions include:

- What might my own racial lens be obstructing me from seeing?
- Whose perspective, experience or voice is missing?
- Would the same situation be interpreted, scrutinised or responded to in the same way for different racialised groups?

How can we evidence that our policies, decision-making and organisational practices are effective, equitable and inclusive? This question connects directly to the [Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard \(SC-WRES\)](#), which uses evidence to identify racial inequalities, develop action plans and drive continuous organisational improvement. Its [latest findings](#) show that staff from minoritised ethnic backgrounds are 44% less likely to be appointed from shortlist and 50% more likely to face formal disciplinary action, while remaining underrepresented in senior management.

That tells us something important: reflection cannot stop at the individual. We need to examine cultures, structures, policies and decision-making, asking not only "*What did I do?*" but "*What is happening here? Why? Who is affected? What can we do differently?*"

The [recent statement](#) from the [BPS](#) following the tragic death of Professor Jason Arday reinforces this principle. The statement calls for reflection on professional accountability, institutional decision-making, racialised scrutiny, media representation and public commentary, while emphasising the importance of fairness, proportionality, humanity and dignity.

That message connects powerfully with SoB. We can hold people and institutions accountable, while still recognising their humanity; challenge racism

while remaining capable of honest conversations about professional standards and scrutinise institutions while appreciating the complexity of individual circumstances. We can ask difficult questions without losing our compassion. Reflection should not be mistaken for an absence of accountability. It should create the conditions for accountability that is thoughtful, proportionate and humane.

This brings me back to Black History Month. Perhaps controversially, I don't think Black history, culture and achievement should be confined to October. Black history should be acknowledged, taught and celebrated all year round. It should not be reduced predominantly to colonialism, slavery and oppression. Those histories must be understood, but they are not the entirety of Black history. We also need to hear about the stories of innovation, scholarship, creativity, leadership, entrepreneurship, community building, scientific achievement and cultural influence. We also need the countless stories of ordinary people whose contributions have profoundly shaped their families, communities and descendants. If a broad and representative Black history is integrated throughout all stages of education, it becomes part of the story - rather than tokenistic or an afterthought.

Honouring our communities means celebrating the people who opened doors for us, stories

that shaped us and the experiences that challenge us to think differently. Communities are not static. They evolve through relationships, disagreements, learning and collective action. Also, importantly, it means understanding our own responsibility within them.

Black History Month can provide a valuable moment of focus, but the greater challenge is what happens after October.

Do we revert back to "all lives matter"?

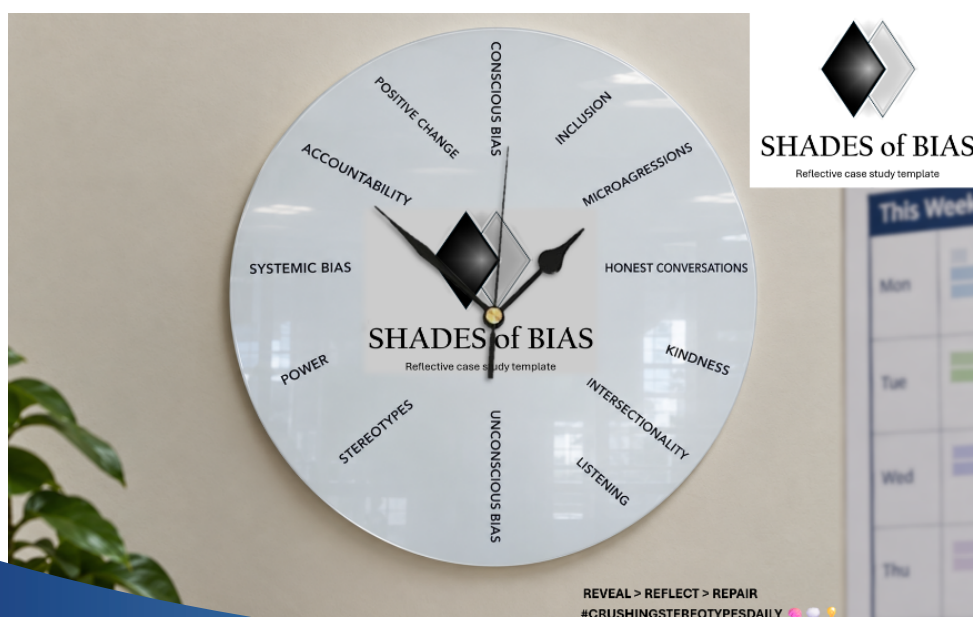
Or does our learning influence how we see, listen, lead and act?

For me, genuine recognition isn't a month. *It's a mindset.*

It's about creating communities and spaces where people are not simply represented, but heard. Not simply included, but uplifted. Not simply present, but able to influence the environments we live and work in.

That is how we honour our communities - by remembering our histories (good, bad and ugly), acknowledging our shared humanity, learning from past experiences and helping shape a future in which every community can be seen, heard and valued.

"One world, one race... the human race!"



**Have you used
Shades of Bias?**

Please share your experiences by completing the SoB survey.

<https://forms.office.com/e/GUekX2Y5tH>

¡Viva la Solidaridad! No to Trump's War on Latin America

The opening Latin America solidarity fringe meeting, held on 13th September 2026 alongside TUC Congress 2026 in Brighton, brought together trade union leaders and campaigners to discuss international solidarity, democracy, social justice and the challenges facing progressive movements across Latin America.



From left to right: Venezuela Solidarity Campaign's Francisco Dominguez, NEU member Natasha Witham, PCS General Secretary Fran Heathcote, GFTU General Secretary Gawain Little, and Wihalas Across the World campaigner Claudia Turbet-Delof

The event was hosted by Gawain Little, General Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), who welcomed delegates and emphasised the importance of international solidarity and the responsibility of trade unionists to stand alongside workers and communities facing injustice and external interference.

Sarah Woolley, General Secretary of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU), argued that international solidarity must remain at the heart of trade unionism. She stated that trade unionists cannot remain silent when workers are exploited, democratic rights are undermined or people are denied the right to determine their own future. Woolley warned against increasing political, economic and military intervention in Latin America and emphasised the importance of respecting national sovereignty, democracy and international law. She also highlighted the role of multinational corporations and global supply chains, arguing that the struggles of workers in Latin America are closely linked to those of workers in Britain and elsewhere.

Francisco Dominguez, National Secretary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, spoke about the continuing pressures facing Latin American countries, particularly those pursuing independent political and economic paths. He criticised sanctions and interventionist policies directed at countries such as Venezuela and Cuba and argued that nations have the right to determine their own futures free from external influence. He called for stronger international solidarity between workers, social movements and trade unions and urged delegates to defend national sovereignty and self-determination. In later remarks, he argued that the relative decline of United States global influence could lead to more aggressive policies towards countries such as Cuba and Venezuela. However, he suggested that right-wing governments often struggle to maintain support because they offer little beyond austerity, privatisation and repression. Referring to growing resistance across Latin America, including large demonstrations in Bolivia, he argued that people continue to organise and defend social and economic rights. He concluded by emphasising that solidarity is a two-way relationship and that Latin American movements have historically stood alongside workers' struggles internationally.

A brief appeal was made by **Ben Hayes of Arise: A Festival of Left Ideas**, who thanked attendees and supporters and encouraged continued support for the organisations and campaigns involved in building solidarity with Latin America.

Fran Heathcote, General Secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), argued that the United States continues to view Latin America as part of its sphere of influence. Referring to Donald Trump's "America First" agenda, she criticised sanctions, attempts at regime change and policies that place pressure on countries that do not follow United States priorities. Heathcote argued that many workers across Latin America are experiencing attacks on wages, employment and public services and drew comparisons with earlier neoliberal programmes imposed across the region. She described these policies as part of a wider agenda designed to reverse social and economic gains achieved by working-class people and stressed the importance of maintaining solidarity between British and Latin American trade unionists.

Natasha Witham, Member of the National Education Union (NEU) and participant in a UK teachers' delegation to Nicaragua, spoke about the importance of international solidarity and people-to-people links with Nicaragua. Drawing on her experience as part of a UK teachers' delegation, she reflected on the value of learning directly from educators and communities rather than relying solely on media narratives. She argued that solidarity is built through mutual respect, exchange and understanding, and emphasised the importance of supporting the right of people in Nicaragua to determine their own future free from external interference. Natasha highlighted the role that educational exchanges can play in strengthening international relationships and challenging misconceptions about countries facing political and economic pressure.

The final speaker, **Claudia Turbet-Delof of Wiphalas Across the World**, focused on political developments in Bolivia and the rise of far-right movements. She warned that right-wing leaders increasingly rely on social media, populist rhetoric and misinformation while advancing neoliberal policies that benefit economic elites. Turbet-Delof stressed the importance of defending democratic institutions, Indigenous rights, social protections and constitutional gains achieved through decades of struggle. She concluded by calling for continued international solidarity and cooperation in confronting the growth of the far right and defending democracy, equality and social justice.

Building Solidarity Beyond Borders: A Call to SWU Members to Stand with Latin America

The recent ¡Viva la Solidaridad! No to Trump's War on Latin America fringe meeting at TUC Congress 2026 highlighted why international solidarity remains an important part of trade union and social justice movements. For members of the Social Workers Union (SWU), the issues raised are not distant political concerns. They are directly connected to the values and principles that underpin social work practice. SWU itself has a strong tradition of supporting international solidarity, peace and human rights campaigns.

Social work is fundamentally a human rights and social justice profession. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) emphasises that social workers have a responsibility to challenge inequality, discrimination, oppression and violations of human dignity wherever they occur. The themes explored throughout the event, including self-determination, social justice, democracy, poverty and resistance to policies that deepen inequality, are therefore highly relevant to social workers. They reflect many of the challenges practitioners encounter daily when supporting individuals, families and communities affected by social and economic disadvantage.

Speakers at the event discussed the impact of economic sanctions, austerity, attacks on public services and threats to democratic self-determination across Latin America. These are issues that social workers understand well. In the UK, social workers see every day how poverty, inequality, insecure housing, poor mental health and social exclusion affect individuals, families and communities. The social and economic policies that shape people's lives are therefore inseparable from social work practice because they influence the circumstances in which people live, the opportunities available to them and the pressures they face long before they come into contact with services.

International solidarity also reflects SWU's commitment to peace, human rights, anti-racism and support for vulnerable communities. The union has consistently spoken out on international humanitarian issues and recognised the importance of standing alongside those affected by conflict, displacement and injustice.

Developments across Latin America raise important questions about democracy, social protection, inequality and human rights that resonate far beyond the region. Economic instability, political unrest and social inequality can contribute to migration, displacement and increased humanitarian needs. Social workers often support refugees, asylum seekers and families whose lives have been shaped by these wider global realities. Understanding international issues helps strengthen our ability to advocate effectively, challenge misinformation and promote inclusive communities.

The rise of far-right politics, attacks on democratic institutions and growing social inequality were also themes explored during the meeting. These challenges are not unique to Latin America. Across many countries, including the UK, social workers are witnessing increasing pressures on public services, widening inequalities and growing hostility towards marginalised groups. International solidarity creates opportunities for workers, trade unions and social movements to learn from one another and build collective responses to shared challenges.

Supporting solidarity campaigns is therefore not simply an act of international goodwill. It is social work values in action: **human rights, social justice, collective responsibility, respect for diversity, self-determination and challenging oppression wherever it occurs.** By standing with workers, communities and social movements across

Latin America, SWU members can help amplify calls for democracy, dignity, equality and social protection while building connections with others striving for a more just, peaceful and democratic society. In doing so, we reaffirm that social work's commitment to human rights and social justice extends beyond national boundaries and contributes to a world where all people can live with dignity, safety and opportunity.

This event report was written by SWU Executive Committee Member Edith Till.

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**From left to right:
Claudia Turbet-Delof, Edith Till,
and Francisco Dominguez**

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

Why Social Workers Should Attend the 2026 Community Anti-Racism Conference

As we mark **UK Black History Month this October**, social workers have an important opportunity to move beyond reflection and into meaningful community action.

The **2026 Community Anti-Racism Conference in Horsham, West Sussex**, which is free to attend and taking place on **22nd October 2026**, will bring together community members, professionals, organisations and allies to engage in honest conversations about racism, discrimination, inclusion and the kind of communities we want to build together.

For social workers, this conversation should feel particularly relevant.

Social work is grounded in principles of **human rights, social justice, dignity, equality and respect for the inherent worth of every person**. Our professional responsibilities do not begin and end with individual assessments, interventions, safeguarding plans or casework. Social workers also have a wider responsibility to understand and challenge the structural inequalities that shape the lives of the children, adults, families and communities we serve.

Racism is one of those inequalities.

Anti-racist practice therefore cannot be treated as an optional addition to social work. It requires us to reflect on our own assumptions, recognise the impact of structural and institutional discrimination, listen to lived experience and consider how race, culture, identity and inequality influence people's experiences of services and society.



3rd Annual Community Anti-racism Conference

Join us to build safer, fairer, inclusive and cohesive communities. We are stronger together.



THEME: HONOURING OUR COMMUNITIES.

- ✓ CPD Learning Event - A free Anti-racism Conference to mark Black History Month UK.
- ✓ Rich Training Workshop, Lived Experience Speakers
- ✓ Networking & Lunch Refreshments

THURSDAY, 22ND OCT 2026
From 11.00 AM – 16.00 PM
At Millennium Hall, Roffey Road,
Horsham RH12 4DT



Join Vivian Okeze - Tirado, Author, National Award-Winning Social Worker and Social Justice Advocate and members of the community for the 3rd Annual Community Anti-racism Conference. A free and inspiring event for meaningful conversations, learning and growth. Vivian is an experienced host and inspiring keynote Speaker who has spoken on prominent national platforms.

Our website: www.vottraining.co.uk

Community spaces can play an important part in that learning.

As the founder of the conference and a fellow social worker, **Vivian Okeze-Tirado** is encouraging social workers to step outside traditional professional spaces and engage directly with communities:

“Social work is a humanitarian profession. Our role is to change the possibilities of vulnerable children, families and adults for the better, promoting meaningful social change and social justice. I am inviting social workers to join a fellow social worker who is stepping out courageously and taking the dialogue into the community. Join us as we work together to build safer, inclusive and cohesive communities. We are stronger together.”

That invitation speaks directly to the wider mission of social work.

From professional reflection to community action

Conferences such as this offer something different from conventional professional training. They create opportunities for practitioners to hear directly from people whose experiences may not always be represented within organisational learning spaces.

They provide room for **dialogue, challenge, reflection and human connection.**

For social workers, hearing lived experiences of racism and discrimination can deepen understanding of the environments in which children and families live.

It can also encourage us to think critically about how services are experienced by communities and whether our own practice consistently reflects the values we profess.

Anti-racist social work is not simply about developing knowledge. It is about translating knowledge into practice: asking better questions, listening more carefully, challenging discrimination, recognising power and advocating for change.

The role of the social work trade union movement

The trade union movement also has an important place within this conversation.

Social work trade unions have historically advocated for workers' rights, fairness, dignity and social justice. Anti-racism sits naturally alongside those principles. Racism can affect not only the communities' social workers support but also the experiences of social workers themselves within workplaces, organisations and the wider profession.

Trade unions have an important role in challenging discrimination, promoting fairness and supporting anti-racist practice. This commitment should also include practical and financial support for community-led initiatives that often struggle to survive without sustained backing. **It is time to turn shared values into visible action and invest in building safer, fairer, inclusive and more cohesive communities.**

There is also something powerful about social workers, community organisations, trade unions and local residents standing alongside one another. Social change rarely happens through one profession or organisation working alone. It grows through **collective responsibility, solidarity and sustained dialogue.**

We are stronger together

Black History Month provides an important opportunity to celebrate Black history, achievements and contributions. But it should also encourage us to consider what comes next.

How do we move from awareness to action?

How do we challenge racism when we encounter it?

How do we create environments where people feel **seen, heard, respected and valued**?

And how can social workers use their professional influence not only within services, but within the communities they serve?

The **2026 Community Anti-Racism Conference** is an invitation to be part of that conversation.

For social workers committed to social justice, anti-racist practice and meaningful social change, attending is an opportunity to connect, listen, learn, reflect, and contribute.

Because safer, fairer and more inclusive communities are not built by one profession, one organisation or one individual. **They are built together.**



Reserve your free place at the 3rd Annual Community Anti-racism Conference here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/3rd-annual-community-anti-racism-conference-tickets-1993594758589>

Vivian Okeze-Tirado

National award-winning Social Work Leader, Social Justice Advocate, Author and Keynote Speaker. Founder of VOT Training and Consultancy & Managing Director, VOT Community Conferences CIC. Author of D.I.V.E.R.S.I.T.Y: A Guide to Working with Diversity and Cultural Sensitivity and Echoes of Humanity - A Social Justice Advocate's Journal.

Upcoming Events

Challenge Poverty Week, 5th - 11th October

Challenge Poverty Week was launched by the Poverty Alliance in 2013 to highlight the injustice of poverty in Scotland, and to show that collective action based on justice and compassion can create solutions.

The week is an opportunity to raise your voice against poverty and unite with others in calling for a just and equal Scotland.

Each year, hundreds of organisations in Scotland do just that, including elected representative, charities and NGOs, local authorities, faith groups, businesses, schools and colleges, trade unions, professional bodies and more. Click here for events and resources:

<https://www.povertyalliance.org/cpw>

National Solidarity March for Migrant Workers' Rights

Saturday 10th October, 12pm
Albert Square, M2 5PE, Manchester



This is a solidarity march. We know that not everyone directly affected will feel safe or able to march. That makes it even more important for colleagues, friends, trade unionists, communities and supporters to stand alongside migrant workers and make our collective strength visible.

March and rally, followed by a community gathering with food, connection and community.

March with us. Bring your union, workplace, organisation, friends and community.



Message from the Migrant Workers' Rights Coalition and Regularise:

On Saturday 10th October, migrant workers, migrant rights organisations, trade unions, communities and supporters will come together. We are marching in Manchester - the Prime Minister's political home and the proposed home of "Number 10 North" - to bring these demands directly into the heart of the Government's political project.

At a time when the Government's proposed earned settlement model is creating fear and uncertainty for migrant workers and families, while existing immigration policies already enable severe exploitation and exclusion, we are taking a clear message to the streets: Migrant workers are here to stay. Settlement is a right. End tied visas. Regularisation now. There are no workers' rights without migrants' rights.



National March for Palestine

Saturday October 10th at 12pm beginning at Victoria Embankment, London

Message from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC): "After 3 years Israel continues to commit genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. Join our march on 10th October to stand with

Palestine and demand our government take action to end its complicity in Israel's crimes."



Trade Union Bloc Details:

Saturday 10th October, 12PM noon

Cleopatra's Needle, Victoria Embankment, London WC2N

Bring your trade union banners and flags!

Details for this march can be here: <https://palestinecampaign.org/events/national-march-for-palestine-save-the-date>

#1forEquality campaign's Fortnight of Action: 12th - 25th October

#1forEquality is urging the UK Government to enact Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010, known as [the socio-economic duty](#). This campaign coalition is co-chaired by the Equality Trust & Just Fair, with members across civil society including Amnesty International UK, Equally Ours, Resolve Poverty, Thrive, Fair By Design, Disability Rights UK, and more.

The campaign will be launching **a fortnight of action in October to urge the UK government's commencement, resourcing, and meaningful implementation of this long-awaited duty**. There has been [progress made towards activation of this duty](#), but we need to keep that momentum to get it across the line and delivered well.

Watch out for the hashtag #1forEquality on social media during this fortnight, along with other coalition events including #ChallengePoverty Week, the UN International Day for the Elimination of Poverty (IDEP) on 17th October, [craftivism](#) outside parliament on 20th October.

What does good practice look like in the recruitment and retention of social workers in coastal communities?

Recruiting and retaining social workers remains a significant challenge for many organisations, but coastal communities can face a distinctive combination of pressures. Our NIHR-funded research has explored the experiences of social workers and employers in coastal areas, examining the factors that shape recruitment and retention and, importantly, what good practice looks like in responding to these challenges.

On **Tuesday 13th October 2026**, we will be bringing together those who contributed to the research alongside social workers, employers and other key stakeholders for a dissemination conference at **Key West Bar & Grill, Bournemouth Pier**. The event will provide an opportunity to share the findings from the study, consider their implications for policy and practice, and discuss how we can build more sustainable approaches to recruiting, supporting and retaining social workers in coastal communities.

If you are interested in attending, please contact SWRRCoastalStudy@bucks.ac.uk.

Funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) | Ref: NIHR164236



DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE:

‘What does good practice look like in the recruitment and retention of social workers in coastal communities?’

SHARE • LEARN • COLLABORATE • DRIVE CHANGE

Bringing together research, practice and policy to build stronger coastal communities.

WHERE?
Key West Bar & Grill,
Bournemouth Pier.

WHEN?
Tuesday
13th October 2026.

ATTENDEES?
All individuals that contributed to the project and other relevant stakeholders.

INTERESTED IN ATTENDING?
Email: SWRRCoastalStudy@bucks.ac.uk

Funded by the
NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research
Ref: NIHR164236

Join the Cliff Edge Coalition for a lunchtime webinar on **Friday 16th October, 1-2pm**, as we launch our four key asks and discuss what needs to happen next to protect people and families across Northern Ireland.

We welcome the UK Government's decision to scrap the two-child limit to the child element of Universal Credit and want to see Stormont continue to put mitigations in place to help those impacted by cuts to social security.

At this event, we will set out the Cliff Edge Coalition's priorities and call on the Northern Ireland Executive to strengthen the existing mitigations package in response to new and emerging welfare challenges.

Click here to register via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lunchtime-launch-cliff-edge-coalition-four-key-asks-tickets-1999387900031>



Cliff Edge Coalition NI

LUNCHTIME LAUNCH

OUR KEY ASKS

FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER
1-2PM • ONLINE

[Click here to register via Eventbrite](#)

- 1 | ⌚ Extend the mitigation of the benefit cap
- 2 | 📅 Resolve the 5-week wait in Universal Credit
- 3 | 🏠 Introduce a Carer's Recognition Payment
- 4 | 🏠 Provide a Support Grant for Private Renters

Marking the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.
Join us as we launch our new and refined policy asks.

Together Alliance: Organise Summits



STOP THE FAR RIGHT

BUILD COLLAB SHARE

ORGANISE TOGETHER

MANCHESTER 17 OCT
LONDON 24 OCT

People up and down the country are gearing up for Organise Together - two summits to plan next steps.

Help us plan, organise and build together against the far right in local communities across the country.

“We know the challenges we face are bigger than ever before. The voices of division and hate are growing louder.

But we also know that when we come together, we are stronger than hate. We can build the unity we need to stop the far right.

That’s why we’re hosting two summits, North and South, to organise together.”

BASW UK Social Work Conference: Practice & Careers 2026

London speaker announcement:

- Daniel Kebede
- Asad Rehman
- Dawn Butler MP
- Jen Brister
- And many more incredible speakers.

Secure your ticket now: <https://togetheralliance.org.uk/organise-together>

Tuesday, 27th October from 9:30am - 4pm in Birmingham

Join SWU at this year's BASW UK Conference for our workshop **Challenging Far-Right Views from a Social Work Perspective**. This session led by BASW England Professional Officer Denise Monks and SWU General Secretary Dave Callow will run from 15:00 - 15:45.

Far-right narratives do not just affect individual workers. They shape workplace cultures, influence policy, impact communities, and threaten the social justice values at the heart of social work. The answer is not simply resilience. It is collective action. This session will highlight campaigns that social workers, NQSWs, and social work students can get involved with, and how trade unionism intersects with social work and activism. During the session, we will also explore some of the BASW resources available to support you, if you or your colleagues are experiencing difficulties in your workplace as a result of discrimination, oppression or racism.

We look forward to meeting you.

For further details including programme, price, and travel information, please visit:

<https://basw.co.uk/about-basw/social-work-conferences-uk/social-work-live>



BASW
The professional association for
social work and social workers

SOCIAL WORK LIVE

- ▶ **Tuesday 27 October 2026, Birmingham**
- ▶ Hear about practice, jobs and careers
- ▶ **Free Lunch and refreshments provided**
- ▶ 6 hours of professional development

POWERFUL | RESPECTED | TRANSFORMATIVE

STAMMA

People who stammer or have other communication differences or difficulties can easily find themselves excluded from meetings. But their voices are worth hearing as part of discussions, presentations and decision-making.

In this session [STAMMA, the British Stammering Association](#), will outline some of the particular challenges people with speech differences face in meetings, and provide practical tips and resources to resolve these challenges.

Monday
16th NOV '26
10:30AM

CHAIRING INCLUSIVE MEETINGS



People who stammer or have communication differences are often talked over, missed out, or afraid to speak up. If a meeting is worth having, everyone should be able to contribute. Join our session to learn:

The Reality: The specific challenges faced by people with speech differences.

The Tools: Practical tips and resources to resolve these hurdles.

The Result: Meetings that flow better and give everyone the space to be heard.

SIGN UP

Visit the SWU website for more resources from STAMMA: <https://swu-union.org.uk/resources-training/swu-affiliates-and-resources>

Sign for this webinar up here: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/A0G98d8VScqsa0VQSBpFEA#/registration>



Cross Party Group for Social Work webinar: Use of AI in Social Work

Thursday 5th November from 3pm - 5pm

We invite our members to attend this online consultation and share your experiences of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the workplace.

This session will directly inform our work with the Cross Party Group for Social Work and will focus on listening to what social workers have to say. The event will also include expert guest speakers and publishers of guidance on the use of AI in social work.

SWU and BASW members book your free place here:

<https://basw.co.uk/events/cross-party-group-social-work-webinar-use-ai-social-work>

SWU Social Workers Union

BASW

The professional association for social work and social workers

SWU Annual General Meeting 2026

Friday 27th November 2026
from 2 - 4pm, online

SWU Social Workers Union

The SWU Annual General Meeting (AGM) is an event for SWU members only. This online event is free to attend and voting facilities will be provided during the meeting.

This AGM is a chance for you to share your views on the future and direction of your union. Please do register to be a part of it and say hello.

More details and the registration link are available on the SWU website:

<https://swu-union.org.uk/2025/10/swu-annual-general-meeting-2026>

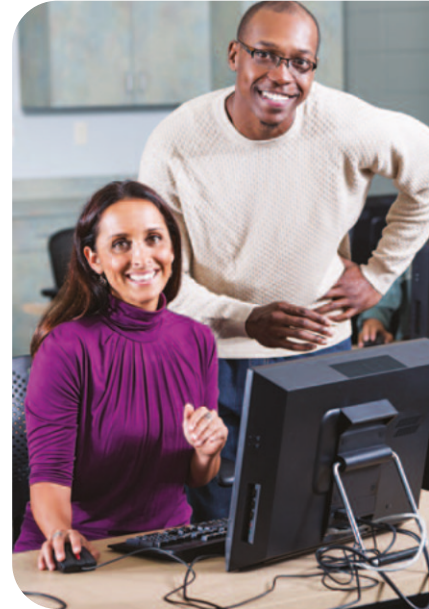
Only **£35** a year with your present BASW membership (**£10** a year for students)

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>