

Your ongoing support is important



We are all aware of the massive challenges ahead and once more the Advice & Representation Team continue to do a terrific job supporting members individually and collectively. I continue to be inspired by their

personal commitment to making a difference to social workers in these personally tough times. I am pleased to report that we have been involved in a range of campaigns over the summer. We will continue to keep members updated regarding our activity via our monthly newsletter, new website and of course via social media. Everything about SWU is designed to support the strengthening rebirth of activism and the growth of our trade union.

This coming month we have our AGM event and this will be another online event with the AGM going live at **2pm on Fri 23rd September**. It is your union and a chance for you to share your view on the future and direction of the union. Please do register to be a part of it and say hello. If not, I can always be contacted via email and I look forward to regular correspondence from members. SWU looks forward to seeing you at our online AGM:

<https://swu-union.org.uk/2022/06/swu-annual-general-meeting-2022/>

At the AGM I will be reporting that this has been another great year for the Social Workers Union. Please do encourage colleagues to join the only specialist trade union for social workers.

The appetite for joining SWU has never been stronger and reflected in the membership and the recruitment of new Union Contacts in the workplace. Please share the benefits of being a member with colleagues. Specialist unions like SWU are the best way to stand up for the Social Work profession; particularly as the big unions are dealing with hundreds of different professions.

BASW and SWU continue to work together well. I have enjoyed the regular *Talk to SWU* webinars and they are supported by both organisations. It reinforces our commitment to drive forward the professional agenda and provide trade union support to BASW members who sign up to SWU. The next *Talk to SWU* is a Social Work Employment Service special and we will hopefully cover a range of live questions pertinent to agency and independent social workers.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/events/talk-swu-swes-workplace-issues-webinar-14-september-2022>

It is a strange working world that we are in presently but Trade Unions, Professional Associations and employers all working together can make a significant difference

to ensure we are all supporting social workers. However, to say that social work is a challenging profession is of course something of an understatement and this is an important message to share and to continue to highlight. We all know the impact on social work with cutbacks to services and staffing.

The SWU "media portrayal of social workers" University assignment competition has now concluded. The standard was very high with many entries, I was delighted in the interest shown in this assignment and this topic focusing on activism appeared to have stimulated a high number of student social workers to submit entries; see page 29.

I am also asked a lot on why SWU is not striking or calling a national ballot and this is covered in the SWU Executive statement on page 15.

Finally, we say farewell to our National Chair, Carys Phillips who has finished a few months ahead of her term of office ending this month. As Carys has highlighted for the AGM: *"I have already stepped down as Chair in response to the competing demands of work and life balance, needing to choose which aspects I can continue to 'make a difference' as pressures increase. I am attending the AGM as a proud SWU Member."*

We all wish Carys the best and a big thank you from all at SWU for her activism and commitment to SWU over the last two years. Carys will continue as a SWU Union Contact in Wales.

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

Register your place at the SWU Annual General Meeting 2022

All SWU members are invited to attend this free event
The 11th Annual General Meeting of the Social Workers Union will be held online this year on **Friday, 23rd September 2022** and run from **2-4pm**.

Voting facilities will be provided during the meeting.

In September before the AGM we will email SWU members an ebulletin with links to the AGM 2022 Motions, AGM 2022 Report, and other relevant material.

Please note that you must book your free place beforehand in order to attend. Joining instructions can be found here: <https://www.basw.co.uk/events/swu-agm-2022>

2022 has been a year of exciting change and we invite members to visit the new SWU website at: <https://swu-union.org.uk> Here you can easily find information and resources, keep up to date on SWU news and blogs, and get more involved with your union.



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

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

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

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- ▶ **10%** discount for family and matrimonial law services
- ▶ **10%** discount for criminal/motoring offences and court litigation services

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or call **033 3344 9600**

Who actually benefits from the privatisation of public services?

SWU National Organiser Carol Reid comments on the continuing wave of privatisation and loss of public sector services

A recent announcement that the [Department for Education \(DfE\) has awarded £7million to Frontline](#) for the provision of “training and development for council children’s social work managers and leaders” emphasises the current government’s penchant for transferring public funds into the pockets of private sector associates. The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) England has recently criticised the previous Frontline training scheme as [not providing value for money](#) and raised concerns about the inequality in government funding between routes that “ostensibly have the same aim...to educate the future workforce.”

These monopoly-money figures are a far cry from the realities of a cost of living crisis, and it’s hardly surprising if some of us become noseblind to the ongoing Tory shenanigans - not least following the [handover of £650million worth of PPE contracts](#) to ideologically-minded members of a WhatsApp Group - but just take a minute to think about this latest mega-bucks transaction.

The current government’s tabloid and TV propaganda increasingly reports of “failing local authorities” and “crumbling public sector services” by way of inserting a notion into our collective mindset - nowadays this is called “dog-whistling” I believe. Over time we assume that our “unworkable” public services must be in need of some kind of overhaul, or even be replaced by “another style” of service - slick, polished, streamlined, and privatised.

Over a decade ago we were patronisingly told to tighten our belts by Eton-educated millionaires as they imposed “The Cuts” upon an already struggling

nation. This ideologically-driven Austerity was not about saving money and budgeting though; it was about shrinking public sector welfare services towards a point of non-existence - a notion inspired by the neo-liberal Thatcher and continued through to today’s pilferers-in-plain-sight.



Think of the public sector services we’ve lost over the last several decades, the things we took for granted when growing up in almost every town or city in the UK - youth clubs, community centres, public libraries, galleries, museums, parks, probation services, regulated residential care, accessible dentists and healthcare, free education, transport, council housing offering long-term, well maintained, and affordable tenancies. All communities, but mainly working-class communities, have been deliberately and consistently robbed of these vital resources which support not only our health and wellbeing, but also nurture our knowledge and collectivism.

When we see privately run organisations like Frontline replacing our public services and receiving lottery-figure sums for the privilege, we should not dismiss it or roll our eyes. We should be angry. We should demand organisational transparency to see how they are linked to the current government, for it seems almost inevitable that they will be. We should keep in mind what our local authorities, youth services, health care, education, care-leavers, and housing could have done with money like that.



The specialist union for social workers

THINKING OF BECOMING A UNION CONTACT FOR THE SOCIAL WORKERS UNION (SWU)?

A SWU Union Contact is a vital member of our team!

SWU's model of developing a network of Union Contacts offers an alternative to the traditional union shop steward approach by ensuring that employment negotiations are confined to paid SWU Trade Union and BASW Officials and your employer. This reduces the potential for tension between staff and management within the workplace, and ensures that you have fewer formal responsibilities than a traditional shop steward.

As a SWU Union Contact you will promote and encourage union membership and will usually be the first point of contact with the union for new and existing members in your workplace. You will also be the essential contact with SWU Officials to enable up to date information and ideas to be exchanged. Each SWU Union Contact has the support and guidance of a Trade Union Organiser who will meet with you regularly to ensure SWU retains strong links with our Contacts and members.



All Union Contacts will be reimbursed out of pocket expenses, will receive access to free General Federation of Trade Union (GFTU) Training - access to online professional development training.

Being a SWU Union Contact gives you access to:-

- Regular mentoring sessions with a SWU Trade Union Organiser
- Regular mailings and updates from SWU
- Access to SWU training, support and information
- Opportunities to recruit and encourage new members in the workplace and beyond
- Opportunities to promote and be involved in our campaigns
- Opportunities to get involved in events, rallies and demonstrations attended by SWU

SWU's future intention is to have at least one Union Contact in each workplace or large section and we need your support to make this a reality

However we don't confine UCs to the workplace and therefore welcome retired members, social work students, unemployed members, and social workers in alternative roles (ie advocates, carers, agency staff).

Simply being a member of SWU enables you to apply to undertake this important role



Managing menopause in the workplace

“Social workers are regularly facing unsympathetic treatment and possible discrimination in workplaces poorly equipped to deal with menopause.”

So, what needs to change?

Lisa Fitzpatrick, a trade union official with the Social Workers' Union has herself navigated menopause. Working in a large office, with experience of 'thermostat wars', she knows how difficult broaching the subject can be.



Flexible working, adjustment to shift patterns, office conditions and general awareness are all important factors when managing menopause in the workplace.

“Menopause is hugely relevant to the A and R Team,” Lisa says. “Many of our members are women because of the disproportionate numbers in social work and social care. And many are older women.

“The TUC has done important work on menopause, producing a guide that states eight out of ten women experience noticeable symptoms and feel menopause affects their working life.

“One of the main difficulties for us is that social work is so stressful anyway. Largely, we find social workers aren’t great at self-care. They tend to keep going, so many are overworked. Menopause is still seen as predominantly a private matter, not a workplace issue.”

But Lisa believes there are already many tools at the disposal of union reps, employers, managers, and other professionals supporting women at work.

“I’ve helped a woman recently going through the capability process where her performance at work is being questioned, who is also going through the menopause.

“The role of occupational health is important in terms

of recommendations in the workplace - but of course, occupational health has to be aware of menopause issues and policy.

“We can also check managers’ awareness of menopause, in terms of whether they respond to the issue being raised, whether they can talk sensibly about it. Many women are worried about speaking to their managers”.

Lisa points out that employers have a duty to prevent workplace discrimination and to make adjustments to ensure women can work safely through the menopause.

Workers need reassurance that they will not be penalised or suffer detriment if they require adjustments to workload or performance management targets. And managers also need training to understand the issues.

The key to tackling menopause-related issues at work is to speak out early, Lisa advises:

“If you approach us, we will discuss the issues with you and consider next steps. The Equality Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. So, menopause is a gender-related condition.

“If you are depressed and stressed, it can be hard to pinpoint. But with help from your GP and Occupational Health, you can think about how you are at work now, compared to how you were before.

“As a union we support individuals, but I would also encourage awareness-raising, getting policies in place, and getting women to come together on this. Menopause is such a core experience affecting your physical and psychological health.”

You can contact the SWU/ BASW Advice and Representation team by email at ARAS@basw.co.uk

FACTBOX

- Nearly two thirds (59 per cent) of working women say menopause has a negative impact
- Women over 50 are the fastest growing sector in the UK workforce, according to the CIPD.
- The average age for menopause is 51.
- The average cost of hiring a new employee through a recruitment agency is around 20-30 per cent of final salary.
- Executive positions cost 213 per cent of annual salary to replace
- Failure to support employees with menopause can lead to unfair dismissal claims and discrimination complaints.

FURTHER RESOURCES

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/menopause-work>

<https://www.mymenopausecentre.com/knowledge/menopause-explained/>

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/about/media/press/menopause-at-work#gref>



Changing the Change: Policy, Practice & Personal Issues

The menopause – what does it mean to you, as an individual and as a social worker?

This event seeks to demystify what is a significant life event for so many people. An opportunity to benefit from voices of lived experience, learn more about the subject and how you can support yourself and others through their own menopause.

18th October 16:30 – 18:30

Members - £10 + VAT (£12), Non members - £20 + VAT (£24)

[Click here to register for your place](#)

<https://www.basw.co.uk/events/world-menopause-day-2022-changing-change>

Social Media

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

Monthly Newsletter

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

SWU can be found on the following:

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

Twitter: [SWU UK](#)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/>

Instagram: www.instagram.com/socialworkersunion

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

SWU Recent Blogs (July & August 2022)

An All-Wales campaign for properly publicly funded Health and Social Care support: reverse privatisation, reverse cuts, and fair pay for NHS staff

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/swu-chair-carys-phillips-speaks-campaign-launch-rally-our-nhs-born-wales>

SWU members who would like to run their own campaign are encouraged to submit their ideas for funding

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/swu-campaign-fund-2021-2022>

SWU opposes replacing Human Rights Act with “Bill of Rights”

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/swu-opposes-replacing-human-rights-act-bill-rights>

SWU is working with our members in the run-up to the National Care Service Bill

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/swu-working-our-members-run-national-care-service-bill>

Article 39 and SWU are among 30 signatories of joint letter calling for publication of Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel report

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/article-39-and-swu-are-among-30-signatories-joint-letter-calling-publication>

SWU in solidarity with the FSCC Social Care Lobby Day

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/swu-solidarity-fscs-social-care-lobby-day>

SWU is delighted to announce the winners of our World Social Work Day 2022 Student Essay Assignment Competition

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/swu-delighted-announce-winners-our-world-social-work-day-2022-student-essay>

SWU Blog: Who actually benefits from the privatisation of public services?

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/swu-blog-who-actually-benefits-privatisation-public-services>

SWU comments on Local Authority pay rises and low 2022 CPD submissions

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/swu-comments-local-authority-pay-rises-and-low-2022-cpd-submissions>

SWU members invited to Union Contact Induction on 10th September 2022

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/jul/swu-members-invited-union-contact-induction-10th-september-2022>

SWU sign joint statement on the urgent need to safeguard unaccompanied children

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/aug/care-every-child-basw-and-swu-sign-joint-statement-urgent-need-safeguard>

SWU celebrates South Asian Heritage Month 2022

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2022/aug/basw-cymru-and-swu-celebrate-south-asian-heritage-month-2022>

Care for Every Child: SWU signs joint statement on the urgent need to safeguard unaccompanied children

The government must put an end to the unofficial and ongoing shadow system of hotel accommodation for children not born in the UK

SWU is one of over 70 signatories to [Children England and Every Child Protected Against Trafficking \(ECPAT\) UK's joint statement](#)

"Unaccompanied children must be protected by the care system, not placed in hotels" calling for urgent action.

This joint statement of concern was made in response to ECPAT UK's new report [Outside the Frame: Unaccompanied children denied care and protection](#) which focuses on concerns about children arriving in the UK alone who are being unlawfully excluded from the duties and protections afforded to all children in England. The report states at the outset, *"We fear that the use of hotels by the Home Office, operating outside of England's care system for children, has led to children suffering significant harm, with over ten children going missing in just one of the reported months."*

[Reporting on the joint statement](#), the Independent quotes committee chair Dame Diana Johnson addressing parliament last month, saying, "The practice of placing unaccompanied children in hotels has resulted in an unknown number of children disappearing either temporarily or, in some cases, permanently.

"We recommend that the government confirm urgently who is responsible for safeguarding these children and tell us what they are doing to prevent children, alone and potentially vulnerable, simply vanishing from sight into unknown hands and unknown futures."

This practice has been described by the Department for Education and the Home Office as a temporary "emergency measure" but it has been ongoing for two years with no end in sight.

ECPAT UK published its most recent data on the situation:

1,606 children who arrived alone in England between July 2021 and June 2022 were placed in hotel accommodation directly by the Home Office, instead of in the care of local authorities where they could receive the support and protection that, by law, every child in the UK is entitled to. Forty-five children, some as young as 11, went missing over a 10-month period.

Chloë Darlington of Children England said, "Reading ECPAT UK's latest figures on how many children have been placed in hotel accommodation instead of the care any unaccompanied child has the right to - and how many have gone missing from that accommodation - was truly chilling. This supposedly temporary Home Office policy has become a shadow system that sets a dangerous precedent, where some children are entitled to care and some children are not, based on where they've come from. The breadth of support for our statement of concern should remind the government that children are children first, and the care system and legal protections like the Children Act 1989 are there for every child - not only those born in the UK."

We cannot overstate our concern for these isolated and traumatised children. They need - and are entitled to - care in supportive foster or residential homes, with skilled professionals to help them recover in safety.

We fully support the recommendations in ECPAT UK's report: **use of Home Office hotel accommodation must cease and central government must invest in proper care for children**, so that local authorities can accept and support every child who arrives on our shores without a parent or guardian, as the law dictates. The government needs to step up and fulfil its vital role of protecting and caring for children without discrimination.



The specialist union for social workers

ABOUT THE SOCIAL WORKERS UNION

The Social Workers Union (SWU) is a Trade Union dedicated to social work professionals. Unlike other trade unions, SWU is able to offer you representation* **from a qualified Social Worker** - someone who understands the competing demands placed upon you by your employer and the Code of Conduct, and what it's like to be a practicing Social Worker. We know how difficult it can be working under tremendous pressure to deliver the services your clients deserve, often subjected to wholly unreasonable criticism in the media. We are able to use our specialist knowledge to advocate and negotiate on behalf of social workers, both individually and collectively within the trade union movement and with employers.

Membership of the Social Workers Union is an additional benefit to members of **BASW (The British Association of Social Workers)** and our membership fee is £25.00 per year (or £10.00 per year for students and unwaged). **SWU is an independent Trade Union and is proud to be associated with BASW, but our legal status as a Trade Union means that SWU members are better protected and their rights to representation in any meeting with an employer are safeguarded.***

The Social Workers Union, unlike a professional association, can **enforce the legal entitlement of representation in employers' hearings by SWU's Trade Union Officials.*** SWU offers swift, practical representation and works with BASW which offers Advice and Representation (A&R) before the regulatory bodies**. **In these challenging times we believe that, working together, SWU and BASW provide the best protection and best advice for social workers from social workers.**

SWU is a member of the **General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU)**, a group of 30 specialist unions with over 300,000 individual members. As a SWU member you can enlist to become a Union Contact within your workplace or university to promote membership, campaigning, and activism. This means that our members have access to the fantastic range of training provided by the GFTU - details can be found at www.gftu.org.uk

Being part of a strong collective trade union is a vital and recognised way of successfully negotiating with employers for better working conditions, pay and security.

If you want to join SWU or learn more about becoming actively involved go to www.swu-union.org.uk or email us at swu-admin@swu-union.org.uk today!

** Representation excludes pre-existing issues and issues that became active within the first three months of membership. Representation is also not available to retired and overseas members.*

*** Regulatory bodies are Social Work England (SWE), the Care Council for Wales (CCW), the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC).*

Will we ever get anti-racism right?

I was recently involved in a meeting to discuss how social work education should rise to the challenges of promoting anti-racist practice. It was encouraging and reassuring to see so many people there, people in positions of influence. However, what was quite disheartening was to find that we were discussing the same issues I was involved in discussing more than thirty years ago. Of course, we have moved on in some ways, but some of the core issues clearly remain to be effectively tackled.

Based on the comments made by participants about discussions they had been involved in at their various workplaces, I could discern three key themes that echoed my own experiences:

1. The effectiveness of education and training

Even staff and managers who have had extensive education and training in relation to discrimination and oppression seem to be struggling to incorporate anti-racist principles into their practice in a consistent and sustained way. I am fairly convinced that a key part of this is the classic problem of the gap between theory and practice: what gets taught in the classroom does not necessarily manifest itself in practice.

This is why, in my published work and my teaching and training, I have consistently challenged the traditional notion of 'applying theory to practice'. This assumes that we begin with the square peg of theory and try to fit it into the round hole of practice. What I have proposed in its place is the idea of 'theorising practice'. This involves beginning with practice - a real-life concrete situation - and then looking at how theory (our professional knowledge base) can help us make sense of the issues involved and plot a way forward (Thompson, 2017). While such a large gap persists between theory and practice because of this flawed conception of 'applying theory to practice', we will continue to struggle to make a reality of anti-racist practice.

2. The role of organisational culture

Cultures - the sets of habits, unwritten rules and taken-for-granted assumptions within an organisation - are often characterised as 'the way we do things round here'. They are very powerful in shaping people's thoughts, feelings and actions.

It is not unusual across a wide range of organisations for the culture (the unofficial 'voice' of the organisation) to contradict the official line and, for the most part, to speak more loudly and insistently than the official 'voice'. This applies as much to anti-racism as it does to any other aspect of organisational life. Consequently, if a commitment to anti-racist practice is not firmly embedded in the culture, then our efforts are likely to have limited impact. This can amount to (to put it politely) 'passing water in the air turbulence'.

This is why leadership is so important, as a key duty for leaders is to shape a positive, helpful culture that is supportive of the organisation's aims and values (Thompson, 2022). A rhetorical commitment is not enough. It has to be authentically embedded in the culture,

3. Oversimplification

The issues involved in anti-racism - as in anti-discriminatory practice more broadly - are complex and sensitive. They

need to be handled judiciously in a spirit of critically reflective practice. As I argue in my *Anti-racism for Beginners* book (Thompson, 2021), an approach that does not do justice to the complexities involved risks doing more harm than good. In particular, there is a danger that a simplistic approach will feed a 'culture of fear' that creates unnecessary tensions, shuts down discussion and debate, blocks learning, undermines confidence and hampers the development of a much-needed anti-oppressive alliance.

If we are not able to address these obstacles to progress effectively, we will surely struggle to achieve our goal of developing genuinely emancipatory forms of practice.

Dr Neil Thompson is an independent writer, educator and adviser and a visiting professor at the Open University. He is also an ambassador for SWU and BASW Cymru. His website, with his acclaimed Manifesto for Making a Difference, is at www.NeilThompson.info.

References

Thompson, N. (2017) *Theorizing Practice*, 2nd edn, London, Bloomsbury.

Thompson, N. (2021) *Anti-racism for Beginners*, Wrexham, Avenue Media Solutions.

Thompson, N. (2022) *The Managing People Practice Manual*, Wrexham, Avenue Media Solutions.



SWU is working with our Scottish members in the run-up to the National Care Service Bill

We need to ensure the workforce is protected and that this Bill will bring better care and support to people in Scotland

The Scottish Government introduced the [National Care Service \(NCS\) Bill](#) to Parliament on 20th June 2022. This Bill sets out principles for a National Care Service (NCS) that aims to improve the quality and consistency of social services in Scotland. It allows Scottish Ministers to transfer social care and social work responsibility from councils to the NCS and newly-formed care boards - this could include up to 75,000 local authority staff across social work and social care.

The [National Care Service co-design paper](#), published on June 21st, states, "The majority of decisions about the National

Care Service have not yet been made and the process of designing what the NCS may become and how it will function will be one that continues to develop." Proposals for the NCS currently only include adult services. There will be further public consultation and collection of evidence before a final decision is made about whether to also transfer children's and justice social work responsibilities to the NCS, and this would require the Bill to go back to Parliament for approval.

[SASW submitted a response to the Scottish Government's consultation in November 2021](#), highlighting the current lack of detail regarding this very significant structural change and the mixed views of members about whether

these changes will deliver the desired outcomes. SASW also submitted [an additional paper specifically focused on the nature of social work and its future role in an NCS](#).

A clear message has emerged from SASW and SWU members which is that the status quo is not working for people who use or need services, or for social workers. However, there are already many different views about the basic intentions of this Bill. While there may be benefits for social work in having a national framework which has “equality, dignity and human rights at its heart” to promote quality and consistency across the nation, how does that fit with delivering local and nuanced services for communities with very different needs?

As it stands, we have a year to make sure the new system will deliver better opportunities, greater support, and improved working conditions for social workers. SASW and SWU are committed to defending and improving employment rights and conditions for the social work workforce and ensuring that this new system delivers improved care and support for people who need services. With that in mind, these are the outcomes that we will work towards:

- A social model of care and support based in human rights, equalities, and inclusion. The model must focus on equalities including anti-racism, the impact of poverty, and disadvantage which must explicitly connect to other Government policy workstreams.
- Social work should be an accessible, trusted, and stigma-free public service.
- Social workers must be able to practice in early intervention and prevention to improve outcomes. This means ensuring balanced, reasonable caseloads that allow the necessary time to develop relationships and

use all the therapeutic assessment and support skills that social workers are trained in. This will contribute to ensuring that social work and social care are attractive and sought-after career choices.

- Social work’s three specialisms (adult, children, and justice services) should be located together to ensure effective support is provided to people when they need it at all life stages and through transitions between stages. This will need thought and careful assessment of the options.
- Changes to structures and governance arrangements must simplify the experience for people using services and those who support them.

This Bill’s proposal to transfer council staff to care boards has caused a significant amount of anxiety and concern among social care and social workers. A Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) - known as a TUPE transfer - of this magnitude could have serious ramifications including uncertainty around terms of employment and pension rights, loss or dispersal of local knowledge and expertise, and a destabilisation of the local government workforce that will impact councils’ duties, finances, and potentially Scotland’s ability to deliver critical support services.

SASW is hosting a series of online discussion events and we encourage SWU members in Scotland to attend, especially if they have concerns over these or any other aspects of the NCS Bill. The sessions are an opportunity to learn more about the Bill, ask questions, put forward your views, and hear feedback from others. This Bill is currently a framework which means there will be secondary legislation and regulations that will address its details. It is critical that, working constructively with the Scottish Government and MSPs, we develop a plan to help strengthen this Bill for social work as it proceeds through Parliament.

VISION, MISSION, AIMS, VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

Vision ...

To be a trade union growing in size and influence by being held in high regard by the social work membership, the social work profession, employers and Government alike with a high level of member support and activism. The SWU Executive Committee is pledged to delivering this Vision

Mission ...

The Social Workers Union (SWU) is a trade union dedicated to social work professionals. Unlike other trade unions, SWU is able to offer you representation from a qualified social worker - someone who understands the code of conduct and what it is like to be a practicing social worker. Our mission is to be regarded by our members as the best trade union for Social Workers.

This will be through:

- The excellence of our A&R Employment services, our SWU Executive and representatives.
- The effectiveness of employment representation for our members.
- The positive influence we have upon the relationship between social work employers and government in pursuit of trade union aims and values pertinent to social work.
- Further links with International Social Work Bodies
- Recruiting and developing a growing team of SWU Union Contacts amongst social work teams and university cohorts to promote SWU and encourage membership, campaigning and activism.

Aims ...

- To provide Members with trade union services including advice, assistance and representation, legal or otherwise, and other benefits, in relation to matters arising out of or in connection with their employment as registered social workers or as student social workers.
- SWU will strive to improve the terms and conditions of Social Workers and fight for better resources for the people who use these services.

Values and Behaviours ...

Our values are necessary to ensure we provide outstanding member service and maintain our independence.

SWU and those who represent it will:

- Act with integrity and principle in line with the BASW code of ethics;
- Work together;
- Operate in an open, democratic, and representative manner;
- Strive for excellence and *not* defend bad practice;
- Be open and transparent in all our union activities and funds;
- Support the principles of human rights and social justice worldwide.



Find SWU on the following:



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



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



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



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLUZPgX0Zzy-NpmFeBDWXLQ>



https://twitter.com/SWU_UK



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



swu-admin@swu-union.org.uk

June 2022: SWU Executive Statement re strike ballot



The Social Workers Union offers our wholehearted support to colleagues in public sector trade unions who are considering voting regarding industrial action in relation to pay issues. SWU is equally committed to supporting where possible the main issues around pay levels.

The starting point is that any ballot regarding Social Work pertains to Local Government and Health Employees. SWU is not currently part of the negotiations on main pay issues. Indeed, we have previously been blocked re Collective Bargaining applications and Trade Union Congress membership by three large generic trade unions who object to our social work specialism: <https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/aug/swu-challenges-tuc%E2%80%99s-decision-deny-membership>

SWU is a full member of the General Federation of Trade Unions and the Future Social Care Coalition, collaborating significantly with other unions and organisations. SWU is a certified and listed Trade Union, which means SWU Advice and Trade Union Officers have the right to represent our members - individually and together on larger issues. SWU will continue to apply for Local Authority bargaining recognition.

CODE OF PRACTICE Industrial Action Ballots and Notice to Employers: Legal

As a matter of principle, we want to express our solidarity with colleagues. The system for balloting members is legally complex and we presently do not have the legal consultative ballot mandate for strike / voting action and do not hold collective agreements with Local Authorities and Health Boards re negotiating pay scales. We can't simply join any proposed action if we are not part of the consultation group.

Importantly, an industrial action ballot should not take place until any agreed procedures, whether formal or otherwise, which might lead to the resolution of a dispute without the need for industrial action have been completed and consideration has been given to resolving the dispute with the employer. Without Collective Bargaining agreements we are not legally able to do this.

Where more than one union decides that it wishes to ballot members working for the same employer in connection with the same dispute, the arrangements for the different ballots should be co-ordinated. Our door remains open to assisting the large unions with our official support for any proposed action.

Our Trade Union Officers Skills

Our skilled Advice and Trade Union Officers provide quality representation to SWU members. It is often quoted by some that we do not have collective bargaining; however, the basic fact is that we have the right to represent SWU members individually or together on larger issues and this has been effective and life changing for SWU members. This covers a variety of issues and successful interventions for our members; for example, Professional Practice, Reorganisation, Terms and Conditions, Contractual Issues, Physical Health, Mental Health, Workplace Stress, Retirement, Bullying and Harassment, Misconduct, and Discrimination.

Collective Bargaining

Some unions have acquired a 'collective bargaining' relationship with an employer, and this is often due to the size of the large unions who have a broad selection of members doing a variety of jobs across public sector workplaces. This enables the large unions to have a monopoly on bargaining and, coupled with this, they often sadly object to smaller specialist unions such as SWU being part of the collective group; SWU is a union specifically for social workers and run by social workers with a breadth of knowledge and experience of the profession.

At SWU, we have a right to represent social workers because we are an independent certified Trade Union and are ratified in Section 10 of the Employment Relations Act 1999 and further regarding the ACAS Code of Practice. All of our Trade Union Officers and work reps are entitled to attend disciplinaries and grievances on behalf of our members regardless of whether or not we negotiate in collective bargaining. Regardless of the opposition from some large unions, SWU will continue to apply for Local Authority bargaining recognition. Collective Bargaining within Local Authorities is something we may consider in the future, but it is a prolonged and complicated process which would involve extra staffing which would come at a membership cost to implement.

Our growing team of SWU Union Contacts assist in growing our Union via promoting and encouraging membership, and, as we grow in strength and numbers, we are more able to consider such actions.



Talk to SWU Social Workers Union
workplace issues webinar

& Social Work
Employment Services

Wednesday
14th September 2022
6-7pm

Your chance to talk with the Social Workers Union and the Social Work Employment Services about workplace issues.

This session will allow you to talk directly with a panel of experts about any work place issues you are experiencing.

Hosted by the Social Workers Union (SWU) on behalf of the Social Work Employment Services (SWES), this session is **free to attend**.

This session will allow agency social workers to bring their employment, legal, and practice-based questions to a panel of experts from the SWU/BASW Advice and Representation Service and SWU's Legal Advisor from Morrish Solicitors

The webinar is set up so that **questions are asked anonymously**.

All UK social workers and social work students are invited to attend and engage with this online advice and representation session, regardless of membership.

Booking for this session will close on September 13th at 11.45 pm. Be sure to book your free place before then to avoid disappointment.

SWU and BASW members: Please ensure that you are logged in before booking for this session. Thank you!

BOOK NOW

[Talk to SWU: SWES workplace issues webinar on 14 September 2022 |
www.basw.co.uk](https://www.basw.co.uk)

Bite Size Online Sessions



Log in every Monday for lunchtime and evening sessions on a variety of topics aimed at union workplace representatives. Sessions will last no more than 30 minutes and will be accessible through any device be it a smart phone, tablet/iPad, laptop or computer.

Join us at 12.30pm or 6pm or view the recording after each session.

Register here for all sessions:

www.GFTU.org.uk/bitesize

Register for 12.30pm and again for 6.00pm - but once you're registered you can attend all of the sessions at that time.

The programme for autumn 2022 is below. We will be consulting over additional subjects for the New Year - let us know your ideas by emailing Mark Robinson via markr@gftu.org.uk.

5 th Sept	Mental Health as a Trade Union Issue
12 th Sept	Mental Health - 3 next steps for workplace reps
19 th Sept	Mental Health - surveying members
26 th Sept	Your written particulars/contract of employment
3 rd Oct	Challenging and preventing adverse changes to contracts
10 th Oct	Fire and rehire - how employers try to do it
17 th Oct	How safe is your workplace?
24 th Oct	Are safety inspections working for you?
31 st Oct	Getting the most out of safety committees
7 th Nov	Flexible working - what's working for workers?
14 th Nov	How family friendly is your employer and workplace?
21 st Nov	Getting equality onto the bargaining agenda
28 th Nov	Where next for GFTU learning and our bite size sessions?
28 th Nov	Where next for GFTU learning and our bite size sessions?

SWU and SWES - formal Bargaining Agreement

The Social Workers Union (SWU) recognises the Social Work Employment Service (SWES) as a good employer for agency social workers



SWU and SWES are thrilled to announce the ongoing formal recognition and bargaining agreement between our two rapidly growing organisations. John McGowan, SWU General Secretary and Kate O'Regan, BASW Head of Business Development and SWES Company Director - seen shaking hands and holding their copies of the agreement in the photo above - are the signatories of this agreement.

SWU recognises that SWES is a good employer and is a good opportunity for our members. The bargaining agreement commits SWES to consult with SWU on any changes in terms, conditions, and pay rates for employees. This action affirms SWES and SWU's commitment to protecting workers' rights, and specifically in this case the rights of agency social workers.

More about SWES

SWES is the UK's first 'not for profit' social work umbrella company and works in partnership with the British Association of Social Workers (BASW).

It was formed by BASW in 2020 as a direct response to the growing need for a professional, trusted, and ethical social work umbrella service. SWES supports social work professionals and employment agencies by providing PAYE, NIC, HMRC, compliant payroll, and employment services to meet off-payroll regulations (IR35).

SWES understands the challenges and complexities of the profession because it was created for social workers by social workers.

A strong offering from BASW, SWU, and SWES

Based on the 2021 market rates, a BASW/SWU/SWES membership would be equivalent in cost to joining a standard UK umbrella company.

However, unlike joining a standard umbrella company, BASW members who opt into SWU membership and join SWES receive an extensive suite of professional services and support. For example, each month more than 10 SWES employees make use of the acclaimed SWU/BASW Advice & Representation Service.

Members of BASW, SWU, and SWES enjoy:

- Advice from the SWU/BASW Advice & Representation Service starting from your first day of membership
- Guaranteed representation in hearings before an employer after the three months qualifying period - please note that the issue cannot have been a known pre-existing issue or active during this three-month qualifying period
- Access to BASW's Social Work Professional Support Service (PSS)
- Professional indemnity insurance cover
- SWES management of all agency social work employment and payroll obligations
- Access to subsidised training
- Subscription to Professional Social Work (PSW) magazine
- Eligible to apply to the SWU Campaign Fund

Our membership triumvirate of professional association, union, and umbrella company offers amazing value to both professional social workers and social work students. This is reflected by the fact that 75% of SWES members are also members of SWU.

Who can join SWES?

SWES is a social work umbrella company exclusively for BASW members.

SWES agency social workers are fully insured and compliant. SWES provides 24/7 professional support and manages all employment and payroll obligations for a set fee of just £15 per week.

Free SWES advice and representation webinar

In celebration of this agreement, SWU is hosting an online advice and representation session on behalf of SWES focused on questions from agency staff. All social workers and social work students in the UK are welcome to attend this free event!

The Talk to SWU: SWES workplace issues webinar will take place on Wednesday

September 14th, 2022 from 6-7pm and be sure to book your place soon to avoid disappointment.



<https://www.basw.co.uk/events/talk-swu-swes-workplace-issues-webinar-14-september-2022>

SOCIAL WORKERS UNION

Who we are:

The only UK Trade Union designated for and run by qualified and registered Social Workers

- Opt into **SWU** membership for a minimal fee when you join **BASW**
- Two for the price of one (reduced for students), **Trade Union membership** and a **Professional Association**
- We offer a duty system Monday to Friday 9am to 4.30pm
- Part of a strong collective where **YOU** can be active and make a change
- Access to experts in representation at UK Regulatory Councils
- Advice to members from day one of membership*
- Receive monthly ebulletins

* Certain conditions apply including pre-existing issues and non-representation covering first 3-months of membership.

If you are interested in getting active and involved in SWU please contact:

***Carol Reid, National Organiser • Telephone: 07375 496315 • Email: carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk
Wellesley House, Birmingham, B2 5PP***




Find SWU on the following:

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

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

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/social-workers-union>  <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLUZPgX0Zzy-NpmFeBDWXLQ>

 https://twitter.com/SWU_UK

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

 swu-admin@swu-union.org.uk

BASW Cymru and SWU celebrate South Asian Heritage Month 2022

This year's theme calls for us to reflect how we have all been affected by "Journeys of Empire"

In this blog, BASW Cymru Professional Officer **Narinder Sidhu** explores what it means to be South Asian in the 21st century whilst also reflecting on the past with award-winning LGBTQ+ Activist **Khakan Qureshi BEM** and BASW Vice Chair **Neeta Singh Baicher**



Journeys of Empire

July 18th to August 17th 2022 marks South Asian Heritage Month (SAHM) which is now in its third year. This celebratory month raises the profile of British South Asians from countries including: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka. Details of events across the UK can be found at the [South Asian Heritage Month](https://southasianheritagemonth.org/) website.

SAHM Co-Founder **Jasvir Singh OBE** hopes to celebrate, commemorate, and educate South Asians and the rest of the world during this month. He commented, *"Barely three years old, a movement that showed slow growth year on year is today showing exponential growth month on month. South Asian Heritage Month 2022 openly resonates with its community and is fast becoming the anticipated time for South Asians."*

This year's theme is Journeys of Empire. It reflects how we have all been affected by the many journeys of empire including the many migrants who travelled by choice to the UK with just three pounds in their pockets; this is a familiar story to many South Asian individuals who settled here. The theme also reflects two major anniversaries taking place in 2022 which are the 75th anniversary of the independence of India, Partition, and the creation of Pakistan (later known as East and West Pakistan) and the 50th anniversary of the expulsion of Ugandan Asians by Idi Amin.

We understand that the term “South Asian” has limitations as a label and we use it here as a general term for South Asian diaspora communities, those who identify as South Asian, and people of South Asian descent. We also include Indo-Caribbean communities, Mauritians, those from the South Asian sub-continent, and all those who identify both within and outside of the various borders and geo-political formations, as well as those aligned with self-determination movements across the South Asian subcontinent. We practice our [social work values](#) and stand in solidarity with those who are excluded and marginalised within ‘South Asian’ diasporas.

We welcome all communities including Romani communities to celebrate South Asian Heritage Month with us. Many people may not be aware but Romani people originated in India as a nomadic people and entered Europe between the eighth and tenth centuries C.E.

The Romani language has obvious similarities with languages spoken in northern India and many common Romani words, including the numerals, are near identical to their modern Hindi and Punjabi numerals - for example, the Romani for number one *yek* (Hindi and Punjabi *ek*), for number two *dui* (*do*), for number three *trin* (*teen*), for number four *shtaar* (*chaar*), and for number five *panchi* (*paanch*). The words *baal* (hair), *kaan* (ear) and *naak* (nose) which are the same as the Hindi and Punjabi words. There are many cultural similarities too between the Romani and Indian communities, such as an association of the colour white when mourning and applying of mehndi on palms by Roma brides.

This is only something that I have learned this year! It brings me much joy to hear and further fuels my celebrations for SAHM this year and for many years to come. Learning about the communities we serve is vital when practicing effective social work and advocating for social justice across the UK. Watch for a future blog in which we will share more about this Romani and Indian heritage. BASW Cymru and SWU commit to learning more about South Asian heritage and sharing this with you.

BASW Cymru National Director **Allison Hulmes** said, *“For us Romani people whose ancestors left Mother India over a 1000 years ago, it is a joy and privilege to celebrate South Asian Heritage Month along with our South Asian brothers and sisters. There is growing acknowledgement of our origin in India. In 1983, Indira Gandhi expressed her kinship with Romani people and in 2016 Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs of India, proclaimed, ‘You are the children of India...’*

“These past days I’ve been reflecting on the partition of India in 1947 and watching documentaries detailing personal stories of loss and grief and also stories of a willingness to protect and support neighbours and friends across the religious divides. These stories have moved me deeply. We must understand the migration stories of all of the citizens in the UK and the role that Empire played and as I take the opportunity to learn more about South Asian culture and heritage during this important month, I too celebrate in also being a daughter of India.”

General Secretary of the Social Workers Union (SWU) **John McGowan** said, *“South Asian Heritage Month is a terrific opportunity to celebrate the cultures, heritage, and history of SWU's many South Asian members. It's great to hear the stories of people with living experience and I thank them for sharing their Journeys of Empire with us this year. It would be great to hear from members so we can share some of their stories in the next SWU newsletter.*

“Along with celebrating the month, SWU and its National Executive Committee are committed to continuing to learn and broaden our knowledge. SWU is also committed to improving the working conditions and wellbeing of social workers, including social workers with South Asian heritage.

I invite everyone reading this to give serious consideration to joining a union. If you ever need our services you can be confident that advice, support, and representation from SWU will be from a fellow social worker who understands the needs of frontline workers.”

Personal reflections on South Asian History Month 2022

Like many of South Asians who grew up in Britain, it was not until many years into my adult life when I began to fully understand and reflect on the sacrifices my grandparents and parents had made moving to the UK. I have heard many stories about the hardships that families faced during their journeys of empire and the solidarity that grew as communities came together to survive.

Khakan Qureshi is an award-winning LGBTQ+ Activist and has a long history of advocating for individuals who identify as South Asian LGBTQ+. Khakan shared with us how his family settled in England with us. He said, *“My parents were born in Amritsar, Punjab, India. They were forced to leave India due to the Partition in 1947 as they were (Punjabi) Muslims and settled in Lahore, Pakistan. My parents were distant relatives and had an arranged marriage. They had their first child, a daughter, in 1955 and their first son came along two years later. My dad was offered the opportunity to study either in the USA or the UK. He chose the UK and was later joined by my mum in 1961. They lived in a small, terraced house in Balsall Heath, Birmingham. My father opened one of the first South Asian curry houses, called Shiraz, in 1968 and was featured in the Evening Mail, a local newspaper for the Midlands.”*



Khakan openly shared his experience of being a South Asian living in Britain by telling us about his fondest memories. He shared, *“My fondest memories are of watching children’s TV shows like Pipkin, The Klangers, Bagpuss, reading books, going out with my mum and siblings to local parks, like Cannon Hill or the Lickey Hills and drawing attention as we sat on the grass eating sheesh kebabs burgers, samosas and pakoras, having day trips to places like Blackpool, Barry Island, Weston-Super-Mare either as a family or as a community trip on the charabanc, enjoying Easter, Eid or Christmas and alternating meals between traditional roast chicken dinners and pilau rice, rotis and curries, being in the kitchen and enjoying the hustle and bustle of the family gatherings, watching my mum and sisters getting ready for the South Asian parties, weddings and other special occasions, admiring them as they chose the different brightly coloured shalwar kameez, saris and matching it up with Indian gold jewellery or opting for the less ostentatious high street offerings from stores such as Rackhams, sitting with the family and alternating between watching old Hollywood movies or Bollywood goldies, listening to my brother and sister play jazz, funk, soul and disco whilst my parents would choose Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammed Rafi.”*

This was a joy to read as there were so many commonalities with what brought me happiness in my youth. We have so much to be proud of as a British South Asians with such enriched heritage and culture. I remember hiring out VHS Bollywood movies from the local store for 50p and watching them with the family. My dad would give me a list of movies written on a piece of paper and I would

walk to the shop with the list hoping they would not ask me to pronounce the complicated titles. It is something we did every Sunday as a family. This was during a time when Sunday was a day of rest, and nothing was open unlike today.

While watching these Bollywood movies, sometimes with subtitles, I began to unconsciously learn Hindi as a young child. Not one lesson and I can now fully understand Hindi; that's powerful. We also would watch Punjabi movies too. After a day at school, me and my siblings would attend a Punjabi school for an hour and learn Punjabi. It was the same school I went to in the day which was great so we would pop home eat and then walk back to school; it was great fun seeing our Asian friends there. The value of learning Punjabi and more about my heritage did not hit me until much later in adult life. Now I realise how priceless it was. I can speak, read, and write Punjabi which I am proud of. All my family speak English so unless I see my grandmothers, I rarely get opportunity to use it.

There seems to be an invisible golden thread which is deeply rooted amongst all of those who have lived and understand the journeys of empire. There is a silent underlying pain which will always exist and this month we pay tribute to all those we have lost and all those who paved the way for South Asian greatness across the world. Khakan describes this best when he described his life as *"enriching, culturally confusing, complex and challenging, linear and diverse."*

Whilst Khakan continues to be an incredible inspiration to the South Asian LGBTQ+ communities across the world, he has had to draw upon inner courage during difficult times. Khakan shared some of his hardest struggles. He said, *"Over the years I have been facing up to the realities of racism (direct or indirect) and prejudice about being a brown, Muslim gay man. Coming to terms with my sexual orientation and trying to reconcile it with my faith as a Muslim. This had led to anxiety and depression and suicidal ideation. Stepping away from identifying as a Muslim after 9/11 as the stigma and bigotry surrounding Islam and Muslim was extremely prevalent in the media and community as to sometimes create a hostile environment, even in conversations. Losing both my parents. I lost my dad in 2008 and mum passed in 2010. I also lost my job at the end of the year so fell into a deep depression and experienced loss (emotionally and financially) and bereavement."*

We have all observed and occasionally reflected on how times have changed. Khakan describes his own reflection of positive and negative changes. He said, *"The more positive changes are how South Asians are gaining more visibility in areas which were otherwise inaccessible. There's more online accounts tackling issues which were or are deemed 'taboo' within South Asian communities such as mental health, women's health, forced marriages, honour based violence and sexual matters. IG and Twitter are good examples to see how South Asians are being more creative in highlighting the good, by connecting people who share a commonality. The negatives are the more visibility we gain as South Asians, there is more hostility and discrimination. There is a lack of resources, funds and role models in the public eye, and I hope SAHM becomes more recognised as a national annual event, which will strengthen our role in UK society."*

Khakan speaks about those who have played a significant part in his life. He said, *"My parents were very influential in my life. I was very close to my mum who had been to the University of Life and taught me about the inner strength of women, how to be robust and resilient in the face of adversity and allowed me to have a spiritual connection with my faith. I didn't realise how much of an inspiration my father was to me until after he passed, and I had written an unpublished novel about my relationship with him. We seemed to have quite a distant relationship, but it was because we were so much alike. He recognised my passion for social injustice before I did, saw the potential in me and, ironically, I find myself following in his footsteps. Where he strived to integrate South Asians with*

Western communities and vice versa, I do the same but through the lens of the South Asian LGBT+ perspective. My lifetime partner, who instilled confidence in me, offered me unwavering support and loyalty and encouraged me to do the things I love and not to pay any mind to what others think."

We asked Khakan how he will be celebrating this month, and he replied, "As it happens, SAHM coincides with the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham this year, so I will be enjoying both festivities. I will be utilising my brownness, gayness and Muslimness to celebrate attending events, speaking about intersectionality, sharing my personal experiences and looking at ways in how to promote SAHM via social media or in person. I will be celebrating my uniqueness in my identity as a brown South Asian every day!"

Khakan's stories about his life caused me to reflect further about the social work profession. As social workers, it is crucial that we are open to listening and understanding people's life experiences in their own narratives. Understanding the heritage of communities that we serve is fundamental for safe and effective social work intervention to take place. The various layers of people's identities intersect and offer many opportunities for relationship-based social work to take place in co-production with those we support. [Intersectionality enriches relationship-based social work.](#)

Neeta Singh Baicher is the recently appointed Vice-Chair of BASW UK and has spent many years being an innovative leader within the social work profession across Wales and now hopes to continue her work across the UK. Neeta has inspired many social workers to remain authentic to their true selves and be proud of their heritage and culture when practicing social work. She has challenged opposing views and inspired many to seek social justice during difficult times. Neeta is fluent in her mother tongue and the Welsh language which she learnt when she arrived in Wales those many years ago.

Neeta shared that, "As a social worker I am very proud of my unique profession and passionate about my South Asian heritage and culture. Today we enjoy many privileges because of early social workers like Vinobe Bhave, Jotiba Phule and many more who saw injustice and took action. They inspired me to work in this field. The same with my parents and grandparents in the struggle of the Empire - it was because of them that solid foundations were laid for my future career.

"I came to Leeds in the early 80's. I recall that getting a job as a student's spouse was an interesting phase of my life. It included hearing many phrases like 'Oh! You speak good English, were did you learn the language!'

"Support from my family and friends has encouraged me to move forward in my work and voluntary work. My best memories from my career are from my secondment to study social work, being appointed as a Justice, and working with marginalized communities in Riverside, Ely, young offenders and Welsh valley. I understood what an important role values and tradition play in successful intervention. Also, the common shared experience of burn-out from the job."

Neeta reflected further, saying, *"We must continue work to eliminate systematic racism, and this includes ensuring access to behavioural health services and appropriate use of terminology. Change has been slow. Together we need to keep moving."*

BASW Cymru and SWU wish you a fabulous South Asian Heritage Month and we invite you to share your stories and celebrations with us by emailing narinder.sidhu@basw.co.uk, and with the wider world using the hashtags **#SouthAsianHeritageMonth**, **#OurStoriesMatter**, **#JourneysOfEmpire**, **#SocialWorkMatters**, and tagging [BASW Cymru](#) and [SWU](#) on social media.



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fall as well as rise and you can get back less
than you invested.*



SWU Social
Workers
Union

Austerity Action Group

WE SHALL OVERCOME and I will say it again WE SHALL OVERCOME

Angi Naylor, Chair of the Austerity Group provides us with
her usual update and some future dates for your diary

Trying to be supportive, turning negatives in to positives and engendering some hope, is perhaps one of the few skills that social workers can still offer to service users worried about the COST OF LIVING. But it's not just service users who are affected, it is social workers and their families as well!

What you ask has changed and have we been at all effective in calling out the government?

In 2017 we BASW & SWU marched 100 miles from Birmingham to Liverpool to stand up for the rights of those who couldn't fight and highlight the detrimental effect that (then) seven years of austerity measures had had on their lives.

At the start of the march, public awareness was patchy and media attention limited. At the end we had raised awareness and joined up with lots of other policy and campaigning groups and more since.

Whilst the ground swell of public opinion grew the Government's view became more entrenched, specifically in 2019 without reference to the damage of their previous policies the Chancellor Sajid Javid announced *"We have turned the page on Austerity."*

So here we are in summer 2022 - without by now nor leave to those people still struggling, the Tory party fiddle with fiscal policies claiming to be offering support to those who will be affected by the massive hike in fuel policies! Meanwhile this government continues to whitewash over the last 10 years (and more) of Austerity measures without even a nod to the Daniel Blakes of the world!

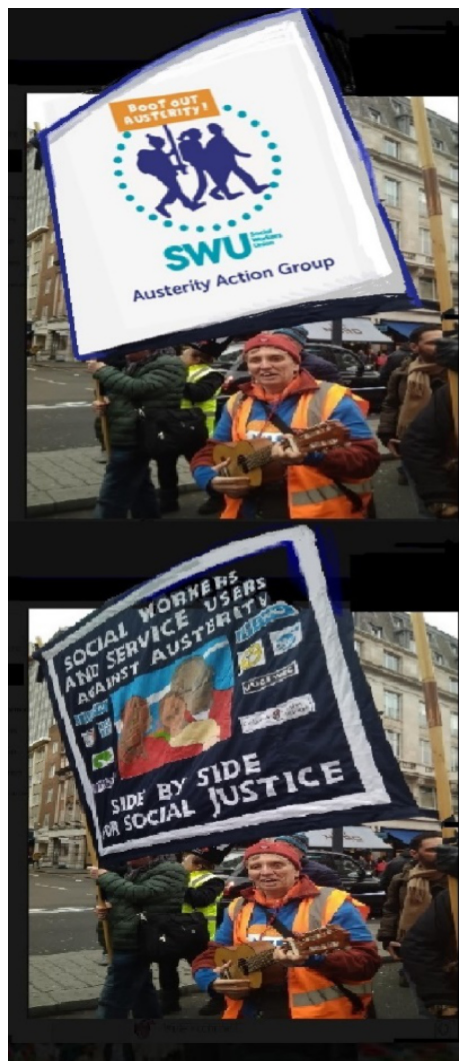
Have we been effective? We (and our Allies) have certainly been effective in getting the media involved in raising public awareness, and in recognising that social workers should and do have a role in calling out the government and can do that through their Union or Association like BASW & SWU. But it's not only our allies I still cannot express my feeling when I see heads of the main energy companies on mainstream TV raising concerns for and on behalf of their customers and again asking the government to do something.

**** This is being written in the days before the announcement of the latest fuel cap ****
Let's hope that WE SHALL OVERCOME

Diary Dates

The Tory Party Conference takes place over the weekend of October 1st and 2nd in Birmingham.

BOOT OUT AUSTERITY will be there marching under [the amazing SWASSUA Banner](#) as part of the PROTEST THE TORY PARTY. Put the dates in your diary and watch out for more details on our social media pages.



the
peoples
assembly



the
peoples
assembly

SAVE THE DATE:
AUTUMN OFFENSIVE

SUNDAY
OCT 2
BIRMINGHAM

**PROTEST THE TORY
PARTY CONFERENCE**

SATURDAY
NOV 5
LONDON

**NATIONAL
DEMONSTRATION**

SATURDAY
JAN 15
2023 LONDON

**PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY
NATIONAL CONFERENCE**



We Shall Overcome
We Shall Overcome
We Shall Overcome Someday
Oh Deep In My Heart (I Know That)
I Do Believe
That We Shall Overcome Someday

Pete Seeger

HAT TRACKS LIVE
'WE SHALL OVERCOME'
30th July 2022

Last month Pete Unwin and myself joined a dozen or more acts to raise money for food banks in the Bradford area. We sang in solidarity, in protest and for our supper to Boot Out Austerity.

Angi Naylor
SWU Executive Member and
Austerity Action Group Chair

SWU is proud to feature the winners of the Competition

Competition marked by a Panel including:

Shahid Naqvi - PSW Magazine Editor

David Callow - SWU Executive

Lindsey Huxtable-Dowd - BASW/SWU Advice and Representation Team

The criteria: a 750 - 1000 word assignment with the following title:

Considering the current negative TV and general media portrayals of social workers, what action can be taken to change this?

Who could take part: Social Work Students undertaking an Undergraduate or Post Graduate Social Work Degree

The prize: £500



SWU Social
Workers
Union
Austerity Action Group



SWU Social
Workers
Union
Campaign Fund



SWU Social
Workers
Union
Union Contacts



Talk to SWU Social
Workers
Union
workplace issues webinar

CO-BUILDING A NEW ECO-SOCIAL WORLD: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY
15TH MARCH 2022
#WSWD2022

Considering the current negative TV and general media portrayals of social workers, what action can be taken to change this?



Natalia Phillips - Brunel University

Recent news coverage has repeatedly emphasised the shortcomings of social work professionals and the limitations of social work resources that, consequently, have contributed to several serious and chilling events in recent years, including child deaths (Leedham, 2022). The more recent deaths of Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes, coupled with the historic cases of Victoria Climbié, Baby P, and many other individuals both in the UK and internationally shook the nation (Curtis, 2022). The failure of those with legal powers and duty substantially weakened the already fragile position of social work (Gallagher, 2022).

Negative and sensationalistic depictions of social work in the media have been present since at least the 1970s (Neate and Philpot, 1997) and have had a serious impact on the public perception of social workers, and have influenced national legislation, especially pieces focusing on child safety and protection (Franklin and Parton, 2014). The 1975 and 1989 Children's Acts are examples of legislation that came out as a direct consequence of the Cleveland and Colwell cases, where children died due to the neglect and violence (Valios, 2007).

Current professional challenges including large workloads, insufficient funds to support professionals with more time and the space and understanding they require to act with more efficacy and diligence sadly means there has been inevitable societal disappointment and an increasingly negative perception of social workers (Legood et al., 2016). Such strong feelings of anger and disappointment are enrooted in the common belief that social workers are to be held responsible for such terrible mistakes. These common societal beliefs and the existing stigma of social workers are compounded by the characterisation in the media that define their role as to interfere with families and 'take children away' (Bolgun and Sahin, 2019).

Therefore, it comes without surprise that due to such repeated stigma and pressure from the care providers and governments, along with the day-to-day stresses

of overwhelming casework, social workers are not only overloaded with responsibility but also subjected to a continuous string of negativity and scrutiny coming from the news (Mason, 2018).

The media has contributed to a negative image of social work and its emphasis on any wrongdoing and professional neglect, particularly children's services, offers a generalised, badly informed, and skewed picture of what social workers do (Davidson and King, 2005). Such unbalanced images of the profession and social work professionals suggests that not much is known about the reality of the job, its variety, diversity of roles and responsibilities (Galilee, 2001; Kagan, 2015).

Because media sources are a main contributor to the negative perception of social work, it has created an unfair image of the profession, particularly amongst those who do not have any personal experiences of social work services (Legood et al., 2016). Media limits the growth of the understanding of the profession, however, keeping in mind media's power that leads to 'a widespread influence over public attitudes and beliefs' (Staniforth et al., 2022, p.244), social work professionals should consider taking action to change negative perceptions in three following ways.

First, on a micro-level, social workers both nationally and worldwide need to take charge of changing the skewed image of the profession (LeCroy and Stinton, 2004). A more active involvement on social media through the sharing of positive and successful stories would provide an opportunity for a more balanced opinion of social work (Jahan, 2016). Furthermore, considering an educational approach in such stories, including successful examples of excellent social work in a diverse setting, would be helpful to those who are unfamiliar with the complexity and variety of the profession. For instance, an Instagram account, Blog, YouTube channel, Vlog and/or podcast could be set up to promote the work of diverse teams and individuals. That would not only be informative but would be able to reach out to the younger demographic.

Second, on a mezzo-level, strong research-based initiative must be encouraged by social work departments, statutory and non-statutory organisations, and educational bodies. Conducting research in social work not only allows the development of new theories and improvement of practices and interventions (Jahan, 2016), but it also enhances the status of social work amongst other professionals and academics. The new research initiative could be shared, discussed, and evaluated within local research hubs (Local Authority or NHS Trust -based) and subsequently shared nationwide via conferences, social media, and online seminars.

These initiatives should be aimed not only at the professionals but also open to the public interested in what social workers do and how and why they do it. That would also offer room for co-production of services and dialogue amongst practitioners, service users and governing bodies (Legood et al., 2016). New research initiatives, as well as excellent examples of practice, could be subsequently shared with local and national media and press. Social media, including Instagram, LinkedIn or Twitter should be used regularly to promote research and any examples of excellent practice (Westwood, 2014).

On a macro-level, Social Work Education's curricula, as well as national policies, must develop and promote an array of skills necessary to positively inform and influence media and public opinion (Legood et al., 2016). Students and professionals need to be trained to co-work effectively with media and establish a fair and balanced working relations that would help illustrate both the challenges and the successes coming from social work profession (Westwood, 2014).

By doing this, social work's status will improve, the public will gain a wider view of social workers' duties and consequently, that will overall lead to a better perception of social work. However, for this to be possible, there must be a strong governmental 'push' for fairer working conditions and social funding allowing social workers perform at the best of their ability (British Association of Social Workers, 2021). Without investment in social work education, professional skills as well as fairer pay, it would be impossible to create innovative tools to adequately work with and stand up to the media's skewed depictions of social work (Staniforth et al., 2022). Only a strong co-productive approach and initiative between social workers, service users and media representatives can transform an overly unfavourable representation of social work profession.

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Considering the current negative TV and general media portrayals of social workers, what action can be taken to change this?

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Within the UK, social work has been negatively reported in newspapers due to “scandals” ranging from removing children from their families too quickly, to allegations of neglecting to protect children from abuse (Franklin & Parton, 1991; Franklin, 1998). However, a positive image of social work is vital in gaining support for programmes, utilising services, maintaining morale, attracting recruits, and ensuring its voice is heard (Kaufman & Raymond, 1996).

The media serves to further discussions among the public and policy makers regarding particular public health issues (Wallack et al., 1993). From the 1970s – 1990s a series of high profile child abuse scandals in England and Wales led to the frequent vilification of the child welfare agencies considered to be to blame for the deaths of the children involved by the mass media (Ayre, 2001). The negative, and on occasion hostile, media reports of social workers became more apparent in the late 1980s after the reports from the Beckford, Henry, Carlisle and Cleveland inquiries occurred, where social workers were centrally involved (Franklin and Parton, 1991). The 1987 “Cleveland Affair” story was the first case of over-intervention rather than under-intervention, leading to professionals being characterised as “fools and whimps” for failing to intervene authoritatively in the name of protection, and “villain and bully,” for heavy-handed intervention and placing children in care unnecessarily (Lonne and Patton, 2014). These images have been portrayed in the media ever since. Scandals are the single largest category of story and these cases within social work have become national news, often with multiple follow-up stories and leading to the fostering of a journalistic

propensity to see social work in a bad light (Reid and Misener, 2001). The selection of news stories emphasising drama and conflict can only increase the atmosphere of mistrust, with the key news stories of 1970s - 1990s tending to focus on criticism of the competency or motivations of child protection workers (Ayre, 2001). Little to no attention tends to be paid to regular small successes of the social work system in identifying abuse and preventing serious injury or death (Pritchard, 1992). This media portrayal supports the belief within the British social work community that “the profession gets unusually poor news media treatment” (Aldridge, 1990).

Within the social work role difficult judgements must be made and these can unfortunately lead to harmful consequences (SCIE, 2005). However, as a social care sector, the lessons from these mistakes only occur under the most tragic of circumstances and this can raise intense public condemnation, resulting in a blame culture with blame aimed at the ‘guilty’ professionals (Sicora, 2017). An example of this can be seen with The Sun’s “Beautiful Baby P: Campaign for Justice” petition with its success leading to the dismissal of four employees connected to the case (Lonne and Paton, 2014). The media have played a key role in creating and maintaining the discourse that professionals are to blame for the abuse which they are supposed to prevent, coming out in the form of ‘how has this been allowed to happen?’ (Ayre, 2001). However, a false solution is represented by blame and punishment of individual professionals and does not solve the real issues (Sicora, 2017).

Initiatives in the improvement of the portrayal of Social Work in the press should be seen as a feature of maximising the effectiveness of the profession (Reid and Misener, 2001). Recognition and a response to the roles that the media plays is needed, whilst also questioning how Social Work relates to the media (Lonne and Parton, 2014). Social Workers have felt journalists lack sufficient knowledge to report matters accurately whilst some journalists have encouraged the adoption of a proactive public relations strategy (Franklin and Parton, 1991). Often the media are treated as hostile towards Social Work and thus a lack of co-operation with press inquiries and a failure to offer background information or offer the availability of a credible spokesperson to interview leaves the media with large gaps in the narrative of their story (Ayre, 2001). An on-going media strategy should include the promotion of the successes and socially valued aspects of the profession and form long-term relationships with journalists (Aldridge, 1994). Understanding of the complexities and uncertainties involved in child welfare for example on the part of journalists may result in a more objective report with less blame culture generated (Reid and Misener, 2001). A panel of experts as a resource for the media such as The National Association of Social Workers in the USA may provide a link for the media to gain more inside knowledge on the profession (Reid and Misener, 2001). Rather than avoiding the media, it is crucial to increase the understanding of the media and the creation of news, whilst also increasing the effectiveness of the creation and promotion of Social Works preferred discourse (Ayre, 2001). Aspects of the media management of the police forces in the United Kingdom can be learned from, with their anticipation of a possibly controversial story breaking and thus responding by providing neutral or favourable background information to the news leading to quick and positive responses rather than defensive ones (Ayre, 2001). The key that they employ is maintaining a steady stream of stories customised to account for the needs of different media sectors and cultivate specific journalists who are sympathetic to the chosen message (Ayre, 2001). More generally, stories about innovative programmes or interesting practice activities could be created in co-operation with journalists seeking newsworthy articles (Reid and Misener, 2001).

The current negative general media portrayals of social workers has occurred off the back of multiple child protection scandals. The culture of blame that has resulted from these scandals and the public condemnation of individual professionals has been maintained by the media's attention to blaming

someone for why a tragic circumstance has occurred. However, through a strong media strategy, the promotion of the preferred discourse, and increased positive relationships with the media professionals the story may be altered.

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Considering the current negative TV and general media portrayals of social workers, what action can be taken to change this?

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“Baby murdered hours after social worker’s visit.”

“Half of all social workers at risk of quitting.”

“Social workers turned blind eye to abuse.”

These are some of the headlines that come up when the term “social workers” is inputted into Google News. The negative slants of these headlines may not come as a surprise to social workers, with research indicating that this common and negative portrayal has an effect on their morale (Zugazaga et al., 2006). These types of headlines, alongside negative television portrayals and even Facebook groups devoted to maligning social workers, present damning pictures of social workers to the general public and can deter individuals from wanting to become social workers themselves.

It seems as though social work is only mentioned in the media when something negative and rare, such as child abuse resulting in death, has happened, negatively impacting the reputation of social workers in this field (Lonne and Parton, 2014). One example is the recent case of Logan Mwangi in Bridgend, who was discharged from the Child Protection Register only a month before his death (Pollock, 2022). Other notable cases include the murders of Victoria Climbié and Peter Connelly. The result of the extensive media coverage of these cases can be hostile attitudes towards social workers (Warner, 2012).

Instead of waiting for another case to end tragically or for another media investigation on the worsening social work staffing crisis, it is time to do damage control and change the narrative. We must cast the spotlight on the good that social workers achieve and the positive aspects of the social work role. This may then encourage people to seek support from social workers and alleviate recruitment pressures into the sector.

However, we cannot attempt damage control when so many people are unclear about what social work actually consists of. In undertaking research for my Masters dissertation, I conducted interviews with individuals, through which it came out that many of them did not actually understand what social work

entailed. This discovery reflects research indicating the public appears to typecast social workers as do-gooders and hippies and are unaware about the qualifications needed to practice as one (Beddoe et al., 2017). Members of the public may benefit from greater education about the social work role, which will hopefully alleviate the stigma resulting from seeking support. This education may also prevent people from only speaking to social workers when at crisis, alleviating pressures on the sector. This preventative support, which is a crucial element of social care as evidenced by the Code of Professional Practice and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, also leads to better person-centred care.

By educating the general population about various social work functions, we can also hopefully demonstrate that the Climbiés in social work are rare, with the current rate of fatal abuse being 2.2/100000 and 1.8/100000 for boys and girls respectively (McCarroll et al., 2020). We can also evidence how we support the older adult population in the midst of the current NHS crisis. In this way, the focus shifts from child protection gone wrong to how social workers actually benefit members of the public and promote their well-being (Beddoe, 2013).

Sharing information about our roles through social media and news sites would be beneficial, but it is important to be realistic and realise that comments underneath articles, especially by those readers consider to be peers, may have a chance of being negative. These comments can then influence these readers and deter from the message we are trying to send to the general public (Krämer et al., 2019). Media portrayal via television, for example on BBC networks, may also be beneficial for those who prefer not to access the internet.

Community outreach information sessions may also be effective as this would enable the general public to speak face-to-face with people. I recently supported the local authority hosting my placement to conduct ‘Carers Roadshows.’ This entailed setting up a booth in the middle of a busy town market to support any unpaid

carers happening to stop by with information on how they could access support and what they may be entitled to. This seemed to be effective for several families who did not realise how social workers could support them in their roles.

They also had the benefit of speaking to other professionals, such as benefits advisors and carers support workers, to better have an idea of what other support is available. Many of these individuals appeared to be older, who also explained to us that they were not confident in accessing internet resources. For this reason these types of events may reach an audience not accessible through traditional television and internet methods.

Speaking to social workers in this way also humanises them as some people have had negative experiences with social workers. I have worked with adults who have advised me that the child protection social workers they have come across in the past have appeared very punitive and that they were afraid of being penalised for having, for example, mental health issues. Transparency surrounding the role and to remove the stereotypes associated with the role may help through an information session.

None of these suggestions will wipe the stigma that is associated with the social work role, with research indicating that some social workers believe that negative views of the role will dominate the discourse even with evidence indicating the contrary (Legood, 2016). However, through community outreach and education surrounding the social care role, we can make a dent in the negative portrayals which currently surround social work and positively impact our local communities at the same time.

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