

Supporting our members



Thank You - once more we have seen membership significantly increase. The appetite for joining SWU has never been stronger and reflected in rising membership and the recruitment of over 100 Union Contacts in the workplace. Please share

the benefits of being a member with colleagues. As a member organisation we have lots of opportunities get involved in the union so please keep in touch. Next month we will be recruiting for new Executive Members and please do give this some thought.

Over the past few weeks, we have all had to make massive changes to the way we live our lives to protect ourselves and those around us from coronavirus. It is no coincidence that recent applications from social workers to the Social Workers' Benevolent Trust (SWBT) have significantly increased over the last 8 weeks due to the financial impact of the coronavirus on individual social workers and their families.

I am pleased therefore to be supporting the terrific work of the Social Workers' Benevolent Trust through this difficult time with a donation of 25% of my salary this month which will additionally be matched from the Social Workers Union. Personally, I am in a fortunate position of myself and my wife continuing to work, educate family at home, pay our bills, purchase food, and pay the family mortgage. Indeed, like most of society the lockdown has meant no nights out, travel, leisure shopping, holidays

or indeed opportunities to do all the fun activities that we enjoy. Regardless, all our personal situations differ, and I heard recently about some of the personal hardships on social workers with family salaries lost, as well as sickness, resulting in real hardship.

If you are able, then please join me and donate to the SWBT if you can. A small donation will make a huge difference and it will go directly to social workers in need. The SWBT was established as an independent charity in 1971 on the initiative of the British Association of Social Workers. It remains independent with its own trustees. The Trust offers financial help to social workers and their dependents in times of hardship and if able you can donate here: <http://www.swbt.org/how-to-donate/>

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about huge changes to all our daily lives as we all make huge personal and work changes to follow the advice from the UK governments and NHS bodies to try and limit the spread of the virus. As well as being a threat to our physical health the virus remains a significant feature in the ongoing stress and anxiety for busy social workers particularly as key workers. The effect of having to take time off if a social worker, or a member of their household, has symptoms of coronavirus, means that many social workers are experiencing hardship when experiencing sickness, bereavement, family difficulties and the wider impact of managing aspects of the coronavirus.

With some Local Authorities reporting sickness absence rates of up to 30%, there is no doubt that the coronavirus is having a profound impact on our profession and on individual social workers and their families. Social work,

weakened by years of declining real-terms public funding and rising demand, has further been struggling from the impact of the virus. As a result, many service users and staff have been unprotected, fatally vulnerable and poorly accounted for their contributions until now.

In a just and compassionate society, we all rely on one another for support in difficult times, within communities, acting together through national and local government systems, as well as through charitable responses such as the SWBT. Social workers face challenges staying resilient in the face of rising costs and income loss due to the coronavirus outbreak. Our social work members continue to be supported by the skilled Advice and Representation team. Never

before have social workers really needed the support of a union and a professional association who are dedicated and knowledgeable about social work. The dedication of the A&R Team and the support they have offered to SWU members over this difficult period has been exceptional.

Finally, that is us now on Wikipedia and it has some further info about the formation of SWU and history. Hopefully, we will add to it once we get the time:

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Workers_Union

John McGowan
General Secretary

j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk

The link between BASW and SWU

Lien Watts, SWU Assistant General Secretary explains some of the functions of A&R and differences between BASW and SWU

As many of you will know, I am Lien Watts, Head of BASW's Advice & Representation Service and I'm also the Assistant General Secretary of the Social Workers Union, more commonly known as SWU.

I am the longest serving member of the A&R team - having myself previously worked as an officer prior to moving into the management of the team.

An A&R service of sorts was set up very early in BASW's history when it was realised that social workers going through personal and professional challenges needed advice and support. It was a small but very important part of BASW's overall membership package; and it still is! It was originally a very small team with just one or two people handling enquiries, then it started to grow, took on admin support, and by the time I joined, we were a team of eight part-time and full-time officers including a service manager and one senior officer. We now have fifteen officers including two senior officers plus myself overseeing the operation.

It's been a really exciting journey!
(so far..)

Our officers are based all over the country and serve all four nations of the UK. Whilst we are all employed by BASW, the A&R team undertakes work on behalf of the Social Workers Union - a specialist trade union which was set up by BASW in June 2011. Some people are very confused about the relationship between BASW and SWU, but it is important to stress that we are two separate organisations who happen to work collaboratively together.



SWU is a certified and independent trade union, with its own governance, through its elected members including the General Secretary, John McGowan. SWU has become one of the fastest growing trade union in the UK and is well worth joining (if you haven't already). This is because whilst we can represent as 'BASW A&R Officers', employers can refuse to allow us in to accompany and/or represent our members; however under trade

union legislation, any employee (or worker) has the right to be supported and represented by an official of a trade union of their choice - which means that employers cannot refuse SWU TU Officials (which we all are) entry to represent our members.

So, the A&R Team is the main 'link' between BASW and SWU, and we feed back issues and concerns and, for example, any 'themes' that we identify to both BASW Council and to the SWU Executive. This ensures that the leadership of both organisations are able to work together strategically on some of their messaging relating to those issues that we raise.

A good example of this was the research into the working conditions of social workers conducted by Bath Spa University for BASW and SWU which I was able to feed into, giving examples of situations reported to our service by members.

All our officers are qualified and registered social workers, independent of our members' employers (those are our 'Unique Selling Points') and collectively, the team has experience across all of the social work disciplines. Many of them have achieved very senior positions during their social work careers, but they also have strong trade union roots and have an interest and experience in, and have developed great expertise in, employment law. Some have formal legal and/or management qualifications in addition to their social work qualifications.

I am very privileged to be able to lead such a talented and skilled group of people and would have no difficulty in recommending any of them to you should you ever need support in employment or regulatory body issues.

Members can call in to our duty service on 0121 622 8413 to ask for an appointment with one of our officers.

Lien Watts
Head, Advice & Representation
Service, BASW
Assistant General Secretary, SWU



Revised Formal Notice SWU 2020 General Meeting

Friday 25th September 2020

The 2020 Annual General Meeting of the Social Workers Union will be held at The Mechanics Centre, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD

This AGM will be accessible ONLINE for members only with voting facilities provided by UK Engage.

A very limited amount of places will be made available for members who wish to personally attend and who are not able to access voting via social media.

If you would prefer to attend in person please notify us via email by Friday 11th September to joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk

SWU is unable to assist with travel costs.

The timetable is as follows:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 31-7-2020 | Deadline for receipt of motions |
| 4-9-2020 | Notice of any proposed amendment to rules given in writing to members |
| 18-9-2020 | Deadline for amendments to motions |

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

Amendments to motions must also be signed by 10 members.

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

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

Motions should be submitted by email to joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk

Membership numbers must be stated and will be checked.

The Social Workers Union, Wellesley House,
37 Waterloo Street, Birmingham B2 5PP

www.swu-union.org.uk

SWU LEGAL SERVICES



As a SWU member you have access to the expert legal team at Morrish Solicitors.

Whether you want to buy or sell a house, create or update your will, claim compensation after an injury or claim for medical negligence, Morrish Solicitors can help. We've been working with Trade Unions for over 120 years and are proud to always represent the people, never companies or insurance firms.

Contact us for more information.

Through your SWU membership you receive exclusive benefits including:

- Free personal injury service
- 10% discount on wills and probate
- 10% discount on residential conveyancing
- 10% discount on family and matrimonial legal services
- 10% discount on criminal/motoring offences and court litigation

T: 033 3344 9600

E: info@morrishsolicitors.com

W: morrishsolicitors.com/socialworkersunion

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President's Message



Why weren't we more prepared? This is a massive public health failure. Why from the outset were there not sufficient stocks of personal protective equipment and the infrastructure to carry out mass Covid-19 testing. Social workers, social care staff, nurses,

doctors, hospital porters have all been left without the equipment they need to protect themselves and the patients. It is a disgrace. The daughter of a SWU member of staff who works in social care in a residential home for the elderly caught Covid-19. Fortunately she fully recovered. But many social care staff working in residential homes for the elderly have died. There is a tragic epidemic sweeping residential homes with a vast number of deaths amongst this very vulnerable group of elderly people. These are people who died before their time. Why didn't we have stockpiles of PPE?

In Birmingham Muhammad Islam, a social worker who supported care leavers died from Covid-19 recently. Other social workers have died from this devastating virus. Demands on social workers are particularly high at the moment with increases in mental health issues and domestic abuse as a result of the lockdown. Yet social workers making emergency home visits have not been given adequate PPE.

It is not as if epidemics and pandemics are anything new. Spanish flu in 1918 to 1920 killed millions. More recently we had SARS and MERS, not dissimilar to Covid-19, which is also called SARS2. Historically we have had epidemics of smallpox, typhoid, polio, cholera, tuberculosis, measles and others. The formation of the NHS in 1948 was one of our greatest achievements. However there was a downside, the progressive marginalisation of public health. At the core of public health is preventive medicine. However you cannot practice preventive medicine without the equipment to do so. PPE should have been

stockpiled in sufficient quantities to cope with any possible epidemic. The infrastructure for mass testing for a virus should have been in place. If South Korea could do it, why couldn't we? Certainly there will be lots of questions to be answered when this outbreak is over. My father was a public health doctor, a Medical Officer of Health. I am sure he would have been very concerned about the way this pandemic has been handled in the UK. Had appropriate measures been in place many thousands would not have died.

Society often venerates celebrities, pop stars, film stars, footballers and other sports stars, successful entrepreneurs, billionaire leaders of industry; all of whom earn vast quantities of money. But now we are all dependent on public sector workers; the social workers, social care staff, nurses, doctors. These are the people we should venerate. The inevitable media focus on this group during the pandemic has greatly enhanced the value and respect these occupations are held in. Perhaps as a society our values will have changed when the pandemic is over, and, as a result we will have a more caring society.

For our members of SWU working as social workers in these incredibly difficult times, I have the utmost respect. Thank you for all you do to make the world a better place and enhance the quality of life of some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Take care and keep well.

Best wishes,

James Birchall
President SWU



Health & Safety



The Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) (HASAWA) places a legal duty on employers to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees and others are kept safe. The Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

is responsible for enforcing the act.

The Aberfan disaster was the catastrophic collapse of a colliery spoil tip around 9.15am on 21 October 1966. The tip had been created on a mountain slope above the Welsh village of Aberfan, near Merthyr Tydfil, and overlaid a natural spring. The collapse was caused by a build-up of water in the accumulated rock and shale that made up the spoil tip, which suddenly started to slide downhill, in the form of slurry, and covering Pentglas Junior School. Of the 144 people who died in the disaster, 116 were children.

The tip was the responsibility of the National Coal Board (NCB). Following the disaster an official enquiry was chaired by Lord Justice Edmund Davies and the blame was laid squarely on the NCB. However, neither the NCB nor any of its employees were prosecuted, and the organisation was not fined.

In 1969 Lord Robens the head of the NCB was selected by the Labour MP Barbara Castle to chair a committee into workplace health and safety. This led to the 1972 Robens Report which controversially championed the idea of self-regulation by employers. The report itself led to the HASAWA (1974) and the creation of the Health & Safety Commission and the HSE. Michael Foot the then Secretary of State for the Labour Party introduced the HASAWA on 22 March 1974.

The Aberfan disaster added to a growing sense that the risks the public were exposed to by industry had to be controlled. This mood for change eventually led to the enactment of the HASAWA 1974. The primary aims of the act being to

protect both workers and non-workers from the potential and inherent risks of workplace activities. The implementation of the Act has significantly reduced the number of deaths and serious accidents in the workplace. The HSE published statistics in 2018 showing that in recent decades there have been large reductions in both fatal and non-fatal injuries in workplace settings. With an estimated 84% reduction in both types of injury since the introduction of the Act in 1974.

The three main objectives of the HASAWA 1974 are as follows:

- Ensuring employees' health, safety, and welfare at work
- Protecting non-employees against the health and safety risks arising from work activities
- Controlling the keeping and use of explosive or highly flammable or dangerous substances

Since the original Act became law in 1974 there have been several, further, pieces of health & safety legislation passed which inform and enhance the original legislation. Two key examples of this supplementary legislation are the Health & Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations (1992), and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (1999).

However, perhaps the two most pertinent pieces of legislation that affect both employers and employees during the current coronavirus pandemic are The Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002 and the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002).

The main provisions of the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002 require employers to:

- ensure that suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided free of charge "wherever there are risks to health and safety that cannot be adequately controlled in other ways." The PPE must be 'suitable' for the risk in question, and include protective face masks and goggles, safety helmets, gloves, air filters, ear defenders, overalls and protective footwear

- provide information, training, and instruction on the use of this equipment.

The main provisions of the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002) require employers to:

- avoid (so far as is reasonably practicable) the need for employees to undertake any manual handling activities involving risk of injury
- make assessments of manual handling risks and try to reduce the risk of injury. The assessment should consider the task, the load and the individual's personal characteristics (physical strength, etc.)
- provide workers with information on the weight of each load.

At the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic the Advice & Representation (A&R) duty line was receiving a high volume of calls from members expressing concerns about them not having the appropriate protective equipment to undertake their duties safely. For example, employers not providing hand sanitisers and masks for front line social workers who had to undertake visits to service user's homes. The advice we have given to our members is to remind their employers that they are owed a duty of care by the employer under the HASAWA 1974. We also recommend that members should bring to their employer's attention the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002, and the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002). Social workers were also sharing that they were expected to deliver personal care and administer medication alongside delivering social work services. Apparently, there was little or no training on offer for these crucial additional tasks.

Furthermore the A & R Services duty line has recommended that if the employer did not address health and safety concerns raised by their employees, and were not following government advice, members should consider reporting their employer to the HSE if no appropriate remedial action was taken by the employer. The HSE can, as the government agency

responsible for the encouragement, regulation and enforcement of workplace health, safety and welfare, issue fines for non-compliance and can also serve closure notices where and when necessary. HSE inspectors have significant powers to enter premises, inspect and investigate, take measurements, samples, and photographs. HSE inspectors can require an area or machine to be left undisturbed. Similarly, they can seize, render harmless or destroy dangerous items and obtain information and statements from persons deemed by the inspector to have relevance to the inspector's investigation.

Breaching health and safety regulations is a criminal offence and can lead to substantial fines and/or imprisonment. HSE inspectors or local Environmental Health Inspectors may issue an improvement or prohibition notice instead of prosecuting were such action is deemed appropriate.

If, however, members feel that their health & safety is being compromised by the work activities their employer requires them to undertake they should raise their concerns with their employer.

Members should ensure they:

- Make a written record of their concerns, which includes the date, time, and the name of the person they raised the concern with
- Include what exactly their employer has instructed them to do
- Report their concerns to their H&S representative if there is one in the workplace

However, if after these steps appropriate remedial action is not taken by the employer, we would recommend that consideration is given to reporting these matters to their regional Health & Safety Office.

Alternatively, if you would like to discuss any H&S concerns with a duty officer please contact our duty line on 0121 622 8413 to make an appointment.

Julie Long
SWU Trade Union Advice
and Representation Officer

Social work during Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Ongoing Survey open to all social workers:

Sharing and learning from each other

BASW and SWU wants to hear your ongoing queries and experiences during the Coronavirus pandemic. BASW first launched the survey on 16 March 2020 and have now added new questions to follow your experiences during Covid-19. This vital feedback will help us support you and all social workers, speak out social work and the rights of people using services, and create a record of this challenging period that we can learn from.

Take the survey:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2020/mar/social-work-during-coronavirus-covid-19-ongoing-survey-open-all-social-workers>

Please fill out this ongoing survey (query and feedback form) as many times as you want to - tell us what is happening and raise social work related queries. Keep in touch.

We welcome both BASW and BASW/SWU members to log-in prior to completing the survey - but this is not essential. All responses will be treated anonymously and in confidence.

The coronavirus pandemic brings unprecedented challenge and uncertainty in the professional and personal lives of social workers. It is vital that you have the support you need to do your job well and safely during this crisis. BASW will be the collective voice of the profession throughout crises and for the long term.

Responding to the initial survey findings, the Social Workers Union General Secretary, John McGowan, stated that *'The initial response to this survey has been terrific and I would urge all SWU members to engage and share their experiences. The strength of this survey is that it is aimed at all practitioners in a wide range of settings who can individually highlight what challenges are ahead. Each and every view is important to reflect social workers' experiences of Covid 19 in this qualitative survey'*.

Social Media

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

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

Monthly ebulletins

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

SWU can be found on the following:

Twitter: SWU_UK

Facebook: www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/

Internet: www.swu-union.org.uk

Coronavirus and its impact on Black communities

In the rising coronavirus death toll, black and brown people in the UK are represented in disproportionate numbers, due to not only discrimination and poverty, but because they make up a sizeable amount of the frontline workforce working without adequate PPE, argues GFTU Executive Member, Zita Holbourne.

Black and minority ethnic workers and communities are disproportionately adversely impacted by coronavirus in multiple ways with the most devastating, sudden and harshest impact being the high and disproportionate number of people dying from the virus, especially those who are key workers, with a particular impact on those who work in the health sector and in transport.

These are the workers on the frontline, delivering essential public services including caring for and treating those with coronavirus who have disgracefully been failed by the government who have not protected them and failed to provide personal protective equipment, effectively being sent to die with no care for their lives.

Black communities have historically and right up to the present day faced race discrimination at work and in the labour market, meaning they are in frontline jobs, often working precariously, bearing the brunt of ten years of austerity and cuts to the public and voluntary sectors, pay freezes, zero-hours contracts and discrimination in promotion and progression. They are the same people who experienced the horrendous Windrush scandal - some of whom are still experiencing destitution and homelessness and with the majority impacted still not receiving compensation, they are from migrant communities who have been demonized, labelled and scapegoated through a decade of austerity and who have and continue to face not just discrimination and racist abuse at work but in wider society. Black and migrant communities have for decades been crucial in keeping public and voluntary sector services running.

Other impacts are the increase in racist attacks and abuse. Chinese people and communities and those perceived by racists to be Chinese who are not, have been

subjected to horrific abuse, including hate mail sent to Chinese restaurants and takeaways and physical attacks leading to people having to be hospitalised.

There have been reports of key workers, even while they keep essential services running and are caring for those who are ill, facing abuse and told they want a white nurse or carer.

I think that any moves by the government to end lockdown before it is safe to do so will impact adversely on even more black workers and must be resisted.

There is now an inquiry underway to look into the reasons for BAME people dying disproportionately but there is little faith amongst black communities in the person originally appointed to lead this inquiry and an array of formal letters issued by BAME and health representatives calling for this to be changed including one by 100 black women and one representing thousands of BAME people. There has been speculation that the reasons for black and other minority ethnic people dying disproportionately is due to underlying health conditions that impact on our communities and whilst this may be a factor the key reasons are linked to racism and poverty, where we live, how we are treated in the workplace and the labour market and now the complete disregard for our lives in failing to provide protection and safety.

I know of one family where two members of the same family, key workers in different sectors died a day apart from each other. The trauma and pain for families who have lost more than one loved one, will have lasting impacts - mentally, physically, spiritually and economically and whilst the government have announced a payment to families who have lost loved ones, this cannot bring back lives - the priority should be on keeping everybody

safe and reducing all the risks of getting coronavirus - lives cannot be replaced by cash.

We have had so many inquiries and reports into race discrimination in the UK and what we don't need is another inquiry for the sake of an inquiry without action to address the causes and reasons - but this is an urgent situation that cannot wait for the outcome of an inquiry - an inquiry cannot be an excuse to do nothing in the meantime. The government should be carrying out equality impact assessments on all key work and carrying out ethnicity monitoring on those doing key work, those who get the virus and those who die from the virus by sector and work area. Official figures broken down by ethnicity is not there for all areas, but we sadly see it for ourselves as the photos alongside heart-breaking tributes to those who have died are published by the media and shared on our social media.

Whilst responding to the coronavirus pandemic is clearly a priority, we must not forget about the other injustices faced by black and migrant communities here in the UK and globally.

For the past 7 years, I have organised regular aid and solidarity missions to people who are refugees in Northern France in addition to being part of a European Trade Union group who have monitored and responded to the impacts on refugees and migrants coming to Europe, visiting refugee centres in Melilla and Palermo. Due to the coronavirus, for the safety of people who are refugees and volunteers and closed borders, some of the charities on the ground we work with have had to stop the support work they do as have we and this has left already vulnerable traumatised, predominantly young people at risk and without basic sanitation, food and water, let alone shelter, people who are displaced due to climate change, conflict, poverty and persecution and who have in recent years been labelled and demonised as coming to steal jobs and strip resources. Yet it is a large proportion of migrant and black workers who the UK are depending upon right now to keep essential services running. The government have already indicated that when we are through the coronavirus crisis, they will continue with their hostile environment policies.

This will coincide with an economic crisis which will also have disproportionate adverse equality impacts as the last decade long one did but with potential impacts we have never experienced before with whole sectors that black and migrant workers are concentrated in impacted in a major way by the coronavirus crisis and the necessary lockdown that has come with it.

However, whilst the response by the government in ensuring safety and reducing the spread of the virus is essential, I do not agree that there is no individual responsibility required. This week we have seen people travelling to hold protests outside the workplaces of key workers. Whilst some may have walked to these demos, others may have taken public transport, putting predominantly BAME public sector workers at risk at a time when those workers have expressed over recent weeks their fears about going to work. I know from family and friends who are key workers that they worry about using shared facilities such as toilets, cannot access food or drink during the working day and have to put their own measures in place to protect themselves and have to do all they can do be socially distanced from their colleagues. Meanwhile, there are people outside their workplaces, not practising social distancing, not considering the safety of workers who have no choice but to be there, blocking pathways and posing for photos with smiles on their faces. Yes, we should protest and campaign for their rights but we need to do this in different ways to what we may be used to and with respect for the safety of everyone else, as well as in coordination with the workers in these workplaces.

In the midst of the coronavirus crisis the *Windrush Lessons Learned* report was published with a range of recommendations and the two year anniversary of the Windrush scandal came whilst more than one thousand applicants to the Windrush Compensation scheme, some waiting for over one year, have not even had their cases considered by the government.

Black nurses, transport workers and other public sector workers who came to the UK as part of the Windrush generation faced the

most horrific racism yet dedicated their lives to helping others and to public service and now face destitution, injustice and poverty because of the way they were discriminated against due to racist immigration policies and laws and it is black and migrant workers who are keeping essential services running now - some of them the children and grandchildren of the Windrush generation who have also experienced the impacts of the hostile environment in their lives. We must hold the government to account for failing them yet again.

Black Lives Matter.

Zita Holbourne is the Chair of BARAC UK, a founding member of BAME Lawyers for Justice, a trade unionist, human rights campaigner, author, visual artist and poet.



A Charter for a Better Britain?

In a recent broadcast the eminent social historian Peter Hennessy compared our cultural situation with that towards the end of WWII when, despite the ongoing war the Beveridge Report gave hope by proposing a new sort of country based on community action for welfare. Surely, Hennessy argued, it should be possible to construct a new document that would define the post Covid-19 world. A world that, based on the lessons of our current predicament would bring hope for a future.

The SWU/BASW Austerity Action Group, pursuing their promotion of social justice, decided to take up this challenge and is inviting our members to contribute to such a document.

The 1942 Beveridge Report laid the foundation of the welfare state. He identified five 'giants' on the road to recovery. These were Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness. The Times described it as 'a momentous document which should and must exercise a profound and immediate influence on the direction of social change in Britain.' While many of the issues identified by Beveridge are still with us we now face new challenges including Climate Change, Globalisation, Inequality, Work Life balance, Political and Economic Structures and many others which tap into our collective experience during lockdown. The time is right to propose a different way of life.

We are asking you to send in your thoughts and ideas from which we can launch and promote a Charter. Many of these issues require deep thought and consideration. Feel free to change the title, work on challenges other than those outlined above. This will be your document.

Please send responses to aag.jordan@btinternet.com July 25th. Each will be acknowledged and a draft of the final charter will be shared. All contributions will be shared.

If you prefer to remain anonymous, please let us know.

Any contributions will be confidential.

Resilience - important resource or a weapon to beat us with?

I recently contributed to a BASW Cymru webinar where I spoke about self-care and resilience. One of the points I made was that I was aware that some managers use resilience as a stick to beat staff with. They give a member of staff too much work to do and when they struggle to get it done, the manager criticises them for 'not being resilient enough'. Since the webinar was held (and my part was uploaded to my YouTube channel - see below), a few people have contacted me to give yet more examples of this happening.

To my mind there are (at least) two key issues here. One is the classic mistake of assuming that the more work you give people, the more they will achieve. In reality, this only works up to a point. For example, a reasonable amount of extra pressure can motivate people and enable them to be more productive and get more job satisfaction. However, there is a line which, when crossed, turns this into a destructive and very harmful process. That is, once the amount of additional pressure passes from reasonable and manageable to unreasonable and unmanageable, we enter the territory of stress and, potentially, bullying (knowingly giving somebody more work than they can cope with amounts to bullying). What actually happens is that, if you give someone too much work, they actually achieve less than they would with a more reasonable workload (because overstretched workers will be less effective, less creative, less open to learning, more tired, more prone to making mistakes and more likely to take sick leave.

The second issue is an oversimplified understanding of resilience. It is not something you either have or do not have or have in a certain quantity. Whether or not a person responds resiliently to difficult circumstances will depend on a number of factors, not least the level and quality of support they are receiving. This is why in our book (*Promoting Resilience: Responding to Adversity, Vulnerability and Loss*), we emphasise that an adequate understanding of resilience needs to incorporate a sociological perspective. Social factors, including organisational culture, quality of leadership and presence or absence of appropriate support, will play a key part in either promoting or undermining resilience. Seeing resilience as simply a characteristic of individuals is to indulge in a gross and dangerous oversimplification.

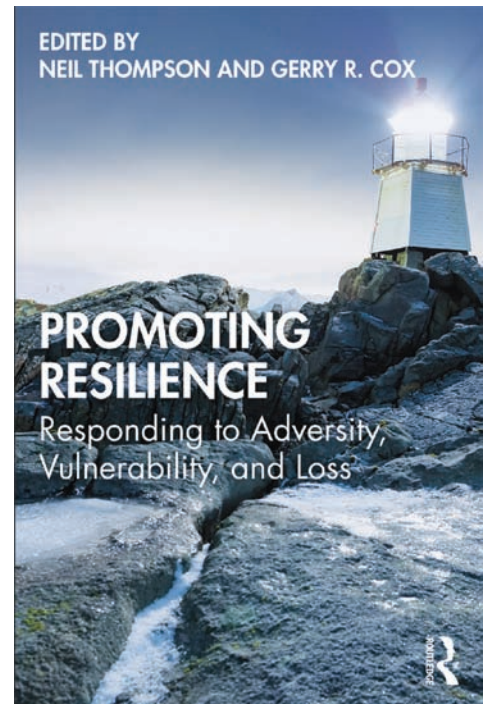
We should all, whether managers or practitioners, be responsible professionals who do our best to support one another and contribute to an ethos that nurtures resilience, not one that uses it as a weapon.

Dr Neil Thompson is an independent writer, educator and adviser and an ambassador for SWU and BASW Cymru. The recording of his webinar input about self-care and resilience is to be found on his YouTube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7UWHGrxszahkLfCJgCgtYw>.

Did you know?

As well as a YouTube channel with lots of helpful resources, Neil also has a Learning Zone on his website at www.NeilThompson.info with lots of useful free stuff, including his Manifesto for Making a Difference. Neil also generously allows SWU member access to his online learning resources for half price. Contact Neil directly at neil@avenueconsulting.co.uk to find out how you can benefit.



Union Contact Scheme

Carol Reid, National Organiser & Union Contact Scheme Manager provides us with her regular update and some dates for your diary



Union Contact Update

Its perhaps hardly surprising that there's been a rise in the number of SWU members contacting me requesting details about becoming workplace Union Contacts. In times of crises we are naturally drawn towards collectivism, particularly when such crises impact so greatly on our working environments, our safety and our wellbeing. When we are working in such isolated and remote circumstances our trade union and its representatives are often the link that keeps us connected.

I understand the frustrations of being unable to attend an Induction Day for those who are keen to undertake the role, and we are hoping that training can take place again this year, depending of course upon official guidance. Induction Days are opportunities for new Union Contacts and the SWU team to meet, interact, receive training and undertake activities, and we are really looking forward to being able to arrange them again soon.

Our current Union Contacts have been keeping in touch with me describing some extremely difficult and challenging work experiences such as working without adequate PPE, having to go into cramped offices and not being provided with homeworking facilities. SWU members are being supported full time by our excellent Advice & Representation Team who are all qualified and experienced social workers, and should you have any concerns in relation to your working circumstances please telephone A&R on 0121 622 8413.

Social Media

Whilst not favoured by everybody, social media is a useful contact tool in times of restricted interactions. SWU's current and prospective Union Contacts are all able to join the UC Facebook Group which can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2060830637577136/>

This is a closed group and Union Contacts are welcome to join and make use of this additional means of contact and information sharing.

Austerity Action Group

As a core group member of the joint BASW/ SWU Austerity Action Group, I have recently written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, to share with him an open letter prepared by the Group, which can be seen here: <https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2020/apr/open-letter-calls-austerity-policies-be-rolled-back-part-response-coronavirus>

The letter emphasises the impact of imposed austerity upon some of society's most vulnerable people, and how this is further exacerbated by the onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic. It goes on to call upon the Chancellor to respond to three main points relating to funding of social care, reviewing tax/benefit/income systems and reversing the enforced destruction of local authorities.

As social workers these are issues which impact upon our lives daily, not only upon our service-users and the people we want to support, but also our own working environments, conditions and wellbeing. We should not close our eyes to the impact of austerity, nor assume it “doesn’t affect us” - we are ALL victims of it.

The Boot out Austerity Facebook Group can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/785440885305389/> and we welcome new members, particularly activists from service-user groups.

Keeping in Touch

Can I remind our Union Contacts to let me know if any of your contact details change,

whether it be address, employer, email or telephone. This way I can ensure our records are up to date and you will continue to receive important updates and information from me in your role as Union Contact.

Please also consider contributing to this Newsletter as we always enjoy hearing your thoughts, ideas, suggestions and items of interest.

Take care and keep in touch,

In solidarity

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

Research project entitled ‘Social Work with Migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds’

Dear social work colleagues,

I am a Liverpool-based social worker and proud member of the Social Workers Union. I joined this union as it is run by social workers who understand the nuance and complexity of the social work profession.

I am currently undertaking an MA in Social Work Practice at the University of York and as part of this course of study, I am conducting a research project entitled *Social Work with Migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)*. The main objective of this research project is to identify the obstacles social workers (practicing in England) face when working with migrants with NRPF and explore the ways in which social workers respond to these obstacles.

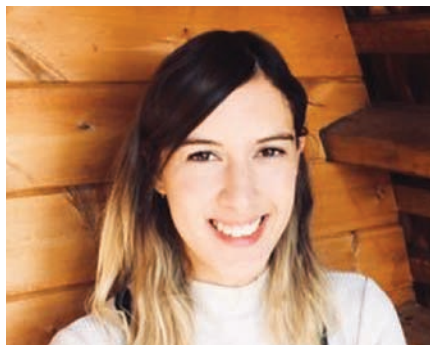
I invite you to participate in an anonymous online survey, which is expected to take roughly 10 minutes to complete. This study has received ethical approval from the Departmental Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of York (Ref: SPSW/MTA/2019/7).

If you would like to take part in this anonymous online survey or would like to read the participant information sheet, please follow the link : https://york.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6YxjVnmJwx4k2UZ

Best Wishes

Jonathan Lacey
Social Worker
JI3358@york.ac.uk





Rebekah Pierre, BASW England's new Professional Officer shares some thoughts on team working during the coronavirus. BASW England and SWU regularly collaborate on social work issues and policy work.



Into the wilderness: What we can learn from the natural world about teamwork during the coronavirus

No man is an island - but lockdown life can make us feel oceans apart from colleagues.

Suddenly, everyone is cooped up in their own homes, and office chit-chat, joint-working and buying rounds of donuts on a Friday afternoon - those little things which knit people together - feel like distant memories.

But perhaps it is easy to look back on pre-coronavirus life with rose-tinted glasses. If we are honest with ourselves, even under normal circumstances, social work often felt like a solitary profession.

Even within the context of peer and management support, ultimately much of the work we do is solo. We enter homes alone. We singlehandedly represent our local authorities in multi-agency meetings. We stand alone in the court-room, giving evidence for cases that only we know inside out.

Rushing between visits, we sling our bags on the desk, maybe let out a quick rant about a less-than-pleasant encounter, before proceeding to tap out a court statement for four hours.

Staring ahead at our screens, wrapped up in our ever expanding to-do-lists, we often lack the opportunity to connect properly, even when just feet apart.

The hot-desking phenomenon also meant that we lacked a 'micro-community'. Rather than getting to know colleagues gradually in a shared space, we often sit next to 10 different people over the course of a week - which is great for meeting new people. But not very conducive to forming lasting working relationships (or for pinpointing the litterbug who left their half-eaten cheese sandwich on the desk from the day before).

As many of you will be aware, BASW has pioneered relationship-based practice through the 80:20 campaign.

For those who are unfamiliar, this is a drive to bring us back to the heart of social work. To redress the shocking statistics which demonstrated that social workers spent 80% of the time doing admin, and just 20% doing 'people stuff'. The latter is why we entered social work in the first place, is it not?

Perhaps we can cultivate this time apart to apply the principles of the campaign to teamworking, so that in our distance, we can grow ever closer.

As the human world is on pause, let us look to the natural world, which is said to be thriving in the lockdown, to see what we can learn about connection.

Follow like sheep

You 'herd' it here first.

With the advent of digital working, now is the time to connect with colleagues in new ways.

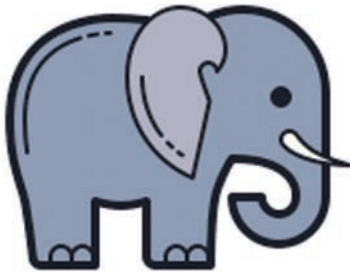


A smiley faced emoji will never quite replace human facial expressions, nor a 280-character tweet coffee with a colleague, but digital connection can go a long way in lockdown.

The local authority I worked with prior to joining BASW encouraged staff to share lighter moments of lockdown. This resulted in a WhatsApp group infested with cat photographs, eclectic window views, and a carefully curated gallery of lockdown cuisine.

I've even heard that a BASW virtual disco is on the cards...

Acoustic communication should be encouraged



Okay, so I'm not saying you should call your colleagues and sing acoustic 80's classics down the phone. That might not go down so well (unless it's their birthday. In which case singing down the phone is totally justified).

However, we can learn something from the way in which elephants use sound to communicate. These awe-inspiring mammals use short-lived, deliberate acoustic signals to give information about the immediate situation (as opposed to an ongoing, constant state).

In a way, they're being 'reflexive' and responding in the moment. Which can be more helpful than bottling things up for 2 weeks before the next team meeting.

Calling a colleague for no other reason than to ask if they're okay, and to offer support, could mean the world to them. Equally - why not reach out yourself and cultivate a culture of communication.

Have a whale of a time sharing new skills

Forgive the puns, but Orca whales really have been observed teaching each-other how to catch fish using quirky methods. Which are then imitated and passed on, and on, and on.



Whether you are the technological wizard of the team, are a dapper hand at making sourdough bread, or perhaps have lived experience in a certain area, your knowledge could go a long way in boosting your team.

At BASW England, our administration manager is an Excel oracle - so I have asked her for a 1:1 session on this to brush up on my skills. Don't forget, screen sharing makes everything possible.

Spin webs together

It's a well-known maxim that two heads are better than one. Or is it 8 legs...?

Social spiders often work in tandem to create mega-webs, which catch far more prey than individual webs could ever do.

These webs can span up to 200 yards long (you may feel compelled to do a spot of dusting after reading this article).

If you're working on a task, nine times out of ten, there is someone around who could help you to improve it.

Whether you're working together to identify local 'hotspot' areas where there is a high concentration of gang activity, joint-working a case or simply working on technical issues, mega-webbing works.



Bee-come more organised



Honeybees are acclaimed for being exceptionally productive, in-sync and organised.

They manage to orchestrate around one another whilst working toward a literally sweet end goal.

Being aware of team movements is crucial to working in tandem.

One of our highly skilled events coordinators has innovated a new colour code system, which makes it easy to see when colleagues are potentially free, to make collaboration easier.

Social workers are the epitome of busy bees, so working out how to make efficient use of time, which is often scarce, is crucial.

The above suggestions are not the 'bee all and end all'. Feel free to share your own suggestions (and adorable pet pictures) by tagging [BASW_UK](#) and [SWU_UK](#) on twitter.

Dear SWU members!

I am very pleased that I have joined SWU as a student. It is a great opportunity for my professional development and learning. As a SWU member, I am able to access lots of information such as articles, researchers, and learn from other professionals' views and experiences. It keeps me updated on social issues. I am blessed to be a part of SWU. Currently, I am in my final placement. I have decided to conduct a small piece of research which is quite relevant to my current practices during the pandemic of COVID19. The research title is *Communication during COVID 19*.

I will be grateful to gather information on this topic. I will be concentrating on the following areas:

What are your communication challenges?

How are you overcoming these challenges?

What is working well for you?

What are you worried about?

My email address is s.hasrat@gmail.com

I am looking forward to hearing from you. The deadline for receiving responses is the 15th of June 2020.

Many thanks,

Saima Naheed
Student Social Worker



It is vital that unions work together

Social Workers Union on the importance of working together with UNISON and any other trade union body on key issues including the need for sufficient social work funding post Covid-19.

Once more SWU has attempted to work with UNISON, this time on a joint statement about the importance of sufficient social work funding post Covid-19. This would have been powerful and building on comments made by Roger McKenzie (UNISON Assistant General Secretary), who spoke quite passionately recently about the importance of UNISON working with other unions and moving away from seeing other unions as competition or threat and focussing on the positives of joint working.

This attempt at collaboration from SWU followed on from a UNISON official's previous comment when we asked about campaigning about 'Working Conditions' that *'they would never work with SWU'*. In addition, it was also stated that *'they would be developing their own campaign'*. This remains a real regret as the profession would be stronger together and would allow us an opportunity to really support UNISON with any future proposals for strike action. It is difficult to support future strike action instigated by UNISON if they do not engage with the largest social work union in the UK.

UNISON's recent reply to SWU on joint campaigning was brief and the following: *'I circulated the draft statement to my lay Committee and they thought rather than a joint statement it would be more effective for UNISON to mirror the concerns through the recognised National Joint Council (NJC) machinery'*.

The Social Workers Union feels that it is important to share our frustrations regarding UNISON not engaging as we often get asked why we are not working with UNISON on social work matters particularly as *'working together'* we would all be stronger. The NJC is the mechanism for pay discussion with Local Authorities and covered by the traditional unions of UNISON, GMB and UNITE and not social work specific.

Frequently we are also asked about Trade Union Council Membership and Collective Bargaining.

SWU can apply and consider TUC membership but the SWU Executive has previously voted not to; partly this is due to the cost as there is a fee for each member but principally because we feel that our needs are well met through membership of the General Federation of Trade Union (GFTU) which is also costly but provides bespoke services and campaigning opportunities for specialist trade unions. SWU is an active member of the GFTU and we sit on their National Executive with 31 other specialist unions covered as part of the federation. GFTU is also a member of TUC.

Some UNISON activists often criticise SWU for not offering collective bargaining. The issue for SWU as a small (albeit **13,200** social work members) but growing union is that we have not asked to be recognised by most local authorities for individual collective bargaining. Collective bargaining is the official process by which trade unions negotiate with individual employers, on behalf of their members and mostly linked to pay and conditions. The majority of collective bargaining arrangements in the UK are voluntary and moving forward we can apply to be recognised but this process involves complex legal statistical provision. It also involves having extra staff and union volunteers (please consider applying to be a Union Contact) to fulfil the duties of this. As a developing union we are building on our membership and will hopefully be able to apply for collective bargaining in the future but being in a union is much more than collective bargaining as you will know if you have ever been in touch for specialist social work advice and representation or followed some of our recent campaigns and union activity. SWU can implement national strike action on general issues similar to any other union.

Although traditionally larger unions have done well to focus on pay and conditions, moving forward, what also appears to be important for social workers is **employment wellbeing and job satisfaction**. Interestingly, this is reflected further through recent Bath Spa University research and follow up meetings indicating that addressing those factors keep social workers in their posts and not only higher pay levels or more annual leave. This fits with findings from a recent GFTU conference. SWU is in a unique position as social workers to understand those issues as opposed to solely issues around pay.

Fortunately, the appetite for joining a union has never been stronger and this is reflected in **SWU's rising membership** and recruitment of over **100 Union Contacts** in the workplace. Unions have a representative role in the workplace, and we have the experience of specialist advice and union representation if needed and we cannot be refused by an employer. In addition, a more collaborative approach with British Association of Social Workers - our professional association - works best for social workers in the long term. Certainly, conglomerate large unions who represent social workers traditionally only have extremely low percentage members who are actual social workers; so how can they truly represent the profession on their own? Larger unions provide representation from shop stewards and reps who often have no knowledge or understanding of the complexities of social work. SWU staff, Executive Committee, workplace Union Contacts and full time Advice & Representation officers are all social workers with extensive and in-depth knowledge and experience of the profession.

Our door is always open to working and collaboration with any trade union as a priority.

**Last chance
CLOSING 5th JUNE**

SWU offering £500 in student essay competition

Four grants of £500 to the best arguments for how to build better relationships!

The Social Workers Union (SWU) have announced the theme for their annual World Social Work Day student essay competition.

The question posed is: **Working Better Together: How do we build stronger relationships between social workers and people using services?**

The question links with the BASW Future of Social Work e-book project with the winning SWU entries being part of the online BASW publication:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/call-essays-poems-and-visual-images-future-social-work>

The four most compelling arguments within the word limit of 750-1000 words will win a grant of £500 each.

The competition is open to university students only and all UK universities will be contact this week. A flyer with further details can be seen on the following page.

John McGowan, general secretary of SWU, said: "I am delighted that the interest in our assignment competition grows each year and the calibre of entries is strong. The relationship between social worker and the service user is a key element of the process of engaging and working together.

Connecting with and actively engaging service users will make them feel at ease when they link with services; so, what better theme to have for our future social workers."

WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY ASSIGNMENT

Four grants of £500 are to be presented to winning Social Work Students undertaking an Undergraduate or Post Graduate Social Work Degree.

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

“Working better together: How do we build stronger relationships between social workers and people using services?”

All completed assignments will be judged by a Panel including representation from the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), Jon Dudley, BASW Hon Officer and a marker from SWU Exec. All winners will be invited to the SWU AGM and Conference 2020 (Fri 25th Sept, Manchester).

The closing date for the competition is Friday 5th June 2020.

The winning entries will be published in the BASW: The BASW Future of Social Work e-book project which is part of the Heritage 50 BASW project. Please forward your completed assignment before that date with a covering letter giving your Name, Address, University, Year of Study and Academic Tutor (if appropriate) to: joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk

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

Please note: By taking part you are agreeing to SWU using the assignment for future purposes such as newsletters or other forums. Only the winning assignments will be used. Winning assignments will be displayed at the forthcoming SWU AGM Conference. All winners will also be offered a delegate place at the conference with a contribution towards transport if necessary.



PROMOTING THE IMPORTANCE
of Human Relationships



SWU Social Workers Union

**WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY
17TH MARCH 2020**

#WSWD2020



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FOR SOCIAL WORKERS**

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