

Campaigns, competition and positive changes



Last year's **World Social Work Day** Assignment Competition was a great success and I am happy that this will be continuing this year. The quality of entrants last year was excellent and hopefully interest will remain high once more. Please share with as many Social Work

Students as possible. Once more the GFTU will be assessing the assignments, along with SWU Executive members and Jon Dudley, BASW Hon Officer.

If you have not done so already, please get your friends and colleagues to sign up to SWU. We consider this to be a bargain at only £25 annually with BASW Membership, and £10 for students. Independent Social Workers (ISW) are also very welcome to join SWU. They can apply to join the SWU Executive, become Union Contacts and join the activities of the Austerity Action Group which is funded by SWU. In joining SWU, ISW are actively supporting our campaign on Working Conditions for Social Workers. ISW would receive a variety of SWU member benefits which include the monthly SWU Newsletter, access to free GFTU training courses, discounted legal fees, discounted financial advice fees and reduced-price online training with Neil Thomson. In addition, they can attend our AGM and Conference and the interesting and entertaining Fringe event at no cost and with food included. We feel that £25 per year is a small price to pay for involvement in the wider Trade Union Movement. SWU is actively involved in the General Federation of Trade

Unions and as a SWU members you have further access to campaign activities and events through the GFTU streams. Unfortunately, we are not able to provide full Trade Union representation for Independent Social Workers because they are classified as private businesses. However, if required they can contact our A and R Service for in-depth advice and support on any workplace issue pertinent to work and can access this via duty appointments.

The last few months have also been busy and I have welcomed the opportunity to discuss with several Local Authorities concerns about working conditions and poor practice. This has had a positive effect and discussions have been ongoing with several Head of Services about the issues we have been raising. If you would like to share confidentially areas of poor practice or concerns about your working conditions, then please do get in touch.

We are still recruiting for one new Executive Member covering Scotland. All candidates for election must be nominated by another Member of the union. SWU is encouraging applications from Students/ Newly Qualified Social Workers and black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) who are currently under-represented on the National Executive of SWU. An attendance payment is also now available and travel costs.

This month, BASW and the Social Workers Union (SWU) with Bath Spa University are in the final stages of developing a wellbeing toolkit to support positive working conditions for social workers with a launch date of March 23rd in London. This toolkit has been developed to respond to the findings of the Bath Spa University, Social Workers Union (SWU) and

British Association of Social Workers (BASW) research into social worker wellbeing in 2017 and 2018 UK. Through two UK wide surveys and follow up interviews, we heard from over 5000 social workers who provided rich detail about their work circumstances and their views and feelings about their jobs. The toolkit can help you make positive changes - as a social worker in direct practice, as someone involved in supporting social work and developing good practice or an employer. This toolkit is aimed at accelerating action across all parts

of the workplace, engaging and empowering social workers and those that support them professionally, managerially and through local and national leadership.

Finally, results are in from the SWU Consultative Ballot which can be seen below. There will be more on this next month.

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

SWU Consultative Ballot

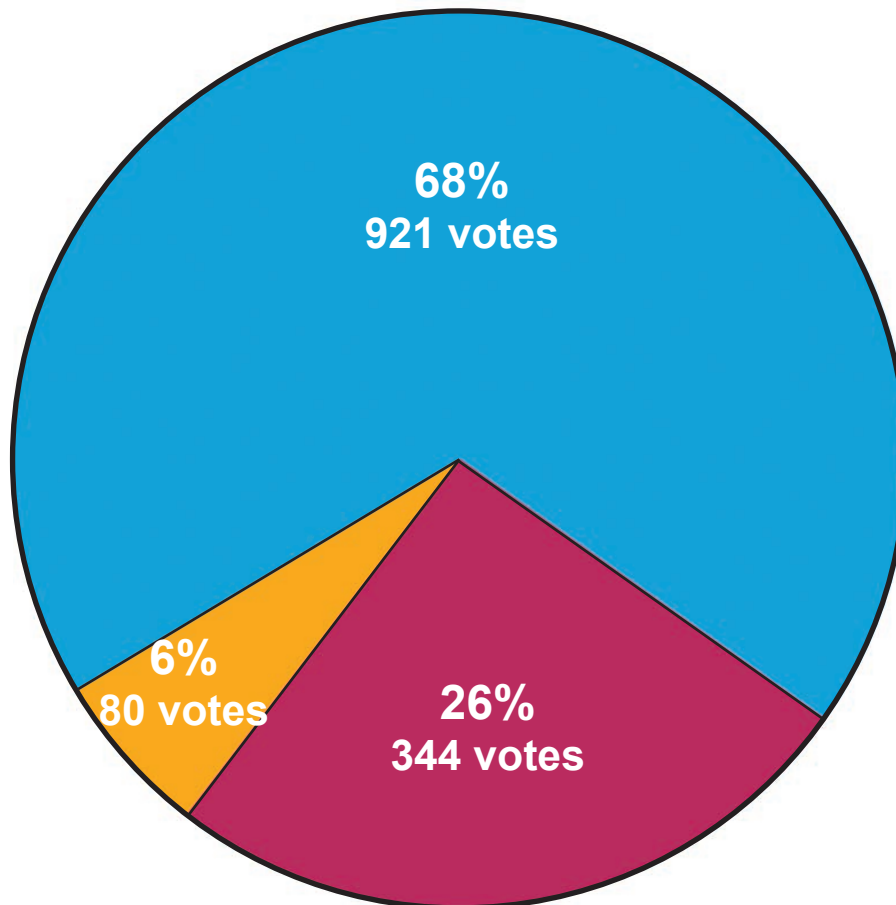
Electorate 12,760

Turnout 10.54%

Total number of votes cast 1,345

Number of rejected votes 0

Number of valid votes 1,345



- Yes - I support the possibility of industrial action 921
- No - I do not support the possibility of industrial action 344
- Abstain 80

Union Contact Update

Carol Reid, National Organiser & Union Contact Scheme Manager explains why every union member should have their voice heard

A recent PSW article entitled “Like Teachers, We Must Demand Fair Payment” (Feb 2020) rightly emphasises the concerns around social work pay and working conditions, and in reference and comparison to other professions it highlights the “ongoing national debate about nurses pay”, exemplifying the RCN (Royal College of Nursing) banner “#safestaffingsaveslives”. The article refers also to the government’s pledge to increase teachers’ pay and pension contributions and the case made by teaching unions (eg the NEU - National Education Union) on behalf of their members. It goes on to state that newly qualified social workers earn “almost £3,000” less than teachers and nurses at the start of their careers.

The article declares a “coup” for unions in getting their demands met, however I would also emphasise the direct connection between these successes and the importance of union membership and activism. It’s no coincidence that the two professions mentioned have strong, vocal trade unions who encourage, mentor and train activists, who are in turn willing to undertake industrial action when necessary.

Further examples of this are train and tube drivers who are well paid and have good Terms & Conditions, annual leave and pensions. Again, it’s no coincidence that transport unions such as the RMT (Rail, Maritime & Transport Union) have gained a level of influence as a result of active members willing to strike when necessary to ensure they retain and improve working standards, particularly under the leadership of the late RMT General Secretary Bob Crow, who was able to successfully negotiate on their behalf.

The RCN, NEU and RMT are all examples of specialist trade unions, geared to and focussing on the needs of their profession and their members, but it is the members,

the activists, who ultimately make things happen. The union is not detached from its members - members ARE the union, and members can influence decisions about pay and conditions through union activism, that is why they’ve been successful.



Getting involved and active in SWU enables social workers to have their voices heard, which is more important now than ever as we enter a continued era of imposed austerity impacting not only on our own working conditions, but more severely on the lives of our vulnerable service users.

SWU recognises, respects and encourages our members’ enthusiasm for activism and our frequent Union Contact Induction Days are a great way to find out more about getting involved. Our March induction day is already fully booked, and we are now offering places for our 25th July date which will take place in Manchester. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you’d like further information about becoming a SWU Union Contact in your workplace (or university if you are a student social worker).

Finally, just a brief reminder to ensure you exercise your right to vote in our consultative ballot which has by now been sent to all SWU members.

Thank you for your ongoing support -
Together we are Strong.

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

Union Contact Scheme



SWU are recruiting for members in Scotland to join the Union Contact Scheme. You must be a member of SWU to apply

for this role. Previous union experience is useful but not essential, genuine enthusiasm and interest in trade unionsism and collective activism is welcomed.

SWU is a relatively new Trade Union (established in 2011) - but also one of the fastest growing specialist trade unions, according to figures published by the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU). As a SWU Union Contact you will:

- Be the first point of contact for anyone in the workplace/university in relation to joining and getting involved in SWU - you will receive all relevant training, paperwork, materials and contact details in order to successfully do this.
- Encourage membership within your workplace or university by providing leaflets/flyers/promotional merchandise and materials which can be delivered to your home address or place of work for your convenience.
- Be an essential contact for SWU when we and members need to exchange information and ideas - you will be kept up to date with campaign details and materials to share and distribute to colleagues.
- Promote and be involved in campaigns, events, meetings and rallies attended by SWU (depending upon your availability and commitments). Examples of these are the Working Conditions Campaign which SWU has helped establish and maintain, and the excellent Durham Miners Trade Union Gala which is attended by SWU, and there are many other opportunities throughout the year.
- You will receive induction training, regular contact and updates, newsletters, Facebook group, with a focus upon strengthening the union and ensuring you are happy and confident in your role.

- Make use of the excellent training courses and programmes provided by the GFTU (General Federation of Trade Unions) which are mostly free to SWU members and which can be viewed in the following link to their online catalogue: <https://user-tkb9xx.cld.bz/Education-for-Action>
- Undertake workplace representational tasks* if this is something that interests you. (*Following an additional period of training provided by SWU & BASW).

Union Contact Induction Meetings include presentations from Carol Reid, SWU National Organiser and Contact Scheme Manager and John McGowan, General Secretary of SWU, as well as activities and information relating to trade union recruitment, campaigning and activism. SWU are also delighted to have the support of Dr Neil Thompson, a highly respected figure in UK social work, who delivers a learning session, and provides each participating Union Contact with free access to his online programme and a free copy of his new book *The Social Workers Practice Manual*.

Induction meetings mostly take place in Manchester and we cover the cost of travel and accommodation, however we are keen to initiate inductions in Scotland and will be happy to arrange this once we are aware of how many of our valued members wish to get involved.

SWU have also developed a Phase 2 Union Contacts, enabling Union Contacts to support colleagues in their workplaces when attending meetings such as:

- Stage 1 Sickness absence meetings - largely information-sharing meetings triggered when an employee has been on sick leave for a given period.
- Short notice meetings - when an employee is going to be suspended or advised about other action that is being proposed against them.
- Investigation meetings - when a BASW/ SWU member has been asked to attend as a 'witness' in an action against a colleague.

This workplace support is vital to members, particularly when they know that the Union Contact assisting them is also a qualified social worker who is fully aware of the complexities and demands of the job. This an exciting opportunity for SWU which enables the Union to be more visible and vocal within workplaces and beyond.

If you are interested in getting involved in Scotland or indeed England, Wales and Northern Ireland also, please contact Carol Reid

carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk

President's Update



Last year was a very successful one for SWU. Plans are in hand to hopefully make 2020 even better. For me the highlight of the year was the SWU AGM and Conference at the Mechanics Institute, Manchester which was preceded the previous evening

with a very lively Fringe meeting with music and free food. This year's AGM, Conference and Fringe meeting will also be in September and I can strongly recommend you attend if at all possible, as I can guarantee an enjoyable and interesting time. Booking can now be made for Fri 25th September.

On February 3rd I met up with our General Secretary, John McGowan in Manchester. We looked back over the previous year and discussed plans for this year. The SWU Executive met for the first time in 2020 on 19th February at our offices in Birmingham. They have put in motion arrangements for the coming year.

Great progress is being made with the recruitment and training of Union Contacts. The Austerity Action Group continues to be active in opposing the effects of austerity and the high level of poverty in the UK. The Working Conditions Campaign continues to develop and SWU has given money to the four nations in BASW to develop campaigning further. The Newsletter continues to get positive feedback. If you have

any articles you would like to submit, please contact SWU Admin to discuss further. Membership is almost 13,000, the Advice and Representation Service is up to full strength and is coping very effectively with supporting our members facing employment difficulties. John McGowan continues to be interviewed on radio and press; on a variety of issues related to Social Work.

Last year I made a presentation at a workshop at the IFSW European Conference on our Working Conditions Campaign. IFSW will be working with Jermaine Ravalier of Bath Spa University, the author of the working conditions campaign report, to take the research Worldwide to members of IFSW. While in some respects they will be comparing apples with oranges, in so far as Social Work in Ghana is going to be different from Social Work in New York, nevertheless it will give us valuable insight into the working conditions of Social Workers across the World.

On a more personal note I spent Christmas and New Year in Fiji. I would like to tell you that I introduced the Fijians to the work of SWU. However, the reality is I spent my time sunbathing near the beach, swimming in the warm sea, eating spicy food and taking boat trips round some of the islands. Future editions of the Newsletter will keep you informed of further developments with SWU, and I will look forward to the possibility of meeting you at the SWU AGM, Conference, and Fringe Event in Manchester in September. Keep up the very valuable work you do.

James Birchall
President SWU

What has the climate emergency got to do with social work?

SWU Member Caroline Hall shares some thoughts regarding the present climate emergency. Caroline is already active with Extinction Rebellion and working with her District Council on the Climate Emergency Strategy.

As social workers we have a responsibility to model environmental good practice. This includes educating ourselves about the facts, making change in our working practices and own lives and taking action to encourage our employers and elected representatives to act and to legislate to protect the future of our planet. Individual's efforts are to be applauded but they are not enough in themselves. The emergency we face is across the planet and needs fundamental change.

Social workers have a moral and ethical duty to advocate for people living today who are fighting the impact of climate change and to advocate for future generations. The impact of the climate emergency will increase inequality across the world. Those with access to resources will battle to keep them. The consequences of climate change are already having the most significant impact for those with fewest resources and limited power, for example increasing drought, floods & cyclones in Mozambique. In the UK the most polluted areas are often the least affluent. Air pollution is proven to have adverse health impacts.

Our professional skills will be needed in more than the aftermath of serious climate events. We can challenge acceptance of the status quo, challenge government's failure to act responsibly with legislation. As social workers we have skills in bringing people

together, in working with diverse groups and in facilitating progress towards problem solving. We have our analytical skills in working with evidence and our understanding of human nature. We are already used to addressing grief and loss and patterns of avoidance and blame. We have skills in recognising these behaviours and in working with others to bring positive change. Above all we have a responsibility to challenge those in power and to speak up for those who are not able to do so for themselves.

As a profession we need to make the case for a fairer sharing of resources, now and in the future. This will mean some countries and people will increase their use of resources whilst 'overspenders' will have to cut back hard to allow for developing nations to increase their share of resources.

The International Federation of Social Workers defines social work as promoting 'social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people,' this is exactly what is needed to respond to the climate emergency.



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

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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Wages Fit For Heroes

By Edda Nicolson - University of Wolverhampton

The General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) was created at the 1899 Trades Union Congress in Manchester, with a view to collecting and administering a centralised strike fund that could be accessed by affiliates at times of industrial unrest. Within 5 years, they had a membership of over 500,000; by 1915, there were more than a million workers on their books. Although created by the TUC, they operated as a separate organisation from the very beginning, with a management committee that travelled up and down the country giving advice to trade union officials, mediating between aggrieved employees and employers, administering strike benefit payments and encouraging trade unions to grow their membership numbers. However, the steady rise in their initial membership figures was not to continue past the end of the first world war.



William Appleton, 8th from the left, as part of a 1909 Labour representatives delegation to Germany

Despite their centralised role in the early twentieth century labour movement, Dr Alice Prochaska's *The History of the General Federation of Trade Unions* (1980) has so far been the only published research into the GFTU's history. My doctoral thesis looks at their involvement in the wider labour movement up until the general strike of 1926 and explores their activities with Lloyd George's national insurance scheme, their relationships with international trade unionists and their (very brief) foray into journalism. One of their most interesting campaigns was their fight to obtain wage increases for sailors and soldiers serving in the first world war.

The link between the armed services and the GFTU was not new by the time war broke out in 1914. At their 1909 Annual Conference, Ben Tillett (of the Dockers' Union, and also GFTU management committee) pressed forward a motion to encourage trade unions to accept former soldiers into their ranks upon their discharge. Although the motion was voted down after Arthur Henderson's strong rebuttal that a policy of employing untrained soldiers in lieu of skilled workers would most negatively affect craft unions such as his own, it marked the beginning of their concerns over the welfare of servicemen. At the outbreak of war, the GFTU General Secretary William A. Appleton was made Treasurer of Henderson's Workers' National Committee (WNC), with several of his fellow GFTU committee members appearing alongside him. They stood shoulder to shoulder with other notable labour leaders on the WNC executive committee, such as Margaret Bondfield, Mary Macarthur, Ramsay MacDonald and Marion Phillips, and got to work tackling issues concerning the labour movement.

After working on levelling food prices and combating rent increases, Appleton's main focus was to be obtaining wage parity between British soldiers and those of the Empire. In an unusual move, Appleton resolved to invite all members of parliament, regardless of political affiliation, to a specially convened conference that they hosted at the House of Commons on 1st August 1917. After gathering together these Conservative, Liberal and Labour MPs, Lords and Bishops, the GFTU argued persuasively that 'sixpence per day was a scandalous sum to offer' those that were defending Britain, and called for a cross-party alliance that would ensure that all British soldiers received a minimum of three shillings per day with immediate effect. This would give them the same pay as their fellow soldiers from the Empire.

There were big personalities at that conference. Ben Tillett, a staunch supporter of the war but known for being a firebrand leader of the 1889 dockers strike butted heads with Colonel Wilson over the issue of whether or not the government should be financing allowances for the illegitimate children of servicemen. Wilson stubbornly refused to entertain the idea set forth by the WNC that 'unmarried wives' of serving soldiers ought to be in receipt of allowances, in the same way as spouses were, much to Tillett's distaste.

Despite their ideological differences, the newly formed committee forwarded their unanimous resolution supporting an immediate pay increase to the Prime Minister's office. Lloyd George's response was to reply with enclosed details of planned reforms that had been settled on by the War Cabinet. Dubbing the group 'an unofficial composite committee of Lords and Commons', The Times reported the GFTU's displeasure at these plans, as the £50,000,000 promised by the War Cabinet fell far short of the £125,000,000 that had been requested. The GFTU were then invited to Downing street to discuss the matter further, and subsequently obtained a revised offer for servicemen that amounted to an extra expenditure of up to £69,000,000. Not quite the longed-for £125,000,000, but Appleton was very pleased that the revised scheme included the GFTU's suggestions that hospitalised soldiers would not have their pay stopped during their recuperation, that privates would receive at least 1 shilling and sixpence per day, and that all servicemen would be entitled to extra proficiency pay after 6 months of service, instead of having to wait for two years.

Appleton was even more pleased about the news he received only two weeks after his initial conference of MPs and Lords: William Appleton, General Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions, was to receive a CBE. His name appeared at the top of the newly created honours list of civilians, in recognition of his services to Britain during war time. Never a revolutionary man, he was a devoted advocate of trade unions as organisations that could work alongside the establishment, and as such was extremely proud to be included on the King's Roll. He abhorred any talk of what he called 'hothead socialism', and the question of whether or not his aversion to left wing views made him unpopular in the wider labour movement, and therefore contributed to the diminishing of the



Ben Tillett and John Ward
Vanity Fair 1908

GFTU's influence, is an issue I explore further in my thesis. Nevertheless, towards the end of the war at least, British servicemen and their families owed a debt of gratitude to his now little-known organisation for that extra daily shilling.

About the author: Edda Nicolson is a PhD student at the University of Wolverhampton. Her PhD thesis explores the early years of the General Federation of Trade Unions, and she is broadly interested in the labour movement of the twentieth century. Her current research centres on emotional links within the trade union movement.

Edda will be a guest at the forthcoming SWU AGM and Conference 25th September in Manchester and we look forward to hearing more about her work.



Formal Notice

SWU 2020 Annual Conference and 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

The timetable is as follows:

31 st July 2020	Deadline for receipt of motions
4 th September 2020	Notice of any proposed amendment to rules given in writing to members
18 th September 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.
Entry to 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 must 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 Road, Birmingham B2 5PP**

www.swu-union.org.uk

SWU and BASW Cymru meet the Minister

Julie Morgan AM - Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services signs the pledge to improve working conditions for social workers

The ongoing work to improve working conditions for social workers made another positive impact today as BASW Cymru National director, Allison Hulmes, and SWU general secretary, John McGowan, met with Julie Morgan AM - Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services.

The duo visited the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff where they had the opportunity to highlight the findings from the recent BASW & SWU commissioned Bath Spa University survey of 3421 social workers on stress and working conditions.

A productive meeting with plenty of discussion on the current situation of high caseloads and depletion of resources, and also what improvements are needed, led to an agreement from Morgan that she will respond with a plan of how she can assist BASW and SWU, and that she would raise greater awareness amongst her colleagues.

“We are very grateful to Julie Morgan AM for making this opportunity to speak with BASW Cymru and SWU about the pressures on social

workers in Wales, pressures which have intensified over the last 10 years,” said Allison Hulmes.

“The working conditions for social workers in Wales must be addressed if the profession is to realise its true potential as a transformative workforce making a difference to the most vulnerable members of our society.”

She added: “Social work in Wales is key to realising the ambitions as set out in *A Healthier Wales* and we must be given the opportunity and parity with other professions in order to do so.”

Speaking about what needs to change, John said: “Some of the best protections from the impact of high turnover of staff are manageable caseloads and high quality, regular and reflective supervision from an experienced manager, as well as improving administrative processes to enable for more direct work from social workers.”

He added: “However, these measures are harder to achieve against a backdrop of funding cuts and an increasing number of people in need of help and support.”

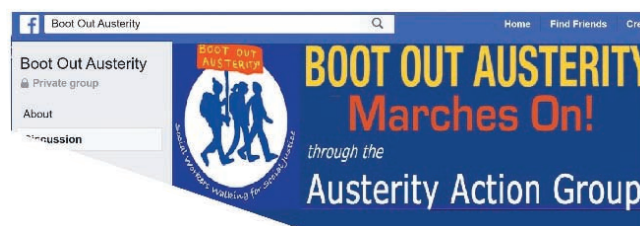


Austerity Action Group Update

(funded by SWU)

Boot Out Austerity Facebook Group

Thanks to the deft fingers of Carol Reid we now have a new Facebook group. This is where you will find the latest news from the Austerity Action Group as well as some of our past campaigns, facts and info graphs and links to current issues. It will also be the place where you can find links to the other groups who make up the AAG. We envisage the Facebook Group as a forum for individuals and groups all over the country to share their troubles and triumphs and hopefully through the power of the internet find solutions.



For those not familiar with Facebook - a Group is a closed unit so only members can see posts from other members of that group. To become a member you have to be confirmed by administrators and in this case your request to join will be seen and confirmed by Carol or myself.

We'd love to see the group membership increase, but don't worry if you've a facebook phobia as we'll still be posting article and updates in the SWU Bulletin

TV programmes

In early February BBC 2 screened a three part series called *Universal Credit Inside the Welfare State*.

It wasn't sensational nor did it flag itself up to exposing a scandal! What it did was show how easy it is to change "normal". It showed the day to day mundane roles and tasks that the staff at a selection of DWP Offices undertook. (I am assuming that they were all still directly employed by the DWP and not transferred to agencies like Serco & Atos). From the CEO of the service charged with implementing the change from six or more old benefits into the one new Universal Credit, to the Work Coaches who that call in claimants to check whether they have fulfilled their obligations to seek work - did you know claimants have to prove they have been "working at" finding work for 7 hours a day 5 days a week!? We saw the CEO under pressure because the deadline to switch everyone to UC has been moved back yet again! We did not see him comment on the fact that the benefits generally leave people with less money than they were getting. Have we actually seen a person who is getting more money on UC than they did on the six or more old benefits? We did see the CEO or his staff comment on the number of deaths that have been reported due to people being sanctioned or being left unable to make a claim? We did see claimants under what I can only describe as coercive control - having to jump higher and higher in order to receive benefits. Yes, we know that the whole system is based on a process of "less eligibility" ie the system is there to support people but not give them more than they would get if they were working, but it should not make people worse off in the process of trying to sort themselves out.



NO I do not think I am being too hard or over dramatic, I am just making a clear observation and that was the point and the title of the programme - an observation of what actually happens *Inside the Welfare System*. Bizarrely, or was it ironically,

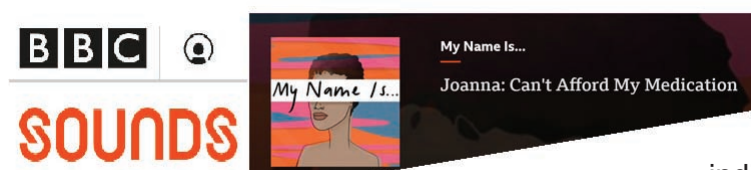
truth is indeed stranger or in this case obscener than fiction! Each and every one of the vignettes could have been scenes from *I Daniel Blake*! You will remember the nice member of staff in the film - yes she got told off - actually threatened with disciplinary action for showing compassion to a claimant. That was the point of the documentary, showing just how easy it is to change people's behaviour and get them to believe what they are doing is normal! It is never normal to belittle people!

And that's what I mean by changing normal.

And then I had a thought - have we as social workers been drawn in to the new normal? Where do you see yourselves along the line from Change Agent to Agent of State Control?

PS I met the actress who played that part, her character's name was "The Nice DWP Person"!

And that was how Kate Rutter introduced herself to me when we met at the *Sorry We Missed You* premiere.



Radio 4, 26th February 2020

My Name is

This 30-minute Radio 4 series gives individuals the opportunity to explore an issue

that is pertinent to them. As soon as I heard the trailer, I knew

I had to listen. Having spent hours liaising with DWP and other agencies trying to get an exemption for a client I once worked with, I could guess what was to come. In their case the script was for Clozapine, a drug that greatly helped them keep good mental health. A drug that you cannot start and stop without medical supervision, and a drug which requires monthly blood tests before a repeat prescription can be issued - yet because the person had worked they could not get it free!

Today's presenter Joanne was a 22 year old student who had a kidney transplant within days of her birth and since then has taken anti rejection medication, but who has been unable to claim for that medication since she was 19. As she points out of course "without the medication she would not be alive!"

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000fpx

Do take a listen. Meanwhile I'm off to follow up some of the links to groups and people interviewed and who have been trying to resolve this issue.

We are not the only ones trying to Boot Out Austerity.

Social Workers Benevolent Trust Video

At the BASW 2019 AGM in Belfast, Bridget Robb one of the Trustees of SWBT, gave a presentation of the work of the Trust - clearly demonstrating that Austerity was affecting those whose job it was to help others.



Boot Out Austerity offered its services to bring the work of SWBT to more people. We used the launch of the BASW Heritage Year to announce it will soon be available to view on the SWBT website.



Angi Naylor with SWBF trustees

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



The Icing on the Learning Cake

Unfortunately, many people seem to think that their work and their learning are two different things. That is, for the most part they just focus on getting the job done and pay no attention to learning and occasionally go on a training course to add learning to the mix. Of course, this is a very narrow and self-defeating approach to professional development. What should really be happening is that most of the learning comes from actually doing the job, reflecting on it and getting guidance on it through good-quality supervision. Training should then be the icing on the learning cake, not the cake itself.

Getting the best results generally comes from self-directed learning - that is, by following a learning pathway that you have decided upon for yourself (with advice and guidance from education and training specialists as appropriate), the pathway that suits your particular needs and circumstances.

To help facilitate this I developed the Avenue Professional Development Programme, an online learning community geared towards critically reflective practice. It has been running for six years now and has grown into a supportive community of fellow learners keen to help one another learn, grow and develop. As part of my commitment to trade unionism and the social justice it stands for, I am offering SWU members half-price membership at £5 per month instead of the usual £10. There is information about the Programme at www.apdp.org.uk. If this is something that you would like to take advantage of, let me know and I will be happy to answer any questions and guide you on how to sign up at the special rate (neil@avenueconsulting.co.uk).

I am also happy to offer my range of e-learning courses at half price, including *Time and Workload Management*; *Handling Aggression*; and *Risk Assessment and Management*, amongst others (<https://tinyurl.com/e-courses>). And, last but not least, for a limited time, I am able to offer a 20%

discount on the series of practice manuals I have been involved in publishing. That includes *The Social Worker's Practice Manual*; *The Learning from Practice Manual* (for practice educators and others involved in promoting learning); *The Care of Older People Practice Manual* and *The Managing Stress Practice Manual* (<https://tinyurl.com/practicemanuals>). Just email me to let me know what you need and I will do my best to help.

Neil

Dr Neil Thompson

Neil has been a longstanding supporter of SWU and trade unionism in general. At last year's Annual Conference he was presented with an Ambassador Award in recognition of his important contribution and his support of our efforts. His generosity in offering these important learning resources to SWU members at reduced prices is part of that commitment, for which we are very grateful. So, please do take advantage of what Neil is kindly offering to SWU members.



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