

SWU continues to grow



I am delighted to report that the membership at SWU continues to grow significantly which is brilliant news. Presently, we are heading towards 13,000 members, which is phenomenal. This reflects the growing presence of SWU in the workplace, and

our popularity with student social workers. Unionism is not about competition but about what we can offer at SWU, which is clearly important to our members, reflecting our growing success. We are the only union for social workers run by social workers, however I remain concerned about the negativity towards SWU from some members of a large UK union which covers social work and I would rather we all worked together for the common cause of raising the profile of social workers.

Regardless, 'the proof is in the pudding' as membership not only grows but existing members continue to be keen to engage and support our development. This newsletter highlights several examples of why people are joining SWU and we have terrific member offers such as the one from Neil Thompson. I have also received several emails from new members advising me that they have just recently discovered SWU which led them to join BASW. This is indeed good news for both organisations as collectively we can be the voice of social workers, and if required, employment representation for SWU

members from social workers who know our profession inside and out. I feel this is the main reason we are growing and keeping members. I am particularly pleased to see some further interest in Union Contacts with the next training date already full and member engagement.

I have had an extremely busy month with a thought-provoking visit with other SWU members to Palestine and the West Bank which was an experience I will never forget. Thanks to David Harrop and the Palestine-UK Social Work Network for the opportunity and the hosting organisations over in Palestine. The hospitality, fantastic food, beautiful landscape, sense of history, and the warmth and spirit of the people will always stay with me. Lasting in my memory is the everyday reality of the occupation and how it infuses everything in daily life. The constant presence of soldiers and checkpoints, the small indignities, the risk of settler violence, the fear of administrative detention and the lack of water and basic supplies. The trauma that children face from seeing violence on an everyday basis. The Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails endure appalling treatment. I heard personally how they are physically and psychologically abused by their Israeli jailers and have little or no legal recourse against the occupying power. Palestinian prisoners do engage in one form of resistance: hunger strikes. But even in this most hostile of environments we met so many inspiring social workers, Non-Government Officers and community activists who were working to build hope in their communities, and to build a better future in Palestine.

When I was approached 18 months ago to discuss and advise on some aspects of the new Ken Loach movie *Sorry we Missed You* with writer Paul Laverty, I did not expect it to lead into SWU not only being involved in the story but also the ongoing campaign and awareness raising issues as part of the campaign. Personally, this has been another great piece of work from SWU and I was particularly delighted to see us at the forefront of the advertised movie at the recent London Premiere and made it on to all the advertising and tickets. We even made onto to the film credit. The film is well worth a viewing and another great piece of work from the production team that brought us *I, Daniel Blake*.

Finally, this newsletter has our manifesto which will be going out to candidates for the December 12th General Election. It is important to register to vote and encourage others to do so: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. It would be great if our manifesto could also go out from members so please download it and forward to candidates in your constituency which will reinforce the message even more about the need to invest in social work. A PDF can be found here on the SWU website: www.swu-updates.org.uk/

John McGowan
General Secretary
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GS of SWU with Ken Loach at the Premiere



Ken Loach and Paul Laverty with SWU logo very prominent



Angi Naylor from Austerity Action Group at the movie launch



Full movie cast on stage at the Premiere

Film Review

Sorry We Missed You

The film was another collaboration between veteran film maker Ken Loach and Glasgow born writer Paul Laverty. The pair want it to be seen as a companion piece to their earlier film *I Daniel Blake*.

Like their previous work this film deals with the fate of ordinary working-class people who want to take care of their families and experience misfortune at the hand of institutions in contemporary Britain, one of the richest economies in the world. This film charts the experiences of protagonists Ricky and Abbie and their two children. It's a searing indictment of the gig economy.

Prior to the 2008 financial crash the family were shown as doing well financially but never quite recover afterwards, with Ricky being employed in various demeaning jobs. At the start of the film he is being interviewed for a driver's job with PDF a delivery company. His manager explains that he is not an employee but self employed, which means that he is responsible for obtaining his own van and the tracking gun which tells him where and when he should be at any particular time of the day. The film highlights the tyranny for technology, in order to meet the exacting schedule Ricky must work 14 hour days, 6 days a week, with no time for a lunch break and he is forced to relieve himself in a bottle to address his need for a comfort break. Ricky is treated as just another commodity with no account being taken of him as a human being with feelings.

Abbie's experiences as a home care worker are mirrored. Her employers expect her to meet all her client's needs in strictly limited time slots. In order to purchase Ricky's van the family have to sell Abbie's car and she has to depend on public transport so that she is always running just to catch up on herself. The pressures on the absent parents become intolerable and the external pressures begin to turn inwards upon the family with teenage son Seb dodging school and getting arrested for shoplifting. In taking time off to deal with

his family, once the blue eyed boy, Ricky is

sanctioned for being absent from work and fined. When Ricky is beaten up by thugs who smash his tracking gun he is told that it is his responsibility to buy a replacement at a cost of £1000.

The skill of the film lies in the way that Loach and Laverty always represent the main characters sympathetically, as having dignity and humanity in an unsentimental portrayal. The characters are shown as being authentic. It is the system that grind them down, and if they behave badly at times to one another it's only because of the intolerable pressure society places upon them.

Like *I Daniel Blake* the film asks questions of the audience - is the portrayal shown as a series of unfortunate events which happen to a particular hapless family or can you extrapolate the wider impact of modern capitalism upon ordinary working people? One scene in particular where a group of jobs poured Ricky's urine all over him can be seen as a metaphor for the 'system' urinating all over working people. Me, I was left thinking of zero hour contracts and other situations where self employed workers are unable to negotiate conditions of service and pay increases because it is not clear who is responsible. I yearned for the period during most of my working life of collective bargaining when trade unions negotiated decent pay and working conditions for their staff!

In my view all social work students and staff should be made to see this film.



Steve Plastock
Independent Practice Teacher

Palestine PAL UK Social Work Trip 7 - 15th October 2019

Mollie Heywood, SWU and BASW Member, reports on the recent PAL UK trip to Palestine which included several SWU Members and SWU General Secretary



Picture the scene: an olive grove, a fire with a teapot on it; brewing some Palestinian mint tea, rolling Palestinian hills in the background. Oh, and a bunch of weary social workers, from all across the UK and Palestine, resting mid hike and talking, reflecting and laughing about all things social work.

That just about sums up the recent PalUK trip to the West Bank - we met social workers and other organisations across the West Bank, we had gallons of tea and strong Arabic coffee, and shared lots of reflections and information about social work and how it differs, both between these two parts of the world, as well as across the UK within different types of social work. It was a learning curve for all of us but being back in the West Bank, and specifically going there with social workers, to meet social workers, has made me realise two things.

The first thing is just how important people actually are. It seems silly to say, doesn't it? The clue is in the title: social work. It's social, it's about people. However, in and amongst all

the assessments, court reports and box ticking, how often do we actually see the people we are working with? All the assessments and notes written about a person but how important are they?

What was really clear to me throughout my trip in the West Bank, meeting with social workers both from the UK and from Palestine, was that regardless of the system that we are working under, the person at the centre of it has to actually be at the centre of it.

We met countless social workers across the West Bank, all doing various different jobs working with people, working under an occupation. Some are working in roles probably similar to those that we can find in the UK, such as the social workers that work with children with disabilities. Other social workers were specifically doing jobs and roles that are linked to the occupation, for example working with child prisoners suffering the effects of horrific torture.



Delegates from the PAL UK on one of the many walks in Palestine



Group members with the Head of Social Work at Al Najah University and the President of the Palestine Union of Social Workers

Regardless, all these social workers are working within a system that doesn't promote the people. In the West Bank, children and adults are living under an occupation, in a culture where post-traumatic stress disorder doesn't even exist. How can it, when there is no 'post', only daily, lived trauma?

It was such an invaluable experience to meet with all sorts of social workers and discuss with them different ways to practice and reflect, listening to examples of work across the West Bank. Hiking through the middle of the West Bank with Palestinian social workers meant we were really able to get into the nitty gritty of social work, really break it down and reflect on the different ways we can work and improve.



A great opportunity to hear about the local situation and meet with local people in their own neighbourhoods



**Walls of Shame
- West Bank Separation Wall**



An informative trip with the opportunity to meet and hear with many organisation. Picture with Nassar Ibrahim, Palestine Academic who provided an insightful overview of the political situation in Palestine

So it was clear to me at the end of the week that people really are the most important things in social work. We met with countless social workers, professionals and people doing invaluable work in the West Bank, fighting back about an unjust occupation in some of the most creative ways, such as the Freedom Theatre in Nablus or Alrowwad project in the Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, empowering women and children through creativity.



The SWU football team of Rebecca, Dave, John and Jess playing in the hot desert against the children of the Bedouin rural desert village



Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails endure appalling treatment. They are physically and psychologically abused by their Israeli jailers. Prisoners do engage in one form of resistance hunger strikes

Informative meeting with Munther Amira - Palestine Social Worker and Human Rights Activists. SWU and BASW were active previously with the campaign to release Munther from recent imprisonment





SWU GS with Ayed Abu Eqyaish from Defence for Children Palestine. The group heard and received evidence about so many child fatalities and breaches of basic human rights



Palestine Social Workers with SWU Union Contacts Rebecca and Jessica



BASW and SWU members Mollie and Ruth on one of the many adventures during this trip

Everyone we met was generous and proud to show off their life, their culture and their confidence and positivity in the future. From playing football with bedouin children in the middle of the Palestinian desert, to sharing jokes in an olive grove, to experiencing the fear of checkpoints and the shared anger towards prisons at a hunger strike demonstration in Hebron, we met some truly incredible people across the West Bank, from all walks of life. Their ambition to 'make some noise' about the occupation and how much hope they hold on a daily basis. It starts with people; it can start with social work. And it's not drastically different to fighting, say, austerity, here in the UK.

Oh, and the second thing? Freshly made pitta bread and homemade maktoubeh continue to be my favourite foods ever, and they don't taste better anywhere else than in the magical part of the world that is Palestine.

Mollie Heywood

Follow Mollie on Twitter: [social worker@mollieaheywood](https://twitter.com/socialworker@mollieaheywood)



Pretty accurate really

Social work trip to Palestine - Palestine UK (PAL-UK) social work network

The PAL-UK network was established in 2011 and aims to increase knowledge and sharing experience of social workers in both countries

Raed Amira - reflects from a Palestine perspective on the recent visit from UK Social Workers as part of the Palestine Social Work UK trip. Raed is the:

- Main Representative, International Federation of Social Workers. Human Rights Commission for the Asia Pacific Region.
- Coordinator of Public and International Relations, Palestine Union of Social Workers and Psychologists - Palestine.



Raed is also a Member of the Arab Federation of Social Workers.

With high commitment and good cooperation social work trip to Palestine was organized from 7th - 15th October 2019. Reception for the participants in Ramallah, and Bethlehem was organized by Palestine Union of Social Workers and Psychologists - Palestine; under the auspices of this trip we sought to develop effective peer to peer social work relationships, between Palestinian SW practitioners and UK based SW practitioners.

PalUK successfully facilitated a delegation of 14 UK social workers to Palestine this month and this attracted great interest of global solidarity. Trip of two weeks includes several activities and meetings. Meeting was to discuss the experiences of Palestinian prisoners (especially children) with Human Rights group. Field trips to Aida and Deheichia camps where Raed Amira gave briefing about current social work in Palestine and the challenges that social workers are facing in their professional life (restriction of movements, arrest, checkpoints), then Munther Amira describe the Palestinian refugees daily life. And we held a meeting that was held with Alternative Information Centre, Palestine; with writer Mr. Nassar Ibrahim on the political situation in Palestine and its impact on the social and economic life.

through Palestinian countryside and olive groves, staying with villagers for few days until we reached the city of Jericho. Visit also was conducted to freedom of theatre. The team continues their plan by meeting with different institution such as Aldameer, IBDA center and DCI to discuss the treatment of child prisoners. Visiting H2 old city of Hebron and Qurtba School. A really important and successful trip to Palestine completed.

It is with great pleasure to say that your visits had an impressive impact on Palestinian social workers in general and on us in specific. Thanks for your repetitive visits which encouraged and supported Palestinians towards thinking about a better future. I believe that it was reciprocal, meaning that, both Palestinian and British social workers were able to benefit from each other. The British social workers for example got the chance to see how Palestinian refugees practiced their daily lives, they also were able to examine cases of Palestinian violated prisoners and they were aware of many human rights violations happening in the West Bank. Thus, we are always willing to improve our bilateral relations with you so that we can together achieve freedom, dignity and equity for all social workers worldwide.

We wish to keep such solidarity campaign in the future.

Natural walks started from
Nablus

Raed Amira

**BASW Cymru in association with Cardiff University
and PalUK Social Work Network Presents -**

Social Work and Human Rights

From International to Local Contexts

How do we as social workers pay attention to human rights, which are central to our profession?

At this one-day event we will be considering examples from as far afield as children detained in Palestine and as close up as poverty in the UK and provide food for thought about how social workers everywhere can incorporate the promotion of human rights into their practice

Wednesday 27th November 10am-4pm

Council Room, Glamorgan Building, Cardiff University, King Edward VII Ave, Cardiff CF10 3NN

Learning Outcomes

- Awareness of the global definition of social work**
- Connecting human rights issues into your social work practice, both locally and internationally**
- Understanding of a rights-based approach to poverty**
- Ability to apply BASW's Anti-Poverty Practice Guide**
- 5 hours CPD**

Speakers

Mohammad Al Quaisy - *Works with ex-detained children in Palestine*

Tom Croft - *ATD Fourth World, who helped develop BASW Anti-Poverty Practice Guide*

Abyd Quinn Aziz - *Programme Director MASW Cardiff University*

Guy Shennan - *The Solution-Focused Collective*

Allison Hulmes - *National Director BASW Cymru*

Free Event - For further information and booking visit www.basw.co.uk/events

FSW Vienna



Great that the SWU President James Birchall was able to provide an overview of the recent work involving SWU. This is important as The International Federation of Social Workers and Bath Spa University Centre for Health and Cognition (in association with Ulster University Social Work Department) have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding which will form the basis of a new research partnership aiming to shine a spotlight on the everyday working environment of social workers around the world. Developing the 'Working Conditions' campaign into a global project.

Rory Truell, IFSW Secretary-General previously highlighted that: "Social Workers practice in situations of extreme complexity and necessity. The state and employers must support working conditions that allow social workers to carry out their jobs without exploitation and risk of occupational burnout. Social Work is essential to the wellbeing of people, it makes significant contributions to the functioning of communities and wider society, yet wages and conditions are often inadequate. The profession and the communities that social workers practice within must work together nationally, regionally and globally to campaign for all governments and services to construct and implement decent and fair working conditions for social workers."

James Birchall's report to IFSW:



The UK Working Conditions Campaign for Social Workers started when Dr. Jermaine Ravalier, Reader in Psychology at Bath Spa University, contacted John McGowan, General Secretary of the Social Workers Union, towards the end of 2016.

Jermaine said he was interested in undertaking a research project on the working conditions for Social Workers in the UK. Would the Social Workers Union be interested? I should perhaps mention that Jermaine's wife is a Social Worker. A meeting was held between John and Jermaine after which Jermaine started his research project, which was funded by Bath Spa University.

By August 2017 the research project was completed. More than 1,600 Social Workers had taken part and the results were alarming. SWU took the research finding to MPs and other Parliamentary figures, including the Chief Social Worker for Adults, Lynn Romeo.

Our first meeting was with Lord Roy Kennedy on 8 September 2017. This meeting resulted in Lord Kennedy leading a debate in the House of Lords on the results of the research project. The Government has to take notice of the debate. I watched the debate online. Further meetings were arranged through an organisation called Campaign Collective. BASW joined SWU in these meetings for a number of months.

It was then decided to do an updated Research Project. Over 3,600 Social Workers responded and on August 2018 Jermaine's report was published by Bath Spa University. This showed that conditions in nearly all sectors of the research had worsened in twelve months. The findings of this report showed that working conditions contributing to stress and ill health are worse than 90 to 95 per cent of the UK employees in both public and private sector occupations. Social Workers worked an average of 64 days per year more than they are contracted to. This is an average of 11 hours per week. This causes burnout and a feeling of being overwhelmed. 60 per cent are looking to leave their current jobs within the next 15 months compared to 52 per cent last year. Nearly 40 per cent are thinking

of leaving the profession entirely. The main stressors were high case and administrative loads, together with a lack of resources for service users. More than 40 per cent of Social Workers are exposed to aggressive or physically abusive behaviours at least once a month from service users.

We asked MPs to write to the Chancellor and the three Secretaries of State for Health, Education and Housing, Communities and Local Government to request that Social Work is properly funded to retain the workforce and protect vulnerable children and adults. To organise a small meeting with representatives of SWU in their area to hear more about their work lives and understand the work they do with vulnerable people. Request a debate on Social Workers working conditions. Join the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Work.

We held a Parliamentary Event in Westminster to launch Jermaine's Report on 20th November 2018. More than twenty MPs and one member of the House of Lords signed their support. In addition, we have met face to face with over 20 MPs and Parliamentary figures. I have been pushing MPs for a debate in the House of Commons. Some MPs have told me they will ask questions in the House of Commons.

As far as the future is concerned, we will be arranging meetings with Social Workers and MPs in their constituencies. Many MPs were sympathetic to our cause and we will be contacting them further to develop this. We also intend to contact local Councils.

James Birchall
SWU President

Vienna Trip

SWU Union Contact, Liz Gormley reports on her visit to the IFSW Conference in Austria

The International Federation of Social Workers holds a conference every two years. This September it was held in Vienna, Austria.

With the theme of *Social Protection and Human Dignity* I particularly enjoyed the opportunity to get to know like-minded social workers from different parts of the UK, as well as around the world, covering all client groups.

"Brexit" came up a lot, but the political climate/changes, which are echoed around Europe were not really discussed, other than to reiterate that sharing experiences and collaboration at conferences like this help to bridge these political and national divisions.

The workshops provided opportunity to hear from social workers around the world with common themes including less time with service users and difficult working environment.

With so many nations represented at the conference there was a positive buzz throughout the four days. Even time to attend the conference party!

The most striking thing for me was how we should develop our relationships between nations, even within the UK, I look forward to being part of a more social Europe.



Liz Gormley
SWU Union Contact



Dear fellow SWU member,

Would you let someone else decide what your career should be? Would you let them decide what jobs you apply for or what direction you want your working life to go in? Clearly, the answer for the vast majority of people is no. And yet, when it comes to our learning and our professional development, the vast majority of people tend to allow others to be in the driving seat. We allow trainers, tutors and others to have the major say in what is to be learned and how. This is despite the fact that we have known literally for decades that different people have different learning styles and therefore feel more or less comfortable with different approaches to learning,

The Avenue Professional Development Programme was set up six years ago to put its members back where they should be: in the driving seat of their own learning. In APDP, as it is affectionately known, you decide what you want to learn and how best to learn it. "But, I wouldn't know where to start," I hear you say, and that's not surprising after being used to years of other people making those decisions for you. But, one of the great strengths of APDP is that it is not just an impersonal website, it is the focal point for a supportive community of fellow learners. Members receive guidance on setting their own learning pathway in the form of two workbooks based around six learning themes and six areas of development. The first workbook is used to identify what you feel you need to learn in relation to each of the 12 sets of issues, and the second workbook can be used thereafter to review your progress. But, that's not all, there is a growing library of multimedia learning resources, an e-portfolio for you to record and consolidate your learning, a *Learning to Learn* e-course and, perhaps most valuable of all, discussion forums where you can raise issues and play a part in sustaining APDP as a supportive community of learners. Long-standing members regularly tell me how much they value this support as a basis for their learning and development.

For decades we have been talking about the importance of reflective practice, and APDP provides a flexible but structured framework for making it a reality. In these challenging times, the more opportunity we have for reflection and for supporting one another in our learning and personal growth, the better - and that is why membership of APDP is such a valuable resource.

The normal cost of being a member is £10 a month, but for some time, as part of my commitment to trade unionism and social justice, it has been available to SWU members at half price. However, at the moment, SWU members can benefit from a year's free membership - yes, that's right, totally free for a full year! This is a limited-time offer, so if you are serious about being in charge of your own learning with the support of a community of fellow learners, then now is the time to join up. Email me at neil@avenueconsulting.co.uk and I will let you know what you need to do to take advantage of this excellent opportunity. Don't miss out, do it now!

Best wishes,

Neil

Dr Neil Thompson

Union Contact Scheme

Carol Reid, National Organiser & Union Contact Scheme Manager provides her regular update



Union Contact Days

Our next Union Contact Induction Day is fast approaching and taking place on **Saturday 23rd November at the Mechanics Institute in Manchester**. I'm pleased to say that this very quickly became fully booked and I'm now collecting names for our next Induction Day in March 2020.

Being a member of the Social Workers Union enables you to apply to undertake this role and we welcome people who are interested in getting involved. Previous union experience is useful but not essential - more important is a genuine enthusiasm and interest in trade unionism and collective activism.

Induction Meetings include presentations from myself and **John McGowan, General Secretary of SWU**, as well as activities and information relating to **trade union recruitment, campaigning and activism**. We 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*. A full-time BASW/SWU Advice & Representation Officer will also be in attendance to discuss their role and answer questions.

The growing popularity of Induction Days is an indictment of **YOUR** interest in developing and strengthening **YOUR** Union, and we greatly value our team of SWU Union Contacts. Travel and accommodation costs are covered for the event and lunch is provided on the day. Being a member of a Trade Union is the best way to fight the injustices of workplace inequalities and poor working conditions which we as social workers are so familiar with, and which in turn impacts upon our service-users and their relationships with us.

SWU are in talks with BASW and our
Advice & Representation Team
to look at

developing the Union Contact role further for those who would like to undertake additional GFTU/A&R training for lower-level representational work supporting colleagues. This is an exciting advancement to the role, and several of our Union Contacts have already registered their interest. Watch this space for further details.

If you're interested in becoming a SWU Union Contact in your workplace or within your university cohort, please contact me for further details.

SWU at Conferences

It was a pleasure to attend both the BASW Student and BASW England Conferences in Leeds this month alongside SWU President James Birchall. We held a SWU stall at both events and it was an excellent opportunity to meet new and existing members of all ages and experience to discuss the importance and positives of union membership. The enthusiasm and interest of social work students was extremely rewarding and gave us an opportunity to discuss with them not only the benefits of joining, but also the opportunities to become more involved as SWU Union Contacts. This was matched by the plethora of experience at the second conference and the conversations with practicing and retired social workers, many of whom were themselves active trade unionists and lifelong members.

I'd recommend attending such conferences whenever possible as it's a great opportunity to meet like-minded people and develop your knowledge and expertise.

Request for articles for Newsletter

As ever, we welcome articles and items for this Newsletter from our Union Contacts. The

Newsletter is produced for SWU Members and we really value your input. What inspired you to become a Union Contact? Do you have previous experiences of activism? Are challenges in your workplace impacting on your ability to practice successfully? Are you a student ... what are your expectations of social work when you qualify? If you have anything you'd like to share, whether it be humorous, work/university or family related, or anything of interest that you would like to add to your Newsletter - you can submit a short paragraph or two, or a lengthier piece of around 500 words, the choice is yours and we look forward to hearing from you.

Update of Contact Details

Finally, I know it's easy to forget to inform everyone when you change workplace or get

a new phone number etc, but please take a minute to double-check that we have the correct and up to date contact details for you (as well as checking that messages aren't going to your "junk" folder by mistake). It's important that SWU can keep in regular contact with our members, and that I can share updates and information with you in your role as SWU Union Contact.

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

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

SWU welcomes issues from members and organisations:
This month Colin Slasberg encourages the following:

Request to help bring about radical change in social care

BASW is consulting on a proposal that would bring about fundamental and radical change in adult social care. A new 4-step approach to the way needs are assessed and resources allocated is being proposed. The model separates them. Assessment of need and the resources required would be a matter between the practitioner and service user. The decision about how much could be afforded would be a subsequent and transparent management responsibility. This would bring an end to the need for managerial control of practice to control spending. It will also, for the first time, expose the real funding gap and therefore expose political leaders to their responsibility to close it. Below is a link to an article in Community Care reporting on the proposal. <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2019/10/18/social-care-system-focused-independent-living-record-unmet-need-says-basw/>

I urge all SWU members to engage
in the consultation.

Social workers currently fulfil a moral duty to get the very best they can from the system. But I invite you to ask if that is enough. Should our service users have better lives? If you agree they do, the 4-step approach would free you to practice not just with moral worthiness, but according to our Code of Ethics.

Whether BASW follows through on this radicalism and proceeds to seriously lobby for change may depend on the strength of response to the consultation. It will require about 15 minutes of your time to read the consultation document, and then another 15 minutes to complete the on-line survey. Below is the link that will take you to both. <https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2019/oct/basw-england-consultation-future-adult-social-care>



Colin Slasberg

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or call **033 3344 9600**

The recent articles from SWU Advice and Representation have gone down well with a number of emails asking for more. We are therefore delighted that SWU Trade Union Advice and Representation Officer Julie Long shares another piece of advice and this time on;

Indirect Discrimination

This article is concerned with discrimination relating to redundancy and restructuring in the workplace. However, it will be useful to outline the legislation and principles that define and underpin discrimination in the first instance. The Equality Act (2010) places a duty on employers not to discriminate against their employees on the grounds of age, race, religion or belief, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. These grounds are known as protected characteristics and are concerned with the protection from discrimination of employees with any one, or more, of the protected characteristics. Consequently, employer policies and procedures, as they relate to the employment of their workforce, must be framed in the context of the Equality Act (2010) and, therefore, ensure compliance with the principles which underpin the act.

The Act in effect places a duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments, for those of its employees with one or more of the protected characteristics outlined above. This means that the provision, criterion, and/or practices of the employer, including the policies and procedures that relate to employment and the physical characteristics of the workplace, must not significantly disadvantage employees with a protected characteristic. Hence by using reasonable adjustments for employees with one or more protected characteristics an employer can mitigate any potential discriminatory acts and ensure compliance with the legislation.

Within equality legislation there are important distinctions between direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination occurs when an employer treats an employee less favourably due to certain characteristics, or attributes, of an individual employee (or group of employees). Therefore, if an employee, who has one or more of the protected characteristics as outlined above, is dismissed by an

employer due to the employees protected characteristic(s) this is likely to constitute direct discrimination under the Equality Act (2010).

Similarly if the employer refuses to provide training, promotion or imposes less favourable terms and conditions on an employee with a protected characteristic(s) direct discrimination is likely to have occurred.

Indirect discrimination, on the other hand, can occur when an employers practice, policy, or rules, which applies to all employees in the organisation, has a worse or detrimental effect on some employees with a protected characteristic(s) when compared to others employed by the organisation. An employer, consequently, should not do something which has (or could have) a worse impact on an individual employee, and others, who share a particular protected characteristic. An example of indirect discrimination might be where an employer requires all staff to work full time rather than part-time. This could put female employees at a significant disadvantage as they are more likely to be primary carers for children and may need to work part-time or more flexibly to accommodate this. However, for indirect discrimination to apply to an individual employee the act by the employer must put the employee personally at a particular disadvantage.

There are two other areas of discrimination worth mentioning here, specifically discrimination by association and discrimination by perception. Associated discrimination occurs when a person is discriminated against because of another person's protected characteristic. Discrimination



by perception occurs when a person is believed to have a protected characteristic even though they do not. In both cases the discrimination is usually classed as direct discrimination and both types of discrimination do not apply to all the Acts protected characteristics, specifically marriage and civil partnerships, and pregnancy and maternity.

With regards to redundancy the Equality Act (2010) imposes a duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments in their practices so as not to put, for example, disabled employees at a substantial disadvantage when compared to non-disabled employees. The employer is required to undertake appropriate due diligence regarding their statutory duties and responsibility to all employees. It follows that when a redundancy selection criterion is being consulted upon, or applied, union representatives and affected employees should scrutinise all relevant documentation relating to the proposed redundancy. This is to enable the identification of any issues within the redundancy selection criteria that are likely to disadvantage and/or discriminate against the employee(s) concerned. Whilst the redundancy selection criterion may appear fair, further scrutiny may highlight, for example, the disestablishment of part-time posts which may indirectly discriminate against disabled employees who, due to their long term condition, are unable to work full-time. The disabled employee is, therefore, likely to suffer detriments under the Equality Act (2010) and the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations (2000), making it un-lawful for part-time workers to be treated less favourably than full-time employees.

Whilst anti-discrimination legislation is there to protect individuals and groups from discrimination, as with all legislation certain caveats apply. Employers are expected to make reasonable adjustments to mitigate and support employees with a protected characteristic. However, adjustments only have to be made if the adjustments are considered reasonable. If the employer can show that they can objectively justify their decision not to implement certain adjustments at the present time the employer does not have to make those adjustments. Factors such as the financial cost of the adjustment, availability of resources to bring about the required change, the inefficiency of any changes, and Health & Safety concerns can be used by the employer to justify why they, the employer do not consider the adjustment to be reasonable.

It is worthwhile remembering that any discrimination claim by an employee against their employer will be heard in an Employment Tribunal. It is vitally important that the alleged act of discrimination is registered with the Employment Tribunal within three (3) months less one (1) day of the alleged discrimination taking place. Failure to comply with these time scales will mean that the alleged discrimination claim is timed out and will not be heard. So expediency in collecting and collating relevant information and lodging the complaint with the Employment Tribunal is of vital importance if the employee is to have a chance to have suitable redress under the law.

Julie Long
SWU Trade Union Advice and
Representation Officer

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

Statement from SWU to prospective candidates in the forthcoming 2019 General Election

What is Social Work:

Social work is a professional discipline that seeks to facilitate the welfare of communities, individuals, families, and groups. A practicing professional with a degree in social work is called a Social Worker. Since April 2005 "Social Worker" has been a protected title (section 61 of the Care Standards Act 2000). Social Workers are guided by principles of social justice, rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversity. Social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being.

What they do:

Social work tries to promote change and grassroots empowerment of people and aids in socio-economic development, social cohesion, and liberation from abuse and oppression. There are currently 100,000 Social Workers in the UK. Social Work continues to be a demanding profession with recent research from Bath Spa University highlighting the difficulties: www.basw.co.uk/what-we-do/campaigns/professional-working-conditions.

What we do:

The Social Workers Union (SWU) is a trade union dedicated to social work professionals. SWU is working to recruiting as many of these practitioners as is possible. The Union was legally established by the British Association of Social Work in 2011 and now has 12,000 members. We know how difficult it can be for a Social Worker, working under tremendous pressure, sometimes subjected to wholly unreasonable criticism in the press, to deliver the services that their clients deserve. As a Union we are able to use our specialist knowledge to advocate on behalf of Social Workers both individually and collectively.

Social Workers dedicate their lives to promote change and grassroots empowerment of people to promote social development, cohesion, and liberation from abuse and oppression.

Social Work is an extremely complicated process – not only does it require very finely tuned and skilled decisions to be made, it has to be made within a detailed legal framework. Contrary to the portrayal of social work in the media, Social Workers do not simply pop by and check that everything is all right within a household, whisk a child away at the drop of a hat, or neglect a vulnerable adult's needs. Faced with rocketing caseloads Social Workers now find themselves spending the majority of their time navigating laborious and unwieldy data-collection systems.

Will you support action to reduce this bureaucratic overload so that workers can spend more time with their clients?

Politicians would appear to want it both ways. They want Social Workers to act more swiftly in situations where children and adults need to be safeguarded from abuse and neglect, but they want fewer mistakes where action is disproportionate and oppressive. The fact is that the long standing programme of austerity is both increasing demand and limiting the response. In particular preventive work can only have a low priority, increasingly costly for the state.

Would you support increased funding of social services in order to allow us to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in society?

The Social Workers Union would urge all parliamentary prospective candidates to work with us in supporting our members to do their job effectively and support our campaign for better working conditions. As a prospective candidate what would you do to ensure that Social Work professionals have support to deal with their caseload?

The Social Workers Union supports the recent statement by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) on social protection, which reads:

"Social protection is a human right. The social work profession's core commitment to human rights involves a commitment to provide social protection for all. IFSW calls upon governments and members of civil society to engage for inclusive and comprehensive social protection systems for all.

IFSW will work in the promotion of social protection and calls on its member associations and social workers worldwide to join in this commitment to protect, preserve and expand the right for social protection for all.

In the understanding of IFSW social protection is more than the provision for basic needs. In accordance with the international definition of social work and with the professional ethics and principles IFSW holds that social protection systems must be embedded in a social policy that promotes social justice, social security, social coherence and wellbeing. Social protection systems must be understood as instruments for social transformation, democracy and creating social just societies." (IFSW 2016)

As a prospective parliamentary candidate would you support this IFSW statement?

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