

General Secretary's Update

Working Conditions

The SWU Conference and AGM reinforced the positives with being a social worker however to say that social work is a challenging profession is of course something of an understatement and this was an important message heard throughout the 2018 Conference and AGM. We all know the impact on social workers of cut-backs to services and staffing. These are on-going challenges and we will continue our battle to fight them and look forward next month to sharing with you some of the actions and an overview of the recent "Working Conditions" Part 2 research with our partners, Bath Spa University and BASW. SWU will continue to campaign and be active and we will do everything we can to keep our struggle in the public eye.



John McGowan, SWU General Secretary and James Birchall, SWU President open the 2018 Conference and highlight the benefits of being a SWU Member

The skill, passion, commitment and hard work of social workers is often taken for granted, but their ordinary daily working lives would be immeasurably improved if we could:

- Employ more social workers, so that we can better manage the pressure and demand of their working lives, thereby reducing stress and absence rates.
- Ensure a consistent approach to caseload allocation and enable flexible and remote working through improved technology.
- Ensure time for reflective supervision to work through complex cases.
- Ensure managers have completed management training.
- Provide administrative support to enable social workers to focus on their caseload.
- Reverse the blame culture and give social workers more respect, with increased support.

And I would add on a general note that I am convinced that we must be more proactive in terms of presenting social work in a more positive light to the media, sharing newsworthy stories about members and their activities and achievements.

Trade Union, Advice & Representation Team

The skilful work undertaken by the A&R service is our USP but the demands on this service can be excessive at times - particularly as our membership grows. The service continues to provide quality advice and guidance and support for social workers from a skilled A&R team of social workers; however, please bear with us as we continue with further recruitment and staff support to meet the increase of membership and general demands.

GFTU

As a union member you can access the new training catalogue from the General Federation of Trade Unions with a terrific selection of courses available with the majority free.

You can find the direct link below, or alternatively on the GFTU web page www.gftu.org.uk

Link for Training Brochure: <https://user-tkb9xx.cld.bz/Education-for-Action>

SWU Executive

Finally, we will be recruiting next month for a new England Representative as Ellie Cubbage has completed her term of office. I am delighted that the SWU Executive continues to grow and we are almost at full strength. Please do consider being active with the union as part of the Executive, a SWU Union Contact, the Austerity Action Group, or in any other capacity. As always, I welcome the opportunity to discuss the development of your union.

John McGowan
General Secretary

j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk

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.

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

Carys Philips, New SWU Executive Member and Union Contact highlights why she is 'part of the union'

I have been a member of different Trade Unions all of my 34 year working life. As a professional, capable, social worker, leader and value-based practitioner; I have chosen to be a Union Contact for SWU and BASW and SWU Executive Member. This is because it is now, more than ever vitally important to be confident and articulate and feel supported to continue the challenge of social work through the complex, as well as 'difficult to articulate' experiences of practice and work place cultures. Challenging toxic cultures as I go.

Originating from a working class and educationally impoverished small community in the South Wales Valleys, my entry into Social Care began when I became a volunteer aged 13, shopping for older adults in the community and learning-disabled children and adults (Gateway Club).

This experience directed towards vocational roles and to seek a job-satisfaction. I left Wales age 18 to study to be Registered Nurse - Learning Disability in Bristol. This was at the end institutionalisation era yet in 1984 there was still a school and children's ward. Unsurprisingly, this was a hugely impactful work/life experience. I developed a thirst for knowledge and learning.

I undertook a BA Honour's in Community Care Studies (incorporating the Diploma in Social Work qualification) in 1997-2000.

My dissertation topic was the prevalence and

gendered nature of sexual abuse of women with learning disabilities and, including the responses for post abuse support.

I have led safeguarding in four distinct local authorities in Wales, as such I have been the project lead the SSIA funded research in 2011, developing progressive awareness training for Cardiff CC and Newport CC. I have been involved and lead on reviews of cases; including Serious Case Reviews and providing Management reviews. I self-funded a Masters in Social Care Law (Cardiff University Law School). I chose to undertake my dissertation on the safeguarding components of the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014, including comparisons across the four nations.

My 34 year employment chronology is

comprehensive as are practice challenges that I have encountered along the way. My integrity together with my already strong sense of justice and equality has enabled me to become analytical in all of my work and research. Practice informs my research topics - usually in the 'swampy lowland', deliberately immersing (myself) themselves in confusing but critically important situations.

I continue to feel enthused by work and study Dysgai i Gymraeg yn ddosbarth nos.



Carys Philips
SWU Executive Member

James Birchall, SWU President reports on SWU Fringe Event and Conference / AGM

A fantastic time was had by the SWU members who attended the SWU Fringe Event and Conference on 20th and 21st September. In a private room of the Victoria Pub, Birmingham with a bar and stage stood Peter Unwin, SWU member and vocalist of a rock band, with his guitar. On drums was the General Secretary of SWU, John McGowan. It was 7pm and we were about to be entertained by some great rock protest songs. There were burgers, bacon buns, pizzas, chicken wings with sweet chilli sauce and chips.



Pete Unwin, Senior Lecturer University of Worcester with SWU GS John McGowan as part of the Austerions entertaining Fringe guests

There was a Q and A session involving the panel members and the audience, this including lively discussion about the positive contribution that can be made to shaping the new regulator Social Work England as well as effective communication with political leaders. See #swuagm2018 for further discussion.

The music created a night club atmosphere. Prior to the music Dr Jermaine Ravalier, Senior Psychology Lecturer at Bath Spa University, gave us a talk about his updated research project into Working Conditions for Social Workers. The full results of his research will be launched soon. This was followed by a stimulating question and answer panel hosted by Anthony Dhadwal, Senior Press Officer for BASW. The Panel consisted of Ruth Allen, CEO of BASW; Lien Watts, AGS and Head of the Advice and Representation Service; Eddie O'Hara, Chair of the Birmingham branch of BASW; and Carol Reid, Trade Union Organiser for SWU. An absolutely excellent evening ... but more was to follow the next day.



Fringe Panellists with an evening hosted by BASW Senior Press Officer Anthony Dhadwal

Friday 21st September was the SWU 2018 Annual Conference. What a great event this was. At no cost to members lunch and refreshments were provided and were of a high standard. James Birchall, President of SWU welcomed everyone and John McGowan, General Secretary of SWU introduced the speakers. What brilliant speaker they were. Dr. Neil Thompson, who has held a number of Professorships, led a discussion with the members present on "What makes a good Trade Union." This was followed by an excellent presentation by Preet Gill MP on celebrating Social Work. Preet Gill is MP for Birmingham Edgbaston and a former Social Worker.

Dr Elizabeth Cotton, who is a writer and educator, gave a very interesting speech on "Surviving Social Work- the case for relationships at work." Lien Watts, AGS, presented the winners of the SWU Student Assignment Awards with cheques of £500 each. The quality of their assignments was outstanding. The Banner Theatre Company gave us a superb performance of some of their best songs, including "We Will Rise Like Lions." Great entertainment with very strong messages. This was followed after lunch by the SWU AGM. An extremely interesting and entertaining two days.

**James Birchall
President, SWU**



Dr Neil Thompson



Preet Gill MP



Dr Elizabeth Cotton



Banner Theatre Company Live Band

Jon Dudley, BASW Honorary Treasurer highlights the importance of BASW and SWU together

Can it really be 40 years since I joined Coventry City Council as a trainee social worker? On day one in September 1978 I joined the union, as nearly everybody did, with my subscription taken monthly from my modest wages. At the time the National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO) had over 700000 members. These were turbulent days and the first ever national strike undertaken by NALGO was of social workers. In Coventry I took to the streets with NALGO and many thousands of others in support of racial harmony, following the racially motivated murder of a young Sikh in the city. Meanwhile, in my professional life, I was the social worker for one of the murder suspects.

As well as nurturing my professional well being through membership of BASW, I have always maintained trade union membership over the years, most recently with the Social Workers Union. SWU has bucked the trend of trade union decline and continues to grow. Having personally benefited from the wise counsel of the Advice and Representation service, I would not want to be without access to a such unique resource. Times are tough now, with reductions in job security and a steady decline in working conditions for many social workers. SWU has worked closely with BASW to

highlight these issues and provides a vital link to the wider trade union movement through the General Federation of Trade Unions.

One of the most inspirational aspects of the 2017 Boot Out Austerity march from Birmingham to Liverpool, which I took part in, was the great support we received from social work students along our 100 mile route. Their enthusiasm and campaigning spirit is a great sign for the future of social work and social justice. There is much to be done and SWU can help us focus our activism. Over the last year we have marched alongside the People's Assembly in Manchester, London and Wales. We have joined the Grenfell protest on a tragedy which has highlighted some of the huge failings in social policy in Britain. We have rediscovered means of expression through song and poetry. We have also found fellowship with other trade unionists at the Tolpuddle Festival, an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices made by those who helped establish the trade union movement.

We are stronger together as professionals and trade unionists and that solidarity is needed now more than ever. Join us.

Jon Dudley
BASW Hon Officer



Jon Dudley
with Angi Naylor
from Austerity
Action Group

Keir Hardie

The latest in our series of articles highlighting those historical influences that have led us to our modern Trade Unions.



A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots

SWU Social Workers Union

Trade Union Rights

Keir Hardie and the link between the Labour Party and Trade Unions

Born illegitimate and in poverty in 1856 and working in the coal mines from the age of ten. Yet Keir Hardie was to become the main founder of the Labour Party. An active trade unionist, he was sacked by the pit owners and became a trade union official, living in Cumnock with his wife, Lillee, where he was active in a local church.

1888-92 were vital years for him. There was no Labour Party and, like many miners, he supported the Liberal Party. In 1887, he realised that wealthy Liberal MPs would never do much for working people and that the latter needed their own working class party. Backed by miners, he stood in a by-election for Labour in Mid-Lanark with his manifesto ending with, "I ask you therefore to return to parliament a man of yourselves, who, being poor can feel for the poor." With few resources, he was heavily defeated but acted with others of similar views to form the Scottish Labour Party. By this time he was a socialist and declared, "Socialism is not a system of economics I am a socialist because socialism means fraternity founded on justice and the fact that in order to secure this it is necessary to transfer land and capital from private to public ownership."

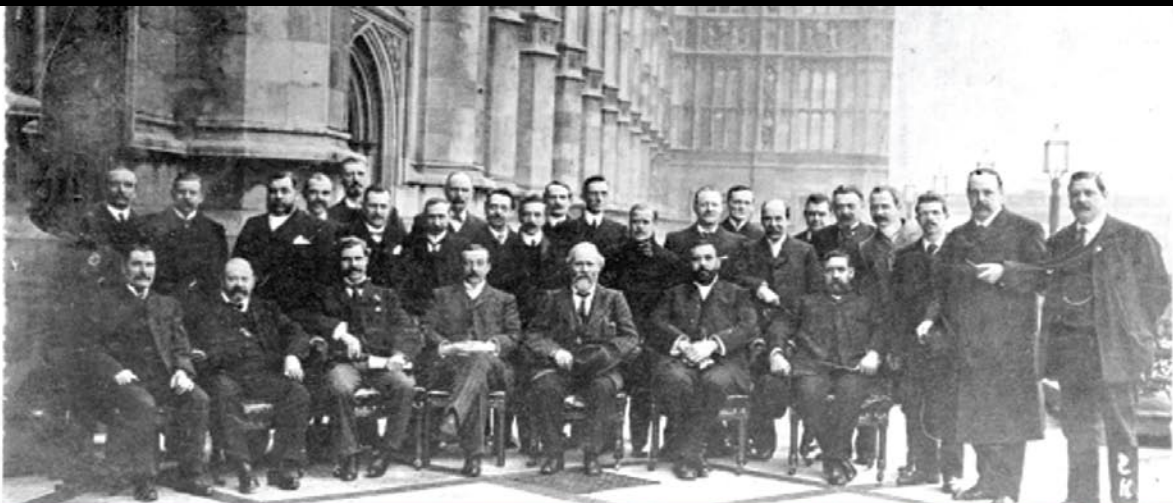
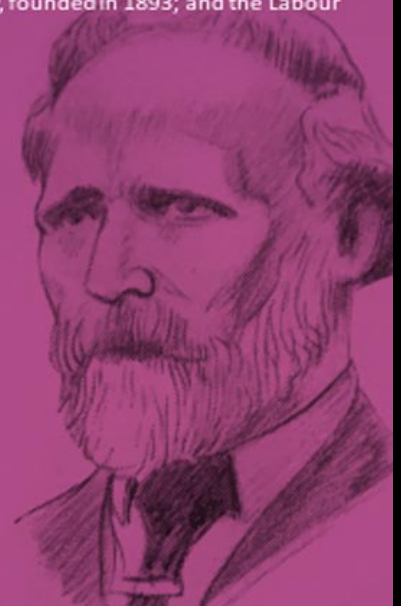
He should also be praised for the life he led. He put principles into individual practice. He lived modestly and never used politics to enrich himself. He wanted no honours. He spent little time with social elites and always kept in touch with ordinary people. We need his like today.

Keir Hardie and the Link between the Labour Party & the Unions

The unions became increasingly accustomed to working together through the annual Trade Union Congress, and to formulating collective bargaining agreements. However, the Taff Vale judgment, in 1901, (named after a railway company in dispute with the rail unions) threatened to seize trades union funds and assets if they promoted strikes or political activities.

This had the power to break the organised Labour Movement..

The union leaders saw that a political attack necessitated a political response, and the result was that they were far more prepared to fund their own candidates (through the Independent Labour Party, founded in 1893; and the Labour Party, founded in 1900).



The 1906 election saw a breakthrough as 29 Labour Members were returned to Parliament. These were all trade unionists and overwhelmingly from working class backgrounds. Keir Hardie, an ex-Scottish miner, became the party's first and, perhaps, most inspirational leader.

An opponent of imperialism and war, and a champion of women's rights, one of his comrades wrote of him that:

'He was the first man from the midst of the working class who completely understood them, completely sympathised with them, completely championed them. He was the first working man who, having entered Parliament, never deserted them, never turned his back on a single principle which he had professed, never drifted away from his class in thought, in feeling, or in faith.'

General Federation of Trade Unions



The General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) concentrates on servicing the needs of specialist unions. It does this by providing courses, creating international union links, parliamentary links, undertaking research for its affiliated Unions and providing ongoing support and assistance to all members with additional support for General Secretaries.

The GFTU has 30 affiliates with a membership of just over 250,000 and describes itself as the "federation for specialist unions." The GFTU offers a range of courses, from foundation to more advanced with the majority free for SWU members. The new training catalogue is soon to be launched with even more courses covering a range of topics.

John McGowan, SWU General Secretary sits on the GFTU National Executive Governing Body with a committee elected to meet regularly to manage the work of GFTU. SWU is a proud member of the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU). This section will provide an opportunity to meet some of the other unions affiliated to the GFTU. Meet the National Association Probation Officers with information provided by Yvonne Pattison, Napo National Co-Chair:

Who are NAPO and what do they do?

Napo is the Trade Union and professional association for staff working in probation and family court services, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We originated in 1912 so have a long and proud history of defending our member's rights, though I must admit to not having been around since our inception. Napo is supported by a General Secretary, an Assistant General Secretary, three full time officials and a support team at our headquarters at Clapham Junction. There is also an elected officers group consisting of Chair, three Probation Vice-Chairs, a Finance Vice-Chair and a Family Court Vice-Chair. This group are all practitioners and are seconded from their substantive roles.

As a trade union we have formal recognition agreements in place with employers and hence negotiate on the full range of terms and conditions.

We are part of the wider trade union movement and are affiliated to the TUC, the GFTU and pride ourselves on working closely and supporting other affiliate unions.

As a professional association we publish two internationally respected journals, one probation and one family court based, which are free to members, and we work tirelessly to protect our member's professional status which



Yvonne Pattison

is sadly being eroded by this government's privatisation agenda.

We are supporting members throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our members are a mixture of qualified probation officers, probation service officers, management grades and support staff, as well as members working in the family court system. Many of our members are social work trained, due to length of service, as well as all Probation Officers in Northern Ireland where the newer probation specific qualifications are not recognised. We are currently trying to support the introduction of a licence to practice to protect our member's professional status.

The past five years have been Napo's toughest with the biggest social experiment in the name of Transforming Rehabilitation, where 70% of probation services were sold off in contract package areas to the lowest bidders. This was something Napo fought long and hard to prevent but sadly in 2014 services were moved to a new National Probation Service and twenty-one Community Rehabilitation Companies. This affected services in England and Wales but the Probation Board of Northern Ireland remained unchanged.

The position currently is that the CRC contracts are failing with numerous Her Majesty's Inspector of Probation, HMIP, reports citing services needing improving and failure to adequately protect victims. Contracts are to end two years early in 2020, but already plans are being made to remarket with twenty-one contract package areas being reduced to ten ... Napo will continue to campaign against the locally split services and to bring all back to being unified locally and returned into public ownership. We are working alongside the Shadow Justice Team to look at how services could be brought back in house, with a high focus on public accountability and local autonomy.

Napo believe that all public services should remain in the public sector and should not be hived off to private profiteers, and this along with defending our member's terms and conditions will remain high on our agenda for the foreseeable future.

If you work within our services and want to find out more please visit our website at www.napo.org.uk

Yvonne Pattison
Napo National Co-Chair

Union Contacts Section

It was great to see and speak to so many like-minded Trade Unionists at this year's SWU AGM. I know many SWU members were inspired and enthused to become more involved in our Union, and the AGM was a roaring success for the Union Contact Scheme! Eight SWU members expressed a keen interest in becoming involved ... taking our current total to 43.

Our successful Induction Days are now becoming a regular event, and the next one will take place on Saturday 3rd November in Manchester (location to be confirmed but we'll ensure its central and accessible). The induction days are a great way for would-be Union Contacts to learn more about the role, meet the SWU team and, importantly, meet each other. We generally have a gathering of around ten to fifteen and the meetings include presentations, activities and information relating to trade union recruitment, campaigning and activism. Prior Union knowledge and experience is great but it's by no means essential - more important is a keenness to get active and involved.

Now is a great time to become an active member of Your Union. Limited places are still available for our next induction meeting and if you'd like to know more please contact me at carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk

Together we are Stronger

- Equality
- Democracy
- Empowerment
- Social Justice
- Awareness
- Solidarity
- Communication



EDUCATION FOR ACTION

Educating Trade Unionists for
Workplace and Social Change

Learning Opportunities 2018-2020

Find out more about learning
at the GFTU – www.gftu.org.uk