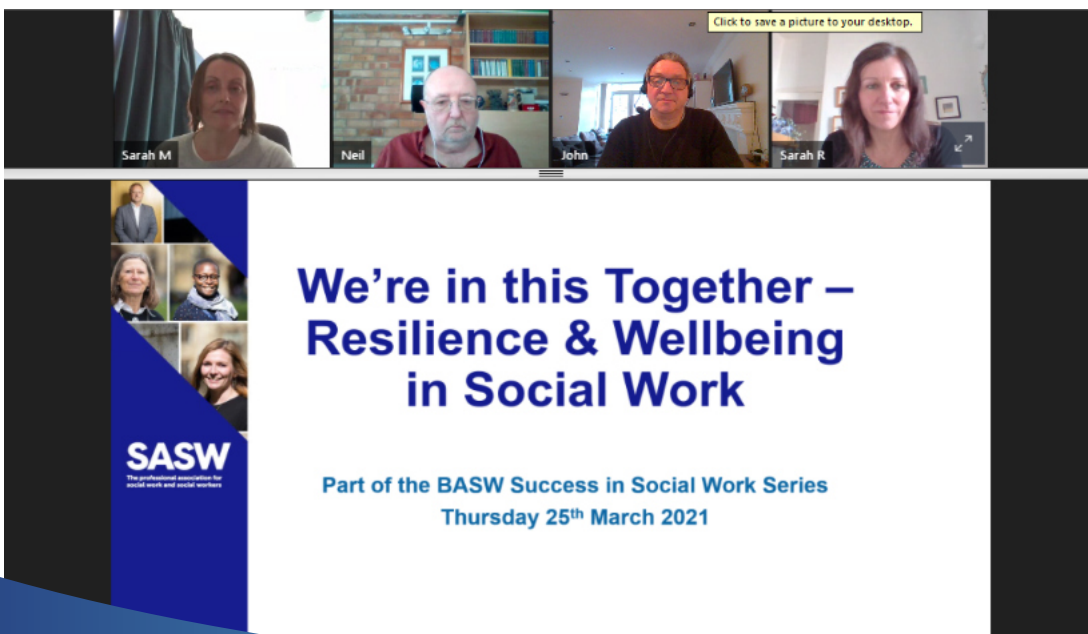


### A Promising Future

The future of social work looks promising considering activism and involvement in the trade union movement. Social activism doesn't have to be about disruption and rebellion. In the future, more social workers will discover meaningful ways to shape policy and influence politics and look for opportunities to make things happen.

Social workers need to have an opportunity to lend their voices to national conversations and raise awareness about policies that could improve the lives of struggling communities. Social workers' unique experiences provide them with an understanding of what is happening among disadvantaged populations, enabling them to identify, engage and find out personally what service users need and how to address those needs.

Fortunately, the appetite for joining a union has never been stronger and this is reflected in SWU's rising membership and it is hard to believe that we will hopefully be reaching 15,000 members during our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year. As we know, unions have a representative role in the workplace. In addition, a more collaborative approach with the British Association of Social Workers - our professional association - will work best for social workers in the long term. Certainly, conglomerate large unions who represent social workers traditionally only have about 3% members who are actual Social Workers so how can they truly represent the profession? My good friend Doug Nicholls General Secretary of the GFTU provided me with this interesting quote:

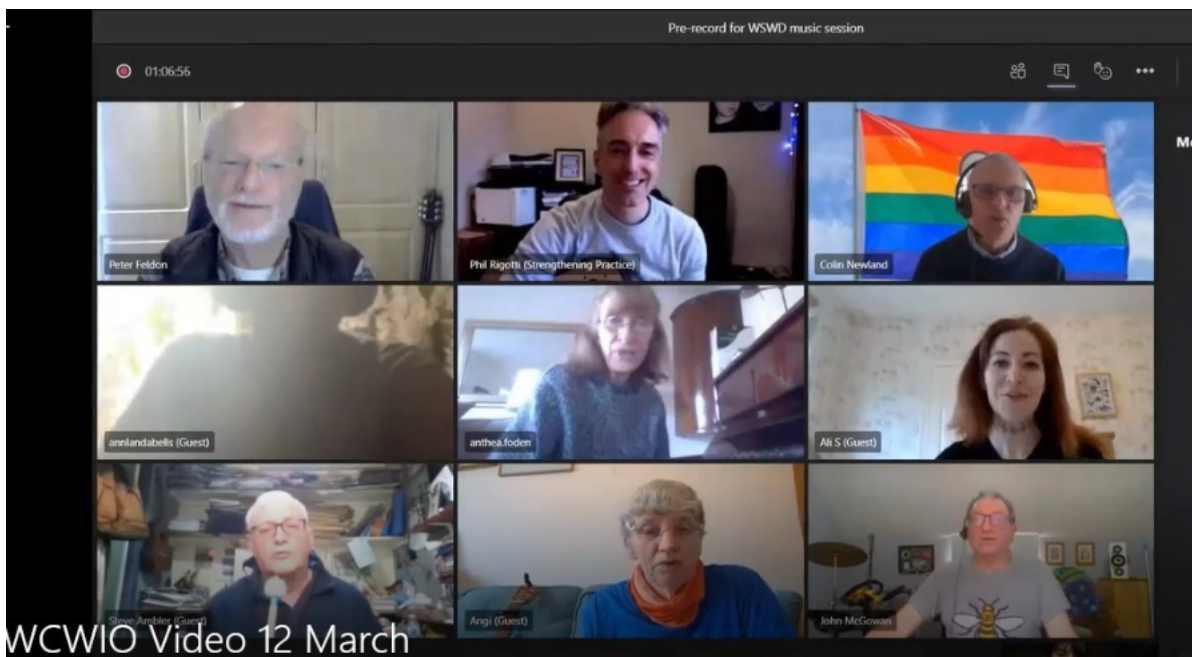


Scottish Association of Social Workers - WSWD Event

*“There has been about 5400 UK Trade Unions in our history and only 6 have been generalist unions. The clue is in the name TRADE union.”*

One of the most depressing things we’ve found regarding recent ‘Working Conditions’ research and campaigning is that social workers often feel there are problems at work but that there is nothing they can do about them - that it’s just work and stress linked to the role of being a social worker. This is completely unacceptable, and this mindset will change significantly over the coming years.

As the pandemic hopefully winds down and hospital admissions return to normal, social workers will continue to pick up the pieces related to the domestic violence and child abuse that spikes during this kind of crisis. About 40% of social workers are employed with government agencies as vital members of public safety-net programs. Social workers will work with those who have fallen into depression and substance abuse. They will facilitate grief groups and individual therapy for the multiple kinds of loss experienced such as jobs, partners, parents, graduation ceremonies, and more. They will help children readjust to school after an extended absence, in some cases spent in chaotic environments. They will help agencies rethink policies and practices, collect and analyse data, and conduct community assessments so that we are better prepared for the next time this happens. They will lead conversations about how agencies can provide trauma-informed care in the face of widespread community trauma. Wise agencies will have a social worker at their tables during strategic planning to help think through the disparate impacts of this pandemic, and how to do better at ensuring equitable outcomes for vulnerable populations.



Our colleagues at BASW have done a terrific job with World Social Work events over the month of March. I enjoyed being part of the SWU Webinar 31<sup>st</sup> March, the BASW England World Social Work - song event on 16<sup>th</sup> March and the Scottish Association of Social Workers World Social Work event on 25<sup>th</sup> March. SWU’s World Social Work Assignment Competition is still open, and we look forward to receiving more assignments this month.

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

# The duty of care

## Rebuild Britain without austerity says Doug Nicholls, General Secretary of General Federation of Trade Unions

We should not for one second allow the new talk of economic meltdown and belt-tightening to gain ground - it's human welfare that should be our priority, says GFTU general secretary **Doug Nicholls**.

The law is the strongest piece of legislation we have in that it gives workers power in the workplace to withdraw if the environment is unsafe. It was the product of over 170 years of science, campaigning and bitter struggle and tragic circumstances. It wasn't uncommon for workers to lie dead in the factory as the relentless grind of production whirred around them.

However, like all legislation, it requires organisation in the workplace to apply it. Only two years after it was passed, workers at Babcock and Wilcox were sacked for refusing to work with asbestos without protective clothing. They eventually won their case after six months of strike action.

Nevertheless, some historians have accounted for a staggering 84 per cent fewer fatalities at work than prior to the Act coming in. Yet still the figures are too high: 187 workers lost their lives in workplace accidents in Britain last year. Its enforcement was hampered by years of cuts to the Health and Safety Executive. The Health and Safety at Work Act is a social piece of legislation that puts a shared duty of care on employers, employees and the public. An understanding of its provisions have long formed the popular bedrock of most trade union education. Its significance is now very great indeed. At this time the provisions in our health and safety legislation for risk assessments and for the duty of care are critical and right in the foreground in every workplace. Many unions are intensifying their online learning offers to ensure that all workplaces and branches are fully conversant with the legislation.

The General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) too is offering a new online service called Emplaw, with an accompanying monthly newsletter and huge resource of model policies and procedures and case studies to support unions and employers to get the best understanding of rights and responsibilities and best practice.

At our recent executive meeting the unsung daily effectiveness of unions in protecting lives was hearteningly conveyed. Hospital consultants have a major negotiation on their hands for appropriate provision of PPE, realistic hours of work and support in dealing with so many bereavements of patients without their families present. Pharmacists have had a range of complex protective issues to deal with in community pharmacies and the NHS. Social workers, educational psychologists, probation and prison officers have faced an array of new dangers.

Unsurprisingly the new conditions that are generating more mental health issues are also creating a changed environment, challenging the greatly needed services of those who can help most, like psychotherapists and counsellors. We heard from many sectors of tragic fatalities of workers in the line of duty seeking to cure and protect others.

It was a very moving discussion and the scale of the sacrifice that the nation now recognises that so many groups of workers are making only deepened the anger directed towards those in the government, like the Chancellor, who are planning to make today's heroes tomorrow's victims in a new round of austerity.

As well as understanding and enforcing health and safety legislation, there is a need to return to proper economic understanding. They are already massaging language and media to talk of "recession," "slump," "depression." There is, they say, a need for more taxes and public-sector pay freezes and public sector cuts.



### GFTU National Executive

This is dangerous talk. It shows no duty of care to the nation and it will cost lives. We know the number of those already killed by austerity. It is only capitalist production that slumps - people supporting each other do not. The risks the nation faces if another round of government cuts comes are totally unacceptable and unnecessary.

As historian Adam Tooze recently quite rightly wrote about national debt, "We merely owe government debts to ourselves." We should be cancelling existing debts and investing in an intense period of economic growth to regenerate the wealth that will have been lost. No stock exchange trader, money lender or banker can generate this wealth.

Our parents rebuilt Britain after the second world war when the national debt was five times bigger than it is now. We should not for one second allow the new talk of economic meltdown and belt-tightening to gain ground. We have a duty of care to everyone in a new and obvious way. You cannot put a price on this.

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SWU is an active member of the General Federation of Trade Unions and our General Secretary sits on the National Executive. The GFTU is a friendly democratic organisation responsive to the needs of affiliated Specialist Trade Unions and represents 290,000 Trade Union members.

## 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/](http://www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/)

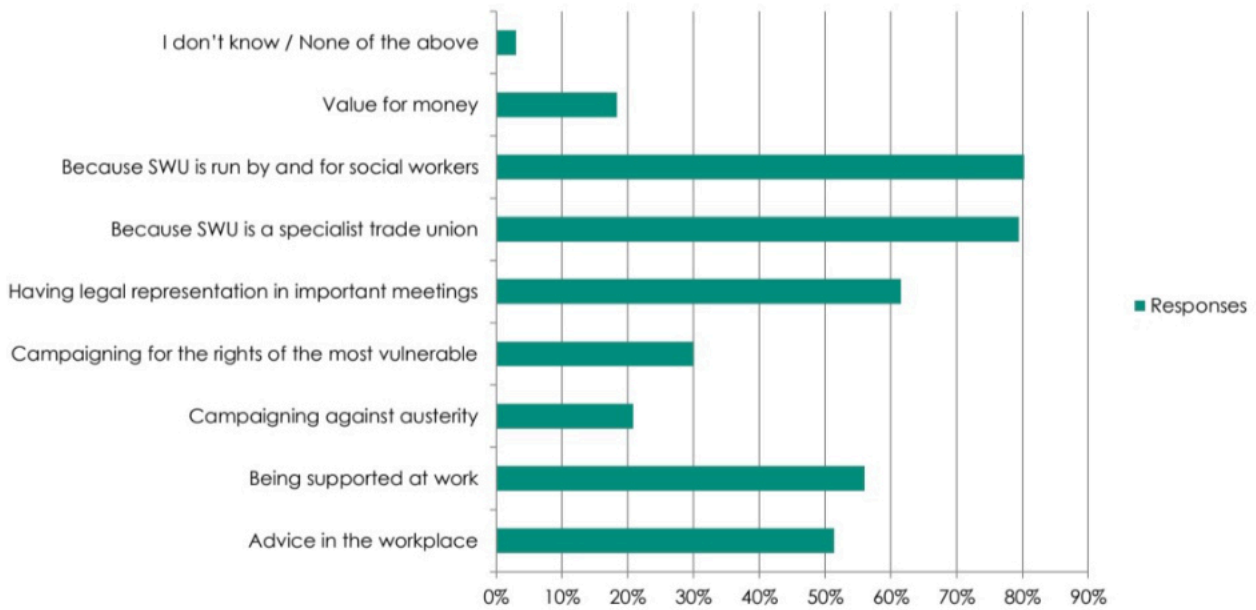
Internet: [www.swu-union.org.uk](http://www.swu-union.org.uk)

# Social Workers Union (SWU) Member Survey 2021

It was brilliant to hear from so many social workers about how passionate you are about your union. SWU conducted a Member Survey in January 2021 and 868 of our members responded within the 14-day survey window - some further comments:

## SWU membership

Why did you decide to become a member of the Social Workers Union? Select all that apply.



### Headlines

- Members are passionate about their union, the need for a union and they value the services offered
- Advice and representation is absolutely vital for social workers (92%)
- They believe SWU membership offers value for money

# Amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill

## Protecting adults and children from violence

SWU welcomes the initiative of a cross-party group of Peers attempt recently to introduce a new clause to the Bill that would provide greater protection to children from violence in the home by repealing the legal defence of 'reasonable punishment'.

The Social Workers Union fully supports the aims of the Domestic Abuse Bill. We believe that all people, be they adults or children, should be protected from violence in any setting, including their home.

### Current law on corporal punishment

Corporal punishment was banned in state schools in England in 1986, with a full ban in place in all schools in all parts of the UK by 2003. Restrictions on corporal punishment by a parent or caregiver were introduced in 2004, Section 58 of the Children Act. These mean that parents could be charged with common assault if a physical punishment causes bruises, grazes, scratches, minor swellings or cuts.

However, a defence of "reasonable punishment" is still available in the law and a parent or caregiver can smack or otherwise physically hurt a child within the law. Legal experts say that even when there is physical evidence of severe punishment it is almost impossible to prove that punishment is unreasonable. The legal test is whether the parents' intent was reasonable, rather than the actual harm caused, and it is difficult to obtain evidence given that the violence happens behind closed doors.

England's law is behind the times. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was signed by the UK in 1990, requires the prohibition of all corporal punishment in all settings. Article 19 of the UNCRC requires states to take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all

forms of physical or mental violence. The UN Committee on the Rights of the child has affirmed that this includes protection from all forms of corporal punishment.

Sixty countries already have full bans, including Sweden, Ireland, Spain, Germany and Portugal. Scotland and Wales have both recently legislated to ban the physical punishment of children, and the Northern Ireland Assembly is considering the same issue. This means that England's continued acceptance of the physical punishment of children is completely out of line with the good practice demonstrated within other parts of the UK and many other countries; the physical punishment of children has been outlawed in the majority of OECD countries.

### The case against physical punishment of children

Research shows that corporal punishment frequently leads to a lower quality of the parent and child relationship, poorer mental health in childhood and adulthood, higher levels of aggression and anti-social behaviour and an increased risk of being a victim of physical abuse. It can be a contributory factor to the overall levels of ongoing stress felt by children which is now being recognised as part of research into the impact of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) on children's later development.

The Social Workers Union strongly believes that smacking is harmful to a child's mental health. It models aggressive behaviour and communicates to children that it is acceptable to use violence as a means of expression. There are many other more effective ways of teaching children right from wrong than by hitting them. Force escalation is a key issue. Research shows that when force is used there are changes in brain activity that led to an escalation in the degree of force used. In a survey of parents, 2 in 5 admitted to using a different degree of force than intended.

## Where is the evidence?

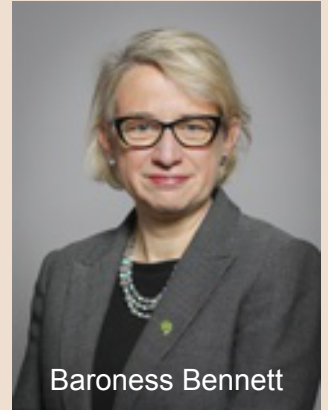
A recent major review of the evidence on physical punishment was carried out by Barnardo's, the NSPCC and other organisations. It concluded:

*"There is strong and consistent evidence from good-quality research that physical punishment is associated with increased childhood aggression and antisocial behaviour. The multitude of these studies, which include observational, gene-environment and experimental designs, and the consistency of their findings suggest that these links are indeed causal. Several studies showed that the relationship between physical punishment and problem behaviour is reciprocal: physical punishment exacerbates existing problem behaviour, leading to a vicious circle of cascading conflict. In other words, parents who are using physical punishment in response to perceived problem behaviour are likely to make it worse. Moreover, there is consistent evidence for a link between childhood physical punishment and adult aggression or antisocial behaviour, suggesting that the effects of increased aggression among children who were subjected to physical punishment carry over into adulthood."*

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Speaking about the Amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill to Baroness Bennett, John McGowan, General Secretary of Social Workers Union (SWU), said: *"Physical punishment has no place in the 21st century. The international evidence tells us that it can have serious impacts on children, and that it is not effective. SWU will be raising the issues of 'smacking' in partnership with the Association of Educational Psychologists as a motion at the forthcoming General Federation of Trade Unions Conference."*

Speaking at the recent Lords debate Baroness Bennett said, *"I particularly thank the Social Workers Union, which has published an article doing that just today."*



Baroness Bennett

*"I have a further ask of the Minister: will she agree to meet campaigners, fellow Peers and me to examine the evidence and discuss ways forward or, if it is more appropriate, to approach the relevant Minister on our behalf to arrange such a meeting? In the meantime, I beg to move."*



## Application Update

where any objections to our application are raised to the Executive Council.

Just to update members regarding the TUC application. The application for membership is now submitted with all our legal bits and pieces. The timelines are the following:

The TUC will now write out advising of our application and conduct a formal consultation with their current union affiliates who have a direct social care interest. Usually, TUC will give them 4-6 weeks to respond - to allow them to consult their own democratic bodies. As an estimate our application should go to the Executive Council in April (the scheduled date for that meeting is the 26th of April). This would be the meeting

Any recommendation from that April 26th meeting would then go to the General Council on the 28th of May. It will be a real sad day for social work if another union attempts to block our application !

# The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

A mammoth piece of legislation that includes major government proposals on crime and justice in England and Wales

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill had its second reading in the House of Commons on Monday and Tuesday (15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021) where it was voted through by 359 Conservative MPs. Opposition parties unanimously voted against the government, while the DUP - traditional allies of the Tories - abstained.

**SWU is concerned** that the Government's new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill risks criminalising the right to peaceful protest, and will increase discrimination and undermine democracy. Many of the hard-won rights that communities have fought for have come as a direct result of protest, and people should be able to stand up for what they believe in and hold the Government and organisations accountable for their actions. Under this legislation protesters can be arrested and charged on grounds so vague that they are almost impossible to refute. It appears to be that the only criterion they have to meet is whether, in their own judgement, the crime is necessary to deliver outcomes that are again defined in the loosest possible terms, including "to prevent disorder" or to maintain "economic wellbeing".

There is a clear direction of change here: the state is rapidly acquiring huge powers over citizens, and security agencies are being empowered to act as they please under the direction of a dreadful UK Government. The most damaging sections for the trade union movement fall within Part 3, which one MP said "would make a dictator blush" in its severe curtailing of the right to protest.

## What does it say?

The Bill is lengthy and covers a great range of issues, from strengthening the prevention and prosecution of child sexual offences, to taking a more

hard-line approach to dangerous driving, and new provisions on the sentencing, release and probation of criminals.

Many of the government's policies on these issues found broad support in Parliament but such was the outrage at new laws to criminalise "noisy" protests and prosecute people in the Gypsy and Roma communities that no MP outside of the Conservative Party felt able to vote in favour of it. Even former Prime Minister - Theresa May - publicly denounced the plans to curtail the rights to freedom of assembly and to speech.

## Ten-year sentences for being annoying

As well as amending the Public Order Act 1986 to tighten police control of protests, this section also introduces a new statutory offence of "intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance". People found guilty of this new offence, which includes causing "serious annoyance" or "serious inconvenience" - or even just causing the risk that said annoyance and inconvenience will take place - are liable to be imprisoned for up to ten years if convicted on indictment or 12 months if convicted summarily.

Elsewhere in the Bill, similarly high sentences are imposed on those causing damage to statues and memorials, presumably as a response to the toppling of slave trader Edward Colston's statue by Black Lives Matter protestors in Bristol. Under the proposed law, said protestors could be looking at ten years in prison. This - as many opposition MPs pointed out during the debate - is a longer sentence than that given for violent crimes against living people. Indeed, it is twice the length of the maximum sentence for assault causing actual bodily harm (five years).

As Labour MP, Peter Kyle, pointed out, an “angry mob” that throws a statue in a Bristol harbour “and then turns around and throws a woman or a child into water” would be penalised more harshly for the first offence than for the second.

### **Motivation**

It is not difficult to make the link between the contents of this Bill and recent protests by the Black Lives Matter movement and climate change activists, Extinction Rebellion. As many in Parliament pointed out, both of these movements were greeted with considerable disdain by Home Secretary, Priti Patel, who introduced this Bill. She has variously described these protestors as “dreadful”, “thugs”, “hooligans” and “criminals”.

### **Why such a rush?**

The Home Secretary has also been accused of trying to stifle scrutiny of such an expansive bill by rushing it through Parliament. The nearly 300 pages of legislation was published just one week before it was debated in the House of Commons.

### **Human rights violations**

Many MPs during the debate highlighted potential contraventions of the Bill with international human rights laws, chiefly Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights - the right to freedom of assembly and association.

## SWU sponsors Poems by and for Social Workers



The poems included in the weblink (below) came from a callout for work that reflected upon the many issues that social workers face in their professional lives. Some came from social workers themselves, others from people who have used social services. They all provide creative insight into the complex threads that make up our common life together. Social work is a profession that works with some of the most vulnerable and disenfranchised members of society, seeking to promote human rights,

challenging inequality and discrimination, and empowering individuals, families and communities. These poems showcase how those intentions and goals play out in the messiness of real human lives.

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poems-for-social-workers/>

The online event took place on 4<sup>th</sup> December and the organisers selected poetry that provides comfort, support, challenge, and inspiration to social workers in Scotland.

The organisers said: *"Poetry is a wonderful way to communicate complex issues, and to find space for deep reflection."*

John McGowan, SWU General Secretary, said: *"We were delighted to sponsor the Poetry for Social Work event and to celebrate the importance of social work and social workers."*

# Opening Our Soul onto a Computer Can Be Scary

Cath Nicol, Social Work Practice Teacher (and blogger)

During the first lock-down, I read a piece of research where a social work practice educator introduced using a blog with four students to write their reflective journal (Dunworth, M. and Scantlebury, N. (2006/7). The blog was initially intended to increase the confidence and competence of social work students in using web-based tools. At the end of the study, one student reported that blogging her reflective journal felt more intimate and effective than writing it in her notebook because 'books can be shut but opening your soul onto a computer can be scary'.

Reflective journaling is a key part of social work education intended to help develop emotional intelligence. This is an essential social work skill as before a worker can understand the power of emotion in the life of someone they are working with, it is necessary to discover the importance in their own experience (Shulman, 1999). Yet writing about our emotions and feelings is hard and being asked to do it as part of a university course can be even harder.

I sent the research article to a student, Izzy that I was working with and suggested we trial using a Google Blogger account as suggested in the research. The new learning environment was initially a challenge and I wanted to think of creative digital ways of providing support to Izzy in my role as her practice educator. Izzy was on a resumed 30-day placement which was suspended in March 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic. She completed this placement entirely online with group work programmes with young people.

I also wanted to share my own positive blogging experiences where I had written 100 blog posts over 100 days. I started this personal challenge because I was working on a project for a mindful leadership course. I planned to invite experienced social workers to share their practice wisdom in order to help students and newly qualified workers as they started out. I surprised myself with the depth of emotion that I shared via this private blog with several invited members and the key insights that I gained in several areas of my life.



I took the advice of Moira (aka my mum) that I could not ask others to be vulnerable and tell their story if I was not willing to do the same. I was inspired to write a blog by ethical entrepreneur, Seth Godin who writes a daily blog and has written over 7000 to date. He describes the clarity and magic which is created by this form of communication (he also says the first 1000 are the hardest to write!).

Izzy was immediately on board though was initially unsure about content and how academic it should be. I suggested that she to write what the hell she liked - to just go with whatever came into her head. My intention for this was to get her to connect with her emotions and feelings rather than her conditioned 'academic' learner self. Obviously, I first had to overcome my own conditioned learner self (which was screaming "you can't do that!").

And it worked. Izzy wrote to a reflective depth that she had never written before. She titled each blog and used images to highlight her feelings. Izzy explored her feelings of loss and grief at the impact of Covid-19, the disruption to her education, the potential impact on her career, her understandable anxiety that she wouldn't connect with the young people who use the service. Izzy also wrote with great humour and hope. A blog, "Is Resilience A Buzz Word?" reflected on her family's experiences of resilience during her dad's cancer journey, the importance of humour and critically reflected on resilience in social work education and practice. Izzy's blog on why she chose to become a social worker through her experiences of being a personal assistant to an individual with Cerebral Palsy was beautifully poignant. In short, she was feeling her feelings.

Izzy reported that the blog felt like her own space to reflect. I commented on each blog which provided an additional level of digital support and feedback. I also began suggesting ways that Izzy could introduce a more evidence-based critical approach to her reflection to develop her skills in this area. A later blog

demonstrated her growing skills in this area as she reflected critically and powerfully on the lack of LGBTQ awareness in social work education.

And I found that both of our responses via this medium were more authentic and more creative. It also took away the power dynamic of having to 'hand in' a piece of work, a factor also highlighted in the research paper. Parker (2004) reminds us that what we do as educators and how we interact with a student is probably the single most important thing that will influence the quality of a student's experience. I felt that this reflective tool deepened our relationship, offering an additional form of support and connection during the uncertainty of 2020. I also shared this additional digital reflective tool with other practice educators as we all navigated the new online learning environments  
#sharingthelearning #innovating #relationships.

#### References:

- Dunworth, Moira & Scantlebury, Non.** (2006).  *Blogging as a reflective journaling tool.* The Journal of Practice Teaching and Learning. 7. 6-20. 10.1921/19640.
- Parker, J.** (2004) *Effective practice learning in social work.* Exeter: Learning Matters, 2004
- Godin, S.** <https://seths.blog/>
- Shulman, L.** (1999) *The Skills of Helping: Individuals and Groups,* Illinois, Peacock in Tony Morrison, Emotional Intelligence, Emotion and Social Work: Context, Characteristics, Complications and Contribution, The British Journal of Social Work, Volume 37, Issue 2, February 2007, Pages 245–263, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcl016>



# Campaign Corner

## **Social Work England**

How Social Work England is battling fitness to practise caseloads in face of Covid, legacy and high referrals - continued pressure from SWU.

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/03/19/social-work-england-battling-fitness-practise-caseloads-face-covid-legacy-high-referrals/>

## **Amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill - protecting adults and children from violence**

SWU welcomes the initiative of a cross-party group of Peers to introduce a new clause to the Bill that would provide greater protection to children from violence in the home by repealing the legal defence of 'reasonable punishment.'

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/mar/swu-blog-amendment-domestic-abuse-bill-%E2%80%93-protecting-adults-and-children-violence>

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## SWU Recent Blogs (March)

### **Workforce stats**

SWU members speak up about the new workforce statistics for social work in England.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/mar/swu-blog-social-workers-speak-about-new-workforce-statistics-social-work-england>

### **UN Anti-Racism Day 2021**

SWU supports this international day of action to unite against racism, antisemitism, anti-Roma racism, Islamophobia, Sinophobia, and fascism.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/mar/swu-blog-un-anti-racism-day-2021>

### **Talk to SWU: workplace issues webinar**

All UK social workers are invited to attend this free online Talk to SWU session, regardless of membership.

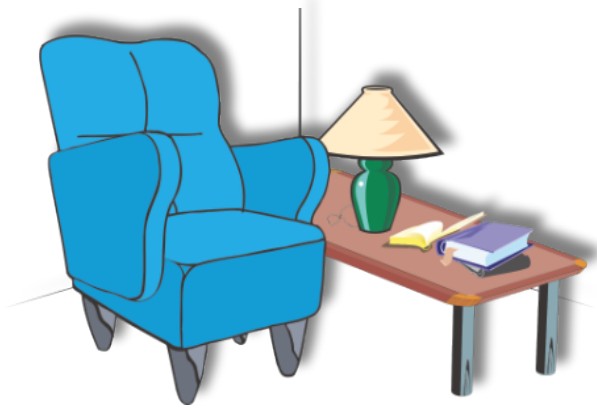
<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/mar/talk-swu-workplace-issues-webinar-31-march-2021>

### **SWU Blog: International Transgender Day of Visibility 2021**

The Social Workers Union stands in solidarity with trans and non-binary people.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/mar/swu-blog-international-transgender-day-visibility-2021>

## Chair's Corner



An update from  
SWU Chair,  
Carys Phillips

Writing this on the 23rd March #National Day of Reflection is significant, I have had to go into the workplace to do a follow-up safeguarding call. Everything has changed in respect of how we are able to interact and undertake our roles. My worry is that **nothing** will change. The mantra has already begun - “no other public sector employee is receiving a pay rise” and that 1 percent was “the most we think we can afford.”<sup>1</sup> The absence of Social Care in the budget yet again kicks any real considered reform in the long grass as another round of Austerity is apparently on the horizon. This is despite the sharp focus following Jo Whiley’s campaign that successfully altered the vaccination priority list at the end of February in her pleas for her learning-disabled sister Francis.

*People with learning disabilities are much more likely to die from coronavirus. And black and Asian people with learning disabilities are even more likely to die from coronavirus. This isn't because the virus targets people with learning disabilities. It is because society fails to do enough to support the health and wellbeing of those at the sharp end of structural and health inequalities.*<sup>2</sup>

Austerity has diminished welfare resources in the decade prior to COVID-19, arguably a political decision to both shrink and dismantle the state.<sup>3</sup> The UK government decision to impose cuts through reducing benefits as well as tightened eligibility criteria for accessing

Social Care was mirrored by a steep decline in those deemed eligible for Continuing Healthcare (CHC); despite the population increases and increasingly complex needs. Consideration of complex health needs is fundamental to the preventable and often predictable healthcare omissions and frequent awful outcomes. The current House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee short inquiry *How should Autistic people and people with learning disabilities be supported?*<sup>4</sup> has received evidence, again confirming - the system is broken and it needs to change. Next week is Autism Awareness week. Alexis Quinn a campaigner gave her evidence.

***“millions were spent on turning me into a wounded storyteller..... a system that just doesn't work and is not fit for purpose, if I might say so. There needs to be a huge culture and paradigm shift. For me, the main problem with the system is that it is sink or swim. If you cannot manage in the community, then to hospital you have to go. It is that polarised.”***<sup>5</sup>

This situation exists despite a lot of focused attention provided by the various reports and initiatives into the growing disparities for accessing healthcare such as, the Learning Disabilities Mortality Review Programme (LeDeR)<sup>6</sup>. A current review of the impact of COVID-19 on this population is ongoing and, unlike LeDeR, this will now include Wales’ learning disabled population.<sup>7</sup>

As a direct response to Austerity cuts across health and social care professionals here is growing acknowledgement 'moral distress' (a tendency to feel distressed when professionals are forced to act, because of institutional constraints or in way that was contrary to their beliefs or understanding; in the case of CHC you have two opposing understandings of what eligibility means!). SWU is working on all fronts to support Social Workers in practice and advocate, articulate and challenge the social policy decisions that so evidently have impacted the people we work alongside and endeavour to empower. SWU would like to highlight BASW's Homes not Hospitals <https://www.basw.co.uk/events/basw-england-webinar-homes-not-hospitals-campaign-launch-key-documents> being launched on the 10<sup>th</sup> May evidences the unique synthesis of the professionalism and support.

'Policy decisions need to consider the significant negative impact that austerity measures have had. Responsibility for people with Intellectual Disability needs to be properly 'shared' between health and social care to avoid people falling between them'.

**Be more! Join in! Speak up!** is a helpful reminder of Trade Union values and a clarion call for Social Workers to reach out. To be part of a collective, a campaign, a movement,



a catalyst, a Union of Social Workers; the Social Workers Union!

Contact: [carys.phillips@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:carys.phillips@swu-union.org.uk)  
Twitter: @CarysPhillips3

**Carys Phillips**  
**SWU Chair**

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1 Nadine Dorries in <https://www.politico.eu/article/nhs-pay-rise-british-government-pitiful/> accessed 23/3/2021

2 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/nov/19/covid-19-deaths-must-prompt-better-healthcare-learning-disabilities> (accessed 19/11/20)

3 D. Whitfield (2012), In Place of Austerity: Reconstructing the economy, state and public services

4 <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1026/treatment-of-autistic-people-and-individuals-with-learning-disabilities/> (13/2/2021)

5 Health and Social Care Committee Oral evidence: Treatment of autistic people and individuals with learning disabilities, HC 1195 Tuesday 9 February 2021 Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 9 February 2021. <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/1695/pdf/> (accessed 13/2/2021)

6 Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDeR) Programme 4 May 2018, University of Bristol Norah Fry Centre for Disability Studies NHS England

7 <https://www.ldw.org.uk/project/covid19-learning-disability-study/> (accessed 19/11/20)

The General Federation of Trade Unions has recently purchased Emplaw on-line, which is a comprehensive, professionally researched, up to date guide to UK employment law from the country's leading barristers and solicitors.

This article answers some of the most frequently asked questions about **'Your Rights at Work'**

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## **Key Points**

UK legislation provides for protection for employees in the context of their employment relationship, and, to a more limited extent, workers in the context of their work. This information gives an overview of rights during the recruitment process, during the employment relationship and on termination.

## **Rights during the recruitment process**

Certain rights of employees and worker will arise during the recruitment process. Candidates benefit from protection from discrimination and recruiters may need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates. Recruiters must also keep in mind that they may be processing personal data, or sensitive personal data, belonging to the candidate. This may trigger data protection obligations and could be disclosable to a candidate if they submit a valid subject access request under the data protection legislation. Under the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 these processing conditions have become far more stringent.

## **Right to a statement of the main terms and conditions of employment**

Employees are entitled to a statement of certain key terms of their employment contract within the first two months of starting their employment. From 6 April 2020 the right to a written statement will be extended to workers. The statement will also become a 'day one' right and will have to contain additional particulars such as notice, sickness and sick pay. The statement is not a contract of employment but may be evidential of the terms agreed.

## **Rights to time off**

Employees may be entitled to statutory and/or contractual time off work in certain circumstances:

### **Paid holiday entitlement**

Leave in relation to family/caring; and leave for civic responsibilities; and  
Sickness absence.

## **Disciplinary procedures**

Throughout the employee's employment, concerns in relation to the employee's conduct or performance should be dealt with through a fair and reasonable disciplinary procedure, which complies with the ACAS Code of Practice 2009 (though some employers have a separate capability procedure, this should also comply with the ACAS Code). An important consideration in any disciplinary process is that the employee may be entitled to be accompanied to certain meetings.

## **Grievance procedures**

Employees should be permitted to raise a grievance with their employer, and any grievance procedure should also follow ACAS Code. The right to be accompanied can also arise in a grievance context.

## **Whistleblowing**

Employees (and workers) are protected from detriment arising out of the fact they have 'blown the whistle'.

## **Guarantee payments and lay off**

In some circumstances, employers can consider shortening hours or laying off staff to deal with the fact there is a reduced workload, or to avoid redundancies. In such circumstances, employees may be entitled to a guarantee payment.

## **Protection from discrimination**

Throughout their employment or engagement, employees and workers are entitled not to be discriminated against on the basis of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, which are currently age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## **Rights in relation to working hours**

Legislation in the UK, which was previously pre-Brexit implemented from European law, governs the maximum hours that employees can be required to work.

## **Health and safety**

Employees and workers benefit from health and safety protection in their workplace. Please see Health & Safety at Work/key card for further details.

## **Changes to employment**

Making changes to an employee's terms and conditions of employment is not necessarily straightforward. It may amount to changing the terms of their contract of employment, and imposing changes without consent or consultation could lead to claims for constructive unfair dismissal.

Furthermore, the employee's terms and conditions are protected and preserved in certain circumstances where the identity of their employer changes, for example where the business of their employer is taken over by another Company.

## Termination of employment

After an employee has been employed for more than two years (and sooner in certain exceptional circumstances), they will be protected from unfair dismissal. In order to lawfully and fairly dismiss an employee, an employer must have one of the five fair reasons (as set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996) and follow a fair procedure. Employees have statutory and contractual entitlements to a period of notice on termination in most circumstances (with the exception of cases of gross negligence or misconduct in which the employee may be dismissed summarily (without notice) Contracts of Employment/notice.

## Rights following termination

The employee's rights will not necessarily end on the termination of employment.

# Corporal punishment in Singapore

[James Birchall, Honorary President of SWU, raises some issues regarding the brutal treatment in Singapore Prisons.](#)

A 31-year-old British subject and former Westminster School pupil was given 24 strokes of the cane in August 2020 at Changi prison, Singapore and he will not be released until at least 2038. Apparently judicially sanctioned beatings are a regular occurrence in Singapore prisons. I am appalled at the brutal and barbaric treatment of prisoners in Singapore.

Ye Ming Yuen was arrested for possession of 15 grams of methamphetamine (also known as crystal meth or ice). He was working as a DJ in Singapore. He was released on bail pending a court case but was rearrested for possession of 69 grams and 60 grams of cannabis. 500 grams of cannabis results in the death penalty in Singapore. On conviction he was sentenced to 20 years in prison plus 24 strokes of the cane. Jeremy Hunt and Priti Patel both intervened on his behalf, but without success.

Whilst in Changi prison he was taken from his cell without warning to a private room where he was told to strip naked. He was checked by a doctor to

ascertain if he was medically fit. Then he was strapped to a trestle. Bent over at 90 degrees he was then beaten with a 4-foot cane 24 times. The men who administered the beatings were, it was said, specially trained to inflict the maximum pain. Another man took over after every 6 strokes. His lawyer, Mr. Ravi, is suing the Singapore authorities. International human rights organisations have spoken out about this dreadful case. Corporal punishment, which is a form of torture, should have no place in the criminal justice system.

I felt that this is a serious issue that is worth bringing to the attention of our readers and share information about this case and corporal punishment in the prison system in Singapore.

**James Birchall**  
**Honorary President**  
**SWU**



# Social Workers Union and Bath Spa University begin new research on reflective supervision best practices

It is well known that one of the best support mechanisms for the psychological wellbeing of social workers is support from both peers and managers. Over the last three years SWU, BASW, and myself at Bath Spa University have been developing support mechanisms for social worker working conditions and psychological wellbeing.

Over that time, we have spoken to thousands of social workers and social work support staff about their psychological health and working conditions. We have consistently found that social workers have among the worst working conditions of any occupation in the UK. These working conditions subsequently lead to social workers wanting to leave the job, having poor levels of job satisfaction, and having high levels of presenteeism (which is where an individual continues to work despite being so ill that they should take time off) and sickness absence.

Support from colleagues, peers, and managers can act as a buffer to poor wellbeing by providing the resources that individuals need to cope at work. One support mechanism we consistently heard about from all the social workers that we spoke to is the use of reflective supervision. Across all of our studies with social workers, reflective supervision was described as one of the key approaches that can be used to support both social worker wellbeing and their practise. However, for many that we spoke to, supervision was often described as a tick box exercise designed to keep an eye on case progression rather than to support and help develop social workers.

Bath Spa University and SWU will now work together on a new piece of research which seeks to develop and make available best practise supervision for social workers and related professionals. Over the next three to six months we will develop a comprehensive approach to best practise supervision by

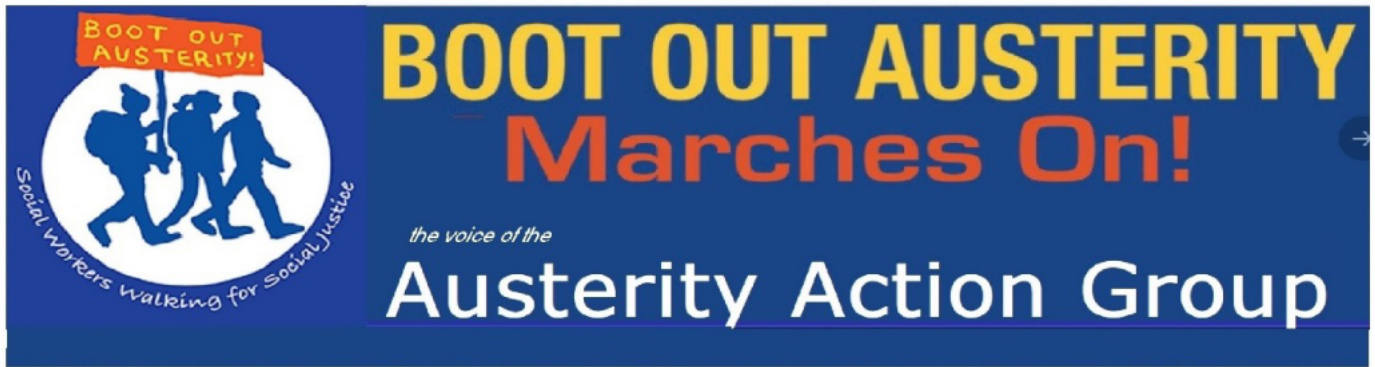
working closely with social workers from across the country as well as looking at the myriad of existing literature around reflective supervision.

John McGowan, General Secretary of SWU, said: *“Supervision is a key area in social work development. I am therefore delighted that SWU will be exploring the role of reflective supervision in social workers’ wellbeing with Dr Jermaine Ravalier and his team at Bath Spa University. Common feedback from members indicates that the majority of supervision is ad hoc and irregular. More significantly, feedback has highlighted that it often does not include a discussion linked to reflection, learning and development - it is often reduced to a process of case management. It is important to note that previous working conditions research has demonstrated that effective supervision is associated with higher job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation and retention.”*

Carys Phillips, SWU Chair highlighted: *“In social work we have a significant professional knowledge base, a wide and varied skills base and an important set of values. We also have a keen awareness of professional accountability as a legitimate expectation of our practice; therefore, management should be ensuring that employees are receiving appropriate support through supervision and that social workers understand what is meant by effective supervision. This model is essential, and even more significant since Covid-19 has changed our way of working’.*

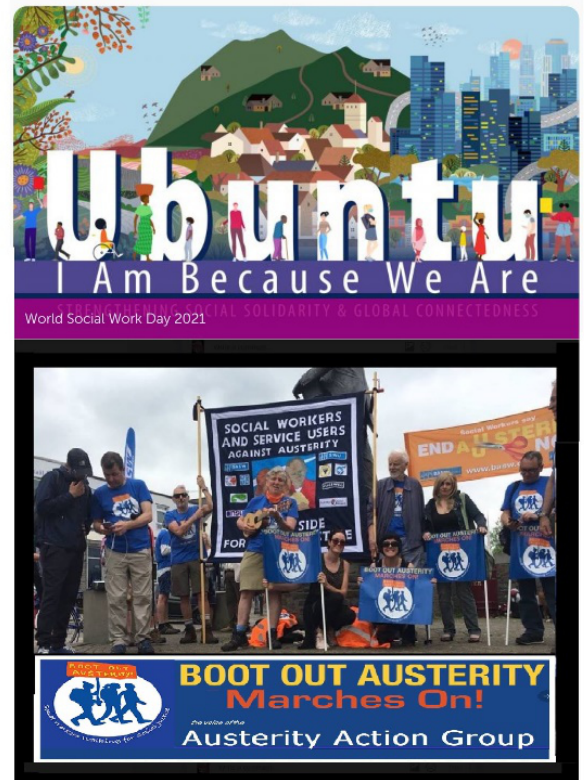
Dr Jermaine M Ravalier is a Reader in Work and Wellbeing (Psychology) at Bath Spa University. Jermaine is also a SWU Ambassador.  
Email: [j.ravalier@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:j.ravalier@bathspa.ac.uk)  
Twitter: @Ravalier





Austerity Action Group (AAG) is a key vehicle in SWU & BASW's ongoing campaign for a more socially just society

**#UBUNTU #WSWD21** World Social Work Day 2021 well what can I say, what an amazing Day, Week, Month. If you haven't had opportunity to listen to the numerous podcasts then head off to the BASW website where 'the watch again list' is awaiting you. Listen to Charles Mbugua former President of IFSW Africa, [https://youtu.be/wflhQ7Ji\\_2o](https://youtu.be/wflhQ7Ji_2o) as he explains that **UBUNTU** is more than a word. It describes a movement, a belonging and a concept which we all need to embrace as we continue in the shadow of the Covid pandemic and look forward with hope to the future. UBUNTU translates as 'I Am Because We Are' now there is a Union motto if ever there was one. It is also a word that expresses the work of the *Austerity Action Group* as we walk under the SWASUAA banner - *Social Worker and Service Users Against Austerity* - with our motto 'Side by Side for Social Justice.'



Whilst the pandemic has stopped us physically marching we have continued to seek ways to demonstrate our values. Most recently we have joined the **End Fuel Poverty Coalition** <http://www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk/>. Under the stewardship of *Campaign Collective* it brings together a number of groups who 'believe that everybody has the right to a warm, dry home that they can afford to heat and power'. Fuel Poverty of course is everybody's concern and sits in Maslow's basic Hierarchy of Needs AIR FOOD WATER SHELTER. Angi attended her first meeting earlier this month and will share details here and on social media pages.

### Fair Remuneration

It is always a pleasure to work alongside *Campaign Collective* <https://campaigncollective.org/> It was their skills that helped us produce the *Leave No Stone Unturned in the Fight Against Austerity Campaign Action Pack* and we will be working with them on our campaign towards fulfilling the motion passed at last year's SWU AGM:

*"to seek and define a clear policy to put to government regarding remuneration for involvement of service users and carers"*

Why are social workers and service users campaigning on this issue? :

- Inclusion of service users and carers on social work and other (person centred) training courses is mandatory in order to gain validation and ongoing approval (co-production).
- The current system of tax and benefits militate against full inclusion preventing many service users from contributing to the design of society. Meaningful involvement must have at its core a system of REMUNERATION which values people skills and experience.
- Challenging policies that are barrier to inclusion are a fundamental part of the role of the social worker.

## Ethical Giving & UK PALMHN Campaign

SWU has been actively involved in the UK PALMHN Campaign with a number of members visiting Palestine in the autumn of 2019. Most recently in March 2021 there was a 2 day campaign highlighting and questioning the notion of both ethical giving and ethical receiving of donations. In this case the machinery company based in the UK - JCB who have for many years given money to NSPCC. JCB however, also have a large contract with the Israel Government/Army and supply them with the classic digger JCB. Those diggers are used to destroy the homes and villages of Palestinians. <https://ukpalmhn.com/resources/nspcc-jcb-campaign/>



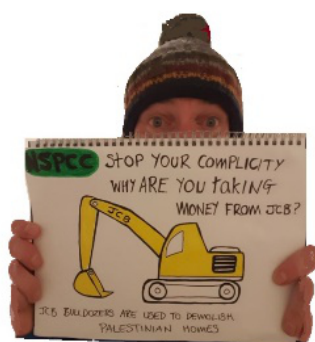
As part of the campaign Pete Unwin, The Poet Austeriate wrote two songs, highlighting the issues and which I have made into videos - do listen to them and share them with colleagues and take action by:

- Writing to NSPCC (model letter on the website)
- Consider whether any donations you make are to organisations whose direct or indirect actions endanger or exploiting others.



The JCB Song (Horror Version)  
<https://youtu.be/YW9K6nCsXi4>

<https://ukpalmhn.com/resources/nspcc-jcb-campaign/4-march-action/>



Suffer Little Children  
<https://youtu.be/XvXSwJ-nlh4>

**Angi Naylor**  
**SWU Executive Member and**  
**Co-Chair of Austerity Action Group**

# 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:

***"I want to make a difference"*** is a common phrase used by social workers and students as to why they joined the profession. ...So is choosing to become a social worker a political decision as well as an action and if so, are all social workers activists by default - discuss

All completed assignments will be judged by a Panel including representation from the Austerity Action Group, Carys Phillips - SWU Chair and Geraldine Nosowska - UK Chair BASW.

**The closing date for the competition is Friday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021.**

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](mailto: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.



I Am Because We Are  
STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SOLIDARITY & GLOBAL CONNECTEDNESS

WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY  
16TH MARCH 2021  
#WSWD2021

**SWU** Social Workers Union





# Social Workers' Benevolent Trust

Wellesley House, 37 Waterloo Street, Birmingham. B2 5PP

email: [swbt@basw.co.uk](mailto:swbt@basw.co.uk) [www.swbt.org](http://www.swbt.org)

Date: 22 March 2021  
Ref: SWBT/Trustee Recruit

## Social Workers' Benevolent Trust

### We are currently seeking people to join our Board of Trustees

The Social Workers' Benevolent Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees who are all volunteers. The trustees provide leadership to the charity and are responsible for its financial and legal governance.

At present our board has a balance of women and men; however, it largely reflects white, European culture. We are keen to develop the board in order that it can more fully reflect the UK social work community. Therefore we are particularly keen to hear from social workers from the breadth of communities, including the BAME communities, that come together in our social work family.

#### About us

SWBT was established to provide support to social workers facing hardship. We do this by providing grants to qualified social workers who are facing hardship themselves or for their dependents. We also aim to educate the public on the hardships faced by social workers in their own lives.

Meetings are held 6 times a year online to allocate grants, plus 2 face to face business meetings in Birmingham when possible. Trustees have online access to the grant applications prior to the meetings and are expected to make comments on them to ease the decision making at the meeting. Travel expenses are paid for face to face meetings.

#### About you

Do you have compassion for your fellow social workers? Do you want to understand better the personal challenges faced by social workers across the UK as they also try to do their jobs?

Being a trustee can provide you with new opportunities to develop your own knowledge and skills, which can enhance your career, while also helping your colleagues in the profession. Do you think you can support and reflect the values and aims of the Trust?

#### About being a trustee

Being a trustee carries legal responsibilities which you should understand taking up the position. Trustees are not expected to be experts in every area, even across the whole board, but they are expected to take due care in their decision making.

The Reach Volunteering website has a guide, "Become a Trustee", which is a good place to start. You may also want to read the guidance given by The Charity Commission for more information.

#### Interested?

For more information, please contact one of our co-chairs:  
Susan.Roxburgh [@swbt.org](mailto:@swbt.org) and Bridget.Robb [@swbt.org](mailto:@swbt.org)

An application form can be obtained from our website at [www.swbt.org](http://www.swbt.org)

#### Deadline for applications: 6 June 2021

Charity number: 262889

The Social Workers' Benevolent Trust was established in 1971 on the initiative of the British Association of Social Workers

And is registered with the Charity Commission.

Charity No: 262889

Only **£25** a year with your present BASW membership (**£10** a year for students)

Every year, the Social Workers Union skilled TU Officers help Social Workers with a range of different situations, from the small and easily resolved, to more significant and prolonged conduct issues. Disciplinary and grievance procedures, including representation at internal hearings – this is only guaranteed if you are a SWU member.

**Remember – investigations into professional social work practice and allegations of misconduct – where this is done by your employer, representation is only guaranteed\* if you are a member of SWU.**

SWU sits on the National Executive of the General Federation of Trade Unions. Have a look at the access you get as a member to GFTU training and development. SWU is one of the fastest growing unions in the UK – be part of the progress.

Being part of a strong growing trade union is a vital and recognised way of successfully being part of the Trade Union movement. Help us campaign for better working conditions, pay and professional recognition. If you want to join SWU or learn more about becoming actively involved as a Union Contact get in touch: carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk or email SWU Admin: joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk



### Belong to a Social Work union that:

- is lobbying MPs and Peers to improve working conditions for social workers.
- partners with organisations to support good working conditions and with opportunities to be active as a SWU Union Contact.
- campaigns to change legislation bills.
- collaborates with external unions and continue to be active through membership of General Federation of Trade Unions and ongoing union campaigns.
- funds the Austerity Action Group and opportunities to get involved.

### As a SWU member you get:

- Full guaranteed employment representation\*
- Free advice and support from A&R and Union Contacts
- Free financial health check from Lighthouse Group
- 10% off Morrish Solicitors
- General Federation of Trade Unions free training courses
- Discounted training from Avenue Professional Group (Dr Neil Thompson)
- Opportunity to be active as part of the trade union movement
- Monthly Newsletter

*\*Terms and conditions apply regarding new members and levels of representation*

**Please check your membership to continue or opt in to being a SWU Member through BASW membership**

SWU can be found on the following:



[www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/](http://www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/)



[www.swu-union.org.uk](http://www.swu-union.org.uk)



[SWU\\_UK](https://twitter.com/SWU_UK)