



SWU Social Workers Union

The specialist union for social workers

e-BULLETIN | DECEMBER 2020 / JANUARY 2021

Thank you social workers for working 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year

As another year comes to an end, I would personally like to thank the engine of SWU which is the hard working, knowledgeable and skilful A&R Team who are by far the reason a lot of members join SWU and BASW. No other organisation or union can guarantee that you will have a social worker providing advice and, if needed, representation at the highest level. More recently, I am hearing from members that they have been misadvised by other employees and another large union that SWU is not able to represent them in work related matters. If you hear of this in your workplace could you please get in touch as this is far from the truth and we would like to be able to correct any inaccurate information about our services. We are obviously doing something right as we have now reached the 14,000-member milestone which is another great achievement - please spread the word about the only specialist union for social workers.

Our unique selling point remains with the following: SWU is the only UK trade union for, and run by, qualified and registered social workers. Therefore, SWU is the only trade union to offer representation by a qualified social worker who understands the complexities of the profession.

With officers working across the UK, we

provide representation at internal hearings for disciplinary and grievance procedures, and employer investigations into practice and misconduct allegations.

I enjoyed being part of the Working Conditions webinar (with participants photographed below) and this can be watched again on this link:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/creating-better-working-conditions-social-work-webinar>



The Union continues to ask that the respective governments of the UK and social work employers take immediate steps for well-being support and a social work and social care recruitment drive as the COVID 19 pandemic continues. We also remain active with the implementation of the *Working Conditions Toolkit*. Any long-term approaches to changed attitudes in the workplace should introduce measures set out in a “working conditions toolkit”, developed by SWU, Bath Spa University and the British Association of Social Workers:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/social-worker-wellbeing-and-working-conditions>

The toolkit is built on the principle that improvement in organisations - for staff and for the people we serve - often needs everyone involved to work together, and that social workers in practice can be empowered to shape change and use their professional agency and power, individually and collectively. For social workers in practice, it should help you be more informed and empowered to look after yourself better at work; recognise when you need support and how to access it; develop knowledge and skills to influence your organisation; and know your rights and what you should expect from your employer.

Knowing your rights at work and the evidence of what constitutes a healthy workplace, understanding what is most likely to work in self-care and knowing more about how managers and employers can support you better, are all important and can make a big difference. The toolkit should help you feel more confident to make your workplace needs known to local and national authorities and to act to make changes yourself where you can.

Have a great festive break and somewhere there will be Social Workers working hard over the festive period providing a side to Social



Work that the public rarely sees or media reporting on the great work we do 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year.

John McGowan
General Secretary

j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk

*SWU would like send
all our members warm wishes
for the winter season*



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

Christmas Message from the Honorary President

I wish all members of SWU, their families and friends a very enjoyable Christmas and New Year. It will be a strange Christmas for all of us. I hope the New Year will bring us the reality of an effective vaccine so that we can have a more normal life. However I do not think we will return to the normal we had previously experienced. The economy will have been severely damaged, many people will be out of work, many businesses will have been closed, never to re-open. There will be the psychological damage to individuals, the communities and society as a whole. The demand on social workers will have never been greater. I have enormous admiration for those social workers who have continued to work during such difficult times

I had the honour of being appointed Honorary President by the SWU Executive in October for a period of 12 months. This is predominantly an advisory and ceremonial position. I had previously been President for a total of five and half years. The role of President was changed to that of Chair. I stepped down as President at the AGM on 25th September 2020. Carys Philips was elected Chair and I send her my congratulations. The Honorary President role is a new one.

As we approach the New Year we also approach the tenth anniversary of SWU. There will be much to celebrate and a time to reflect on our history. SWU has been an incredible success and I have had the pleasure of being involved in this from the very beginning. John McGowan, Gerry Madden and I am founder members of SWU. We were on the BASW Council when SWU was first discussed and when it was formed in June 2011. SWU has developed enormously since those early days. We now have 14,000 members. We have a group of trained Union Contacts and a very dedicated Executive. I have taken the lead in taking the Social Work Working Conditions Research, undertaken by Dr. Jermaine Ravalier to Parliament. As a result we have had a debate in the House of Lords instigated by Lord Roy Kennedy and a question asked about social workers working during Covid-19 by Lord



Frank Judd whom I had met in the House of Lords in 2019. I was working on trying to get a debate in the House of Commons on the Working Conditions Research, but then the pandemic struck in March. I have attended four IFSW Conferences in Edinburgh, Iceland, Dublin and Vienna. In Vienna I did a presentation on working conditions in a workshop which was well received.

As mentioned before, I served as President of SWU, now called Chair of SWU, for a total of five and a half years. I served from September 2012 to September 2016 and again from March 2017 until September 2020. It has been a fascinating and enjoyable experience. I have worked with three General Secretaries, Hilton Dawson, who was instrumental in the formation of SWU, Bridgett Robb, a steady pair of hands during a tumultuous time for SWU, and John McGowan who has been instrumental in developing and expanding SWU to what it is today. It has been a great pleasure working with all three.

Without doubt it was the first two years that I served as President that were the most difficult as we fought to establish SWU as an independent Trade Union closely affiliated to BASW. However during my entire time as President I had the pleasure of working with

a very dedicated, skilled and hard working Executive. The reason BASW Council decided to create SWU was because a growing number of employers, including some local authorities, were refusing to recognise the BASW Advice and Representation Service for representing members in the work place. Only Trade Unions have a legal right to represent their members and is one of the reasons for us encouraging BASW members to join SWU.

You may, or may not, be interested to learn that I am also Vice-Chair of the Turkish Van Cat Club. The Turkish Van Cat is a rare, ancient and very beautiful breed of cat that originates in the remote mountains surrounding Lake Van in Eastern Turkey, near the border with Iran and Iraq. Sometimes known as the "swimming cat", this cat enjoys swimming in the cooling waters of the lake. Temperatures in this area range from 40 degrees in the summer to minus 30 degrees centigrade in the winter. I thought this information might appeal to the cat enthusiasts amongst our members!

In conclusion I feel we are in a safer world with Donald Trump leaving the White House on 20th January. Very best wishes to you all for the New Year. Have a well deserved break over Christmas if you can. Keep safe and take care.

James Birchall
Honorary President SWU



Social Workers Union: Member Research

Coming soon - SWU Member Survey.
Please do complete this once it arrives in your inbox.

Research Objectives

- 1) To understand current views of the membership of Social Workers Union about the value of union membership
- 2) To identify ways the Union could better communicate with members and explain its offer to the wider social work community

The questionnaire will be hosted on Campaign Collective's Survey Monkey platform and results will be anonymous and presented to the Social Workers Union in summary form only.

The questions are structured around four core areas:

- Why join a trade union
- Why join SWU specifically (as opposed to other unions)
- Understanding of what SWU does
- What members need from SWU

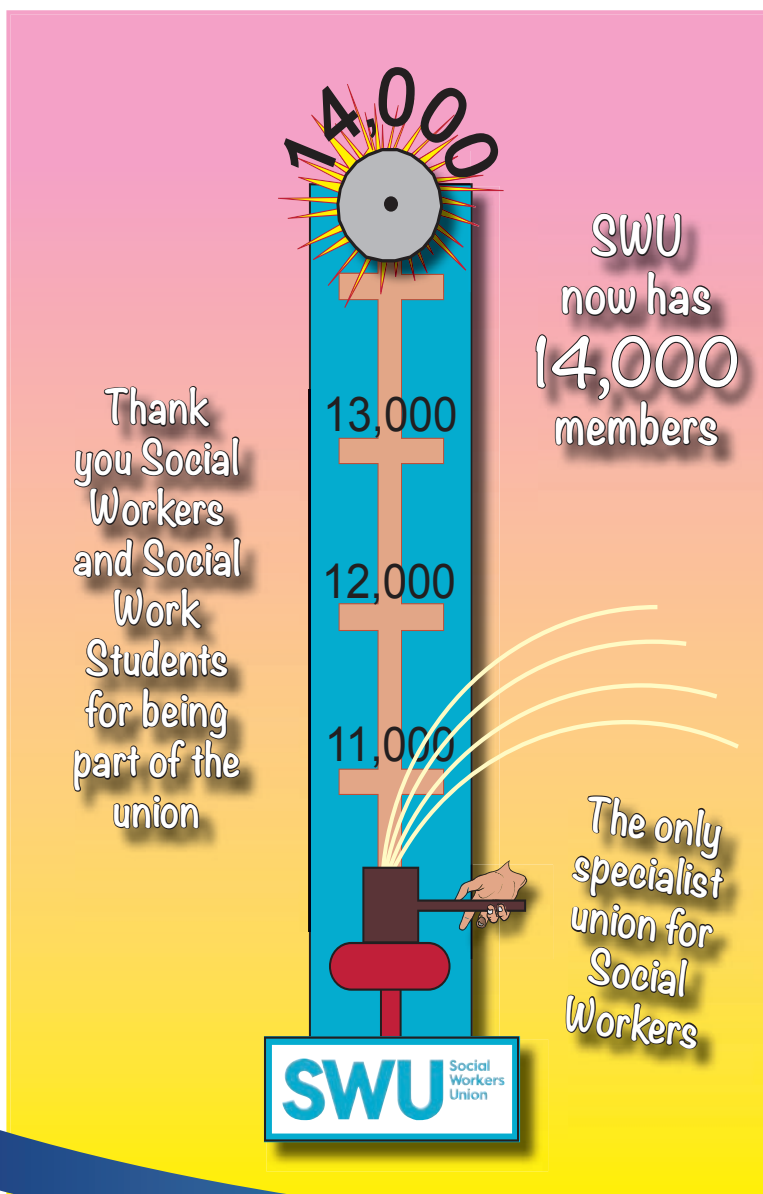
Social Workers Union (SWU) celebrates 14,000-member milestone

Felicity Brown is the lucky 14,000 member and will be receiving a gift from SWU to celebrate such an incredible milestone.

SWU, the UK's only specialist union for social workers, has reached a milestone 14,000 members. Felicity Brown is the lucky 14,000th member and will be receiving a gift from SWU to celebrate such an incredible milestone.

Commenting on her motivations for joining SWU, Felicity said: *"I joined BASW and SWU as I have recently started my Social Work Apprenticeship at the University of Gloucester. As a mum of two young girls I feel privileged to be able to take this route into social work as it gives me more time to spend with them!"*

"I'm particularly interested in reading the journal and magazine articles and hopefully linking them to my learning! Training as a social worker seems like a really big thing to embark on and having the support of the SWU gives me peace of mind. Joining a union has always been on my 'to-do' list - and now it is finally done I am happy to be the 14,000th SWU member!"



John McGowan, General Secretary of SWU, said: *"Membership continues to rise, showing that we are moving in the right direction and still one of the fastest growing unions in the UK. When I was first elected as the General Secretary September 2016 membership was just over 9000 and I would love to see us break through the 15,000-member mark."*

"Interest in the union has been incredible and the skilled work of the Advice and Representation team and the sense of belonging to a specialist trade union cannot be overlooked. Although we are separate in our management, I am delighted to have such a close working relationship with BASW."

Commenting on SWU achieving 14,000 members, **Geraldine Nosowska, BASW Chair**, said: *"I am delighted that more and more social workers are accessing specialist social work trade union support from the Social Workers' Union."*

"SWU and BASW will continue to work closely together to meet social workers' needs, and to campaign for better working conditions for all who do this vital work."

Union Contact Scheme - Online Inductions

As you'll know if you're already one of our SWU Union Contacts, we enjoy the opportunity of meeting you face to face at our successful Induction Days in Manchester. However, as we've had to temporarily cancel these, we have devised an online alternative to enable our keen members to complete the induction and become Union Contacts in their workplaces or universities.

Many of our prospective Union Contacts will have already received details of how to complete the workbook and video links. We appreciate you have work and family commitments so have requested that you complete it in your own time, but as a guideline I would suggest within 2 to 4 weeks of receipt. (Having said that, I've already received some completed workbooks, so well done to those who've completed the training - you'll be receiving further details very soon!)

The course comprises of a workbook for your own records and to complete the set exercises, and you'll forward an online copy of this to me once completed. You will also work through six videos which add up to just under an hour and a half of watching time and which include presentations from John McGowan, SWU General Secretary, Neil Thompson, SWU Ambassador and social work author, and myself.

Following receipt of your completed workbook you'll receive an Agreement to sign and return and following that you'll receive an I.D. badge and all relevant paperwork and merchandise to successfully undertake the role of SWU Union Contact in your workplace or university. You will also receive a Certificate confirming completion of the training, which acknowledges 5 hours of CPD.

All SWU Union Contacts receive ongoing updates, guidance and support and it's great to be able to report that we've already received a positive response from SWU members wishing to undertake the online induction training.

If you are interested in becoming a SWU Union Contact in your workplace (or university if you are a social work student) please drop me a line for further details.

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



Talk to SWU: work place issues webinar

Wednesday 16 December 2020 - 6-7pm



A chance to talk with the Social Workers' Union about work place issues with a panel of Advice of Representation Officers and legal representation.

Have your terms and conditions been changed/alterred?

Have you been facing re-organisation?

Are you experiencing Bullying and Harassment?

This is your chance to ask your questions (questions are sent within GoToWebinar anonymously and no identifiable information is kept on any questions asked during the session).

Free Webinar / CPD 1 hour

www.basw.co.uk/events/talk-swu-work-place-issues-webinar

The World of Work is Changing

SWU Ambassador Dr Neil Thompson shares some thoughts about the present world of work



Traditional ideas about the world of work have been under challenge for quite some time now. For example, the 'gig economy' (as it has come to be known) has seen a massive rise in people on short-term contracts and/or offering their services on a self-employed basis, rather than as a paid employee. The proliferation of independent social work opportunities is just one example of this. Another would be the way the number of permanent research posts in universities has been declining and the number of people on project-specific short-term contracts growing in equal number, more or less.

The days of a 'job for life' have largely become a thing of the past. For some this is an exciting development - the idea that working life can be a series of new projects, rather than getting stuck in a 'same shit, different day' rut. I personally have flourished as my own boss in a self-employed capacity for over 20 years, but I have also seen people lead a life of misery because they pine for the security of a regular payday.

Indeed, this new world of work can bring huge insecurities that can have wide-ranging consequences, both within and beyond the workplace. It can also open the

door to a much wider range of opportunities for discrimination. For example, if someone from a minority background is appointed to a conventional post on a permanent basis, they will have got over the hurdle of the potential for discrimination in the selection procedure that one time. However, if that person is applying for a series of short-term contracts or projects, the potential for discrimination arises every time. An unscrupulous discriminatory manager or commissioner has considerable (and more frequent) scope for making decisions on the basis of prejudice and bigotry.

A recent further development in this constantly evolving world of work is the shift towards remote, home-based working. What we are now seeing is organisations recognising from their pandemic-enforced use of home-based working that there are many advantages to it and they are therefore now seeking to impose this way of working on significant tranches of their workforce. This tendency had already been visible in social work with the shift towards so-called 'agile' working (promptly nicknamed 'fragile' working, as that is how it makes so many people feel without the comfort of their own small piece of familiar territory where they can put their personal effects to make the space their own). Like the gig economy, it is a mixed blessing. Remote working can bring various benefits (flexibility, for example), but also significant challenges (such as maintaining a sense of teamwork and camaraderie when working in a largely dispersed way).

Of course, remote working will not suit every employee due to differences in home circumstances (space, facilities, distractions, access to high-speed broadband and so on), in personality (introversion / extroversion) and in type of work. There will also be various balances to consider - for example, for some people with a short commute, any hassles associated with home working may seem more trouble than they are worth, whereas someone with a long commute is likely to be more forgiving of any such hassles if the reward for doing so is making considerable savings of time, energy and money by not having to commute.

How to Survive in Social Work

by
Neil Thompson and John McGowan

*with a Foreword by Ruth Allen, an Afterword by David Jones
and Illustrations by Harry Venning*

When the general secretary of a trade union and an author with a background in workplace well-being come together and they are both highly critical of austerity and the neoliberal ideology that gave rise to it, then it is perhaps inevitable that the book they decide to co-write will be on surviving in the modern workplace. When you add to this the fact that they are both highly experienced social work professionals with a strong commitment to its value, it is no surprise that the title of the book should be *How to Survive in Social Work*.

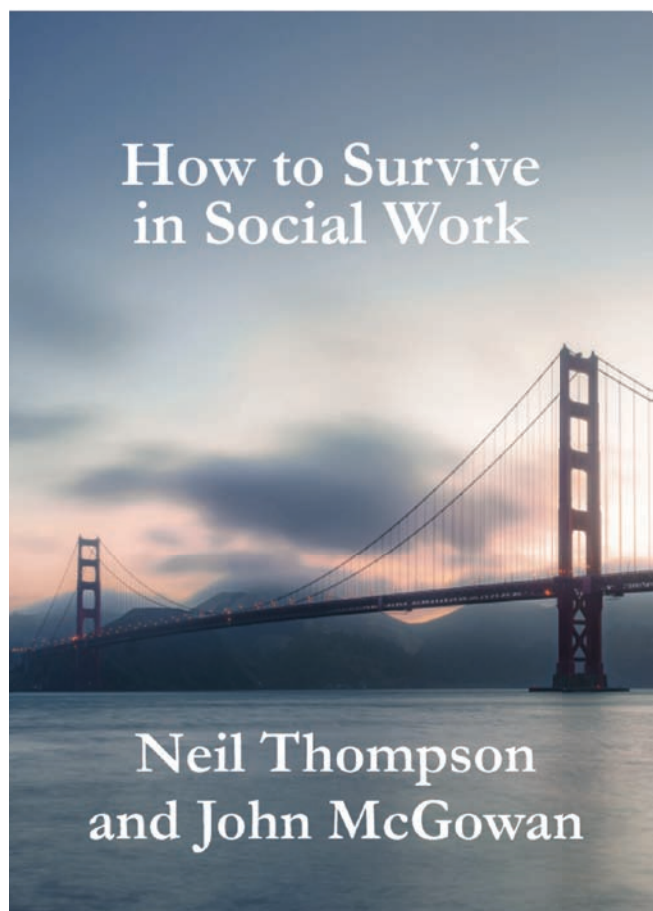
Social work by its very nature is challenging and demanding work. But, in the current social, economic and political climate, it can prove extraordinarily difficult to keep your head above water. Written by two highly experienced social work professionals, this important book explores the significance of that context, offers guidance on how to survive despite it and even to aim for thriving within it. There are no easy answers, but there is much we can do to make sure that we are able to fulfil the potential and value of social work as a force for making our society a humane one without sacrificing our own health and well-being.

Dr Neil Thompson is an independent writer, educator and adviser.
His website and Learning Zone are at:
www.NeilThompson.info.

John McGowan is the General Secretary of the Social Workers Union and also works with the Open University in Scotland.

Their book, *How to Survive in Social Work*, is published by Avenue Media Solutions. It is available at £15.99 directly from the publisher:
<https://bit.ly/3hyyyWk>
or via Amazon Books.

<https://www.avenuemediasolutions.com/product/how-to-survive-in-social-work/>



Do you have the option to work part-time?

SWU National Organiser, Carol Reid highlights that part time working is not always a choice but a necessity



There aren't many women who haven't at some point had to work part-time. For many, this is not a 'lifestyle choice' to free up some extra 'me time' - as lovely a thought as that is! Rather, it's down to necessity and the frustrating dilemma of having no option but to work less paid hours to enable us to commit more time to unpaid roles. Whilst there are of course many enlightened men who 'lead' on home-parenting and caring commitments, it's still predominantly women in households who focus firstly on child care, school runs, pre and after-school care, activities and appointments, and of course care of elderly parents and family members.

According to government statistics, the average age of a UK social worker is between 30 and 49, and of those 86% are female (assets.publishing.service.gov.uk, 2018). Given these statistics, it's easy to conclude that many social workers are juggling work with parenting and caring commitments, and from conversations I've had with full-

time and newly qualified social workers, there are many who would prefer to work part-time simply to enable more focus on unpaid home commitments. Because of this, it's hard to understand why there seems to be so few opportunities for part time social work roles, and a predominant focus on the recruitment of full-time staff. Whether it be direct local authority vacancies or via agencies - the posts are almost consistently full-time bar the occasional exception.

A recent discussion with a social work manager led me to ask this very question, to which they replied, "There's no such thing as a part-time social worker". I understand the metaphor behind this response - as social workers we are of course committed to the responsibilities of the role and are aware of the complexities of it, and often work additional hours when the work intensifies, but we are also capable of time management, prioritising and teamwork, and it could be said to be a somewhat patronising and presumptuous response. It might also be suggested that rather than it being a consideration of the demands upon the social worker to discourage part-time work, it is easier for managers to have full-time staff who aren't sharing cases and complicating rotas.

Particularly now, when service-users are most in need of additional support, it would be wonderful to see a willingness from employers to make use of the extensive and varied skills of social workers who happen to have additional family commitments, and have no option but to work part-time.

If you have had difficulties in finding and securing part-time social work employment please let me know of your experiences, and if you are a social work manager who welcomes and encourages part-time staff we'd love to hear from you.

Carol Reid
National Organiser, Social Workers Union
carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk

The Austerity Papers Update

The Austerity Action Group (AAG) is a group of social workers and people with lived experience of using services, who share a commitment to social justice.

Funded by the Social Workers Union, the AAG aims to identify and address the ongoing impact of politically driven austerity policies on some of the most vulnerable people in our society and partnerships with other organisations, societies, unions and other groups / communities sympathetic to the aims of the AAG.

Steve Moore former social worker and one of the Boot Out Austerity 'seven day' walkers chronicled the 2017 one hundred mile march from Birmingham to Liverpool. A march that set out to highlight the injustices that (then) 7 years of Austerity measures had had on the most vulnerable members of society. On his return he shared his reflections with his fellow wordsmiths The Blakenhall Writers.



What followed became known as *The Austerity Papers* as together the group wove a number of personal vignettes describing how those cruel policies had impacted on their lives.

Please copy link to open:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/19tekUn4TEhwsENQxK581a2TVVTNv_giE/view

First performed at The Wolverhampton Literature Festival in February 2019, the ten minute show included 'a flash mob' made up from the Boot Out Austerity walkers shouting out "We're Gonna Walk one hundred miles, were gonna make those good folks smile, were gonna boot, boot out Austerity 7 long years too long for me."

Reflecting on the performance we felt the message should be shared to a wider audience and hatched a plan to turn it into a film. It took a further year before a date suitable to all was achieved. The filming was smoothly and skilfully undertaken at the home of group member Kuli Kohli and within 3 hours we had the work in the can. Covid came in before the editing was complete and it is only now that we can finally share it with you!

https://drive.google.com/file/d/19tekUn4TEhwsENQxK581a2TVVTNv_giE/view

You can find more about our friends The Blakenhall Writers at https://www.facebook.com/Blakenhallwritersgroup/?__tn__=%2Cd

You may also want to listen to Kuli www.kulikohli.co.uk you may have seen her feature on the BBC <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-53749629>

Austerity is not over - Boot Out Austerity marches on to highlight the injustices that government policies are still placing on vulnerable people. If you have a story to tell please share it with us and let us give it a wider airing - contact us via carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk

Angi Naylor



Whatever legal help you need, we're there for you.

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- ▶ **10%** discount for wills and probate services
- ▶ **10%** discount for residential conveyancing and commercial property services
- ▶ **10%** discount for family and matrimonial law services
- ▶ **10%** discount for criminal/motoring offences and court litigation services

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or call **033 3344 9600**

Be inventive and adaptive

SWU Executive Member Jessica Nielson provides some thoughts on how the social work environment has changed.

I have been contemplating writing something for the SWU newsletter for some time. I became a member of SWU while studying social work and moved on to become a Union Contact to then be appointed as a Social Workers Union Executive (Scotland). I guess there is no time like the present!

In January 2021 I will have been qualified as a social worker for two years and in February 2021 we will have been living and working under the new reality of COVID for a whole year. Nearly half of my social work career I have been working within the environment of COVID. 8 months of this has been working from home in a new city as I moved home earlier this year.

The social work environment has changed. Characterised now by home working, virtual meetings, multi-agency working, PPE, minimal visits, less joint visits. This is social work under COVID. And it's made me want to reflect on place and how important having a desk or an office space is and what it can mean for our wellbeing and development.

I remember being a student on first placement and sitting staring at the phone willing myself to pick it up and make the call. I had written what I needed to say but was nervous on how I would have this conversation with a service user. We've all been there: nervous, palms sweating, fear of the unknown. And then came my saviour. A colleague had spotted my behaviour and came over to offer some tips on the nerves I was dealing with. I took a breath and made the call. You may remember something similar. We used to experience what now feels lost - the "supportive work environment". The little things that helped us through the day: a colleague witnessing a difficult phone call so silently bringing us a coffee; the opportunity to have a rant to the team about that new policy direction; the face to face meeting with the manager for a new case allocation that used to come with a smile and now is just signposted by the ping of an email and a "kind regards".

Social work has been inventive and adaptive throughout the pandemic but the realities of social work have changed forever.

I was a student B.C. (Before COVID) when the environment I worked in, my place, could automatically opt me into seeing colleagues, having the opportunity to ask questions, and shadow others on visits or meetings. I've considered what it might be like for students now and how they can find their place. My message to students is to connect before you need it. Make your own place by reaching out to others. Utilise your university network. Make connections to people from the workplace. Pick up the phone and call your link worker or practice educator. And remember, the Social Work Union is here too. Students can become members and be represented and supported by a specialist trade union. *A place* for you.

Now more than ever it is important to connect, to keep well and to practice well. From my home desk to yours,



Jess Nielson
Social Workers Union Executive
- Scotland

TEN TOP TIPS:

Working remotely

1 SET UP A DESIGNATED WORKSPACE

Separate space for yourself to work in, somewhere you can focus on tasks without being distracted and set up with everything you need for a normal working day.

2 MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ALL THE TECH YOU NEED

This includes a reliable internet connection, required hardware and software, access to your company network, any files and importantly, knowledge of how to get IT support.

3 GET DRESSED

Changing into working clothes will help you mentally switch onto productive work mode. It will also help you distinguish between 'homeworking' and 'home life'.

4 WRITE A DAILY TO-DO LIST

Set out a list of realistic, achievable tasks to keep you focused.

5 KNOW WHEN TO STEP AWAY FROM YOUR DESK

Be clear about when your working day begins and ends and take breaks to refresh. It's easy to let yourself be 'always on' when your home and office are the same place.

6 STAY IN CONVERSATION

Contribute regularly to team chats/group emails so you don't drop off the radar. Ask about what people are working on and share what's on your plate.

7 FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS

Make time for non-work chats as you would in the workplace and use video calling to maintain face-to-face contact.

8 BE CLEAR IN YOUR COMMUNICATION

Speaking in person gives you visual and audio cues that help you communicate. Conversing remotely removes a lot of that extra information so make your communications extra clear and concise.

9 ASK FOR SUPPORT WHEN NEEDED

Speak out when you need assistance, further training or support. Your manager, colleagues and you are part of a team and should be supporting each other, even remotely.

10 MAKE REMOTE WORKING WORK FOR YOU

Change where you sit, put on music, whatever helps you work. And enjoy the perks - no commute or uncomfortable shoes, and all your home comforts!

TEN TOP TIPS:

Further resources for remote working

1 CORONAVIRUS HUB

The CIPD's [Coronavirus hub](#) brings together a host of content including an employer's response guide and a downloadable questionnaire to help your organisation prepare and implement homeworking.

2 LINKEDIN LEARNING'S REMOTE WORKING COURSE

Discover how to improve your productivity, stay focused and connected with LinkedIn Learning's [remote working course](#). The course includes insight from entrepreneur Arianna Huffington, and can be completed in bite-sized chunks.

3 REMOTE WORKING SURVIVAL KIT

Missing the workplace buzz? Homeworking doesn't have to be a lonely experience. A crowdsourced [Remote Work Survival Kit](#) will arm you with tools you need to achieve a happy and balanced remote working set-up.

4 HR-INFORM TEMPLATES

Is your business new to homeworking? HR-Inform has easy-to-use, [downloadable templates](#) to help you establish your own flexi-time, homeworking, and flexible working policies.

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE GUIDE

Employers are responsible for the safety of their employees even if they are working from home. The Health and Safety Executive has created a [guide for employers](#), including advice on managing stress and mental health.

6 ACAS HOMEWORKING GUIDE

As homeworking rises across the globe, businesses are presented with new issues to manage. This [comprehensive guide](#) from Acas includes real-life case studies and advice on meeting homeworking legal requirements as well as health and safety standards.

7 MATT MULLENWEG TED TALK

Wordpress Co-founder Matt Mullenweg considers how homeworking impacts office dynamics in his [4-minute Ted Talk](#). He asks: how can we make sure that all employees, both at headquarters and at home, feel connected?

8 RESCUE TIME BLOG

A blog from Rescue Time looks at [ways to build community](#) among teams who work thousands of miles apart. Many of the key takeaways also apply to remote workers in closer proximity.

9 HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

[How to Collaborate Effectively If Your Team Is Remote](#) is a short read from Harvard Business Review to help your business tackle remote collaboration and perform at the highest levels.

10 REMOTE WORKING FROM GET LIGHTHOUSE

Get Lighthouse takes an in-depth look at remote working with [11 essential tips on managing remote workers](#).

For more information and resources visit
cipd.co.uk/coronavirus

TEN TOP TIPS:

Effective online meetings

1 EMBRACE VIDEO CALLING

Being present and seeing each other is an important part of keeping connected. Don't hide away or do other work during the meeting.

2 USE HEADSETS OR EARPHONES

This will give better sound quality. Speak directly into the mic and remember to mute it when not speaking to limit background noise.

3 SPEAK CLEARLY AND STEADILY

This will help ensure everyone can understand you. And try to modulate your voice, to keep people interested and engaged.

4 ESTABLISH ETIQUETTE GUIDELINES

Agree a system to give everyone a voice. Arrange 'hands up' signals to agree who speaks next and use chat functions to allow everyone to contribute.

5 REPEAT THE QUESTION

The chair or presenter should repeat questions they ask to ensure all participants are aware of the original question. Repeating the question in writing within a chat box could provide additional clarity.

6 USE NAMES AND GIVE CONTEXT

When responding to chat comments, repeat the relevant remarks and make clear who you're responding to. Don't just say 'yes, Jane that's right' - others may not have seen Jane's comment and it won't make sense to them.

7 KEEP SLIDES SIMPLE

Keep to a single thought per slide to help participants understand and focus on what's being discussed. It's better to have more slides with fewer things on them.

8 KEEP SLIDES VISUAL

Your participants may be joining from a mobile device and wordy slides will be tough to read. Anchor your presentation on relevant, image-based slides.

9 ENGAGE PARTICIPANTS REGULARLY

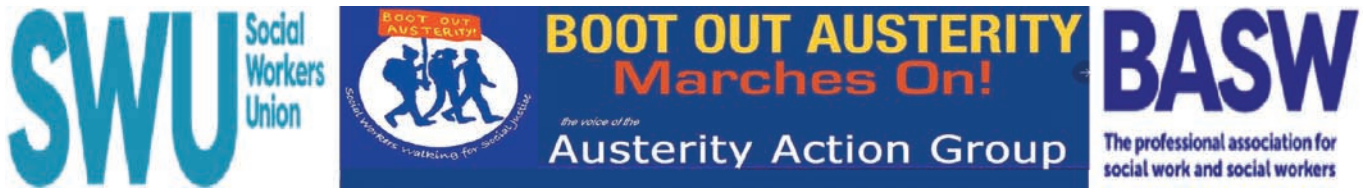
It's hard to simply listen online for a long time. Invite participants to give comments or ask questions, and use tools like chat or polls.

10 BE EXPLICIT ABOUT ACTIONS AND SUMMARISE

Spell out clearly any actions that need to be taken and by whom. Summarise meeting takeaways and circulate notes promptly.

Sanitary Stories

A series of personal vignettes recalled as a landmark decision is made in Scotland



A recent 'covid compliant' photograph of my baby brother and I wearing face masks, took my mind back to an incident before he was born. Granddad Benfield Hall was at our house ill in bed. Three year-old me told him I was going to be his nurse and went to the cupboard to get my uniform and equipment. Responding to his loud laughter whilst trying to keep a straight face my Mum found me adorned in one of her pinnies and wearing a surgical mask! Gently removing the later, she returned it back to box with the other sanitary towels!

The scene out of the film *I Daniel Blake* flashed in front of me - the one where the single mum on benefits make the decision that her personal dignity overrides her respect for other people property, and she steals a packet of sanitary towels from the local shop. Why am I cringing? Is it because given the circumstances I am not sure what my reaction would be?

Scanning the aisles and shelves of foreign shops trying to locate the sanitary product! Becoming more and more anxious as I realise I did not have the local word - nor did I wish to mime what it was I wished to buy. I learned and remembered, that tampons are better known in some parts of the world as OBs.

Aged nine being sent by Mum to the corner shop with a piece of newspaper with the instructions to "give it to Mrs Mason." Compliantly I did as instructed. She without words took the paper from me and turning her back, swiftly and smoothly retrieved and wrapped an oblong object within it. Placing it into my hands she instructed me to "go straight home!" I never saw any boys being asked to do this!

Then last week on hearing the landmark news - retrieving a book from my shelves to find a quote from *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel* by Jill Liddington. Selina Cooper was born in 1864, (a forgotten pioneer of the womens' movement in Britain). From her humble beginnings as a factory lass, she fought to change some of the unhygienic working conditions prevalent in the Lancashire Cotton Mills. On a number of occasions, she came close to loosing her job. As her daughter recalled

In the days when skirts were down to the floor "Women in those days didn't wear any sanitary protection - all their petticoats would be covered in blood every month." Likewise the floor of the winding room! She (Selina) would make towelling for the woman she worked with to use as sanitary towels. One girl's mother complaint to the manager about Selina's action - "How was her daughter ever going to get off if they didn't know about her smell?"

Ten years of Austerity has on the one hand created some new words and terms that serve to highlight injustice like our own **Boot Out Austerity** campaign, whilst other words have become so mainstream we forget that behind the terms - real people continue to suffer. As from last week specifically in Scotland one phrase will be confirmed to history. Of course, this is the reason for this piece, I'm referring to **PERIOD POVERTY** and the landmark decision of the Scottish Government.

Where MSP voted on a bill *The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill*, which will make tampons and sanitary pads accessible in public buildings for free.

As I understand it wherever there is a public toilet it will have sanitary products available just like there is 'free' toilet paper. This decision will do much to improve the lives of woman who live in that part of the UK. No longer the monthly penny-pinching torment, no long shamed to ask for tampons at the food bank - the food bank which was never ever just confined to food! So well done to the team in Scotland who pushed for that change.

I wonder what Selina Cooper's comments and indeed actions would be were she alive today? She would definitely be writing to her MP and demanding parity across the UK and for a more open conversations about periods. I hope my reflections serve to remind that we still have much to do - because there are still stories from today about PERIOD POVERTY that you would have thought belonged in Selina's times

Angi Naylor
BOOT OUT AUSTERITY



Child and family social worker's individual factors and well-being: How does this affect decision-making in COVID-19 times?

At the beginning of this year, news about the spread of COVID-19 was heard all over the world and it just took a couple of months for everyone to be in a lockdown.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people's lives radically, including the work of the child and family social workers. Child and family social workers are usually asked to investigate and suggest interventions to families where there is a suspected case of child abuse or neglect. Most of the times the risk assessment that the child and family social worker makes plays a crucial role in the decision that will be taken regarding the removal of a child from their family of origin or any subsequent intervention.

McGee (1989) has been the only one in investigating the impact of burnout in the decision-making process of the child and family social workers in suspected cases of abuse and neglect. As this research is already outdated and decision-making processes in child protection are sometimes inconsistent, we see a need for investigating how burnout is impacting the decisions made in child protection mainly during these COVID-19 times, starting from

investigating if child and family social workers are experiencing burnout during this pandemic and how is burnout affecting the risk assessment that they are making when receiving a suspected case of abuse and neglect.

Moreover, according to the Decision-Making Ecology model from Baumann et al. (2011), decision-maker factors alongside external, organisational and case factors are the ones intervening when a decision is made. Therefore, in this study we want to further investigate decision-maker factors that have been scarcely researched in child protection work, these are personality traits such as attachment, empathy and resilience.

The responses to this survey will help inform subsequent psychological interventions that could be provided in child protection agencies as a way of supporting child and family social workers and help them coping with stresses of the work mainly in the current situation that the world is experiencing.

If you are a child and family social worker who is currently employed, self-employed or an agency worker within the UK, we want to hear from you.

Please follow the link or scan the QR code below, which will take you to some further information on the study and a questionnaire which will take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

Decision-Making in Child Protection



Please share this invitation (on social media or by email) to take part in this research with fellow child and family social workers in the UK. If you would like further information about the research, please contact MSc. Magdalena Garzón Fonseca at m.garzon.fonseca@rug.nl or Dr. Mónica López López at m.lopez.lopez@rug.nl.

About this research

This research is funded by CONACYT (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, <http://conacyt.gob.mx/>) in partnership with the University of Groningen, and approved by the ethics committee of the University of Groningen. The group of researchers from this study belong to Nottingham Trent University in the UK, the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, the University of Leuven in Belgium, and the University of Colorado Denver in the USA.

Sincere thanks to our funders and a special thanks to you, the child and family social workers for responding to this survey.

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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: louise.wood@swu-union.org.uk.



Belong to a Social Work union that:

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- 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.

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- Opportunity to be active as part of the trade union movement
- Monthly Newsletter

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

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