

Looking forward with optimism



Dear Members,

It appears out of sync to be wishing you a very 'Happy New Year' knowing that this Christmas and New Year break has been for some; one of many challenges, and I am sure that the next few

months will continue to be equally difficult. I do, nonetheless, wish you the best for 2021, which is certainly a year we can look forward to with optimism.

On reflection, 2020 was a devastating year and 2021 has not started well despite such positive news about the vaccines roll out. General trust in the present Government and some politicians has fallen to an all-time low in the UK. However, on a positive, there is a huge appetite for an end to privatisation and outsourcing, for the return of our transport and utilities to public ownership, for action on job insecurity and poverty pay - and for higher taxes on the rich to pay for higher public spending - so get the activist shoes on in 2021 and join the campaigning through our Austerity Action Group!

Although most social workers still have their jobs, for some, interactions and the workplace has changed beyond recognition. Social distancing rules, PPE and COVID health regulations affect how we interact with service users and

colleagues at work. Working from home comes with its own challenges, such as changes in communication, technological difficulties, interference of private life and higher self-organising demands, to name just a few. All of these changes demand a great deal of adjustment in the social work role, requiring an extra amount of effort, grit and creativity to make them work. This is happening against the backdrop of a pandemic that has already forced us to adjust to unwelcome patterns of living, with reduced and changed types of social interactions and increased health worries. At SWU, we acknowledge and will continue to share the message that there must be urgent and major investment within and beyond local authorities, if social work is to play its fullest, necessary leading part in the recovery in communities across the country.

At SWU, there is much to do this year as we approach our 10th year as a trade union, including looking several years ahead about what we want SWU to be in the future and our key priorities. I remember the very first meeting of the newly formed SWU union like it was yesterday - where does the time go?

I am delighted that members took the time responding to our member engagement survey. The results of the survey will be fully reported on next month and the content will be especially useful for the new SWU Strategic Plan 2021-24, which the Executive will be developing with me. 868 members responded to the survey over a 14-day period; with some members highlighting that we need to increase our communication with members.

I am therefore delighted that this gap has been addressed with the introduction of our first dedicated SWU Communication and Engagement officer, Shawn Major.

This has been another busy period for the union and our TU A&R Team. The advantages of having a dedicated and professional team of Social Workers providing advice/guidance and representation is why the majority of members join BASW and SWU. The growing SWU membership has seen more and more demands put on the team, but fundamentally the support offered to members and the quality of the representation continues to be second to none. The Trade Union A&R Team continue to provide a quality service to members despite

the increase in referrals and a changed way of working. The team are exceptionally dedicated and without them we would not have a union. They all work ceaselessly behind the scenes and have a huge impact on creating change for the members who seek their knowledge and assistance.

Finally, please help us recruit new members and do get in touch and share with SWU what is happening in the workplace or campaigns to be involved with. Get involved with SWU and stay active.

John McGowan
General Secretary

j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk

****Watch again****

Webinar - Talk to SWU: workplace issues



On 17th December the Social Workers Union (SWU) held a webinar, offering social workers an opportunity to talk to SWU directly about workplace issues - and hear from a panel of Advice Representation Officers and legal experts.

The recording of the webinar is now available to watch online.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/talk-swu-work-place-issues-webinar>



HM Revenue & Customs

If your employer requires you to work at home, you can - and always have been able to - claim for increased costs due to working from home, eg, heating and electricity.

Clearly, right now many social workers have closed workplaces (again) and that means across the UK thousands of social workers are temporarily required to work from home, even if it's just for part of the week. Therefore, you're eligible to claim if you've had increased costs due to it. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) has specifically confirmed that claims from employees working at home due to coronavirus measures, if their usual workplace is closed, count.

But apportioning extra costs such as heating and electricity is tough. So instead you can, in simple terms, claim a rate of £6 a week. There are two ways to do this:

Employers can pay you £6 a week extra tax-free. Employers can give you an allowance up to this amount and what they give you is free from tax, so you get it all (to give you more, it will need to make special arrangements).

But right now - with HR officers struggling - asking may be bad timing, so instead you can...

Claim tax relief on £6 a week. If your employer will not pay expenses for your extra costs due to necessary working from home, but you have them, then you can ask for the amount to be deducted from your taxable income. To make the process easy, HMRC says that claims in line with the employers' payment (ie, for £6 a week) will not need to justify that figure - meaning you won't need to keep receipts or prove information. Tax relief of £6 a week equates to a gain of £1.20 a week for a basic 20% rate taxpayer, £2.40 a week for a higher 40% rate taxpayer.

Have you claimed your working from home allowance?

If you believe you have higher increased costs than £6 a week, you can claim more, but you will need evidence of the cost increases and be able to apportion these specifically to the fact you are working from home - and this becomes a much more laborious process.

How to claim the tax relief

To process these claims, in October 2020, HMRC set up a new dedicated working-from-home microservice that will automatically apply the whole 2020/21 tax year's relief via your tax code - making claiming the whole amount very easy. Anyone making a claim for this tax year, who hasn't already put in a claim, can use it.

In fact, you can actually use it to claim just a smidge before this tax year too. You can use it to make a claim since lockdown started on 23 March 2020 - just put that date in. Do that and you'll get a refund for the whole of this tax year (which started 6 April 2020) and two weeks extra on top.

You'll need to have your Government Gateway ID to do it. If you don't have one, you can create one as part of the process. Along the way you'll also be asked if you're claiming any other work-related expenses, and as a note, if you wear a uniform to work, it's worth reading our Uniform Tax Rebate guide first, to see if you can claim that too.

Don't expect to receive a cheque for this money though. It is done by altering your tax code, which is what indicates to your employer how much tax to take off your payslip - it should be amended in your personal tax account within a couple of days. The result will be less tax taken off each month for the rest of the year which means you'll take home more.



Social Work Employment Services

Social Work Employment Services

Created by social workers, for social workers

Join the UK's only not-for-profit umbrella for just £15.00 per week.

Social Work Employment Services

Created by social workers for social workers and exclusively for BASW members, Social Work Employment Services is the UK's only not-for-profit umbrella company.

Working solely with agency social workers, it provides PAYE, payroll and employment services to ensure they receive the best returns from their contract, whilst also complying with off-payroll legislation (IR35).

Set-up in direct response to BASW members' request for a trusted umbrella organisation, it is professional, ethical, and understands the complexities and challenges of the industry.

Bound by BASW's Code of Ethics, there is also a formal recognition agreement with the Social Workers Union (SWU) to ensure greater protection of agency workers' rights.

Retaining a not-for-profit ethos, all surplus is donated back to BASW to support and improve our membership services and recognition of the profession.

Why join?

Put simply – the service understands the industry and challenges agency social workers face.

Ethically committed to a fair, competitive price, it costs just £15.00 per week and there are no joining fees or hidden costs.

What's more, members have access to a range of insurances as well as courses, events and networking events.

Key benefits

Compliant

- All income subject to PAYE and NIC.
 - Holiday pay accrual.
 - Allowable expenses.

Employment rights

- Access to expert HR & employment advice.
 - Option to join Social Workers Union.
 - Protection of employment rights.

KEY BENEFITS

Fully insured

- £5 million Professional Indemnity.
- Increases to £10 million Professional Indemnity and £5 million Public Liability (with the Independent Plus package).

Intuitive app

- Dedicated app for ease-of-access.
 - Faster invoicing and payment.
 - SMS notifications.

Key benefits are in conjunction with BASW benefits (working category) and SWU opt in.

Join Us

Joining has never been easier.

BASW members can sign up for Social Work Employment Services through an easy to navigate form.

Visit www.socialworkemploymentservices.co.uk/join to find out more about how to join.

If you have any questions – give us a call on: **0333 311 0922**

Our partners



Collective Bargaining and SWU

Put briefly, 'collective bargaining' is a union's ability to negotiate with an employer in relation to, for example, pay grades and pay rises, and it is collective bargaining that is referred to when people talk of "union recognition". This term can create confusion however, as collective bargaining and recognition are not interlinked and as SWU members you are fully entitled to representation.

You may wonder why some unions have acquired a 'collective bargaining' relationship with an employer, and this is often due to the size of the large unions who have a broad selection of members doing a variety of jobs across public sector workplaces. This enables the large unions to have a monopoly on bargaining and, coupled with this, they sadly object to smaller specialist unions such as SWU; a union specifically for social workers and run by social workers with a breadth of knowledge and experience of the profession.

At SWU, we have a right to represent social workers because we are an independent certified Trade Union. All of our Trade Union Officers and reps are entitled to attend disciplinaries and grievances on behalf of our members regardless of whether or not we negotiate in collective bargaining.

Regardless of the larger unions, SWU is perfectly entitled to apply for bargaining recognition and it is something we may consider in the future, but it is a prolonged and complicated process which would involve extra staffing which would come at a membership cost to implement. Our growing team of SWU Union Contacts assist in growing our Union via promoting and encouraging membership, and as we grow in strength and numbers, we are more able to consider such actions.

The important point for SWU members is that we do not need collective bargaining rights to represent. Indeed, Section 10 of the Employment Rights Act says that *"an employee has the right to be represented by an official of a certified trade union and that trade union doesn't have to be recognised by the employer. It can*

be a trade union representative official of the employee's own choice."

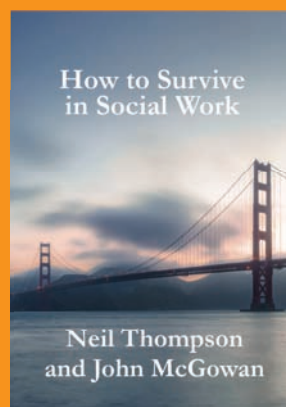
At SWU, historical evidence suggests that we get far better results for members by sitting and doing individual one to one consultation and dealing with individual terms and conditions for members. This is the specialist knowledge of the union and the profession.

It has also been suggested that the entire collective bargaining system is antiquated and relatively ineffective with different unions proposing objections to the bargaining group.

Although traditionally larger unions have done well to focus on terms and conditions, what appears to be important for Social Workers in 2021 is employment wellbeing and job satisfaction as well as pay scales and salaries. Interestingly, this is reflected further through recent Bath Spa University research and follow up meetings indicating that addressing those factors keep social workers in their posts, and not necessarily higher pay levels or more annual leave. This fits with findings from the General Federation of Trade Unions, to which SWU is affiliated.

Win a signed copy of *How to Survive in Social Work*

(see following page)



Share with us in a few lines the importance of being in a specialist trade union. Please email: joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk

Some entries will be shared in March newsletter.

One copy available to the winning entry

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*.

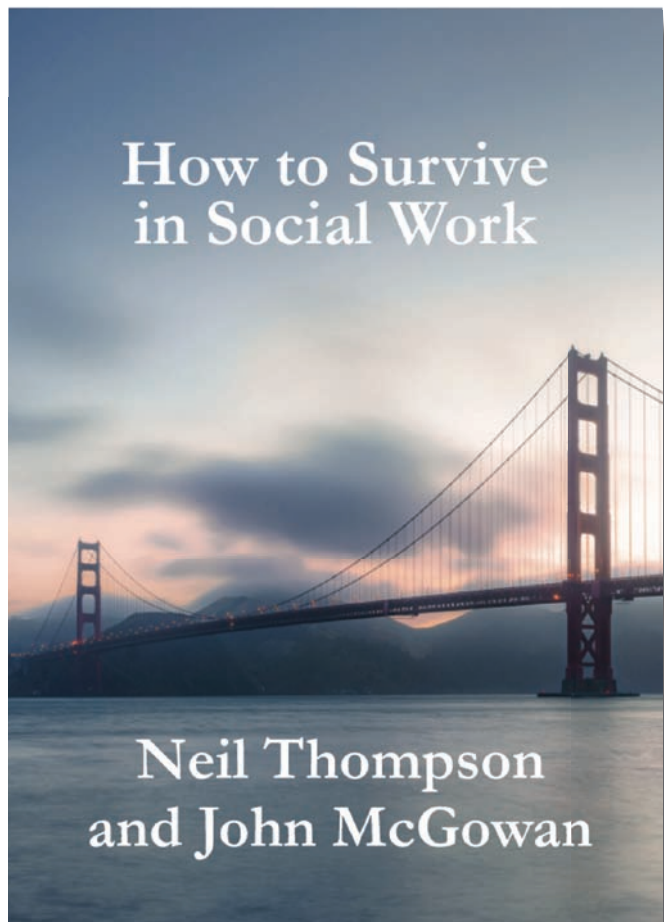
Social work by its very nature is challenging and demanding work. But, in the current social, economic and political climate, it can prove extraordinarily difficult to keep your head above water. Written by two highly experienced social work professionals, this important book explores the significance 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/>



SWU Ambassador Dr Neil Thompson shares some thoughts about ...

What trade unionism can learn from the Trump fiasco

I have always been wary of applying 'ism' to a person's name, as it can be quite misleading. For example, I have had many discussions over years with people who seemed to think that Margaret Thatcher invented neoliberalism. She certainly promoted it and put it centre stage, but she was just part of a wider movement that included Ronald Reagan in the United States and many others and that long predated Thatcher's rise to power.

Likewise, current references to Trumpism can be misleading, as it suggests that Trump and his approach are the fundamental problem. While he has clearly done considerable damage to the USA and well beyond in so many ways, this is best seen as a reflection of a deeper and broader problem which long preceded him. Trump would not have been able to do what he did if there were not already fertile ground for such extreme views in the form of a right-wing ideology that goes far beyond the conventional political spectrum.

I am well aware that many people use fascism - the F word - to describe anyone slightly to the right of the Lib Dems, thereby failing to appreciate the extremism involved in actual fascism. One of the hallmarks of fascism is a disregard of democracy, an authoritarian approach that empowers the elite at the expense of ordinary people. The storming of the Capitol recently was a sad but classic example of fascism - attempting to achieve power by force and illegitimate means, disregarding all the conventions and protocols of democracy that are in place to guard against such authoritarianism.

What happened was in many ways predictable. In a fascinating, but quite scary book *How Democracies Die*, Levitsky and Ziblatt (2019) describe the common processes by which, historically, various countries have moved from democracy to dictatorship (denial of the legitimacy of the opposition, for example) and then they analyse how similar processes have been happening in Trump's America - and the parallels are both striking and worrying.



Another important book is *The Political Brain* by Drew Westen (2008). He argues that politicians who aim to convince through rationality and facts and figures are unlikely to succeed. He provides extensive evidence in the form of example after example to back up his claim. His key point is that people are much more likely to be won over by emotion than reason. What wins elections is not facts and rationality, but a coherent narrative that 'speaks' to the public.

This has deep connections with Trump's success. He was shown time after time to be lying, distorting the situation, offering 'alternative facts' and straying very far from anything resembling rationality. But, what he did offer, among other things, was an emotion-based narrative that resonated with a wide range of people who were dissatisfied with conventional politics (and, ironically, the neoliberalism that gave rise to much of that dissatisfaction).

There is much that the trade union movement can learn from this. First, while I am by no means proposing abandoning facts and rationality, we have to recognise that they are not enough on their own. We also need a clear narrative that people can identify with, a story that fits with their experiences and concerns.

Second, we can learn that there is no room for complacency about the rise of fascism. History has taught us that the authoritarianism and the swing to the far right associated with fascism tend to arise in times of uncertainty and social insecurity - circumstances that have been to the fore not only in the USA, but also across Europe, especially in the UK. There is no need to panic, but there is definitely a need to be tuned in to the challenges we face - we live in dangerous times, all the more reason for standing together in solidarity in true trade union fashion.

Dr Neil Thompson is an independent writer, educator and adviser. His recent books include *How to Survive in Social Work* (with John McGowan), *The Problem Solver's Practice Manual* and, with Bernard Moss, *The Values-based Practice Manual*. He is an ambassador for SWU and BASW Cymru.

Neil's website is at www.NeilThompson.info

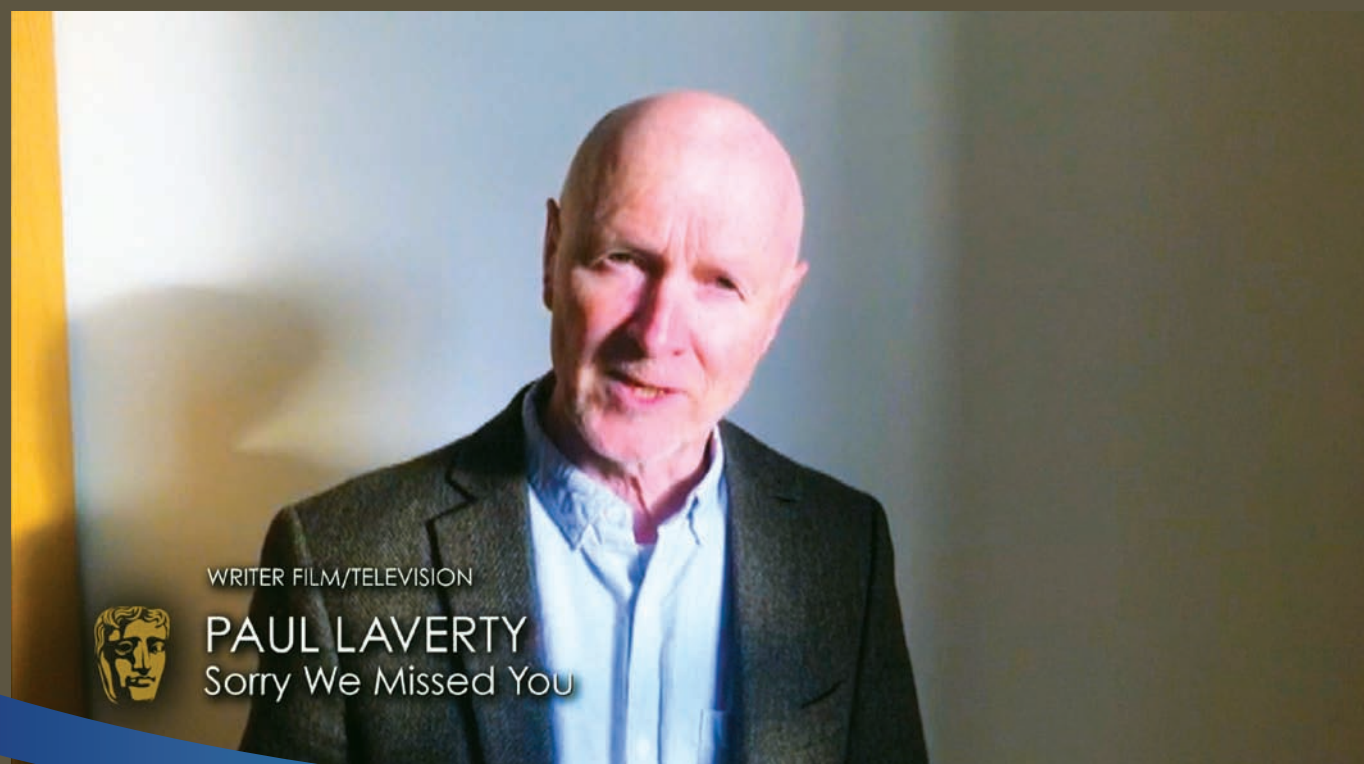
References

Levitsky, S. and Ziblatt, D. (2019) *How Democracies Die: What History Reveals About Our Future*, London, Penguin.

Westen, D. (2008) *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*, New York, Public Affairs.

Well done Paul !

Congratulations to Ken Loach's regular screenwriter Paul Laverty who picked up the BAFTA Scotland Writer Film/Television prize for his work on the 2020 film *Sorry We Missed You*. When SWU was approached to discuss and advise on some aspects of the new Ken Loach movie *Sorry We Missed You* with writer Paul Laverty, we did not expect it to lead into SWU not only being involved in the story but also the ongoing campaign linked to the movie and awareness raising of the message from the film as part of this.



Take control of your financial wellbeing – today

2020 has proved challenging for everyone as many people's lives and circumstances have shifted on various levels, with health and financial concerns prominent. The widespread impact on our finances has vividly highlighted that you never know what's around the corner, emphasising the importance of being financially prepared for any eventuality.

In the UK, we are now seeing the end of the furlough scheme, and as a result, the threat of redundancy is unfortunately a reality for many people. This can understandably prove a very stressful and challenging time, as concerns about financial security come to the fore.

You need quality advice, now more than ever

You may already feel that you should be addressing your finances, but you might be unsure who to approach for trustworthy advice. The sooner you engage with your finances and take action, the more likely you are to achieve your financial goals.

Having a personal general financial review can help you make your money work harder - whether it's budgeting, protection needs, savings and investments, mortgages, tax planning or retirement planning (including getting your pension savings on track) - a holistic approach ticks all the boxes.

Developing a resilient financial plan

SWU has appointed Lighthouse Financial Advice to provide you with the opportunity for professional financial advice. We can help you whatever your financial circumstances. The advice we provide is practical, affordable and tailored to your individual needs.

We can help with all aspects of financial planning. A resilient, well thought out financial plan, brings peace of mind, enabling you to enjoy your life, safe in the knowledge that you've got things under control.

How we can help you

Here at Lighthouse Financial Advice we are highly experienced in providing support and advice to employees in redundancy situations. SWU members are entitled to a complimentary initial consultation with one of our professional financial advisers to explain your options clearly and help you make key decisions to lessen the impact.

As you would expect, we have responded to the current circumstances and are providing remote delivery of advice, which is proving effective, time-efficient, yet still personable and professional.

To find out how we can help, book a complimentary, no obligation initial consultation with one of our professional financial advisers.

08000 85 85 90 or email appointments@lighthousefa.co.uk

Lighthouse Financial Advice Limited is an appointed representative of Lighthouse Advisory Services Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

The General Federation of Trade Unions has recently purchased Emplaw on-line, which is a comprehensive, well 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 **sickness absence and sick pay** during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, including the rules on statutory sick pay and the position of people who are self-isolating, “shielding” or otherwise vulnerable.

What is SSP and when does someone qualify for it?

The statutory sick pay (SSP) scheme entitles qualifying employees to receive a weekly SSP payment. In order to qualify for SSP, an employee must be absent from work due to incapacity. However, the SSP regime has been amended on numerous occasions as the pandemic has progressed. These changes are primarily aimed at extending eligibility to SSP to those who are self-isolating in accordance with government guidance but may not necessarily have symptoms of Covid-19.

How much is SSP and can we reclaim it?

From 6 April 2020, employees can get £95.85 per week SSP for up to 28 weeks.

The Statutory Sick Pay (Coronavirus) (Suspension of Waiting Days and General Amendment) Regulations 2020 have removed the three-day waiting period for payment of SSP for employees whose period of incapacity for work is related to Covid-19. Despite this change, SSP will only be payable if the employee has self-isolated for at least four days. If the relevant person (either the employee or the person in their household who had symptoms) receives a negative Covid-19 test result within the first three days of self-isolation and the self-isolation ends, that absence would not form part of a period of incapacity for work.

Off sick with Covid-19 symptoms but have not been diagnosed?

If you have symptoms which mean you are too unwell to come to work you will be entitled to the employer's usual sick leave and pay provisions, including SSP. If you have very mild Covid-19 symptoms and might otherwise be tempted to try to attend work, you are still required to self-isolate and would be entitled to SSP if you can't work from home.

SSP entitlement is subject to the following:

- SSP is not generally payable during the first three qualifying days of sickness, known as “waiting days” but this provision has been disapplied for Coronavirus cases.

- Irrespective of the change to the “waiting days” provision, employees must still have a total period of incapacity for work of at least four days to be eligible for SSP.

In practice, this means that if someone is off sick with Covid-19 symptoms and is subsequently diagnosed with Coronavirus, they are entitled to SSP from the first day of sickness. If they are sick for three days or fewer and receive a negative Covid-19 test result in that time, they would not be entitled to SSP. If they are sick for more than three days but do not have Coronavirus, they would be entitled to SSP under the usual (non-Covid) rules and would not receive SSP for the first three “waiting days”.

Employees who aren’t actually sick but are self-isolating according to medical/government advice?

Yes. The SSP regulations have been amended several times since March 2020 to widen entitlement to SSP. The following categories of people are currently entitled to SSP:

- Anyone self-isolating for the mandatory ten-day period with Covid-19 symptoms.
- Anyone self-isolating for the mandatory ten day period due to living with someone who has developed symptoms.
- A clinically extremely vulnerable person who is “shielding” and has a current shielding notification letter.
- Anyone who has been officially notified that they should self-isolate under the NHS Test and Trace service (individuals who have been identified as a close contact with someone who has tested positive and are not able to work remotely).
- Those who live with or are in a linked or extended household (a “support bubble”) with someone who has symptoms or tested positive for Covid-19. The definition of a linked or extended household varies between England and the devolved nations. A linked household in England (or an extended household in Scotland) is where a single adult or a single parent with children under the age of 18 have chosen to be linked together with another household. In Wales, an extended household means two households that have agreed to be treated as a single household.
- Anyone (unable to work from home) who has received written notification that they will be undergoing a medical procedure in hospital and have been advised to self-isolate for a period of up to 14 days before their admission.

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

Union Contact Scheme

Carol Reid, National Organiser & Union Contact Scheme Manager provides us with her regular update and advice on you can get involved



I'm pleased to be in collaborative talks with BASW's Professional Officers and Directors to enable SWU to have more of a presence at BASW branch meetings. Branch meetings are currently taking place online but are ordinarily held throughout the UK at various town or city centre locations, usually around once a month, and provide opportunities to meet with other like-minded social workers to discuss topics of interest, socialise, listen to guest speakers, and for SWU this will also be an opportunity for us to encourage membership and activism. Our colleagues at BASW Cymru, SASW (Scotland) and BASW NI don't currently have branch meetings but do have regular events and Community of Practice meetings which provide similar opportunities to interact with fellow social workers, whether they be students, newly qualified, or seasoned practitioners.

As a SWU Union Contact, you may know from discussions with social work colleagues that

members often join BASW thinking they are "joining a union", but of course this is not the case unless they also opt-in to join SWU. A SWU Union Contact at BASW branch meetings will be a vital source of such information and will be able to provide details of how to join, who to contact for advice and support, promote discussion about current and future campaigning and encourage activism.

Not only are BASW meetings interesting and informative, but they are also an opportunity to promote SWU and encourage membership. We encourage you to mention that you are a **SWU Union Contact** in any branch or group meetings. Explain that it's easy to **opt-in** to join SWU when you join BASW, either via the website or phone, and mention the option to become a Union Contact in workplaces and universities. Have relevant contact details to hand and if people have questions about SWU you can simply refer them to me, or if you feel confident you could encourage debate about union activism and campaigning! The main thing is to attend BASW branch and Community of Practice meetings, get involved, and promote SWU in your valued Union Contact role.

If there is no BASW branch in your area you can assist BASW & SWU in creating and promoting one and being a part of its committee if you wish. The level of involvement is up to you!

All upcoming branch events are listed on the BASW website and if you see any of interest please share them on the SWU Union Contact Facebook Group.

A quick reminder too, for those of you who've expressed an interest in becoming a SWU Union Contact in your workplace (or university if you're a student social worker) don't forget we are currently offering an online version of our popular Union Contact Induction. You'd usually attend a full-day group induction in Manchester, and we hope to resume these as soon as we possibly can, but in

the meantime, with the assistance of Dr Neil Thompson, the well-known social work author and academic, we have devised an online version which can be completed in your own time by working through a series of video presentations. Once this is completed and you have returned your workbook evidencing your learning, we will provide you with your Certificate of attendance, ID badge and all relevant paperwork and merchandise to successfully undertake the role of SWU Union Contact. Importantly, you will not be left to 'get on with it' but will be provided with regular support, updates, advice and information,

and you can contact me at any time with any questions about your Union Contact role.

If you would like to register for the online training, or if you'd like to know more about becoming a SWU Union Contact or BASW branch activities, please drop me an email mentioning your location.

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

Competition Time

Win a signed copy of *'The Clare In the Community Collection: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Do-Gooding in The Guardian'*.



Clare visits the Advice and Representation Team, but a caption is needed. Please email your suggested caption to: joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk



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

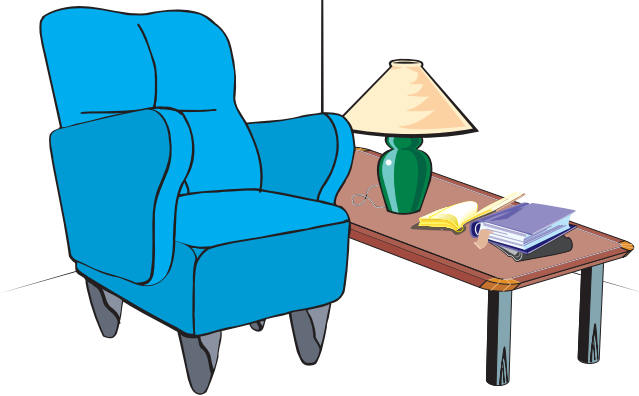
We are friendly, professional and affordable. And we work across the Trade Union movement.

In addition to our **free personal injury service**, SWU members receive **exclusive benefits** including:

- ▶ **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

Visit morrishsolicitors.com/socialworkersunion to find out more
or call **033 3344 9600**

Chair's Corner



Welcome to my first article as Chair. Indeed, welcome to the first ever SWU **Chair's Corner!** The SWU Executive voted decisively to embrace the title of 'Chair' in preference to 'President'. At a time when we have all overheard the word president I have yet another reason for being proud to be the first *Chair* representing one the fastest growing union in the UK. I would like to thank James Birchall for his commitment to SWU since the formation of the Union in 2011. I am hugely grateful for his continuing input as Honorary President as we celebrate SWU's 10th Anniversary in 2021. Diolch yn fawr James.

I am very grateful to the SWU Executive for trusting me in this role. I also thank all those that have made contact and those that have made time to meet me and further my understanding in taking up this position. I see my role in continuing to actively promote SWU's connections to practitioners, researchers and everyone supporting the progression of Social Work. It is the union's commitment to promoting equality, anti-discriminatory practice and evidenced based challenge that will hopefully continue to inspire its members' and other social workers to join us. My mantra of **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!

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to remind us of society's pre-existing

in-equalities in the UK. As social workers we understand the impacts of social policy and daily we encounter people as change impacts their lives, often at a point of crisis. SWU's members; the majority women are likely to be experiencing additional hardships - of caring, being bereaved, discriminated against, ill or any combination of life-traumas. These will be in addition to the impact of vicarious trauma occurring through the empathic nature of Social Work. The very nature of engagement with people who are experiencing adversity prior to; and now, during the COVID-19 pandemic is very evident as each new report across the regions of the UK on child protection¹, domestic abuse², learning disabled population³ and increasingly on mental well-being⁴ all serve to demonstrate.

I have met with the BASW/SWU's Trade Union Advice and Representation Officers was an absolute honor on taking up the role. They maintain and update their own continuous professional development, registration as well as Trade Union skills in order to support members with such commitment is truly heartening. This function brings together the 4 countries of the UK. This is a key and fundamental strength to the Union's unique identity. Each country's laws and registration bodies' deviates, as does the Coronavirus Acts 2020 and Acts across the UK. The approaches to COVID-19 amplifies the four different Lockdowns /Firebreaks and Levels across the UK that are expertly navigated.

Thank You All.

As COVID-19 continues, the current restrictions can only help to enable us making connections and forming alliances in a very different way - looking outwards. As Chair, I am attending the many events <https://www.basw.co.uk/events>.



A highlight, was SWU's **Talk to SWU: work place issues webinar** on 16th December 2020. This demonstrated the reality of the difficulties Social Workers face and the expertise that SWU can bring. The compliments and responses to the on-line advice session more evidence that the Trade Union Advice and Representation Officers fantastic work. The 'open event' enabled all Social Workers to join, not only appreciating and demonstrating **Solidarity in practice** by SWU leading and extending the hand of friendship it was a magnificent positive example of both values of Social Work and Union's professionalism. Such sharing of knowledge will make a safer workplaces for all social workers, their managers and the environment and cultures that operate within. SWU's Trade Union values embedded and are highlighting to Social Workers to reach out at this time, and from the recent increase to join our specialist union.

As Chair, I am grateful to John McGowan our General Secretary in SWU for his hard work, integrity and on-going commitment to SWU's development and growth. I have joined Carol Reid our inspirational Union Contacts Co-ordinator in endeavouring to have SWU presence in all online BASW /SWU events and meetings.

Be more! Join in! Speak up!

Contact: carys.phillips@swu-union.org.uk
Twitter: @CarysPhillips3

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/nov/06/abuse-babies-up-fifth-covid-19-eight-died-ofsted> (accessed 15/11/20)

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-domestic-abuse-forms-violence-against-women-girls-during-phases-1-2-3-scotlands-route-map-22-11-august-2020/> (accesses 15/11/20)

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/people-with-learning-disabilities-had-higher-death-rate-from-covid-19> (accessed 15/11/20)

⁴ https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5929/the-mental-health-emergency_a4_final.pdf? (accessed 15/11/20)

A big SWU Welcome for Shawn



Dr Shawn Major has joined SWU as our new Communications, Policy, and Engagement Officer. She is a Canadian who now lives in Birmingham, England with her husband and young son.

Shawn has previously worked as a content manager for the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), in publishing marketing, and for the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation - a Canadian non-profit supporting social workers in First Nations and Inuit communities. She earned her PhD in Creative Writing at Aberystwyth University.

In her spare time Shawn enjoys knitting, baking, and all things science fiction. She is looking forward to joining the SWU team.

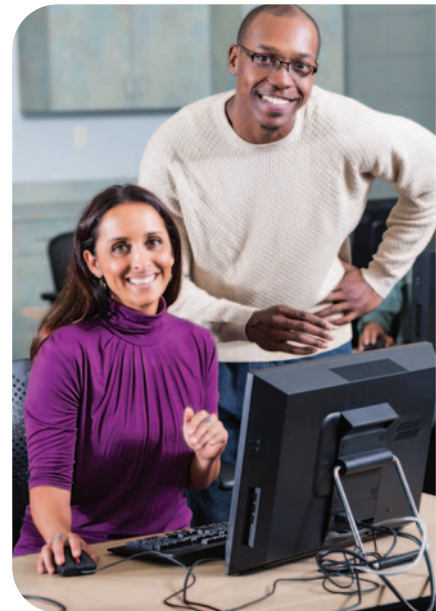
Only **£25** a year with your present BASW membership (**£10** a year for students)

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: louise.wood@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/



www.swu-union.org.uk



SWU_UK