

### A Message from SWU General Secretary John McGowan



I am pleased to share that I will remain as the SWU General Secretary for another term as I was unopposed regarding my re-election. I look forward to formalising this arrangement further with the SWU Executive and to

look at our main priorities ahead. Personally, I am keen to develop our campaigning; however, to achieve this we need more SWU members to be active with the union and to assist this process so please do consider joining our growing pool of union contacts. As always, support is available to you particularly if there is an important issue for you as a SWU member. Indeed, your assistance and activism are essential to take any campaigning issues forward.

Recent events in Palestine, has allowed me to reflect on the SWU trip to Palestine in 2019 and the terrific opportunity we had to meet local people and a range of social work

organisations. Everyone we met on

that 10-day trip were generous and proud to show off their life, their culture and their confidence and positivity in the future. From playing football with Bedouin children in the middle of the Palestinian desert, to sharing jokes in an olive grove, to experiencing the fear of checkpoints and the shared anger towards prisons at a hunger strike demonstration in Hebron, we met some truly incredible people across the West Bank, from all walks of life. Their ambition to 'make some noise' about the occupation and how much hope they hold daily.



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

The social workers and organisations we met on the trip reinforced that they are working within a system that does not promote the people. In the West Bank, children and adults were living under an occupation, in a culture where post-traumatic stress disorder does not even exist. How can it when there is no 'post', only daily, lived trauma?

Moving forward to recent events, I think it is important to provide clarification regarding the language used to depict the ongoing violence in occupied Palestine and throughout Israel. This is not a "conflict." Neither is it a "dispute" nor "sectarian violence" nor even a war in the traditional sense. It is not a conflict, because Israel is an occupying power, and the Palestinian people are an occupied nation. It is not a dispute, because freedom, justice and human rights cannot be treated as if a mere political disagreement.

Closer to home, I was pleased that the two motions we presented on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May at the General Federation of Trade Unions - Biennial General Council Meeting were unanimously passed. I am grateful for the ongoing assistance of the GFTU and the unanimous decision to support our motions. The affiliates of the GFTU will continue to help us spread the word not only about the important work we do as social workers but also the challenges we face as a profession.

Finally, I will end with some terrific news that we will be appointing two new SWU Ambassadors later in the year and both need no major introduction: Harry Venning and Emma Lewell-Buck MP.

**John McGowan**  
**General Secretary**

[j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk)

## Talk to SWU: workplace issues webinar on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**A chance to talk with the Social Workers Union  
about workplace issues**

**Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021 - 6:00pm to 7:00pm**

This session is free to attend, and you can talk directly to SWU about any workplace issues you are experiencing. The webinar is set up so that questions can be asked anonymously. All UK social workers and social work students are invited to attend and engage with this online advice and representation session regardless of membership.

In this session a panel of Advice & Representation Officers along with a SWU Legal Advisor will answer questions from UK social workers and social work students. Some common issues experienced by our members include:

Terms and conditions being changed or altered

Facing re-organisation

Experiencing bullying and harassment

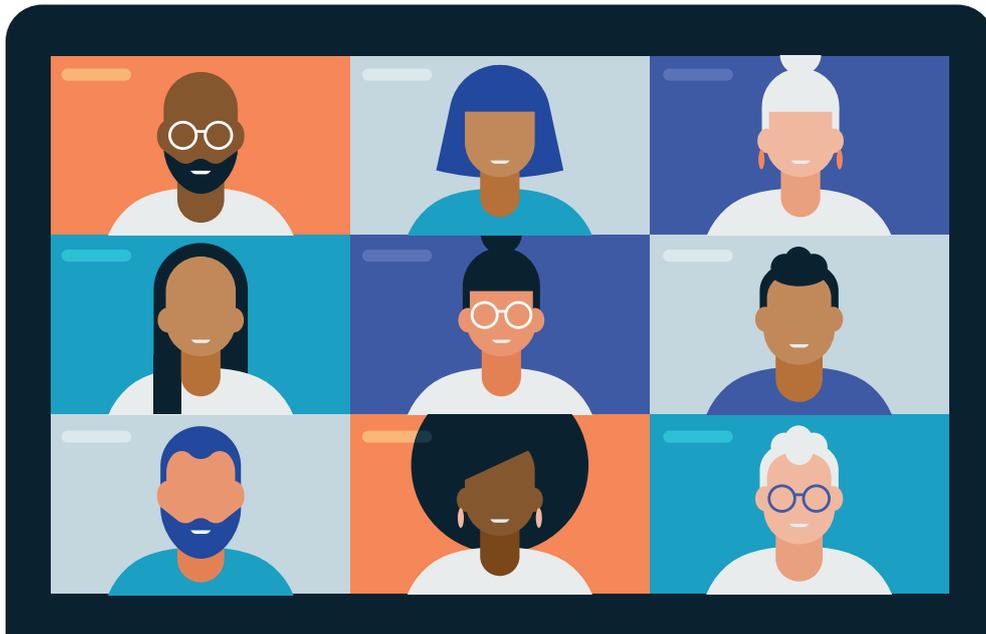
Please ensure that you log in before booking for this session so that your CPD and event records will reflect your attendance of this event.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/events/talk-swu-workplace-issues-webinar-7-july-2021>

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## Talk to SWU: work place issues webinar

Wednesday 7 July 2021 – 6-7pm



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

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-workplace-issues-webinar-7-july-2021](http://www.basw.co.uk/events/talk-swu-workplace-issues-webinar-7-july-2021)**

# Celebrate SWU's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with Us

## The Social Workers Union is pleased to announce plans for our upcoming 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration

**June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011 is the day that BASW set up SWU and we will be hosting an online celebration that runs for the ten days leading up to this date.**

Join us on June 12<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> for an online showcase celebrating the history and future of SWU. Each day we will publish new content that reflects on SWU's past, how far we have come as a trade union, and where we are going. You will see video messages and blogs from current and former SWU Executives, the Advice and Representation team, the first ever member of SWU, SWU campaigns, and more.

**SWU History booklet will be emailed to all members on June 21<sup>st</sup> so watch out for this.**

During this celebration we will also announce the winners of the SWU Assignment essay competition for World Social Work Day 2021. This competition remains open for entries until June 4<sup>th</sup> so social work students in the UK still have a chance to enter to win one of four £500 grants.

10 years is an exciting milestone, and you are all invited to enjoy the virtual festivities! Here is some context and history around how and why BASW decided to form SWU.



**The Social Workers Union was established on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011.**

'Pursuant to the resolution by BASW Council on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2011, it was resolved by BASW to establish a trade union which is to be called "The Social Workers Union" and to adopt rules for such trade union.' (BASW AGM, 2011)

Before this time, the fact that BASW did not have a statutory right to represent members at disciplinary hearings meant that sometimes employers would refuse to allow BASW to represent. The only way to gain statutory rights was to become a trade union and for BASW members to join SWU. Importantly, SWU has a legal right for its Advice & Representation officers to attend and represent at disciplinary and grievance procedures unlike BASW, which offers an extra layer of support for its members.

## One Hundred SWU 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary badges to give away

SWU has designed some limited-edition badges to celebrate our 10th Anniversary. If you would like an opportunity to get your hands on one of the badges please email [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk) with your name and postal address stating **why SWU membership is important to you?**



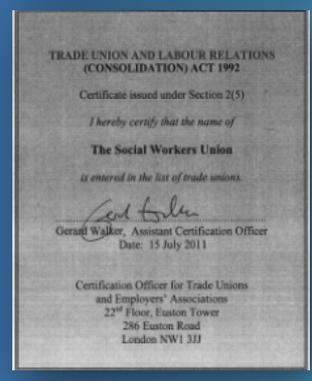
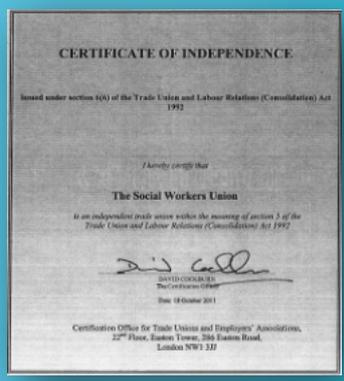
*Please note, SWU Union Contacts will automatically receive a badge so no need for union contacts to apply.*



Social Workers Union

History booklet will be emailed to all members on 21<sup>st</sup> June

# Our History



# Why we responded to SWU members on the issue: 'social workers in England and Wales should have parity with other emergency workers'

Social workers deserve the protection from assault that many frontline emergency professions already have.

Social workers work out of hours as an emergency service, some social workers work alone in this role and often encounter aggression that can lead to violence whilst doing their job. Members have advised us that they have been spat at, verbally abused, threatened with weapons, subject to ongoing harassment, physically injured, and sexually assaulted. The government has classified social workers as "critical workers" during the COVID-19 pandemic but has not given them the protection that other emergency workers have - social workers are also emergency workers in responding to a variety of needs such as Child Protection, Adults at Risk, and Mental Health, the EDT (Emergency Duty Teams) have "Emergency" in their title, it is a Statutory Service.

Many SWU members have been raising this issue with us for several years and, as a member-led organisation, it is vital that we listen to them and act on this. Several members from England have agreed to share their experience to show the seriousness of this issue. A member advised that they were targeted and faced with hardening measures undertaken on their home and workplace after undertaking some emergency work. The risk to their family in this case was so great that they were advised to give their children's and partner's information to the police in case they had to ring 999. Our member still has an alarm to this day for their own safety.

One member said: *'We do this job and our families/loved ones don't always know what we do and who we deal with. I'm sure most workers would feel very differently about the petition if they knew their loved ones were at risk and their home wasn't the safe haven they think it is.'*

Another member, spoke about an emergency home visit with the Police there as support. *'I was violently assaulted during the visit but not the Police Officer. I think the person knew not to assault a Police Officer but I was an easy target'*. Alongside anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems associated with assaults our members have endured life changing injuries and for some not returning to social work and a secure job.

Social workers in Scotland who enforce child protection orders or carry out mental health assessments already have this type of protection under the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005. The Royal College of Nurses indicates that it has provided better protection for their members, stating in a briefing paper: *'The NHS Scotland staff survey in 2015 found that the proportion of NHS staff who had experienced a physical attack had decreased by 10 percentage points since 2008.'* In addition, other unions; for example, GMB pushed for their ambulance members to be added to the initial Bill. This was successful due to the emergency nature of their work and has had a positive impact for staff protection and fully welcomed by their membership.

This is exactly why the British Association of Social Workers and the Social Workers Union started the petition to gauge opinion and respond to member requests to challenge the exclusion of social workers and to request that the government add social workers to the group of professions that it is an additional offence to assault while they are on duty. This would be done by amending the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 using the current Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. So far the petition has over 13,200

signatures and more people are signing it every day. This has been the fastest response we have ever received at SWU with so many positive emails on the subject to us from members.

The inclusion of social workers in the Act by itself and the approach of dealing with perpetrators in a more severe way, in terms of sentencing at court, is not going to completely deter or eradicate this type of behaviour in society. We need to do further work to ensure that our members are safe in the workplace. This is often difficult when social workers do not know what they are facing during an emergency home visit.

However, some do support the current status quo in the application of the law. While this stance supports prosecuting assaults on social workers on the same basis of others, it takes no account of the role of Social Work and the risk encountered by the profession. Some alternative directions have been suggested including a restorative justice approach. These concepts all sound worthy, but they would take a long time to get any meaningful change to be enacted and, in the meantime, social workers would still be acting as emergency response workers but not receiving the same protection, which is unacceptable. SWU's view is that merely perpetuates the invisibility of social work and social care; as well as the poor response from Government to the sector as a whole.

SWU is committed to improving the wellbeing and working conditions of social workers and our members. We firmly believe that social workers are entitled to parity of esteem with other public sector professionals such as health workers in the NHS and other emergency workers. We are simply asking that social workers in England and Wales receive the same protection afforded to other frontline emergency workers.

The introduction of the new and specific offences under the Act can only be seen as a positive start in recognising the risks to this profession. SWU does not see any concrete or actionable alternatives suggested outside the nebulous concepts of "increase public trust and confidence in social work". This amendment supports people to understand the risks of social work (like assault).

**Please share your views below to help inform our ongoing discussion with the Government.**

BASW and SWU will continue to campaign for working conditions that enable social workers to thrive and support their communities safely.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/assaults-social-workers-petition-share-your-views>

## Social Media

If you have not done so then please follow us on Facebook and Twitter - we are planning to post and tweet regular updates about the work and developments of the Social Workers Union.

### Monthly Newsletter

Monthly newsletters are emailed to all SWU members. If you are not receiving this then please check what email address we have. The newsletters 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)

The recent articles from SWU Advice and Representation have been well received from members. We are therefore delighted that SWU Trade Union Advice and Representation Officer Julie Long shares another piece of advice and this time covering: Making a Flexible Working Application and Redundancy



## Making a Flexible Working Application

Flexible working is a way of working that suits an employee's needs, whether wanting flexible working hours, or to work from home. When making a flexible working request, there are two options to consider. The first is to make a formal statutory request, under the rules of law, and the second is a non-statutory request.

A statutory request is a request made under the law on flexible working. You and your employer must follow a process that is set in law when negotiating your flexible working request. To make a statutory request you must have worked as an employee for 26 consecutive weeks by the date of your application. Agency workers, employee shareholders and previous requesters in the last 12 months are unable to make a request. However, agency workers returning from parental leave and employee shareholders who have returned from parental leave within the last 14 days, are able to. Employers must deal with a request in a reasonable manner by assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the application, holding a meeting to discuss

the request with the employee and by offering an appeal process. If you are ineligible for a statutory, a non-statutory application can still be put forward. An employee can take the employer to an employment tribunal if the request is not handled in a reasonable manner. An employer can refuse an application if they have a good business reason.

You can make a non-statutory request for flexible working if you are not entitled to a statutory one. There is no set procedure for a non-statutory request, and it isn't made under the law of flexible working. You should make your request in writing, so it is clear to your employer. It is also worth checking if the employer runs their own scheme, which could be more generous than a statutory request.

If your flexible working request is accepted, the change in your contract will be permanent. It is advisable to agree a trial period to ensure both parties are happy with the new arrangements. You can also agree to a temporary change with your employer.

## Redundancy

If you are facing redundancy at work, your employer has a set of rules they must follow. There must be no discrimination during the redundancy. It is discrimination if you're made redundant at least partly because you're a man or a woman, pregnant or on maternity leave, from a particular race, ethnicity or country, married or in a civil partnership, disabled, from the LGBT community, your religious beliefs or you're older or younger than the other people you work with. These

categories are called protected characteristics and it is discrimination if being in one of these groups made you more likely to be chosen.

There has to be fair reasons for the redundancy. It is unfair if you were chosen at least partly because you asked for one of your work rights, made a complaint about health and safety, reported your employer for illegal practices, work part-time or fixed term, are in a trade union, have been on strike or have been on jury service.

If the employer is making 20 or more people redundant, a group consultation for collective redundancy must be held. Union representatives must be present, or representatives for the group must be chosen, if there is no union. The consultation must be longer than 30 days before the first person is made redundant and the representatives must have written details of why there is redundancy, how many people are being made redundant, the areas of the business chosen, the process of how they'll choose and how they'll make redundancy payments.

If you have worked for the employer for more than 2 years, your employer has to be genuine and reasonable when choosing you for the redundancy. There must be a genuine reason for the redundancies, and they must consider the right group for the redundancy and then choose the right people from this group. If under 40, you are entitled to one week's pay for every year of service and it's a week and a half for the over 40's.

Always talk to a SWU Union rep if you have redundancy concerns.

## SWU Assignment 2021: Social Work Student Essay Competition Open Until June 4<sup>th</sup>

SWU's World Social Work Day Essay Assignment Competition 2021 will remain open for submissions until Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021. **Four £500 grant prizes will be awarded to the most compelling essays.**

This year SWU invites undergraduate and postgraduate social work students across the UK to reflect on this question: **"I want to make a difference" is a common phrase used by social workers and students when asked 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.**

Our competition question this year has been developed within the context of World Social Work Day 2021's theme 'Ubuntu: I am Because We are - Strengthening Social Solidarity and Global Connectedness.' This is the first theme of the 2020 - 2030 Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development and it is a concept and philosophy that resonates with the social work perspective of the interconnectedness of all peoples and their environments.

This is an opportunity for social work students to reflect on the current nature of social work and the intent they bring to the profession. Today's students will become practitioners in a world still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a time of unprecedented challenges and the future of social work depends on those who want to make a difference.

See Page 10 below for details on how to complete and submit your SWU Assignment. Completed assignments will be judged by a panel which will include representation from the Austerity Action Group, Carys Phillips (SWU Chair), and Geraldine Nosowska (UK Chair BASW).

The competition winners will be announced during SWU's 10th Anniversary online celebration that will be taking place from June 12<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>. Can't wait until June to read insights from bright social work students? The four winning essays from the 2020 WSWD Essay Assignment Competition are available to read here.

# 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



## Actively supporting the Union

‘As a lifelong trade unionist, I would like to see all working people joining a union to receive the support and collective security that comes with membership’.

As somebody who worked as a full-time organiser for a large trade union before becoming a social worker, I knew when I qualified that I wanted to be a member of a specialist trade union with specific insight and knowledge of my profession. I wanted to know that advice and representation would come from experienced social workers with an understanding of the complexities of the role, and I wanted to know that my union challenged austerity, promoted membership, and encouraged activism.

As social workers we’ve seen how the last decade of imposed austerity has impacted on individuals and decimated communities. We’ve worked within local authorities whose imposed austerity measures and government legislation, such as the Care Act 2014 and the Children & Social Work Act 2017, have restricted our abilities to support and empower service users in the ways that we know we could and should. Austerity and legislation have challenged and contradicted our ethics and ideologies and affected our working conditions and wellbeing, let alone the lives and communities of the adults and children we work alongside.

As social workers we are often applauded for being ‘resilient’, ‘resourceful’, and ‘going the extra mile’, and of course building a trusting relationship and supporting an individual or family in a positive and empowering way is extremely rewarding for all parties. But ‘resilience’ is also about putting up with something that isn’t quite right and doing the best we can within those boundaries. This is what we as social workers face when working within the parameters of austerity, privatisation,

managerialism and, as if that’s not enough, a global pandemic!

I frequently talk to SWU members who highlight the difficulties they face every day, particularly given the additional stresses and anxieties brought about by the pandemic and the difficulties and restrictions faced when trying to undertake a complex and person-centred job from the confines of your own home - not within a comfortable ‘home office’ but with kids, pets and partners rushing in and out. I still work in adult mental health and understand the frustrations around lack of resources and additional service-user support, and the loss of interaction with vulnerable service users who have no access to laptops, wifi and iphones. As social workers we know that this is everyday life for many families, regardless of a pandemic.

As SWU reaches our tenth year and given the challenges of the past decade, it’s hardly surprising that SWU’s membership has grown to over 15,000 and we’ve seen a rise, not only in social workers wanting to become SWU members, but also in social workers wanting to be active within their union. We’ve seen growing numbers of SWU Union Contacts who’ve played a huge part in growing and developing SWU by promoting membership in workplaces, universities, placements, and beyond, and we applaud their commitment and contribution. Our Union Contacts share important information and merchandise, they get involved in campaigns, Austerity Action and focus groups, encourage activism, collectivism, and participation, all with ongoing support and training from SWU.



It could be argued that social workers, by our very nature and choice of profession, are “Activists”, challenging and exposing not only our own working conditions and restrictions, but also the limitations and lack of resources imposed upon the individuals, families, and communities where we live and work. We are all victims of austerity, and we all should

challenge it. In the next ten years I’d like to see SWU continue to develop and grow as the only trade union for Social Workers - and social work Activists.

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

## SWU Recent Blogs (May)

### **SWU Chair Carys Phillips announces that John McGowan will be standing for re-election**

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/may/swu-chair-carys-phillips-announces-john-mcgowan-will-be-standing-re-election>

### **SWU Blog: Mental Health Awareness Week 2021. This year, join the fight for mental health and positive wellbeing.**

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/may/swu-blog-mental-health-awareness-week-2021>

### **BASW and SWU respond to open letter about 'Assaults on Social Workers' petition.**

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/may/basw-and-swu-respond-open-letter-about-assaults-social-workers-petition>

### **SWU delivers two motions at General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) Biennial General Council Meeting.**

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/may/swu-delivers-two-motions-general-federation-trade-unions-gftu-biennial-general>

### **Workforce: Social Work England proposes doubling annual CPD recording requirement**

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/05/21/social-work-england-proposes-doubling-annual-cpd-recording-requirement/>



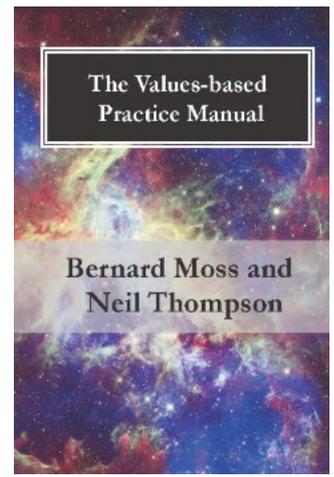
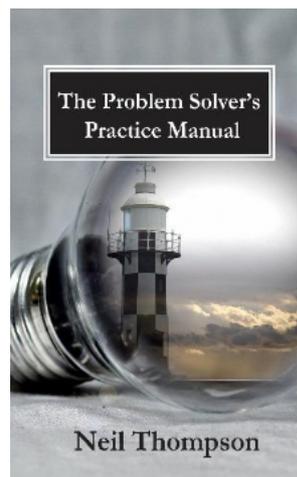
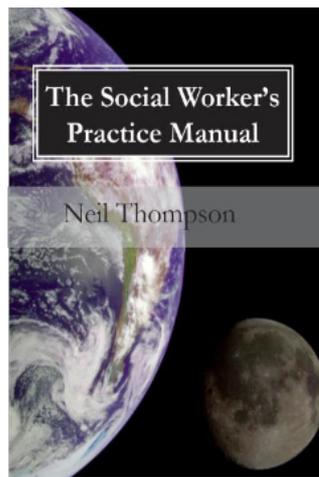
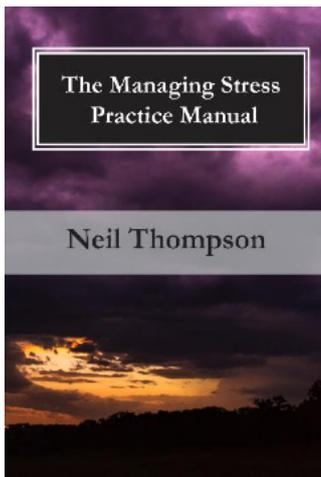
Introducing ...

## The Neil Thompson Academy

Neil Thompson is one of the most successful authors of his generation. With over 40 books to his name and over 40 years of experience as a practitioner, manager, educator and adviser, he is one of the most highly respected people in his field.

His new Academy brings together in one convenient place information about his books, e–courses and services. There are also free learning resources available at [www.NeilThompson.info](http://www.NeilThompson.info).

You will find information about his practice manuals, including:



Neil also offers a wide range of e–learning courses based on his decades of experience of teaching, training and mentoring.

He now also offers two online learning programmes – The Social Work Finishing School and Survive in Social Work. See overleaf for details of discounted prices for SWU members.

In addition, he has also recently launched the humansolutions Health & Well–being portal, an amazing set of wellness resources available for unlimited use for a low monthly subscription. Ideal for self–care! The SWU discount price is just £4.99 per month!

## The Social Work Finishing School

This online programme has been developed with two groups of people in mind: final-year students and newly qualified workers wanting support and guidance in making the transition to being a fully fledged worker and experienced practitioners and managers looking for a refresher to re-energise them.

This is a programme of fives: 5 video-based modules, 5 worksheets and the opportunity to ask Neil 5 questions as a form of online mentoring. The full price is £99, but it is available to SWU members for just £79. Visit [www.SocialWorkFinishing.School](http://www.SocialWorkFinishing.School) for further information.

## Survive in Social Work

This is an intensive six-months programme of online study designed for people who want help coping with the immense pressures social workers currently face in the present climate.

It includes text-, audio- and video-based learning materials, access to the humansolutions Health & Well-being portal, and personal mentoring support from Neil. The aim of the programme is to go from surviving to thriving. The full cost of the investment for this potentially life-changing programme is £599, but is available to SWU members for just £499, with phased payments available.

Visit [www.SurviveInSocialWork.com](http://www.SurviveInSocialWork.com) to find out more.



Visit [www.NeilThompson.info](http://www.NeilThompson.info) to see what the Academy has to offer. Membership is FREE!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Neil directly at: [neil@avenueconsulting.co.uk](mailto:neil@avenueconsulting.co.uk).

# Frontline, Firstline and now Headline... the Plotline Thickens

By Joe Hanley, Lecturer in Social Work, Open University.

Frontline, the social work training charity, is gradually colonising social work services in England. I do not use the term colonising lightly, but when a powerful actor aggressively enters an area, expands rapidly, imposes ideological change, places their own people in leadership positions, and monopolises resources, all justified by a belief that they need to save those they see as inferior, colonising seems worrying apt.

Frontline was officially launched as a fast-track qualifying training organisation in 2013 by then education secretary Michael Gove. In its short life it has expanded offer rapidly, most recently in 2019 receiving a £45 million government contract to train 900 social workers up to 2022 (at a cost approx double university education). Frontline has also expanded into other arenas, such as a 10-month social work management training programme called Firstline, and even a “blueprint” proposal that outlines its plans for wider workforce reform.

Their most recent venture is called Headline (I am seeing a marketing pattern here...), announced on May 19<sup>th</sup>. Headline is stated to be a 12-month leadership development programme, this time aimed at heads of services. Frontline is not known for its transparency, and the launch of the Headline programme is no different. There is limited information about how the new programme was developed, who was involved, and most worrying, who is funding it (and at what cost to you!).

Despite this unclear situation, we can make some guesses based on Frontline’s track record. All Frontline programmes to date have been heavily overpriced compared to existing offers, and heavily subsidised by the central government. Likely

Headline will seek a similar model. We also know that those who complete Headline, like those who complete Firstline and Frontline, will become part of the Frontline fellowship, described by the organisation as being a “movement of leaders” united in their shared purpose. Those on the inside of this movement are afforded networking and other opportunities that are withheld from the rest of us, a bit like the old boy networks of private schools like Eton.

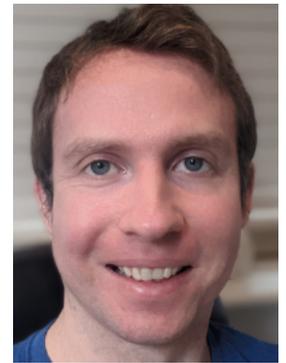
For an organisation that has now trained thousands, this movement is growing increasingly powerful. The focus on leadership also positions these fellows to rapidly rise through organisational hierarchies. Over a third of Frontline qualified social workers are promoted above social work positions within two years of graduating, and almost 50% of managers who undertake Firstline are promoted shortly thereafter. Unsurprisingly then, only 38.1% of Frontline fellows are still working in frontline social work roles.

But why wait for these individuals to move up the ranks? Why not cut out the middle man and get to those already in these leadership posts? Enter Headline - aimed directly at Heads of Services. It is difficult to see this as anything other than a concerted effort by an organisation that is highly reliant on networking to solidify its positional advantage within the profession.

Considering these issues, it is worthwhile thinking about who is behind Frontline. It has never been run by a social worker, and even a cursory glance at Frontline’s governance and supporters shows they are heavily influenced (dare I say controlled) by global business and banking interests, including Barclays, Boston Consulting Group, Credit Suisse, Fidelity, KPMG and others.

We might think that the recently launched Children's Social Care Review in England would want to highlight these issues (and many more). However, in line with the Frontline playbook, they have positioned their founder and former CEO in the role as chair of the review. Therefore, I would gamble any amount of money that the review will ignore these issues. Unfortunately, the reality is that we are actually gambling the future of our profession and those we support, and Frontline are increasingly holding all the cards.

*Joe Hanley is a lecturer in social work at the Open University, with an interest in social work policy, education and networks. He is also currently undertaking a Doctorate in Education at Brunel University London.*



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**Do you have a campaign or opinion on social work issues to share with SWU?  
If so, please get in touch with [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk)**

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## Reflective Supervision

Research is underway at Bath Spa University and students Alice Walker and Annabel Mitchell are working with the Social Workers Union on Reflective Supervision



We are two Bath Spa University undergraduate students who are both excited to begin a project working alongside Bath Spa academics and the Social Workers Union. This is particularly exciting as this line of research has the potential to benefit not only social workers across the UK, but also the many children and adults they support on a daily basis.

One of the students, Alice Wallace, is completing her degree with the goal of obtaining a PhD. Her interests currently include occupational stress and intervention techniques. In general, breaking down the barriers that prevent people from thriving. Annabel Mitchell, on the other hand, is passionate about child development and the role of social workers. She hopes that this research will help to improve the well-being of employees and service users, as well as positive outcomes in social work.

We started with a rapid review of the literature, examining various types of social work supervision, methods used, and potential barriers hindering effective supervision. We are also interested in researching the respective outcomes for social workers' well-being and their service users. After completing the initial rapid review of literature, we both hope to introduce a framework of standard procedure for reflective supervision, in collaboration with a team of Bath Spa University academics.

We are both excited and passionate about the opportunity to collaborate with academics, social workers, and professionals in this field to improve working conditions for social workers. So far, we have learnt the importance of developing a reflective practice as it is believed to be central to the development of a competent and confident social worker. Under the right circumstances, self-reflection can be a very beneficial concept. Therefore, we are eager to continue the research and implement the framework for reflective supervision in order to ultimately improve on the many factors of everyone involved.



Annabel Mitchell

**Alice and Annabel**

# Additional free SWU member discounts as part of your £25

## Online learning with Neil Thompson

Neil has two online learning programmes that are available at a discounted rate for SWU members. *The Social Work Finishing School* has been specially designed for final-year students and NQSWs as well as experienced practitioners and managers needing a refresher to re-energise them. £79 instead of £99 - find out more at [www.SocialWorkFinishing.School](http://www.SocialWorkFinishing.School).



Neil's *Survive in Social Work* programme is an intensive six months' course to help overloaded practitioners not only survive in these troubled times but also thrive. SWU members are entitled to a £100 discount - find out more about the course at [www.SurviveInSocialWork.com](http://www.SurviveInSocialWork.com).

A 20% discount on many of Neil's books is also available to SEU members. To take up any of these offers please contact Joanne Marciano, SWU Admin Manager: [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk)

## GFTU Training Courses and reduced price accommodation at Quorn Hotel

SWU are members of GFTU. There are almost 100 courses offered on the General Federation of Trade Unions website with the majority **free for SWU members**. This is



Quorn Grange Hotel - owned by GFTU

a great membership benefit and adds value to the joining fee of £25 along with guaranteed employment representation and being part of the trade union movement.

All courses are listed on the web link brochure. To apply for any of the courses please download an application form and forward it to SWU Admin Manager: [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk)  
For courses and application form go to: <http://www.gftu.org.uk/>

Course places cannot be guaranteed but you will be notified of availability once you apply.

**Morrish Solicitors** SWU members will be offered a 10% discount with Morrish Solicitors, one of the leading legal firms. If you are looking for friendly, professional legal advice, along with welcome savings, SWU members will receive a wide range of discounts and benefits, giving you peace of mind.



To access this member benefit and find out more please go to: <https://www.morrishsolicitors.com/socialworkersunion>

## Lighthouse Financial Group - Complimentary financial health check

Want to get a grip of your finances, but unsure where to start? Help is at hand - the SWU recently appointed Lighthouse Financial Advice as its preferred provider of personal finance advice and they are offering all members a complimentary, no obligation financial health check.



All SWU members are entitled to a no obligation, complimentary financial health check with a Lighthouse Financial Advice adviser, who will explain how you may be able to:

- build up a nest-egg tax-efficiently, for yourself or for your children or grandchildren
- boost your pension provision, so you will be able to enjoy a comfortable retirement
- protect your family's income, so they have enough money if the worst happens
- take your pension and get the best possible income
- pay for long-term care
- pass on your wealth to your loved ones in a tax-efficient way.

To book your complimentary, no obligation financial health check call 08000 85 85 90 or email [appointments@lighthousefa.co.uk](mailto:appointments@lighthousefa.co.uk) quoting reference **SWU1**

# Care Review Watch Alliance

## Why should social workers be interested in, if not outright concerned about, this Care Review?

In January 2021 Education Secretary Gavin Williamson launched a “wide-ranging, independent review” of children’s social care in England, appointing founder and CEO of the social work training organisation Frontline Josh MacAlister as chair.

In March I sent a number of Tweets setting out some predictions for outcomes of the current reform agenda in social care and social work in England in which the Care Review takes place. I do not claim that any of these are exactly ‘on the money’, but rather indicate the potential direction of travel. The first read:

*I believe we may well be observing the endgame of a plan at least 8 years in the making which will see children’s and family social work completely refashioned and, indeed, replaced with ‘child/family protection professionals’ who will be trained to tackle social problems with prescribed skill sets rooted in behaviour/parenting modification techniques and a particularised, narrow conception of ‘systemic social work’.*

I am not alone in making a prediction along these lines.

Eileen Munro’s recent disclosure that the Review’s chair is considering separating out child protection services from the wider children and families social work function therefore did not come as a surprise. However, laid out in such succinct and stark terms by a social work leader of considerable standing it still carried the shock of revelation.

The Review has been promoted as a ‘once in a generation’ opportunity to fix a system widely held to be ‘broken’. Yet, it is increasingly clear that few social workers even know that there is such a Review under way.

Why *should* social workers be interested in, if not outright concerned about, this Care Review?

The Review takes place in the context of a several years-long programme of reform that has made repeated attempts to deregulate children’s services, whether through the controversial ‘exemption clauses’ set out in the Children and Families Bill of 2016/17 or through the unlawful, under-cover-of-pandemic attempt to strip away several dozen safeguards from children’s legislation via Statutory Instrument 445 in 2020. Proponents of the Review and the wider reform agenda deny that the aim is to deregulate the sector in order to make way for non-state actors to provide vital social support to children and families. However, the roots and history of the current reform agenda strongly suggest this is precisely what is intended.

In 2013, then Education Secretary Michael Gove gave a speech to the NSPCC titled ‘getting it right for children in need’ in which he set out his vision for the reform of children’s social care and social work. This included the ‘academisation’ of children’s social services departments, posited as ‘freedom to innovate’. The chequered history of children’s trusts in local authorities seriously undermines this vision (as does the chequered history of teaching academies). In the speech, Gove also championed the aforementioned Frontline, founded and, until recently, led by the Chair of the Care Review. Gove also held up the ‘Reclaiming Social Work’ model developed by the then and current Chief Social Worker for Children and Families in England, Isabelle Trowler, who has a key role on the ‘design group’ for the Review, and is director of What Works for Children’s Social Care, representatives of which also have key roles in the Review. All of which does nothing to allay concerns about the independence or likely outcomes of the Review.

These are just a few of the issues and concerns surrounding the Care Review. Whatever your leanings and interests as a social worker, it is vitally important you take an interest and seek to have a voice in and around this Review, which will undoubtedly affect people who you support and stands to greatly influence how statutory social work is conceived, potentially affecting who social workers work with, when, and how. And, given concerns about academisation and privatisation, perhaps even who we work *for*.

One way they can do this is by joining with others through the professional association or a union, or joining or starting a campaigning group. For the past few weeks I've been a member of a group of people with personal and professional experience of social care systems, called the Care Review Watch Alliance. Our aim is to scrutinise the Review as it progresses, promote debate about it and

offer challenge where necessary, including through joining with other groups on key campaign priorities. The diverse make-up of the group reflects the range and reach of the Review and its outcomes. You may wish to join us, or indeed start your own group. Or you may choose to simply watch and observe. But, whatever you do, don't be the social worker who, years down the line, finds themselves asking, 'How did it come to this?'

The time is now.

**Christian Kerr, with input from  
Joe Hanley, Alissa Ruane and Robin Sen,  
of the Care Review Watch Alliance**

*Care Review Watch Alliance can be contacted  
via email at:  
[carereviewwatchalliance@outlook.com](mailto:carereviewwatchalliance@outlook.com)  
or via Twitter [@CareReviewWatch](https://twitter.com/CareReviewWatch)*

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## SWU Union Contacts - now is the time to be active with SWU

For those of you who have 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 Programme. We usually provide full-day group inductions in Manchester, and we hope to resume these as soon as we possibly can, but following current restrictions we have devised an online version of our Union Contact Induction which can be completed in your own time by working through a series of video presentations. The videos include presentations from myself and SWU General Secretary John McGowan, and the package has been produced with the assistance of SWU Ambassador Dr Neil Thompson, the well-known social work author and academic, who also contributes to the training.

Once the Induction 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, once Inducted 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 would like to know more about becoming a SWU Union Contact in your workplace or university, please drop me an email: [carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk)



# A Page of Activism



Be more • Join in • Speak Up

It is imperative that social workers evaluate their roles and (moral and regulatory) responsibilities. Current race relations require social workers to be proactive and do our homework to stay contemporarily astute as allies to Black and ethnic minority colleagues and service-users.

*Wayne Reid PO BASW*

**'The ONLY way to gain Statutory Rights was to BECOME a Union' ...**

Hilton Dawson (BASW CEO and 1<sup>st</sup> SWU General Secretary talking about how SWU was founded in 2011)

**Lack of equality in employment contributes to a lack of equality in society - this is a real issue that needs to be addressed and can no longer be ignored.**

Laura Sheridan, SWU/BASW Advice & Representation Advisor/TU Official



Social workers from all over the world have continually challenged racism. This is something we can be very proud of. Long may they continue to challenge racism wherever it occurs.

**'I didn't choose Social Work, Social Work chose me'**

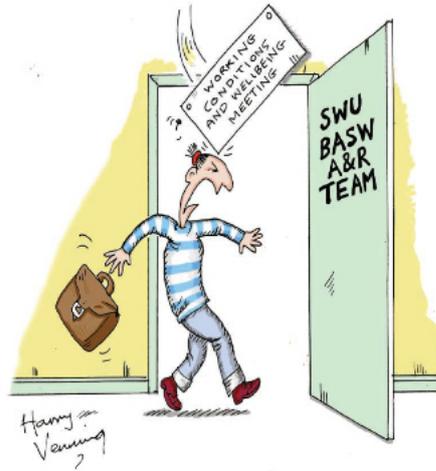
Harry Venning -SWU Ambassador

James Birchell – 1<sup>st</sup> SWU Member and SWU's 1<sup>st</sup> Honorary President

Our uniqueness remains:

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.

SWU General Secretary John McGowan



*'Social Workers have been the forgotten workforce throughout the pandemic, but they have remained strong in the face of attacks on our profession and in the face of those who aim, as the Government do, to diminish and trample over our core values and principles of social justice, respect and integrity'*  
(Hansard 18/3/2021)

Emma Lewell-Buck MP - SWU Ambassador 2021

**What can we all do? Ask awkward questions and challenge racist behaviour. Read about wider black history, read to your children about black history. Education is key.**

SWU Ambassador, Dr Jermaine Ravalier

**Trade unionism, like social work, is political and can influence policy and legislation. Joining SWU and becoming a Union Contact in your workplace or university enables you to be part of this growing collective.**

Carol Reid SWU's National Organiser

**The current COVID 19 pandemic has increased the stresses and losses we are facing whilst exposing the pre-existing inequalities us as Social Workers are all too aware of in society. SWU is breaking down barriers, misconceptions and rejuvenating the broader discourse of strong, if sometimes quiet, ACTIVISM in the workplace and representation.**

SWU Chair Carys Phillips



★ **YEARS** ★  
**CELEBRATION**  
**2011 - 2021**

**SWU**

**Social Workers Union**

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