

### General Secretary's Update



Last year's World Social Work Day Assignment Competition was a great success and I am happy that this will be continuing this year. The quality of entrants last year was excellent and hopefully interest will

remain high once more. Please share with as many Social Work Students as possible. Peter Unwin from the Austerity Action Group will be assessing the assignments, along with the SWU Chair and Geraldine Nosowska, BASW Chair.

The last few months have been very busy here at SWU as we continue to support workplace issues and members thanks to the skilled Advice and Representation Team. I have welcomed the opportunity to raise issues regarding Social Work England and an opportunity to discuss with several employers concerns about working conditions and poor practice. This has had a positive effect and discussions have been ongoing about the issues we have been raising. If you would like to share confidentially areas of poor practice or concerns about your working conditions, then please do get in touch.

A number of large individual unions have continued to lose membership over the last few years. I am therefore particularly pleased to say that membership of the Social Workers Union has expanded, and we are getting close to 14,500 members. As we know, a real strength is that union members want to be active through our Union Contact scheme and further opportunities to engage with activism. The application to join the Trade Union Congress will build on more opportunities to be active and campaign if we are successful with the application.

Knowing your rights at work is important so please do consider joining the SWU webinar on March 31<sup>st</sup>. We will continue to run the webinars if the take up is popular so please do share with colleagues the date and event (see page 4).

Finally, the Annual Statement on the finances which is sent to members is now complete for another year. To download the Annual Statement for 2020 please follow this link: <https://www.basw.co.uk/social-workers-union/swu-governance/reports-and-statements>

Keep up the great work as we move out of lockdown and I am sure further demands on our members.

**John McGowan**  
**General Secretary**  
[j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk)



## **The Social Workers Union is applying to be AFFILIATED WITH THE TUC**

### **Why we are applying with the TUC and what it means for our members?**

An application for affiliation to the TUC (Trades Union Congress) is both a historic step from the SWU Executive - SWU will become the only specialist social work trade union to affiliate to the TUC - and a natural progression. The TUC brings together 48 trade unions, representing 5.6 million workers. If successful, our affiliation increases our influence and allows us to help shape the TUC's strategies and campaigns.

The TUC aims to be an authoritative voice in political debate and regularly meets ministers at all levels of government, including Secretaries of State, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. If our application is successful, then SWU will have a seat on the TUC's General Council. TUC-affiliated unions also sit on the Public Services Forum, a tripartite body of unions, government, and public service employers. Membership of the TUC will enable us to put forward a motion for debate at the TUC Congress (the annual conference) and motions can be about trade union issues but also professional issues such as working conditions of social workers, adequate funding for social work, or the future of social work education. Motions that are passed at the conference shape TUC policy for the following year.

### **Who are the TUC?**

The TUC are the Trades Union Congress, the organisation that represents the wider trade union movement and the voice of Britain at work. There are currently 48 trade unions affiliated to the TUC, representing 5.6 million people from a wide range of occupations such as healthcare, local government, education, manufacturing, banking, acting, transport, sports, science and communication.

The TUC builds links with political parties, business, local communities in Britain and abroad and they campaign for a fair deal at work and for social justice.

### **What do SWU members get from our affiliation to the TUC?**

A louder and more powerful voice as social work issues and campaigns are heard by other affiliated trade unions, professional bodies and community organisations. Importantly for the SWU, the TUC conducts a wide range of policy, campaign and lobbying activity on equality and employment rights.

The TUC hold a variety of specialist conferences which SWU members will have access to including an annual Women's Conference, BME Worker's Conference, Disabled Workers Conference and LGBT conference.

## What do SWU Union Contact Representatives get from our affiliation to the TUC?

SWU Union Contacts will benefit from TUC affiliation primarily through the TUC Education programme and the range of Education courses. TUC Education delivers courses for workplace representatives of affiliated unions. The courses are recognised for quality and innovation and have been awarded an 'outstanding' rating.

SWU Union Contacts will benefit as they have access to a broader and wider portfolio of development opportunities and are able to network with workplace representatives from other trade unions, widening their experience and perspective.

The Education programme is an innovative programme that focuses on increasing organisational skills so that unions can be strong and effective in their campaigns, and inclusive, so that members and prospective members have the opportunity to be involved.

## Does this mean the SWU will be affiliated to the Labour Party?

The TUC is not affiliated to the Labour Party and seeks to build a constructive relationship with the government and the opposition, just as the SWU does. The TUC has dialogue with all the major parties and has a presence at the three main party conferences. 15 of the trade unions affiliated to the TUC have affiliations

with the Labour Party but most of the trade unions affiliated with the TUC are independent of any political party. The SWU will remain politically independent.

## Does this mean the SWU will no longer be a member of the General Federation of Trade Unions?

SWU will remain as a member of the GFTU and continue with the significant presence we have as part of the federation for specialist trade unions. The GFTU adds value and support to specialist unions like SWU and specialist sections of larger general unions. Membership of the GFTU adds value to our specialist trade union service. With affiliation fees of less than £1 per annum per member, we believe this offers exceptional value to members. The GFTU annual programme gives an indication of the range of support they provide. From developing professional support for General Secretaries, to offering an exceptional programme of trade union management training, to youth and arts festivals, to operational support and detailed specialist research and highly customised support for specialist individual unions.

**John McGowan**  
General Secretary

**Tell us what you think about the TUC application - email me directly or contribute to the discussion via social media.**

## Social Media

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

SWU Updates: <http://swu-updates.org.uk/>

### Monthly ebulletins

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

The ebulletins are also published on the web site.

### SWU can be found on the following:

Twitter: SWU\_UK

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

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



## Talk to SWU: work place issues webinar

Wednesday 31 March 2021 – 6-7pm



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

**What is the difference between direct vs indirect discrimination?**

**What are the issues surrounding discrimination based on religious and philosophical beliefs?**

**My employer wants to make changes to my contract of employment – what are the legal protections?**

**Can my employer require me to be vaccinated against CV19?**

**And: can my employer require me to work with someone who hasn't been!  
Or won't wear a mask?**

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

**FREE WEBINAR / CPD 1 HOUR**

[www.basw.co.uk/events/talk-swu-work-place-issues-webinar-0](http://www.basw.co.uk/events/talk-swu-work-place-issues-webinar-0)

# Union Contact Scheme Update

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



As you'll see elsewhere in this Newsletter, SWU is growing in membership and our figure is now well over 14,000. Looking through recent SWU data relating to the location of our Union Contacts, it's great to see that we have growing clusters of members within local authorities and amongst student cohorts in universities.

It's important that we have a presence of SWU Union Contacts within these growing groups of SWU members to ensure social work colleagues are aware of SWU's activism and campaigning, to encourage further membership, and to share details relating to Advice & Representation and how help can be accessed when required.

Some of our growing clusters are in areas where we may not already have Union Contacts, or we may only have one or two, and I'm keen to ensure a presence is established in these areas as our membership continues to develop. Some example areas with a growing SWU membership within local authorities are Devon, Lancashire, Oxfordshire, and Warwickshire, as well as Universities in Middlesex and Derby. If you are a practicing social worker or student member in any of these areas (or of course within any other area) and you'd like to have a role in representing your trade union within your workplace or student cohort, please do consider becoming a SWU Union Contact.

As a SWU Union Contact you will -

- Be the first point of contact for anyone in your workplace/university in relation to joining and getting involved in SWU - you will receive all relevant training, paperwork, and materials to successfully do this.
- Be an essential contact for SWU when we and members need to exchange information and ideas - you will be kept up to date with campaign details and materials to distribute to colleagues.
- Encourage SWU membership in your workplace/university by providing leaflets/flyers/promotional merchandise and materials which can be delivered to your home address or place of work.
- Promote and be involved in union activism, campaigns, events, marches, and rallies (dependent upon your availability and commitments).
- Receive induction training, regular contact and updates, newsletters, Facebook group, with a focus upon strengthening the union and ensuring you are happy and confident in your role.
- Have access to excellent free training opportunities from the General Federation of Trade Unions, to which SWU is affiliated.
- Have opportunities to attend and help develop regular branch meetings.
- Undertake workplace representational tasks\* if this is something that interests you. (\*Following an additional period of Phase 2 training provided by SWU, BASW and the General Federation of Trade Unions).

Please do get in touch if you would like further information.

In solidarity,

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

# Social Workers Union (SWU) Member Survey 2021

SWU conducted a Member Survey in January 2021 and 868 of our members responded within the 14-day survey window - thank you to those who participated for your time!

It was brilliant to hear from so many social workers about how passionate you are about your union, that you feel very strongly about the need for a union, and you value the services offered by SWU. Some of the survey results really stood out to us and we would like to share them with you.

92% said that advice and representation is absolutely vital for social workers. One member elaborated on their answer by saying, *"The majority of social workers do not challenge service cuts or care packages being declined as they have seen others being ousted and being labelled a renegade. Representation by the SWU is vital in such circumstances... I would encourage my colleagues to join the SWU to at least have a telephone service to discuss this with."*

SWU offers members guaranteed protection at employer hearings, representation from SWU Trade Union officials, and access to the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) offer of advice and representation at regulatory body hearings subject to eligibility and conditions.

*"The uniqueness of SWU is that they are social workers and also trained in understanding trade union issues, so there is a holistic approach to support and problem-solving, with a great sense of belonging."* Denise Freeman, retired social worker and SWU Union Contact.

SWU is the only UK trade union for, and run by, qualified and registered social workers. As a smaller specialist union, we get results for members through one-to-one consultation and support for their individual circumstances.

Two-thirds (64%) said that the opportunity to join SWU was a factor in their decision to join BASW. Together, BASW and SWU provide the best protection for social workers from social workers. Survey respondents believe that SWU membership is an affordable addition to their BASW membership (£2.08 per month or 83p per month for students) and offers value for money. It is important to remember that BASW is not a trade union and that its members must opt into SWU to gain the benefits of belonging to a trade union.

Other opinions from SWU members include:

- 92% feel acting as a collective voice is important
- 86% say being represented at work is important
- 79% believe unions are vital in protecting our rights at work
- 77% want to see unions talking to politicians on our behalf
- 70% see maintaining standards is important
- 64% said that being part of a trade union (SWU) was an important factor in their decision to join BASW

There was significant interest from members in joining our growing team of SWU Union Contacts.

If you are thinking about becoming a SWU Union Contact in your workplace (or university if you're a student social worker) you will be interested to know that we are currently offering an online version

of our popular Union Contact Induction. We hope to resume our full-day group induction events in Manchester as soon as possible but, in the meantime and with the assistance of the well-known social work author and academic Dr Neil Thompson, our new online induction process can be completed in your own time. Importantly, you will not be left to 'get on with it' - you will be provided with regular support, updates, advice and information, and you can contact SWU's National Organiser & Union Contact Scheme Manager Carol Reid at any time with questions about your Union Contact role.

There were many positive comments on the survey about the SWU being a specialist trade union, a union run by social workers, and the quality of the Advice and Representation offered by the union. We know we have a lot still to do in our next decade and we are heartened by this outpouring of member support!

Many of you expressed enthusiasm about hearing more from SWU and that's great because we have a lot to say - you can hear it all by following @SWU\_UK on Twitter, joining the SWU Facebook Community, and reading our monthly newsletter.

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## Campaign Corner

### **Children's Social Care Review**

Along with many others, SWU has supported Article 39 as organisations and raising deep concern about the recently announced children's social care review.

<https://article39.org.uk/childrens-social-care-review/>

### **Children's social worker caseloads continue year-on-year fall, according to DfE figures**

Children's social worker caseloads continue year-on-year fall, according to DfE figures | Community Care

### **Social Work England**

Delays in fitness to practise process having 'life-changing impact' on social workers which we have campaigned on.

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/02/12/delays-fitness-practise-process-life-changing-impact-social-workers-says-union/>

### **Social Care Coalition**

Future Social Care Coalition - We have pledged our support for *Time For A Fair Deal for Social Care Workers*.

<https://futuresocialcarecoalition.org/>

### **UK Palestine Mental Health Network**

SWU will continue to raise issues regarding Palestine and encourage our colleagues individually and collectively to consider their response to the Palestinian call for boycott, sanctions, and divestment. We support the work of Palestine campaign groups.

<https://ukpalmhn.com/aims/>

## SWU Recent Blogs (February)

### **Social Workers Union seeks to join TUC - comments from SWU General Secretary and SWU Chair**

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/feb/social-workers-union-seeks-join-tuc-%E2%80%93-comments-swu-general-secretary-and-swu>

### **SWU World Social Work Day 2021 student essay competition will award £500 grants to four winners**

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/feb/swu-world-social-work-day-2021-student-essay-competition-will-award-%C2%A3500-grants>

### **SWU shares Article 39's deep concern about the Children's Social Care Review 2021**

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/feb/blog-swu-shares-article-39%E2%80%99s-deep-concern-about-children%E2%80%99s-social-care-review>

**Social Workers Union (SWU) Member Survey 2021.** It was brilliant to hear from so many social workers about how passionate you are about your union.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/feb/social-workers-union-swu-member-survey-2021>

### **SWU responds to ONS figures on social worker Covid-19 deaths**

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/feb/swu-responds-ons-figures-social-worker-covid-19-deaths>

**SWU Blog: LGBT+ History Month and Ubuntu.** SWU supports LGBT+ History Month and its effort to educate out prejudice and make LGBT+ people, in all their rich diversity, visible.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/feb/swu-blog-lgbt-history-month-and-ubuntu>

## Farewell to Tim

Tim O'Shea, Professional Business Advisor to SWU, has decided to move on after almost 5 years in the role. Tim's advice and expertise on all matters financial has been invaluable to the SWU Executive during these years. SWU remains in a healthy financial position with a budget for this current year in excess of £300,000 thanks to a steadily growing membership now well over 14,000 whose subscriptions fund directly the work and development of the union. Any member who wants further information about the financial aspects of SWU can do so by contacting the Honorary Treasurer at : [treasurer@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@swu-union.org.uk)

Meanwhile, thank you again Tim and best wishes in all your future ventures.

# Support for a National Social Care Service

SWU Member Carolyn Barber shares with us her view on this opportunity

A recent online conference hosted by the Future Social Care Coalition brought together a host of employers, providers, service users, social care charities and politicians from across the spectrum. There were powerful keynote contributions from Sir Andrew Dilnot, author of the 2011 report into adult social care, Christine McAnea from Unison, Stephen Dorrell MP and Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester among many others.

Andy Burnham referred to the way in which political debate on adult social care over the past two decades has become mired in the detail of finances, with all governments failing the social care workforce and those who draw on their care and support. The glaring inadequacies in social care have been exposed during the pandemic. But the greatest challenge is the giant political leap needed to shift adult social care away from a means tested care and support service, to a universal service funded through general taxation.

This has prompted the recent launch of a new petition by the Campaign for Justice in Social Care. This calls for a parliamentary debate on establishing a national social care service, funded through general taxation.

Those of us involved in launching the campaign know from our own professional and personal experiences that many people believe adult social care, like the NHS, is free to those who need it. It's only when people are directly involved with trying to secure some help and support that they fully realise the financial implications. Covid 19 has highlighted social care in the public mind, and there's a real opportunity now to build public awareness of the injustice of the current social care system.

A national social care service, funded through taxation, must be the starting point for radical reform of adult social care. Social care is much broader in the real world than is commonly recognised. It encompasses family and community caring activities where interdependence is the significant factor. It is integral to the way in which other public and community services are delivered, including public space, housing, transport, anti-discriminatory action and measures to reduce poverty. There are many necessary and wider questions about what social care could look like in the future, but there is a public campaign to win the hearts and minds of the public to be had first!

**Carolyn Barber**  
**Registered social worker, independent practice educator,**  
**and director of social enterprise, the Good Mental Health Cooperative**

## Links:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/social.care.campaign>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/nscs\\_campaign](https://twitter.com/nscs_campaign)

Website: <https://nscs.uk>

Petition: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/572206>

# 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



## Pete Curran: First Chairman of the GFTU



Pete Curran, known mostly for his work as an MP and leader of the Gasworkers' Union, plays a central role in Edda Nicholson's university thesis, as the first chairman of the General Federation of Trade Unions. As he significantly shaped the early days of GFTU, Edda has written a small biography to commemorate the anniversary of his death.

Born in Glasgow on the 28th of March 1860, Peter (formerly Patrick) Francis Curran was the son of Irish Catholic parents, George and Bridget Curran. After a brief education, he began his working life in a steelworks, firstly as an assistant to a hammer-driver, before working his way up through various blacksmithing roles. His interest in political and social problems began early, and he soon became an advocate for the Irish Land League, before becoming a member of the Social Democratic Federation.

His frequent appearances on street corners, particularly on Glasgow Green, quickly earned him a reputation as a fiery orator and outspoken socialist, which began to cause him problems at work. Perhaps because of this, he decided to move to London with his wife Mary, where he began work at the Royal Arsenal in Woolwich during the late 1880's. Of course, he didn't leave his socialism behind, and he threw himself into the heady turbulence of 'new unionism' and helped Will

Thorne and Ben Tillet form the National Union of Gasworkers' and General Labourers' in 1889.

After being appointed one of the first secretaries of the union, Curran had his first brush with notoriety in 1890. According to the Western Morning News, Curran and two other union men threatened the coal merchant George Treleven that 'they would do their best to crush him' if he did not agree to stop employing blackleg labour. Three unions had been working jointly to co-ordinate a dispute at Plymouth, but 'Curran had been the chief spokesman' throughout all the meetings held with Treleven and the other merchants. Curran's evidence maintained that there had been considerable efforts to keep the dispute fair and amicable, and that it would have ended peacefully if Treleven had agreed to only employ union labour. However, the case against Curran and his fellow defendants was strengthened by witness accounts from Treleven's fellow merchants, and they were convicted of intimidation under the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act.

Throughout the trial, Curran's witness testimony had been punctuated with loud cheers and shouts of encouragement from his many supporters



in the gallery, and 'on leaving the court they were loudly cheered by several hundred persons' that had stayed to support the three union leaders throughout the hearing.

The support for Curran only grew. Led by the Plymouth Trades Council, there was a nationwide campaign to obtain support for an appeal. Nine months later, Curran's conviction was overturned and a new legal precedent had been set that strictly defined 'intimidation' as causing violence to a person or destruction of property. That Treleaven's Employers' Association was then liable for all the court costs was the icing on the cake.

After this success, Curran was elected as national organiser for the Gasworkers' Union, and he became a familiar face at the TUC, often found at the forefront of the younger, ardently socialist group of delegates. Due to his experience in agitation both with rank and file members and on a national scale, Curran built strong friendships with several notable leaders from both the political and the industrial side of the movement. He worked closely with Keir Hardie, Arthur Henderson and Ramsay Macdonald, and was central in the founding of the Independent Labour Party, and later the Labour Representation Committee. Through the forging of these connections, he was elected as the first chairman of the General Federation of Trade Unions, created at the 1899 TUC. As GFTU chairman he was known for his cordiality and focus on amicable dialogues between union leaders and employers. He tirelessly criss-crossed the country, investigating disputes and providing reports on working conditions for the GFTU quarterly publication.

Hallo! This is Something Good!

NATIONAL UNION OF GASWORKERS  
AND GENERAL LABOURERS.

**MASS MEETING**

Of the Members of the above and the General Public will be held on  
**Friday Evening next, July 31st,**  
IN THE  
**ROTUNDA LECTURE HALL**  
WILLIAM BROWN STREET.  
WHEN AN ADDRESS WILL BE DELIVERED BY  
**MR. PETE CURRAN**  
The Hero of the Plymouth Intimidation Case! The man who almost single-handed fought from Court to Court in defence of Trades' Union Combination, and who, a few days ago, triumphed in the Court of Queen's Bench over the united wealth of Plymouth.

THE CHAIR WILL BE TAKEN AT 7-30 BY  
**MR. WM. MATKIN.**  
Messrs. P. HARRIS, JOS. GOODMAN, A. NICHOLSON, E. McHUGH,  
S. REEVES, T. KELLY, C.C., and several Members of  
the Trades' Council will be present.

ALL FRIENDS OF LABOUR ARE EARNESTLY INVITED TO ATTEND.

J. G. TAGGART, Secretary.



He had also joined the Fabians, but left when they decided to take what he believed was a passive and non-socialist stance on imperialism and the Boer War. He steered the GFTU to act as representatives of British trade unionism on the international scene, inviting delegates from as far afield as Australia to take part in their annual meetings. He also encouraged many trade union leaders from Europe, America and Australia to contribute articles for the GFTU reports, so that British workers could feel better connected to workers from across the world.

Unfortunately for Curran, his political career was a little lacklustre. His first campaigns in the 1890's resulted in resounding defeats; various rumours about his religion and accusations that he had deserted his wife during his 1897 campaign for Barnsley was a particularly painful episode. It is not clear if there is any truth to the claims of the desertion, but Curran did marry his second wife, the trade unionist Marian Barry, around this time. He turned

his political attention on Jarrow, and finally won the seat in 1907. By this point he was also busy creating the Joint Board, a shared committee for the GFTU, the TUC and the Labour Party to work together as one voice of the labour movement. That he could link together these different organisations and inspire the differing elements of the movement to work together was testimony to his genial nature and general likeability. He liked to play billiards, and was often spoken of as a man that was in equal measures a work horse and a bit of a joker. This conjures up an image of a man that could give a rousing and inspiring speech during a long committee meeting, but be equally entertaining during the evening festivities of an annual gathering.

Sadly, the root of his jovial nature was perhaps something of a hidden struggle. In February 1909, he had to appear in court on the charge of being drunk and incapable in the street, where he was fined 10 shillings. This embarrassing episode may have led to his election loss the following year, but it was certainly linked to his death due to cirrhosis of the liver on the 14th February 1910. According to The Times, thousands of mourners attended his funeral, and the Stepney gasworkers' brass band led the procession.

The GFTU set up a Pete Curran Memorial Fund that sought contributions from across the world for his wife Marian and their four children. So many contributions came flooding in that they were able to raise over £700 (around £60,000 in today's money), for his family. The GFTU placed £200 of the total sum into a separate fund for the children to access when they became of age for an apprenticeship or equivalent, and arranged for the rest to be given in annual installments to maintain the family until the youngest reached 16. That the members of the GFTU management committee took such time to care for his family, speaks to the feelings of genuine friendship and love that developed between these men that worked closely together. Trade unions often speak of members as brothers and sisters; here is an example of that familial connection that ran so very deeply.

Curran was many things to many people in the labour movement - he was a politician, an agitator, a socialist, an organiser; but I think that it was his role as chairman of the GFTU that saw his personality shine through the most. One of the arguments of my thesis is that it was his exuberance and general belief in building solidarity that was crucial in installing the new Federation as a significant force for early twentieth century trade unionists, and without him all the connections that they made would have been significantly weaker.

**Edda Nicolson**  
**University of Wolverhampton**

## Competition Winner

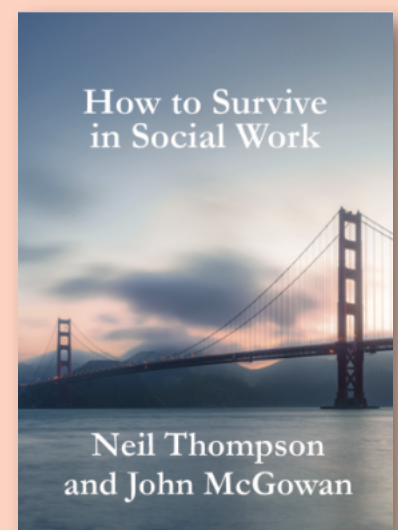
The winner of the 'How to Survive in Social Work in Social Work' book was Stephen Holmes who said the following:

*I joined SWU for 2 main reasons:*

*1/ to have confidence that my union would listen to my concerns and give appropriate information and advice (which it did!)*

*2/ to have confidence that my union would represent the needs and values of my profession (which it does!)*

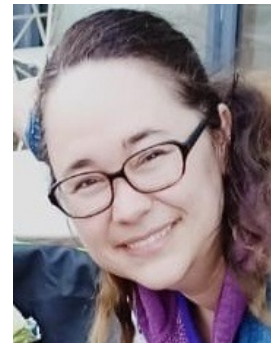
Thanks Stephen.



## Meeting around the table

SWU's Communications, Policy, and Engagement Officer, Shawn Major, reports on the BASW and SWU joint round-table discussion: social worker working conditions and wellbeing.

SWU's input at the multi-agency meeting included John McGowan SWU GS, Carys Phillips SWU Chair and SWU Union Contacts Chrissie Beatty and Colette Hawkins



BASW and SWU hosted a round-table discussion on February 16 to hear about priority concerns and good practice regarding the working conditions and wellbeing of social workers - within and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Ruth Allen, BASW CEO, led the meeting as Chair. Practitioners began with a conversation about **the evidence base around working conditions and wellbeing in social work** - including experiences and learning from COVID-19. We heard about difficulties finding suitable physical spaces for service users and social workers to use during the pandemic, wide-spread burnout among social workers and their managers, the demoralising effect of unstructured personal development, and the need for respect and understanding from those external to social work. Despite experiencing these persistent issues, it really shone through that social workers' love their jobs and are highly engaged with their work. They are very keen to make an impactful change and just need the resources to do so.

Kate O'Regan, BASW Head of Business Development and lead for the Professional Support Service, encouraged all social workers to use BASW's Professional Support Service. Kate commented that:

*"Over the past six months more than 170 members have registered to use the service for a range of different issues including poor working conditions. We now have 49 trained volunteer coaches*

*and offer up to 3 peer-to-peer coaching sessions, either digitally or by phone. A peer support approach means that our coaches understand the working context of social workers - this is something we are doing for ourselves and each other as a profession. The feedback we have received suggests that the Professional Support Service is a much needed and valued service."*

Wayne Reid who is a BASW England Professional Officer, Social Worker and Anti-racism Visionary gave a presentation on **anti-racism in the workplace**. Wayne said: *"It's not enough for social workers (and social work organisations) to be 'colour-blind' or 'non-racist'. We must be PROACTIVELY anti-racist - otherwise anything else is just tiresome lip-service. If anti-racism in social work does not exist for social workers, can it ever truly exist for service users? Anti-racism is absolutely integral to social work, so when will it be given the credence it deserves? Without standing up for our defining values and ethics, what is to stop us succumbing to the pervasive and pernicious post-modern sleaze?"*

Wayne's presentation covered how anti-racism is a vital part of organisational change, wider issues of equalities and intersectionality in the workplace, and the importance of using BASW's COVID 19 Staff Risk Assessment Guide and Flowchart tool due to the disparity in how social workers from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are being affected by COVID-19.

John McGowan, SWU General Secretary, said:

*“Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) social workers have laid bare the discrimination they faced during lockdown in a study by the Social Workers Union. Social workers from BAME backgrounds were four times more likely to be threatened by management for raising safety concerns during lockdown. Among the BAME workforce, the mental health problems are even more pronounced with more than one in ten (12%) citing a collapse in their own mental health.”*

Dr Gail Kinman who is a Visiting Professor of Occupational Health Psychology at Birkbeck, University of London gave a presentation on **organisational change**. She outlined The SWORD (Social Work Organisation Resilience Diagnostic) project’s work over the past 4 years on developing organisational resilience and supporting staff resilience. SWORD is a continuous process of improvement - it uses surveys get an overview of an organisation in regards to the 5 dimensions (“golden threads”) of organisational resilience, works with staff to implement customised interventions, and then evaluates the impact of change. The survey currently has 1171 responses and is modified regularly to include questions regarding current concerns.

The conversation then focused upon **opportunities to work together for improvement across agencies, sectors, and the profession**. The role of regulator was discussed, including the need to offer Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and support people in their CPD. CPD is valuable and central to the profession and to professional responsibility as it builds confidence and resilience. The discussion also underlined that employer

standards need to have a higher profile in organisations. A practitioner said, “We need to raise [employer standards] and get people to work collaboratively to get them in place so we can make sure we’re looking after our staff.”

Neil Thompson, author and independent online tutor, spoke about the culture of expectations that social workers are experiencing:

*“John McGowan and I, in our book (How to Survive in Social Work), talk about vicious circles - social workers try to do the impossible and they don’t have time for creativity/learning so they get burnt out. Managers feel they need to allocate the work to get it all done, so they put unrealistic expectations on staff, and they are frustrated that it’s not getting done. We need to change the culture of expectations - it’s pointless to expect more than people can reasonably do. Someone who is overloaded will achieve less than someone who has a reasonable workload. Someone who’s tired, burnt out, and stressed isn’t going to be creative, reflective, confident, and working to the best of their abilities.”*

John McGowan commented that, *“It’s a shame that UNISON did not attend today - when it comes to issues such as working conditions, all organisations and trade unions need to work together in the best interests of social workers.”*

The round-table concluded with some parting thoughts: How do we make the case to decision makers on national/local level about social workers’ working conditions? This needs to emerge through leadership (breaking vicious cycles), grassroots, and peer awareness. We need a network of likeminded individuals working on this - including the strong voice and community that SWU & BASW are building.

## Competition Time



## Clare in the Community

The winner of our February Caption Competition was Angie McFarlane who wins a signed copy of *The Clare In the Community Collection: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Do-Gooding in The Guardian*.

Angi's winning caption for "Clare visits the Advice and Representation Team" was:

**"Addition to the agenda, how to spot the signs of attachment issues and their ramifications"**

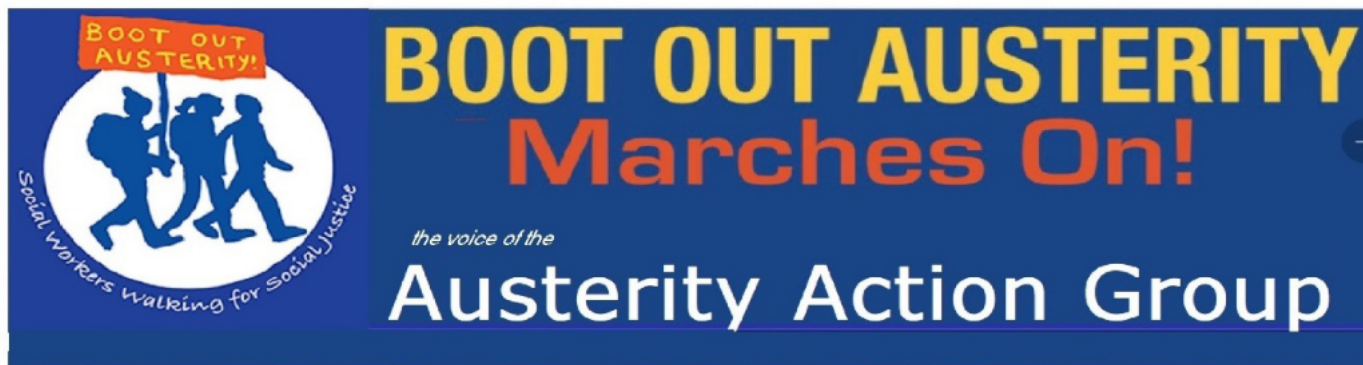
Thanks so much for all the entries and to Joanne for selecting the winner.



Due to the success of the competition there's **another chance to win** a signed copy of *The Clare In the Community Collection: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Do-Gooding in The Guardian*.

### **A caption is needed:**

Please email your suggested caption to: [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk)



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

## Toward a Fairer Society - The Man on The Clapham Omnibus

In the English legal system the test for whether a person acted reasonably is referred to as - *'The man on the Clapham omnibus' who as an ordinary reasonably educated intelligent but nondescript person is asked to decide whether another party has acted as a reasonable person would.*

Throughout the Covid19 pandemic, in order to manage the situation, the government has had to impose changes, and make decisions for us with minimum opportunity for debate and even less for scrutiny of the details. Here is where our man on the Clapham Omnibus comes to the fore.

Was it right and fair for Dominic Cummings to drive to Northumberland?

Was it right and fair for million-pound contracts to be given to newly established companies to procure and provide PPE and set up Test and Trace Systems?

Quoting the 'Man on the Clapham Omnibus' along with the Boot Out Austerity hash tag I like many others used social media to call out the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State on their actions. Earlier this month *"The UK government was found to have acted unlawfully in failing to publish details of dozens of contracts awarded without competition for goods and services such as personal protective equipment (PPE) needed during the covid-19 pandemic, a High Court Judge Mr Justice Chamberlain upheld a challenge by the non-profit Good Law Project to the failure by Matt Hancock, health and social care secretary for England, to publish notices for a 'substantial' number of the deals, as required by law."*

If you want the public to get behind you then you have to show that you are acting responsibly and fairly.

### Educate Agitate Organise

An oft chanted mantra of socialist groups and unions all over the world, emphasised that - success can only be achieved by organised effort.

Educate: We shall need all our intelligence  
 Agitate: We shall need all our enthusiasm  
 Organise: We shall need all our forces

These are of course three interlinked, not separate, approaches to building the base for a socialist ideal. As we steer a course out of the Covid Pandemic it is becoming clear that there have been other consequences above and beyond the actual illness itself. The inability to work through the effects of the illness, alongside being furloughed or shielding has brought into sharp relief the injustices and short falls of our current welfare system. All of which was made worse by the last ten years of Austerity driven policies

Covid 19 has (in fact) done more to educate middle England (UK) about the workings of and the faults of the welfare benefits and tax systems, as many families have discovered as they endeavoured to make a claim.

Freire says:

*“Education ...is the practice of Freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”*

The actions of Marcus Rashford epitomise those words. As a youngster he experienced hunger and poverty, and saw his mum go without for her family. Recognising the unfairness, he put his energies alongside his celebrity status to shame the government calling on ministers to offer a guaranteed **“meal a day”** to all **school** pupils in England in financially struggling families as he warned that his campaign to end child food poverty still had a *“million miles to go”*. (Guardian 20 Jan 2021)

Rashford’s campaign along with a number of other groups calling out the many guises of poverty is certainly agitating society to recognise and call out for a fairer system whether it be The Good Law Project or alliances like: <https://www.buildbackbetteruk.org/about-us>.

And because Covid 19 has affected millions of “ordinary people” the seeds are being sown in our communities for a paradigm shift especially towards those long-term benefits claimants - that they are not the pariahs of society that social media makes them out to be. They are your uncle, my cousin and even your family.

Let’s get involved in the fight for a fairer future, let us continue to encourage people to learn about the pros and cons of our welfare system, and encourage them to shout out when they see injustice. Show them the ways to get involved. Remind them that in May they get an opportunity to become ‘The Man on The Clapham Omnibus’ and determine whether those currently in power have acted reasonably. Do they deserve our vote or not?

Boot Out Austerity Marches On - calling out injustice in the fight for a fairer society.

Learn more about campaigning via *Leave No Stone Unturned in the fight Against Austerity - Campaign Action Pack*. <https://www.basw.co.uk/resources/campaign-action-pack>

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

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](mailto:carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk) or email SWU Admin: [joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk](mailto:joanne.marciano@swu-union.org.uk).



### Belong to a Social Work union that:

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

### As a SWU member you get:

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

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

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

SWU can be found on the following:



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



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



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