

Meeting the challenges ahead

As things slowly get back to some normality there are still a number of challenges ahead and once more the Advice & Representation Team continue to do a terrific job. I want to take this opportunity to thank A&R for their ongoing hard work and dedication over the last while and I am personally delighted that one of the AGM motions focuses on their terrific role. I have been truly inspired by their personal commitment to making a difference to social workers in these unprecedented and challenging times. Such an approach embodies the social work spirit in finding ways to address issues, to do things differently, and to make continuous improvements for members.

SWU membership continues to rise and we look forward to welcoming new members each week. I am delighted that our membership has grown to over 14,800 members. This is indeed a great achievement for all involved with SWU. The challenge ahead for SWU is building on that membership base, working on retention, for SWU to be actively involved with more campaigns and engaging with members. This continues to be a interesting task with only a small but active team; therefore, if you have an interest in being involved with the union then please do let us know.

This coming month we have our AGM event and due to the present situation, this will be an online event with the AGM going live at 2pm on Friday 24th September.

It is your union and a chance for you to share your view on the future and direction of the union. Please do register to be a part of it and say hello. If not, I can always be contacted via email and I look forward to regular correspondence from members.



At the AGM I will be reporting that this has been another great year for the Social Workers Union. Membership continues to rise, and we are moving in the right direction, and I would love to see us break through the 15,000-membership barrier by the end of the year. Please do encourage colleagues to join the only specialist trade union for social workers.

Interest in the union has been phenomenal since we started and incredibly we are in our 10th year as a union, which is an important milestone for us to celebrate. We are glad that so many of you joined in the online festivities in June, and if you would like to revisit the videos and blogs you can find them on the SWU 10th Anniversary Celebration webpage.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/swus-10th-anniversary-celebration>

It is a strange working world that we are in presently but Trade Unions, Professional Associations and employers all working

together can make a significant difference to ensure that the effects of the pandemic have been shared appropriately and we are all supporting social workers. However, to say that social work is a challenging profession is of course something of an understatement and this is an important message to share and to continue to highlight. We all know the impact on social work with cutbacks to services and staffing.

You will see in the newsletter our disappointment regarding the TUC decision; however, we remain committed to the General Federation of Trade Unions as the main body for specialist unions. The negativity from UNISON towards SWU highlights once more that we must be doing something right and as always, I will continue to engage and hopefully one day we can work together in the best interest of social work. We have also announced the creation of further campaign

opportunities to support engagement with campaigns, media, politicians, and local authorities which is in response to our recent member survey where campaigning was identified as really important to you the membership. This is a terrific way for SWU to support member led campaigns. Members are passionate about their union being actively involved in campaigning, and this rekindled partnership with Campaign Collective will help us be even more engaged in activism and continue to make a positive impact. This also builds on our present funding of the Austerity Action Group.

SWU looks forward to seeing you at our online AGM on Friday 24th September from 2pm - 3.30pm.

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

Application Update

It really is a really sad day for social work when larger general unions can block our TUC application with what we perceive to be untruths. SWU challenges the TUC's decision to deny membership



The Social Workers Union (SWU) has challenged the Trade Union Congress (TUC) decision to deny SWU's membership application.

SWU General Secretary John McGowan has sent a letter of complaint to TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady after learning of the TUC's decision.

In the letter, McGowan said: "Our assessment remains that SWU has been declined on the basis of insufficient factual information from industrial interest unions and this is supported by evidence letters written by SWU's Head of Trade Union Advice and Representation

Service and a partner at Morrish Solicitors.

"The allegation of poaching members is alarming as I just need to look at the complaints we regularly receive at SWU about UNISON reps providing false information to Social Workers about SWU."

Responding to SWU's complaint, TUC Deputy General Secretary Paul Nowak said: "While I can understand your disappointment that the General Council did not agree the SWU's request for affiliation, I can only reiterate this decision which was taken in full accordance with our rules. These are, as you would expect, a matter for our affiliates."

SWU's application to join the TUC was blocked by the TUC affiliates UNISON, UNITE, and GMB. The reasons cited were:

UNISON alleging that SWU is 'poaching' members

UNISON, UNITE, and GMB having 'concerns' regarding SWU's independence and working relationship with the British Association of Social Workers (BASW).

SWU categorically rejects 'poaching' allegations

In answer to UNISON's allegation, the SWU Trade Union Advice and Representation Service has not made any attempts to 'poach' members from another trade union. Indeed, to do so would be unprofessional and anti-trade unionist. Lien Watts, who is the SWU's Head of Trade Union Advice and Representation Service, responded to this serious and unfounded claim in a letter, saying:

"I was dismayed to hear that it has been alleged by UNISON that we are 'poaching' their members and feel I must put something in writing to you in response to these serious allegations that were offered to the TUC.

"I was particularly concerned about this because we have always taken the line that we do not put any other trade unions down in any way; as far as we are concerned, we should all be 'on the same side' and as long as social workers recognise the advantage and need to be members of a trade union, then it doesn't matter which trade union they choose."

As you may know, UNISON has long held ill will towards SWU which is why we attempted to reach out to UNISON to open a discussion with them before our TUC application. However, UNISON refused to meet with us then and UNISON continues to refuse to even begin a dialogue with us about this serious allegation they have made.

Responding to BASW/SWU claims

John McGowan, General Secretary of SWU, responded to concerns raised by the TUC about the relationship between SWU and BASW.

"If UNISON, UNITE, and GMB are 'concerned' about SWU's independence from - and working relationship with - BASW, then they should have paid more attention to the development of our union over the years.

"It's true that BASW created SWU in 2011 and I was involved in the process. But in 2016 SWU elected a General Secretary that was independent from BASW - and since then our union rules explicitly specify that 'No member of the Executive Committee may also be a member of the BASW Council and any member of the Executive Committee who becomes a member of the BASW Council shall, on such appointment, automatically cease to be a member of the Executive Committee.'

In 2018 BASW and SWU signed a formal co-operation agreement, committing our two distinct organisations to drive forward the professional social work agenda and for SWU to provide trade union support to BASW members who sign up to SWU. BASW and SWU re-signed this co-operation agreement in 2021, reaffirming the ongoing commitment of both of our organisations to providing the best for social workers.

In a letter addressing this subject, Morrish Solicitors partner Paul Scholey writes: "Nothing in SWU's rules subordinates SWU to BASW or grants any influence to BASW over SWU's affairs." He concludes: "Plainly the two organisations collaborate in various ways. But legally SWU retains its independence in the ways set out above."

What is concerning is that these three larger general unions have decided to prioritise guarding their monopoly within the TUC, over working in solidarity with an upcoming specialist trade union.

SWU's specialist experience within the community of Social Work would be an asset to the TUC, and TUC membership would give SWU a stronger voice campaigning on issues such as the working conditions of social workers and adequate funding of social work.

Decision to block TUC membership 'undermines trade unionism'

Dr. Ruth Allen, BASW CEO, commented on the decision: "BASW is very sorry to learn that the Trades Union Congress (TUC) has not taken the opportunity to include the Social Workers Union (SWU) as an affiliate.

"SWU provides excellent employment advice and representation for social workers because it is bespoke for the profession and deeply knowledgeable about practice, policy, services and working conditions. It has so much to offer across the Trade Union movement and the blocking of SWU's membership of the TUC by large multi-professional unions is a huge loss to trade union collaboration and the opportunity for deepening collective influence.

"I am sure that SWU will continue to grow and be increasingly influential because it is effective in what it does for social workers. It collaborates with many unions through the impressive and creative General Federation of Trades Unions (GFTU). It has extended many offers to collaborate with large multi-professional unions in the TUC who represent social workers too. Unfortunately, these unions have most often rebuffed SWU on unclear grounds - and therefore lost out on joint actions to improve support to social workers.

"The TUC's rejection of SWU's application appears to be on the basis of misinformation and protectionism from UNISON, UNITE and GMB and is therefore deeply troubling. All of us committed to effective, modern trade unionism - and the rights of workers in all occupations to have informed support and advocacy - expect

honesty, truthfulness and openness from the trade union movement.

"The leverage of raw and apparently unaccountable power to block social workers having a clear, named presence in the TUC through SWU raises many ethical issues. It undermines trade unionism and the credibility of certain affiliates and the TUC as a whole. We hope the TUC will look at its processes and accountability and ensure, as a minimum, logical and evidenced reasons for its membership decisions."

Carys Phillips, SWU Chair, also commented on the TUC's decision:

"Post-pandemic, SWU understands that collaboration, solidarity and respect are fundamental to supporting our workforce into the future and makes a clarion call to the Congress of Trade Unions; the TUC to flex and change mid-pandemic to ensure inclusivity where 'no one (union) gets left behind' in striving for a better social care future, and not a vehicle for excluding based on the tropes of control we have seen too much of.

"SWU draws together the four countries of the UK and as the Union is 10 years old, it shares this decade with the implementation of Austerity. SWU represents, advocates and campaigns for issues including anti-poverty, anti-austerity, BLM and disability equality.

"The Social Care Workforce has Social Workers embedded within and key conduits to advocating and articulating the Social Policy and legislative impacts that impact the citizens we work with and strive to empower. Social Work is so distinct and specific that the unions I was previously seeking support from were by their own admission 'out of their depth'."

To see the full letters from SWU please open link:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/aug/swu-challenges-tuc%E2%80%99s-decision-deny-membership>



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or call **033 3344 9600**

Care Review Watch Alliance

'We all have concerns about how the current 'once in a generation' Care Review is being undertaken'.

We applaud the work of CARE REVIEW WATCH ALLIANCE and at SWU we are pleased to support the work of the group with some campaigning time through our colleagues at Campaign Collective.

Please do view the link below and offer your support and see below for some of the group's concerns which we fully support.

<https://carereviewwatchalliance.com/>

SILENCED

Despite being the largest professional group working in the care system, social workers will not be consulted prior to publication of the case for change in May/June 2021

TIME

The whole process is expected to only last 12-13 months despite an extensive remit. *A Case for Change* will be published just 2-3 months after the process has started.

SCOPE

The Conservative manifesto of 2019 pledged an independent review of the care system rather than of the entire children's social care system. A significant task given the timescales.

CHAIR

Lobbyist Josh MacAlister stepped down as CEO of Frontline to become Chair of the review. McAlister has no professional expertise in the field or prior experience of running a review like this and is close to government.

BOARD

950 applicants for the 'Experts by Experience' board were rejected via a generic email and minimal (now closed) opportunities exist for contributing.

CUTS

The parameters of the review state that recommendations must be cost neutral, thus any increased resource means endorsing cuts elsewhere.

EXPERTISE

The experts by experience board bring a wealth of knowledge despite minimal members, however their input and influence is limited and unclear

SCRUTINY

The review is one which stands to affect numerous people, professionals, families and children but has received very little press scrutiny or public engagement.

Union Contact Scheme

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



It was great to meet up with some of SWU's Scottish Union Contacts and SASW Professional Officer, Karin Heber, this month.

We talked about the Union Contact role in workplaces and amongst social work students, and it was good to hear first-hand from established Union Contacts who discussed some of their experiences in workplaces and why they decided to undertake this valuable role. Newly inducted and not-yet-inducted Union Contacts also shared their thoughts about the role and provided useful insights and ideas around how the role may be adapted to suit their own workplaces and colleagues. This is exactly how union organising and recruitment becomes successful, and it was good to hear this positive feedback which I will be acting upon.

We discussed SWU making links with SASW (the Scottish Association of Social Workers) to develop and strengthen the relationship between our two organisations. We looked at ways of working together to share details about events, campaigns, training, and other information that will be of interest to our Scottish Union Contacts, and that they can in turn share with colleagues and social work students.

This collaboration will provide opportunities for SWU Union Contacts in Scotland to become

further involved in SASW, and Karin explained some of the types of groups and activities available. For example, influencing consultations on policies around working conditions; contemplating student-related issues; attending Cross Party Groups and Special Interest Groups on SASW's behalf. Current SASW activists who are SWU members may wish to become SWU Union Contacts also, and reinforce the link between both organisations.

It was noted too that SASW provides a professional support service which is free to all social workers in Scotland and funded by the Scottish Government. Links to this and additional SASW information can be found at: <https://www.basw.co.uk/professional-support-service>

If you are a SWU Union Contact in Scotland and interested in becoming involved with SASW, please drop me a line for further details: carol.reid@swu-union.org.uk

If you are a SWU Member anywhere in the UK and would like to know more about becoming a Union Contact in your workplace or your university, please get in touch for more details.

Social Media

If you have not done so then please follow us on Facebook and Twitter - we 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/

Internet: www.swu-union.org.uk

Health and Social Care



SWU Chair, Carys Phillips, provides an update on the Future Care Coalition which SWU supports.

On the 5th of July the NHS was 73 years old. Social Care does not have a birthday but was formed in 1948 too with the introduction of the National Assistance Act.

SWU can now help support and shape the vital work of progressing the aims of this broad coalition. What a week to have the Summer Summit. The Future Social Care Coalition the 24th of June was demanding a plan for Social Care Reform. The Summer Summit asked the sector to sign the letter to the Chancellor <https://futuresocialcarecoalition.org/fscs-summit/>

The event generated over 43 thousand hits via social media and this totalled 96 thousand impressions - the coalition's social media engagement has gone up by 613%. SWU has certainly added to this as has I am sure the recent media attention and discussions and been catapulted also by:

- Matt Hancock resigned (finally) on the Saturday the 19th June with his swift replacement with Sajid Javid
- Sir Andrew Dilnot was interviewed on Radio 4¹
- Sally Warren - Director from The Kings Fund² writes a blog to Sajid Javid

Social Workers continue to work across Health and Social Care and have legal literacy that guides and supports families through the human impact on an increasingly fragile system in England and Wales that too often gives rise to awful outcomes. The comparisons of Health and Social care their inter-related nature of both arms are fused. Yet, the funding mechanisms and identity in the public eye were polar opposites until COVID-19 shone the brightest of lights onto the most marginalised of sectors; working with the most devalued and at risk populations of the UK.

'a 1% increase on income tax would take social care from a system that we should all be ashamed of to a system that we can all be proud of' (Dilnot, 24/6/2021)

The Future Social Care coalition's cross-party support is no surprise as Social Care has endured no less than 12 Government White Papers and 5 independent Reviews during the last 20 years, the most robust was published in 2011. This, the Dilnot Report coincided with the decision to shrink the Welfare state. The subsequent Austerity measures will no doubt be castigated for exposing the most vulnerable whenever the COVID-19 public Inquiry reports.

'Be generous, the amount of money is not a huge amount but the impact is massive' (Dilnot, 21)

In the meantime SWU stands in Solidarity with the NHS workers calling for a 15% fair pay deal - following pay freezes and joins the clarion call for fair pay, a properly funded social care system and an aligned approach to Social Care and Health Care - where needs and risks are pooled in public funding. History will, I believe, demonstrate this is the right thing to do, the time is now.

'First, the workforce across the NHS, social care and public health. Before Covid-19, the health and care workforce was facing a crisis, with high levels of vacancies, turnover, and stress and the past 18 months has only made this worse, with an exhausted workforce. A [comprehensive workforce plan](#) will need to look at international recruitment, training and development of staff, and workplace culture and practices.' (Sally Warren, Kings Fund)

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000x4zn>

² <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2021/06/sajid-javid-health-social-care-to-do-list>

Sign up now for the SWU AGM (online)



SWU looks forward to seeing you at our online AGM on Friday 24th September from 2pm - 3.30pm.

You can register for SWU's 2021 AGM here:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/swu-agm-2021>

Below are the four SWU Motions for this year's AGM.

Motion 1: Social Justice

This AGM commits SWU to pursuing the concept of social justice in all its activities.

SWU is a Trade Union associated with BASW through the SWU/BASW Co-operation Agreement 2021. A critical element of this relationship is our shared social work value base as expressed in the recently re-launched BASW Code of Ethics and Values. As a certified and independent Trade Union, SWU welcomes particularly the clear statement of commitment to social justice. Moreover in all its activities and endeavours, SWU commits itself and our members to actively pursuing this principle of social justice through challenging oppression, respecting diversity, advocating for access to and equal distribution of resources, challenging unjust policies and practices and ultimately exercising our duty both collectively and individually to challenge social conditions that contribute to oppression, social exclusion, stigma or subjugation and to work towards a more inclusive society.

Motion 2: Working Conditions

With increased demand created by COVID-19, this AGM asks the SWU Executive to fight for an increase in Social Work staffing and funding, improvements in working conditions for social workers as indicated by the research undertaken by Professor Jermaine Ravalier of Bath Spa University together with the provision of regular high-quality supervision which his later research showed was often sadly lacking.

Motion 3: Recognition of A&R's Excellent Work

This AGM applauds the work of the SWU Trade Union Advice and Representation (A&R) Service. Our skilled A&R and Trade Union Officers continue to provide quality representation to SWU members and have adapted skilfully during the pandemic, adapting professionally to different ways of working. It is often quoted by some that we do not have collective bargaining; however, the basic fact is that we have the right to represent SWU members individually or together on larger issues. This specialist intervention has been effective and life changing for SWU members. Covering a variety of issues and successful changes in the workplace for our members.

Motion 4: Celebrate the History of Social Care

SWU's commitment to continued growth, collaboration and campaigning work are crucial. SWU was formed on the 21st June 2011 as the only dedicated and specialist Union for Social Workers. 2021 has been a year of proud celebration of 10 years since it was formed. This Motion asks this AGM to acknowledge and celebrate the very proud history of Social Care that began 73 years ago when the National Assistance Act received Royal Assent on 13 May 1948, just weeks before the launch of the National Health Service.

Social Workers articulate the inequalities exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, made worse by 10 years of Austerity. The indispensable support of our Advice and Representation Service is an essential aspect of the Union and the complex work Social Workers undertake. As the world of Social Work anticipates the imminent changes across children and adult Social Care, SWU's commitment to continued growth, collaboration and campaigning work are crucial so we can celebrate our success and grow into the future.

SWU members - please support Motion 10 at the forthcoming BASW AGM



Either at the event on 15th September 2021:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/annual-general-meeting-2021>

Proxy vote: If you are unable to attend the AGM you can submit your proxy vote on-line at:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/annual-general-meeting-2021>

Motion 10

BASW Council formed the Social Workers Union in 2011 to guarantee employment representation for members because a number of employers were declining BASW representation. From our very first SWU member in 2011 to 14,600 ten years later, SWU has grown and now the majority of BASW members are also SWU members. The significance of SWU as part of the growth of BASW is clear as the value of Trade Unionism has grown. This Annual General Meeting recognises the terrific work of the Advice and Representation Service, and the partnership between BASW and SWU, and asks BASW to commit itself to reflect and develop that spirit of partnership. This Annual General Meeting extends our warm congratulations to the Social Workers Union on its 10th anniversary and looks forward to many more years of working together through the co-operation agreement for the good of social work and social workers.

Proposed by Angi Naylor

Reflections on a return to practice - stepping back into a Social Worker's shoes



This year saw my return to Social Work practice following a 2-year break. (2 years where I worked in a young person's supported accommodation project and more recently ventured into college lecturing in Health and Social Care). However, the pull to Social Work practice grew stronger as the months rolled by and on the 16th of June, I returned to the Family Assessment and Support Team (FAST) sector of Social Work.

As the old saying goes, you never forget how to ride a bike, words I heard on my first day from a new practice supervisor, in a new team, in a new area. Well, I hoped this was true...

The presence of Covid19 is perhaps the most significant change upon my return to Social Work, its impact clearly visible on my first day in what was an empty office. While this initially felt strange to not be greeted by the sound of social workers chatting to each other or the rapid tapping of keyboards, I am pleased to say it has not proved to be a barrier to me feeling part of the team as new faces have become more familiar over the last few weeks. While I feel very fortunate to be part of this new team, we all realise that an understanding management team is as equally important to the wellbeing of all staff. Therein lies the necessity of SWU union membership.

A few weeks into practice and once again I am reminded of the privileged position, we as social workers occupy, a position from where we can support families who may feel disconnected, left behind or powerless in society. For me, this position's worthiness will always begin in that critical first contact

and the empathy to that situation in laying the foundations for a better working relationship in the weeks and months ahead.



After all, we all at some point need support.

I did wonder what societal issues I would find out there when I first put my lanyard on and grabbed a notebook. From speaking to children and families, it is evident that Covid19 lockdown has led to many families being 'forced' together to where the things that usually remain 'unsaid' have now been 'said' - most notably with teenage young people who have represented most of my work to date. My challenge has been to separate some of the typical behaviours you might see in a parent - young person relationship from what is unsafe or unhealthy. Covid19 appears to have magnified this issue and while this has been the biggest test for me, it has also been the most rewarding as well.

It is clear that austerity is very much present for many families, whether that be the absence of or delay in access to further services, the impending reduction to Universal Credit, or the way in which many feel they have no voice in a society that left them behind long ago. While we were sold the line "austerity is over", my return to social work has confirmed for me that austerity has gone nowhere.

While Covid19 and austerity together have shaped some of the issues we face in our role, my return to social work practice has reminded me how critical an understanding of this social policy landscape is when working with families. This again raises the question, are we an agent of the state or an agent of change? Perhaps this is a debate for another time?

On a final note, and I am by no means biased on this, once again I can now wear my SWU union contact badge with pride....

Dave Callow
SWU Executive member

SWU Recent Blogs and Press (July and August)

SWU challenges the TUC's decision to deny membership

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/aug/swu-challenges-tuc%E2%80%99s-decision-deny-membership>

SWU Blog: Motions for the Social Workers Union 2021 Annual General Meeting

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/aug/swu-blog-motions-social-workers-union-2021-annual-general-meeting>

BASW & SWU response to attack on social worker

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/aug/basw-swu-response-attack-social-worker>

SWU and Campaign Collective to support member led campaigns. Newly created campaign fund will be available for SWU members to set campaign priorities and engage in activism through 2021/2022

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/aug/swu-and-campaign-collective-support-member-led-campaigns>

SWU and SASW further develop SWU Union Contact programme for Scotland. SWU Union Contacts in Scotland and interested SASW members are invited to attend our Teams meeting on August 10th

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/aug/swu-and-sasw-further-develop-swu-union-contact-programme-scotland>

BASW and SWU join calls to protect the rights of unaccompanied children in Kent

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/jul/basw-and-swu-join-calls-protect-rights-unaccompanied-children-kent>

The Social Workers Union has written to the new General Secretary of the Professional Footballers Association in solidarity with the three England players who have been facing a torrent of racist abuse since the Euro finals

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/jul/swu-blog-stand-against-racism>

Shout Out UK workshop brings SWU to Year 10 students in Birmingham. This SWU funded workshop was a brilliant opportunity to engage over 100 young people with political literacy

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/jul/swu-blog-shout-out-uk-workshop-brings-swu-year-10-students-birmingham>

BASW/SWU 'Assaults on social workers' petition: An update for members. Together, BASW and SWU will continue to campaign for social worker safety in the workplace.

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2021/jul/baswswu-%E2%80%98assaults-social-workers%E2%80%99-petition-update-members>

SWU Press

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/06/14/members-dying-members-crisis-union-leader-covid-19-hit-social-work/>

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/07/26/growing-majority-childrens-social-workers-feeling-stressed-overworked-finds-dfe-study/>

<https://www.mysocialworknews.com/article/social-work-vacancies-hit-record-high>

Do we really need a ‘beginner’s guide for anti-racism’?

Well, as I wrote the book of that name, obviously I believe we do. Racism is a very complex and sensitive subject, but unfortunately it has often been dealt with in simplistic and insensitive ways. It is also a confusing topic with a lot of competing and contradictory approaches and understandings. So, being clear about the basics and where we stand in relation to them is, as far as I am concerned, an important step forward.

It has been heartening to see anti-racism issues getting the attention they deserve in many quarters and to note that many organisations are showing a renewed impetus to take the concerns much more seriously. We still have a long way to go, of course, but it has none the less been good to see the progress being made.

However, what has not been so great has been some of the old oversimplifications creeping back in. I am at the tail end of my career, so I was around in the early days of anti-racism (and anti-discriminatory practice more broadly) becoming a major feature of social work education. I remember being so delighted that issues so close to my heart were being adopted within my profession after so many years of neglect and marginalisation. But I also remember being disappointed that critical analysis was so often being replaced by dogmatic assumptions, consideration of complex issues being edged out of the picture to make room for some very dubious ‘tactics’. As someone with a strong interest in language and communication, I was particularly concerned about how the complex relationship between language and discrimination was being reduced to ‘You can’t say that word any

more’, generally with no clarity or explanation being offered.

What was also especially concerning was the hectoring and accusatory tone of so much of what was being written and spoken about racism and anti-racism. The complex multidimensional interactions of personal, cultural and structural processes were being reduced to highly simplistic slogans along the lines of: ‘If you are white, you must be racist’. No wonder the common response to such an approach was defensiveness - a very costly defensiveness that led so many people to avoid the subject where possible and thereby fail to learn and develop a fuller understanding. Just as importantly, it meant that many people who could potentially have been useful allies in challenging racism did not engage with the struggle, as they saw it as too threatening.

Racism is a major social problem that needs to be taken very seriously, especially in social work where promoting social justice is a key element of our value base. It is also, of course, a core feature of trade unionism.

I wrote *Anti-racism for Beginners* partly for people who are new to the struggle for racial equality and partly for people who have been around for a while but who could benefit from clearing up much of the confusion and avoiding the oversimplifications that have held back progress over the years.

Dr Neil Thompson is an independent writer, educator and adviser and a visiting professor at the Open University. He is a SWU ambassador and kindly offers SWU members a 20% discount on his books and online learning programmes, including *Anti-racism for Beginners* (published by Avenue Media Solutions). See <https://bit.ly/neilthompdiscounts> for further information.





The Social Workers Union (SWU) has partnered with Campaign Collective to help its members engage in activism and campaigning for the next 12 months in a unique partnership.

A new campaign fund from the SWU has been created which members of the trade union will be able to draw down from in order to access professional support for issues and causes they're passionate about. The SWU, with help from Campaign Collective, will now be able to better respond to the regular requests they receive from their members to deliver impactful campaigns on a range of issues. The partnership builds on previous activity delivered by Campaign Collective on behalf of SWU, such as public affairs activity on working conditions and media work around the impact of lockdown on social workers.

Simon Francis, Founder Member of Campaign Collective said,

"We're delighted to be working in partnership with the Social Workers Union. The challenges facing social workers and the people they work with are urgent and pressing. Yet too often the media and politicians fail to recognise the issues social workers face on the frontline. We hope this campaign fund will start to address this imbalance and ensure the voices of the vulnerable and of social workers are better heard."

A SWU Campaign Group will be formed soon, to review and approve campaign proposals. Campaigns are likely to cover a range of issues identified by social workers.

John McGowan, SWU General Secretary, said,

"This is a terrific way for SWU to support member-led campaigns. Our members are passionate about their union being actively involved in campaigning, and this rekindled partnership with Campaign Collective will help us be even more engaged in activism and continue to make a positive impact. This also builds on our present funding of the Austerity Action Group. With over 14,800 members, the SWU fund and partnership with Campaign Collective will be a platform for social workers to feel seen and heard, with social workers being at the root of every campaign."

SWU will be announcing more details of the referral process soon (see the following page for draft application). The campaign group will be made up from SWU members, SWU Union Contacts and SWU Executive.

SWU Campaign Fund

Briefing Template



The SWU campaign fund is designed to support member-led campaigns.

SWU members are passionate about their union being actively involved in campaigning, and this partnership with Campaign Collective will help us be even more engaged in activism and continue to make a positive impact.

To submit a campaign idea, please complete Table 1 below and return it to j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk

The Campaign Fund Committee meets every 2 months to discuss proposals and agree campaigns to be funded. If activity is urgent, please submit the table to j.mcgowan@swu-union.org.uk and mark your request as urgent in the subject line and it will be reviewed by the committee by email and a simple vote taken to decide whether to proceed.

Question	Answer <i>Guidance on how to complete this section</i>	What will the Campaign Fund Committee look for in deciding if this is approved?
What is the problem you are wanting the campaign to solve?		Essential Clearly articulated problem, ideally with links to evidence the issue raised.
How does this affect social workers?		Essential All campaigns must have an impact on social workers directly, or the service users they work with.
What is the communications objective of the campaign?	<i>e.g. raise awareness of x, inform politicians about y, change policy on z.</i>	Preferred A clearly stated objective is helpful, but may be refined following feedback from the Committee.
What is happening already to deliver this change?	<i>e.g. are any other organisations campaigning on this? Have SWU / members already started campaigning on this?</i>	Essential We will not duplicate activity. Preferred While we may work with others to achieve objectives, the priority for the fund will be to help ensure issues with no support are helped.

When does this activity need to take place?	<i>e.g. are there any key dates known about? How urgent is the issue?</i>	Preferred An indication of timescales would be useful to ensure management of capacity and use of the fund.
Do you have any ideas about what you may like to see take place as part of the campaign?	<i>e.g. media, social media, political work, membership activation, community engagement, content (i.e. film / social media) creation, training for SWU members to campaign by yourselves</i>	Optional
Who is submitting this proposal?	<i>i.e. state the name of individual(s) who will be the main point of contact for the campaign. Feel free to indicate if this is part of a wider group of people</i>	Essential Every campaign must have two individuals who will lead the campaign and work with Campaign Collective.
Contact details for main contacts	<i>Mobile phone number and email address for individuals listed above</i>	Essential

Talk to SWU: workplace issues webinar held on 7th July 2021

A chance to watch the recorded session with the Social Workers Union talking about workplace issues.

This free webinar was a chance to talk directly with the Social Workers Union about any workplace issues you have been experiencing. In this session a panel of Advice & Representation Officers along with a SWU Legal Advisor answered questions from UK social workers and social work students. Some of the questions that we discussed included:



- *Covid-19 - can my employer insist on vaccinations? If I refuse can I be excluded from work without pay?*
- *Does discrimination law extend to transgender people? Am I protected if I have had no gender reassignment treatment?*

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

The next Talk to SWU will take place on Wednesday November 3rd at 6pm.

SWU response for *Social Work News* request asking

'If I were in charge for a day...'

If the Social Workers Union (SWU) was at the helm of social care services for a day we would set in place a service wide plan to embrace a community led approach. This would be an expansion of the SWU and British Association of Social Workers (BASW) Professional Working Conditions Campaign that was launched in 2018 to improve the working conditions of Social Workers and has continued thereafter.

To start, SWU would run a far-reaching public education drive about the nature and current state of social work in the UK. This would grow media interest and build public awareness of SWU's research which shows that Social Workers are strongly engaged in their work and want the very best outcomes for people that use services, but they are hampered by poor working conditions and a lack of resources. Some concrete changes we would make:

Workload - Social Workers have too many cases, meaning that SWs don't have the time to get through them all. Caseloads need to be cut.

Too much paperwork - Social Workers have too much paperwork, as well as paperwork which is too repetitive. Paperwork needs to be cut.

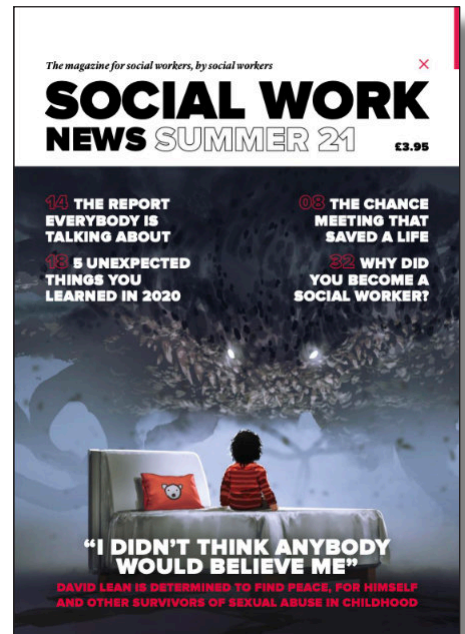
Managerial Support - A large number of non-social workers are in management positions. Because of this, they often placed unrealistic timescales and expectations on employees. Managers would be trained appropriately.

Supervisory Support - More frequent and regular supervision would have positive impacts on stress as well as cases that individuals are expected to deal with.

SWU would use our day-long remit to empower local authorities, begin tackling inequality and hierarchy associated with different care roles, and support best practices for hybridized working that we have built upon during the COVID-19 pandemic. SWU would also ringfence current social care service funding and impress upon the Government the importance of restoring previous funding and making whole a sector that has been cut to the bone by austerity-based policies.

We need to move away from the neoliberal commodification of care - particularly in adult social care - that assumes the individual is best placed to buy services, and instead move the focus to a community led approach that values the many rather than the individual. The vulnerable in our society are not customers; they are people in need of social care.

There aren't any magic wands available in this scenario so this isn't a change that could take place over the span of one day. However, our aim would be to set into motion a significant shift in social work culture that has empathy, awareness of social policy, and personal values at its core.



Thanks to the SWU Executive for their thoughts on this and contributions

I've long held the view that it is as much my duty to protect and develop a system of social justice as it is to be a social work practitioner. I am clear that I cannot do one without the other. The last eight years has seen the government abdicate its responsibilities towards its most vulnerable citizens and that's why, as a social worker and proud member of both BASW & SWU, I found myself walking for social justice. But the campaign didn't end when we got to Liverpool - Boot Out Austerity marches on.

Secondly

The following day at its AGM BASW, my and your professional association made a pledge to continue with its anti-austerity campaign, I ask that SWU my and your Union pledge its full support to BASW's decision.

Thirdly - and this may sound belt and braces but -

This AGM confirmed SWU's ongoing commitment to the Boot Out Austerity campaign and mandates the executive committee to seek ways to achieve this.

Our Union's name is on the Boot Out Austerity T-shirt and two of our Executive Committee members Malcolm Jordan and myself are members of the BASW Anti Austerity Action Group. We seek a mandate to put anti austerity campaigning firmly on our Unions agenda.

I ask you to vote for this motion

Remuneration

Remuneration, Remuneration and Respect

We have been working with our good friends and allies Campaign Collective to highlight the complexity of offering remuneration to people who are giving up their valuable time and experience to be involved in planning and deliver of all forms of public services.

On the one hand the government is rightly mandating the core inclusion of citizens' experiences and views if these essential services are to be allowed to operate. This includes the design of qualifying courses for doctors, nurses and social workers. Yet, because of arcane tax rules and complex benefits, regulations mean that it is difficult for charities, local government, universities and other providers to remunerate people who want to help shape and improve services. In effect, government rules freeze people with lived experience out of contributing meaningfully to the development of these services!

So that's the problem with Remuneration and we as the Austerity Action Group are hoping to change this by showing Respect to those who wish to play their part in society. We have recently conducted a survey to establish what are the barriers to being able to offer some remuneration and will be publishing this alongside writing to the relevant government minister.

The details of this will be published mid- September so do watch out for our launch.

Angi Naylor
Chair Austerity Action Group
and SWU Executive Member

SWU Executive expresses solidarity with Ken Loach regarding his unfair expulsion from the Labour Party

Some of you may have seen a tweet from the SWU Twitter account expressing solidarity with Ken Loach and, in the interest of transparency, we feel it is important to let our members know what happened around this tweet.

As you may know, Ken Loach is a career filmmaker who has focused on raising awareness of social injustices. SWU strongly supported and campaigned on Ken's 2016 film *I, Daniel Blake*. This film had a phenomenal impact on raising awareness throughout the UK and internationally of the labyrinthine and hostile architecture of the benefits system and how the vulnerable continue to be disproportionately affected by austerity-based policy cuts. SWU is proud to have been a part of this project along with the Boot Out Austerity campaign and of the positive impact it has had on social work. **For Ken's last film, *Sorry We Missed You*, SWU GS John McGowan consulted on it with SWU receiving a film credit.**

When the SWU Executive Committee heard that Ken Loach had been expelled from the Labour Party without appeal - along with many others who hold socialist views or are trade union movement affiliates - we felt compelled to speak out about the unfairness of this action. It is not right that someone should be expelled for "association" - and in this case the fact that Ken would "not disown those already expelled" was deemed as association.

As trade unionists and social workers, we should and do have an interest in the political agendas that impact upon ourselves, our members, and service users. We tweeted on August 18th:

"Ken, you are a terrific supporter of social work and you have inspired so many people to seek to build a better society. Solidarity our friend."

Soon after posting, there was a criticism of this tweet that got some engagement on Twitter. In line with our union's commitment to social justice centred values, we felt that we must take comments of this nature seriously. Rather than leaving the tweet up and risk causing unintentional harm, we deleted the tweet and posted a message to explain this action:

"SWU is a union committed to challenging discrimination and racism and there is no place for it. I have personally removed the previous tweet re Ken Loach and will discuss and debate the issues with the wider membership and Exec. Please allow us an opportunity to do this. JM SWU GS."

It was discussed that, if there was even a chance that the tweet in question had made members of the Jewish community feel unsafe, issuing an apology for that was the right thing to do. So we posted this on the SWU Twitter feed:

"We apologise for yesterday's tweet and the hurt that it has caused. The tweet was deleted because we recognise Twitter is not the appropriate place to have this discussion with the SW community. SWU absolutely condemns antisemitism and racism in all forms." John McGowan SWU GS

It is also relevant to note that other unions have supported Ken by inviting him to speak at events, recommended that their members

watch his films, and have quite rightly praised his films, stating, *“In the 50-odd years since Cathy Come Home, which helped to launch the housing charity Shelter, Loach’s dramas have unfalteringly charted the difficulties experienced by ordinary people at the bottom of the economic ladder.”*

As you can see from the length of this article, Twitter was indeed not the place to discuss this. We will finish this account of events with two statements:

Many of our members have written to us to express their support of Ken Loach, and the SWU Executive is united in our respect for Ken who has for decades highlighted social injustice, poverty, and inequality - all of the things that we, as social workers and trade unionists, frequently encounter and challenge.

We also reiterate our ongoing commitment as a union to fight against antisemitism and racism in all its forms. All SWU members who experience discrimination have access to our fantastic Trade Union Advice and Representation Service who will fight on their behalf.



Ken Loach and screenwriter Paul Laverty photographed on the red carpet at the premiere of *Sorry We Missed You* in 2020. The SWU logo is displayed prominently in the background.

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

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

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

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

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



Belong to a Social Work union that:

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

As a SWU member you get:

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

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

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

SWU can be found on the following:



www.facebook.com/socialworkersunionuk/



www.swu-union.org.uk



[SWU_UK](https://twitter.com/SWU_UK)

A large, gold-colored '100' is centered on a blue background. The numbers are cut out, revealing the blue background. Several gold and blue stars are scattered around the '100'.

★ **YEARS** ★
CELEBRATION
2011 - 2021

SWU

Social Workers Union
