

Statement from SWU to prospective candidates in the forthcoming 2019 General Election

What is Social Work:

Social work is a professional discipline that seeks to facilitate the welfare of communities, individuals, families, and groups. A practicing professional with a degree in social work is called a Social Worker. Since April 2005 "Social Worker" has been a protected title (section 61 of the Care Standards Act 2000). Social Workers are guided by principles of social justice, rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversity. Social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being.

What they do:

Social work tries to promote change and grassroots empowerment of people and aids in socio-economic development, social cohesion, and liberation from abuse and oppression. There are currently 100,000 Social Workers in the UK. Social Work continues to be a demanding profession with recent research from Bath Spa University highlighting the difficulties: www.basw.co.uk/what-we-do/campaigns/professional-working-conditions.

What we do:

The Social Workers Union (SWU) is a trade union dedicated to social work professionals. SWU is working to recruiting as many of these practitioners as is possible. The Union was legally established by the British Association of Social Work in 2011 and now has 12,000 members. We know how difficult it can be for a Social Worker, working under tremendous pressure, sometimes subjected to wholly unreasonable criticism in the press, to deliver the services that their clients deserve. As a Union we are able to use our specialist knowledge to advocate on behalf of Social Workers both individually and collectively.

Social Workers dedicate their lives to promote change and grassroots empowerment of people to promote social development, cohesion, and liberation from abuse and oppression.

Social Work is an extremely complicated process – not only does it require very finely tuned and skilled decisions to be made, it has to be made within a detailed legal framework. Contrary to the portrayal of social work in the media, Social Workers do not simply pop by and check that everything is all right within a household, whisk a child away at the drop of a hat, or neglect a vulnerable adult's needs. Faced with rocketing caseloads Social Workers now find themselves spending the majority of their time navigating laborious and unwieldy data-collection systems.

Will you support action to reduce this bureaucratic overload so that workers can spend more time with their clients?

Politicians would appear to want it both ways. They want Social Workers to act more swiftly in situations where children and adults need to be safeguarded from abuse and neglect, but they want fewer mistakes where action is disproportionate and oppressive. The fact is that the long standing programme of austerity is both increasing demand and limiting the response. In particular preventive work can only have a low priority, increasingly costly for the state.

Would you support increased funding of social services in order to allow us to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in society?

The Social Workers Union would urge all parliamentary prospective candidates to work with us in supporting our members to do their job effectively and support our campaign for better working conditions. As a prospective candidate what would you do to ensure that Social Work professionals have support to deal with their caseload?

The Social Workers Union supports the recent statement by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) on social protection, which reads:

"Social protection is a human right. The social work profession's core commitment to human rights involves a commitment to provide social protection for all. IFSW calls upon governments and members of civil society to engage for inclusive and comprehensive social protection systems for all.

IFSW will work in the promotion of social protection and calls on its member associations and social workers worldwide to join in this commitment to protect, preserve and expand the right for social protection for all.

In the understanding of IFSW social protection is more than the provision for basic needs. In accordance with the international definition of social work and with the professional ethics and principles IFSW holds that social protection systems must be embedded in a social policy that promotes social justice, social security, social coherence and wellbeing. Social protection systems must be understood as instruments for social transformation, democracy and creating social just societies." (IFSW 2016)

As a prospective parliamentary candidate would you support this IFSW statement?