



National Social Work Week 2021

Welcome to this special edition newsletter, celebrating the contribution of our colleagues in Adult and Children's services.

In this newsletter you'll find articles on:

- What is National Social Work Week?
- A message from David and Sue
- What's happening this week?
- An audience with a social worker
- Social workers at their best

“[SW] broke things down to my level”

“anything we ask of her she helps”

“She managed to find me a placement back in Swindon so I could continue with my education”

What is National Social Work Week?

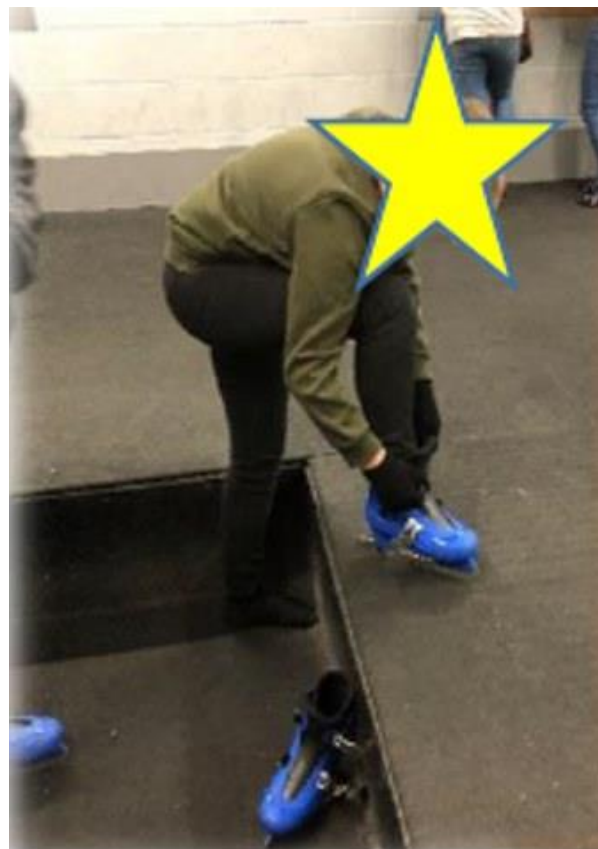


Tuesday, 16 March is World Social Work Day and this year rather than just marking the day, we wanted to run a range of events in the week before.

The 2021 IFSW World Social Day theme is Ubuntu: I am Because We Are.

In such uncertain times, Ubuntu is a powerful message on the need for solidarity at all levels: within communities, societies and globally. It is a message that all people are interconnected and that its now more vital than ever for people to come together to build a sustainable, fair and equitable future for all.





A message from David and Sue



1 - David Haley, Corporate Director of Children's Services



2 - Sue Wald, Corporate Director of Adults', Housing & Public Health

Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted to introduce you to this first joint newsletter for National Social Work Week. Your stories of why you became a social worker and what it means to work as part of the Swindon Team are inspiring. We are so proud of the work that you do, particularly over the past 12 months, in supporting children, families and adults who need our help. The family or person we support is always at the heart of what we do. A feature of our work across adult and children's services is our focus on building on the strengths, skills and abilities of the individual child, young person, family and adult when we offer help and support.

We look forward to the events and hope you will be able to join, be inspired, stimulated and learn from each other.

David & Sue

“He’s very caring and thinks about the whole family”

“Discussing storage boxes [with social worker], then within a few hours they had been ordered”.

“She talks to [child] as a person and seeks his view. She takes notice of him and what he has to say; more than anyone else has done.”

What's happening this week?



The Social Work and Leadership Academy will be running a number of events for Social Work Week. Many of these sessions will be run by practitioners and will centre on the importance of strength-based practice. This week is intended to:

- Celebrate and recognise the value of social work
- Share good practice within Swindon
- Provide an opportunity to reflect on good social work practice
- Promote connection between colleagues across the workforce

The full programme of events, along with the links to book via Eventbrite, are available on the [Social Work and Leadership Academy intranet page](#).

Social Work England are also running events nationally which have been circulated to all social workers. Their free programme can be found on the [Social Work Week 2021 website](#).

An audience with a social worker



We put some questions to some of our social workers to find out more about why they became social workers and what it takes to be good at the job.

Why did you become a social worker?

Senior Manager (SM): I wanted to do a job where I thought I could make a difference for someone that was having a difficult time in their life. I was inspired by a girl I knew at school who told me about their fantastic Social Worker.

Safeguarding social worker (SGSW): I became a Social Worker to be the person to support children in the way that I felt I wasn't supported as a child. As I continued my journey on the University Course I became more passionate about providing a voice, listening to, talking to and supporting children in the safeguarding arena where I remain working in now. I am driven by passion to ensure that the children I work are as safe as they can be and have the opportunities to thrive to their full potential throughout their childhoods as they deserve to.

Jackie Chipping, Principal Social Worker: I became a social worker as I wanted to help and make a difference for children and families who have had to struggle with inequality and oppression.

How would you describe what you do?

SM: In my role I am not carrying out the role of a Social Worker anymore, but that doesn't stop me from saying that I am a Social Worker, that I uphold social work values, and that I am proud to be one. I regularly get sent examples of compliments that our Social Workers receive, so I know that when we do it well it can make a significant difference in someone's life. When we help someone decide what they want to change in their life, help them do it, and they say things are better, that is priceless.

SGSW: I would describe what we do as Social Workers as one of the most important, difficult, rewarding and incredible jobs in the world and I am honoured to be able to do it. Our job is to support and facilitate children to remain with their families but where this isn't possible and a child is at risk of significant harm and change is likely not to be sustained, sadly, we have to find alternative placements for the children, exploring family and friend options first. Our job is to listen and talk to children and offer them a trusted and safe adult to confide and speak to but someone who will act on what they say accordingly in order to promote their safety and well being. We are able to work with parents and carers to support change in the best interest of children, we have to challenge decisions and behaviours at times and this can be difficult to manage but again, this is in the best interest of the children. Our impact is dependent on the nature of our involvement, it can be difficult and relationships breakdown but equally, there are times when we work with families and they thank us for the work we are do and this is an incredible feeling.

What advice would you give to other Social Workers?

Jackie Chipping: My advice would be to;

- **Be connected** - Always remain focused on building relationships with your children and families so that you can have meaningful and honest conversations which at times will be really difficult to have.. don't ever forget that these are needed to make change happen for the most vulnerable children and families . Always work to get their voices heard and always remember the importance of endings for children and families. Connect with others who support children so that you can work together to improve children's lives.
- **Be brave** - Do not be afraid to challenge other's views and stick up for your children and families it is so easy to get drawn into processes and systems which make children and families invisible....don't accept this. If you spot how something could be better be brave and raise this with your organisation as innovation starts with us
- **Be resilient** - My social work journey has had many ups and downs. I have been really upset at times. Sometimes it is tough to accept that a parent or family may not make the necessary changes. I have also been so happy when positive outcomes have been achieved for children. It is so important to recognise the impact of the work on you personally ...so ensure that you use support networks via supervision and peer support opportunities to reflect

Social workers at their best



We have some absolutely brilliant social work colleagues here at Swindon Borough Council, so it felt right that we should have an award dedicated to them.

Last year we introduced the Social Worker of the Year award and asked for nominations that recognised colleagues who go above and beyond what their role requires them to do, make a really positive difference to the lives of others and show a real dedication to their job.

We've had some fantastic nominations in and it will be a really tough job to short list our finalists. Here are a few quotes from the nominations:

Develops positive relationships with families and young people

Approachable and compassionate.

Here is a Social Worker who makes a difference.

A wonderful and caring social worker who is always happy to help

Shows all the professional curiosity and integrity that you would wish for in a Social Worker

Her work is child focused and timely and her commitment to children she supports is evident in her approach

Has repeatedly through her career put Swindon community before anything

An absolute star social worker and colleague

Hardworking, passionate and dedicated Children Social Worker

An MBE for Debbie

Our SBC colleague Debbie Curd – Service Manager Children's Social Care – was awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List for services to leadership in social care and to children and young people in Swindon. Congratulations Debbie on behalf of all of us; it's very well-deserved.