



Campaigning for better working conditions and wellbeing for
social workers

Social workers are responsible on a daily basis for making potentially life changing decisions about children and adults.

Such a skilled role involves a significant investment both by the government and by social workers themselves both prior to qualification and through on-going training.

It makes absolute sense to get the best out of this investment: for people who use services, for social workers and for the tax-payer.

The British Association of Social Workers; the Social Workers Union and Bath Spa University undertake regular surveys to identify key issues that affect social workers and the subsequent impact on social work services.

3421 social workers contributed to the survey, almost three times more than that completed the first Working Conditions and Wellbeing survey in 2017.

Overall the findings from **Dr Jermaine Ravalier's** research from both 2017 and 2018 show how strongly engaged social workers are in their work and that they want the very best outcomes for people who use services, but are hampered by working conditions and lack of resources.

“ Social work continues to be an incredibly challenging profession – with high stress levels in the workplace, excessive caseloads, the challenges of hot-desking, covering for colleagues who are sick and onerous procedures and timescales.”

Dr Jermaine Ravalier,
report author, Bath Spa University

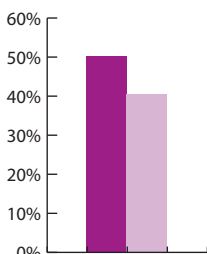


UK Social Workers: Working Conditions and Wellbeing (August 2018)



Key findings

Working conditions are **worse than 90%-95%** of other UK employees in both public and private sector occupations.



Nearly half of all social workers are dissatisfied in their jobs, compared to 41% in 2017.

3421 responded in 2018, compared to 1600 in 2017.



Two thirds have attended work while ill at least twice in the last year.

Social workers worked an average of **64 days per year** more than they are contracted to (an average of **11 hours per week**).

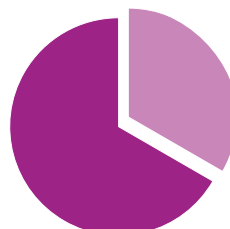


60% looking to leave their current job within the next 15 months compared to 52% last year.

Levels of stress are much greater than the UK average. The main stressors in particular were high case and administrative loads, and lack of resources for service users.



Nearly **70%** social workers attended work while so ill they should have taken time off.



Nearly **40%** respondents looking to leave the profession entirely.



Positive working environments are necessary for social workers' psychological and physical welfare and to keep social workers in posts. If this is not addressed, then we will be facing a crisis. The Government needs to listen."

John McGowan,
General Secretary, Social Workers Union



- ✓ Social workers need positive professional working conditions to provide the best services
- ✓ Strong leadership to manage the demand on social workers
- ✓ Management training for social work managers
- ✓ Reduce stress and provide wellbeing support
- ✓ Professional development
- ✓ Time for reflective supervision to work through complex cases
- ✓ Manageable caseloads and a consistent approach to caseload allocation
- ✓ Employ more social workers
- ✓ Reverse the blame culture and give social workers respect and positive support
- ✓ Flexible and remote working through improved technology
- ✓ 80/20 quality time with individuals and families
- ✓ Fair pay and careers



It is absolutely essential that we work to create decent working contexts for social workers where they can make the difference to people's lives they want to make and develop their skills.

"We know the key elements of success: access to professional supervision, manageable caseloads, good leadership and management, fair pay and careers, reduced unnecessary bureaucracy, time to spend with individuals and families, and access to ongoing professional development and wellbeing support.

"I have been pleased with the supportive dialogue with parliamentarians across the political spectrum. We now need to turn dialogue into action with employers and policy makers."

Ruth Allen, CEO BASW

How you can help



Campaigning for better working
conditions and wellbeing for
social workers

Employers

- Share your good practice and learning for great services.
- Assess your services against the standards for employers of Social Workers across the UK.
- Use the Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) Framework to develop your teams in Wales.
- Professional development and wellbeing support – contact BASW to find out how we can help support your social work leaders, managers and teams.

Social workers

Encourage social worker colleagues to support our campaign for improved working conditions and wellbeing for social workers.

- Find out more about the campaign www.BASW.co.uk/working-conditions.
- Share campaign posters in your workplace and with colleagues.
- Use our online letter template to write to your AMs to highlight the issues faced by social workers and the work you do every day to support people and families.
- Show your support on social media #UKsocialwork.
- Explore the BASW and SWU benefits for social workers and get in touch to find out more.

AMs

- Write to the Cabinet Secretaries for Finance and Health & Social Services and the WLGA requesting that social work is properly funded and resourced to retain the workforce and protect vulnerable children and adults.
- Meet with representatives of the SWU and BASW in your area to hear more about their work lives and understand the work they do with vulnerable people.
- Request a debate or committee inquiry into the impact of cuts on social services.

Contacts

Ruth Allen
CEO, BASW
ruth.allen@basw.co.uk
07702 517 559

James Birchall
President, SWU
president@swu-union.org.uk
07544 199 626

Dr Jermaine Ravalier
Report author, Bath Spa University
j.ravalier@bathspa.ac.uk
07850 683 008

www.BASW.co.uk/working-conditions

BASW
The professional association for
social work and social workers

SWU
Social
Workers
Union