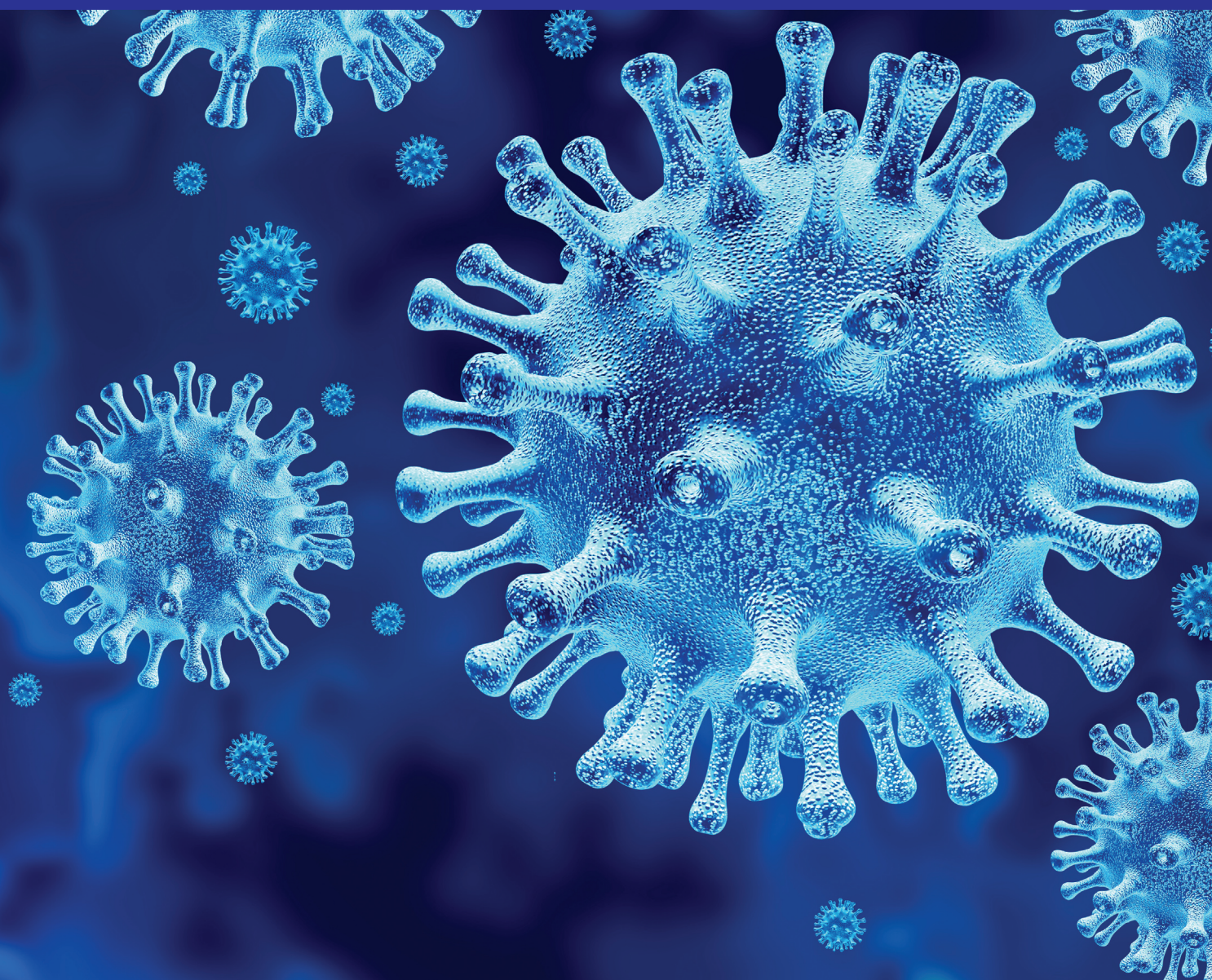


BASW Covid-19 Response 16 March-10 August 2020 Report for members



This short report highlights the actions that BASW has taken for its members, for social work and for wider society in its initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report is from a light-touch review of our actions and feedback we have received. It will be shared with members at the Annual General Meeting.

BASW

**The professional association for
social work and social workers**

www.basw.co.uk

Decision making

Following work by the executive in the first two weeks of March, an extraordinary Council meeting approved a **plan covering staff wellbeing, member support, practice guidance and voice** on 18 March.

Council set up a **Covid Committee** to make urgent decisions on behalf of members, and to oversee staff wellbeing. This included the Honorary Officers (Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer), Policy Ethics & Human Rights Committee representatives, the Chief Executive and senior managers depending on the agenda (for Human Resources, Communications, the four Nations, Policy, Advice and Representation, Professional development and Business development). At times, this committee met twice weekly and never less than fortnightly. Sub groups of Policy Ethics & Human Rights committee and of International Committee also met frequently to inform and sign off BASW's work. A **rapid process** for creating UK wide Practice Guidance and Position Statements was written in early June, to reflect practice of the Covid Committee in ensuring essential member input and sign off.

BASW's delivery was communicated to members through the **website and bulletins** that went out daily at first and then three times a week from April, along with reports from BASW UK Chair and Chief Executive. The Chair reported to Council weekly. Full Council and Committees met as usual throughout the period.

Staff and services

Following the most well-evidenced **public health information**, staff were enabled to work at home with supervisory and team support. **All services** continued online without a break. We reported to members on initial changes on 17 March and updated on 9 April and 14 July. BASW set up a **survey** for members and wider social work on 16 March and used responses to guide our work.

Wellbeing

From 19 March BASW provided **learning from our survey** on keeping safe, prioritising work and seeking support. All nations provided ongoing briefings on support available from

BASW. **Wellbeing** resources were shared on 26 March, with information about self-care and a quick guide for self-care in April, followed by **mental health awareness** resources in May.

Advice and Representation provided immediate service information, followed by FAQs on 8 April. The service added additional duty calls by up to 50% as needed. There was joint work with the Social Workers Union on their **health and safety statement** in early April. Further support came via a webinar on key issues and blogs. The **COVID 19 Staff Risk Assessment Guide and Flow chart** with particular focus on risks faced by social workers from ethnic minorities was used in BASW and published for members early June. The **Wellbeing toolkit** was launched 22 June with **Social Workers Union**, and we shared SWU's blogs, information and campaigning.

Independent social workers had a dedicated webpage from 26 March, including guidance and employment information. We held webinars on transition to practice and business resilience at the end of April. The discussion forums continued throughout. We highlighted **students'** needs from the start and met regularly with regulators and Higher Education bodies in all four countries. We signposted to essential information for students.

BASW's **Professional support service**, developed in response to Covid-19, launched late July and our **Social Work Employment Service** for agency workers launched early August.

Recognition

Reports on **social workers' experience** began on 18 March on our website. **Professional Social Work magazine** captured the experience, learning and power of social workers' response to Covid-19.

We supported the **clap for carers** and produced a poster for this on 22 April; held a minute's silence and **remembrance** on 28 April with SWU for social care and health workers who died during Covid-19 around the world; and took part in June 30 Stars in Memory for all care workers lost. We made statements in memory of social workers who died. BASW fundraised for the **Social Workers' Benevolent Trust** and our heritage event raised money for the Trust and other charities. Students' graduation was

recognised and marked by a disco in early August.

On 19 May our Talking Together **heritage event** shared inspirational talks about past, present and future. Our two-day 50th anniversary event in June covered rights, working conditions, research and the future, together with a 50th anniversary blog in The Guardian.

Guidance

On 1 April we produced **Ethical guidance**, followed by **practice guidance** throughout April for Home visits, Social work with children and families, Hospital social work, End of life social work, Safeguarding adults, Multi-disciplinary and multi-agency contexts, Face to face visits, and Safeguarding adults in placements. SASW launched Domestic abuse guidance at the end of April, then shared across the UK. We continually collected and shared best practice.

On 28 May we published guidance on the **Role of social workers in a pandemic and its aftermath**. We shared **blogs** on practice areas and issues including mental health, adoption, Black Lives Matter, carers week, racism, feminism, and Gypsy Roma and Traveller history month. A statement and guidance on **digital capabilities** was created with SCIE on 25 March, and further work on **capabilities** for social work with autistic adults, and adults with learning disabilities was carried out in England.

Learning

A **dedicated web area** was set up on 16 March. We **reported** on the Coronavirus bill on 18 March and gave a briefing on the Act on 1 April. We **signposted** to Public Health guidance and highlighted changes in the law in the four nations.

BASW's first Covid-19 **webinar** was held on 18 March for Approved Mental Health Practitioners. Further webinars followed including on digital technology, loneliness, connecting with carers, using evidence in work with adults with a learning disability and domestic abuse.

Online **member forums** sprang up and by 17 April were happening in each nation and for independents. Regular **Branch meetings** took place from April. **Podcasts** led by BASW NI

started in May included on domestic abuse, mental health, Pride and Black Lives Matter. BASW continually shared **evidence about emerging practice and the impact** of Covid-19 on social work including evidence relating to carers, people with learning disabilities and autism, care homes, ethnic minority groups, mental health and children.

Lobbying

On 19 March BASW put out its first **press release** about social work priorities, drawing on our survey – fulfilling statutory duties, health and safety, equipment, and students' support. Across the UK, BASW consistently met with senior representatives on a regular basis and raised issues with Chief Social Workers, employers, regulators and governments.

We sent **UK letters** on the Coronavirus Bill 23 March; to the Prime Minister on Personal Protective Equipment, guidance and testing on 1 April; and to public health in early May requesting dedicated guidance for social workers and understanding of risk to ethnic minority workers. Across the four nations BASW **communicated with governments** on key issues, for example SASW briefed Scottish MSPs on 1 April, BASW NI briefed MLAs on 7 May, BASW Cymru raised questions including on workforce and shielding, and BASW England wrote to ministers to withdraw changes to children's rights. All four nations provided **expert input to law and policy**.

We jointly **called for** a Covid-19 Wellbeing Taskforce on 15 April. The Austerity action group from BASW and SWU wrote an open letter 24 April to the Chancellor calling for austerity to be rolled back. We **commented** on public health data, budget changes and lockdown announcements

Human rights

BASW created a **Human rights statement** on 27 April and updated this on 24 June. This called for government accountability, set out how social workers should be enabled to uphold human rights, and highlighted particular human rights issues.

We proactively **raised human rights issues** for example: we challenged do not resuscitate; opposed the introduction of a health surcharge

for immigrants and the points based system; urged rights for migrants and refugees; supported calls for suspension of no recourse to public funds; and called for school meals to be reinstated in England and Northern Ireland. We issued a statement on Care Homes, Personal Assistants and Covid-19 on 29 April, followed by requests for testing and ongoing support to social care workers. We highlighted support required for people with learning disabilities and autism.

The **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** advisory group was formed from early May. We set up a resources page for ethnic minority social work following our initial statement on Black Lives Matter on 1 June. We gave a full statement on 8 June with template letters to write to members of parliaments. Subsequent actions included a blog on tackling institutional racism, involvement in a letter opposing the imagery of the KCMG medal, and a Black and Minority Ethnic Professional Symposium in England. We supported Pride Inside and other national days. BASW Cymru led a new initiative to improve relations between social work and Gypsy Roma Traveller communities.

BASW England worked with others to raise issues about guidance on children's social care, followed by urging government to withdraw its new statutory instrument on 1 May. We then supported **legal action** launched to protect children in care on 6 June.

International

In May BASW committed £40,000 to **support international social work** partners in the fight against Covid-19, consisting of £10,000 to the International Federation of Social Workers to share learning and £30,000 to 8 projects across Africa, Asia and the middle East.

We hosted a **European webinar** on 24 April to share experiences. BASW took part in SWAN **international webinars**, contributed to IFSW **research** on ethical dilemmas during Covid, contributed to and shared a report by the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work and took part in the **IFSW conference and global meeting** in mid July. We put forward a motion that was passed to create an international social work **Covid fund**.

Response, learning and next steps

Our staff and members responded generously, ethically and expertly to the needs of social work and wider society. This took place in the context of personal and professional worry and struggle. We are hugely grateful for the commitment and action shown.

Response

BASW currently has its **highest membership** ever. We had over 2200 responses to our survey, 500 in the first two days. More than half of our members opened each bulletin. Our **website** saw increases of 13% in two weeks and reached 13,500 hits a day, including thousands of new users. **Social media** traffic jumped, including 3000 views of our Vlogs.

The **Advice and Representation team** took 50% more calls at times during the pandemic. The **Professional Support Service** had 47 mentors signed up within two weeks and immediately received requests from members. Our **support forums** have had hundreds of attendees. The **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group** gathered more than 30 committed members in the first few months. Our **guidance** has been downloaded thousands of times. Hundreds have attended our **professional development events** or watched these later, including 700 people signed up to our **Heritage festival**.

In the first month, our **media reach** doubled. BASW had nearly 90 major news items across the UK in national and local papers, radio, television and trade press, and facilitated more behind the scenes. Social work practice and education has been more effectively considered during Covid-19 because of **BASW's lobbying**, starting with us securing meetings with social work leaders on 27 March because of our survey evidence and member voice.

In response to our lobbying, **our resources** have been widely shared and used. For example, Home visit guidance was endorsed by principal social workers in England, the Scottish Universities and Colleges adopted BASW's Covid chart, our Wellbeing Toolkit is being piloted in Wales, our ethical guidance was shared by the Northern Ireland regulator, and our political letters adopted in other countries.

Our voice has joined with others to raise **public awareness** of social work and social care. **Changes in policy** have come about for issues that we have lobbied on, including reducing the Coronavirus Act's length of enforcement, abandoning the health surcharge for immigrants and reinstating school meals. We have seen **greater awareness** of inequality and our voice has added to this.

Learning

BASW has **learned a great deal** about how to work virtually, deliver services innovatively, increase our relational support and amplify our voice. We have identified decision making structures that work for urgent situations by balancing responsiveness and accountability.

Covid Committee has reflected on its work and identified that we could have been quicker to establish a clear process for guidance and to

ensure consistent four nation representation. We could have reviewed our guidance more quickly with members.

We have ongoing work to do to clarify and enhance the **involvement of people with lived experience** across BASW. Had our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** work progressed more quickly, the advisory group would have been in place earlier than May to assist us.

BASW has ongoing work to provide **information about impact to members**. Some of our work is clearly influential. However much more has subtle, shared or gradual impact. Capturing this has always been difficult. Our external relationships have developed and we can now build more and deeper collaborations.

Future

Through our survey, social workers have identified the main challenges ahead – upholding human rights, responding to austerity, and being able to work safely and sustainably. BASW's four immediate priorities beyond the first response to the pandemic are: **social work reform; anti-oppressive practice and human rights; working conditions for social workers and social work education.**

- We have created documents for future social work with adults and children for member input and sector discussion. We will keep lobbying for social care reform.
- Our equality, diversity and inclusion work to transform BASW and lead on anti-oppressive social work will continue, and include a roundtable to give account for our work and ask others to do the same in October.
- Our working conditions campaign and support for social workers is ongoing. We expect the Professional Support Service and Social Work Employment Service to be key in the future. We work closely with educators to support students.

We will keep working for the best – for BASW to build on the innovations from our pandemic response and reinstate the elements we have missed; and for a sustainable, supported reform of social care with valued social work at the heart. And we will plan for potential difficulties – a second wave of the pandemic requiring us to continue our virtual support, urgent care and lobbying but starting from a position of experience and learned expertise.

BASW will be carrying out a full **review of our pandemic response**. We are also working with Durham University with member involvement on a full **analysis of our Covid-19 social work survey** to capture learning for the profession.

BASW's 2025 Vision states that we act:

1. For social work:

Developing professional practice, knowledge, research and learning

2. For social workers:

Supporting, protecting and inspiring social workers

3. For a better society:

Speaking out on equality, human rights, and other social issues.

We will continue to do this and to recognise and celebrate the contribution of social workers.

**Jon Dudley, Fran Fuller,
Gerry Nosowska: Honorary Officers;
Ruth Allen: Chief Executive.**