



THE

LONDON MET'S **SOCIAL WORK** STUDENT NEWSLETTER




**THE SOCIAL WORK NEWSLETTER #4 ● SPRING 2023**

- Student Reps ● Social Work England ● Social Work Week Programme
- Employability Conference ● Get to know the Social Work module team
- You said... We did... ● Classroom off campus ● Theatre performances of MAD(E)
- Racial Equity and Career Progression in Social Work Conference
- The Social Worker and the Mentor Live Podcast



**YOU DID IT!**  
**GRADUATION 2022**

# Welcome

Welcome to the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the , the iconic publication co-produced with social work students. The Loop is a termly vehicle for students to use to share their views, not just of the social work course, but other issues of interest both within and without of the university. The Loop will be a platform to share news and events from The North East London Teaching Partnership, and the teaching, learning and research interests and activities of the academic team and wider colleagues.

The Editorial Team would encourage and welcome contributions from students and staff for the next edition. Please be a part of this exciting initiative.

## Your newsletter. Your voice.

### Editorial Team

**Jessica-Rose McMullins**  
Final Year BSc Student

**Cindy Martin**  
First Year MSc Student

**Donna Jones**  
Head of Social Work

# Know your Social Work student reps

## BSc

### Level 4

Thomas McInnes  
Amelia Jameel

### Level 5

Samantha Halil  
Emma Birbeck

### Level 6

Jessica-Rose McMullins  
Babra Mbabzi

## MSc

### Level 7.1 (1<sup>st</sup> year)

Melissa Namwanje  
Gloria Mputu

### Level 7.2 (2<sup>nd</sup> year)

Moya Biggs  
Alice Wood

Your student reps are here to represent your cohort's views at formal meetings like the Course Committee Meetings that happen once a term or informally via the Open Door! that has been set up for each cohort. They will highlight any concerns to the Course Leads and also share with the academic team when things are going well. They are in regular contact with the Course Leads, so do please let them know if there are things you feel we need to know!

### BSc Course Lead

Elsa Gonzalez Simon  
(my pronouns are she/hers)  
[e.gonzalezsimon@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:e.gonzalezsimon@londonmet.ac.uk)  
or find Elsa on MS Teams chat  
Office: BEUG-3 (Green Zone)

### MSc Course Lead

Hazel Cutts  
(my pronouns are she/hers)  
[h.cutts@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:h.cutts@londonmet.ac.uk)  
or find Hazel on MS Teams chat  
Office: BEUG-6 (Green Zone)



# course leads

# SOCIAL WORK ENGLAND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT LEAD, VICKY HART

Social Work is about connecting. It is about understanding relationships and power dynamics to create positive change in society while walking alongside people through some of their most challenging moments. I am proud to be a social worker and have always taken great pride in this wonderful profession. We look through the closed curtains on the streets, in the blocks of flats, that others walk past. We witness the impact of social policy and have the chances, with those moments of humanity to influence and change relationships with power and authority.

Sometimes, we are welcomed into homes and communities. Sometimes, our presence is a stigma or is unwelcome interference, but we have, at each moment, through each interaction, the decisions of how to use our power, and to instill it with humanity and thoughtfulness. In wishing you all a happy and fulfilling 2023, as you take the next steps in your social work journey, after over 20 years of social work practice, I wanted to ask you to hold on to that. We can make each contact with 'social work' imbued with empathy and care, even if the outcomes may be not wanted.

It is a matter of pride for me to be able to speak to so many people across London, in my role as Regional Engagement Lead. I am always proud of the first steps I took in my career at London Met and look forward to meeting and engaging with many of you throughout your social work careers. I'd urge you as well to check out our [2023 Social Work Week programme](#) where we will have a range of diverse voices involving people whom social work touches in many different ways.



**MORE ABOUT THE**  
**2023**  
**SOCIAL WORK WEEK**  
**PROGRAMME**

**Social  
Work  
England**

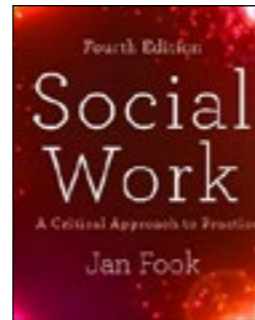
A specialist regulator focused  
on enabling positive change  
in social work

## Social Work: A Critical Approach to Practice (Fourth Edition)

Jan Fook

Now 20 years since its first edition, Jan Fook returns to update her seminal text. Celebrating the ageless ideals of the profession, this book throws a life belt to all social work students and professionals looking to engage with the **critical tradition** of social work to improve their understanding and practice.

£27.99 £19.59 | September 2022 | 248 pages | SAGE Publishing | ISBN: 9781529790238



## Sociology and Social Work

Jo Cunningham, Steve Cunningham & Alice

Now in its third edition, this book takes you through the ins and outs of why sociology is important to social work, step-by-step. It links **sociological concepts, debates and theories** to key areas such as **poverty, social exclusion, education, social class and social justice** to develop your understanding of how sociological perspectives will impact your social work placements and practice.

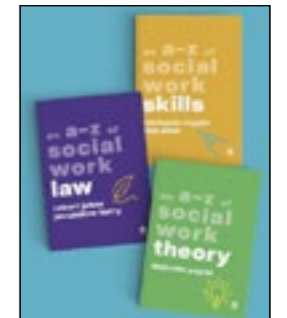
£24.99 £17.49 | September 2022 | 208 pages | Learning Matters | ISBN: 9781526464293

## A-Zs in Social Work Series

This series is here to guide you through key concepts in social work – from basic terminology and skills to social work law and theory. Perfect for placements and revision, these dip-in-and-out books are concise and easy to use. They enable you to make connections between theory and practice, test your knowledge and take your learning even further.

**Books:** Rogers & Allen, *An A-Z of Social Work Skills*; Payne, *An A-Z of Social Work Theory*; Johns & Harry, *An A-Z of Social Work Law*.

£49.99 £13.49 | September 2021 | SAGE Publications Ltd



## Developing Knowledge and Skills for Child and Family Social Work (1st Edition)

Barry Fearnley

This book provides you with the initial developing knowledge and skills needed to **practice ethically and effectively** with children and families. It takes you on a journey, introducing you to all the **relevant theory, legislation and skills for practice**. The case studies, activities and research summaries included in the textbook help you navigate the complexities and challenges along the way.

£24.99 £15.39 | March 2022 | 208 pages | Learning Matters | ISBN: 9781529763065



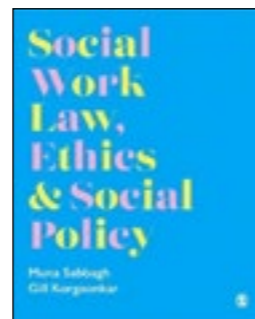
## Social Work Law, Ethics and Social Policy (First Edition)

Muna Sabbagh & Gillian Korgaonkar

Are you a social work student looking to understand how law, ethics and social policy interrelate in practice? Then look no further!

This book covers all the areas of law you need to know: **social work with children and families, vulnerable adults** and **social issues** such as welfare and homelessness. Each section concludes with a discussion of how social policy and ethics relate to each area of social work law.

£27.99 £19.59 | January 2022 | 416 pages | SAGE Publishing | ISBN: 9781529723823

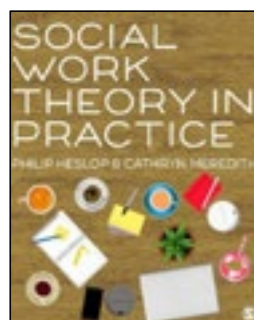


## Social Work Theory in Practice

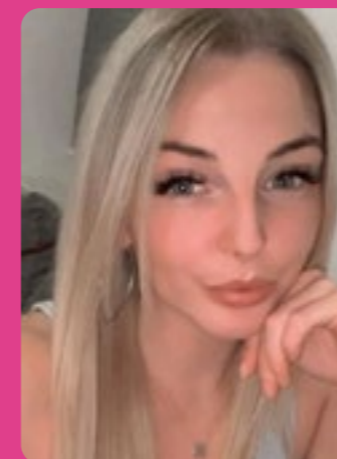
Philip Heslop & Cathryn Meredith | First Edition

A step-by-step guide to the **social work theory** helping you to confidently apply it in practice. This book is **centred around case studies** from eight fictional social workers, allowing you to explore a range of different **practice experiences, theoretical perspectives and approaches** to understanding situations and equipping you to identify possible courses of action.

£23.00 £16.79 | November 2020 | 232 pages | SAGE Publications Ltd | ISBN: 9781526492364



# HAPPY FINAL YEAR LEVEL 6 – WE'RE ALMOST THERE!!



Jessica-Rose

[jem0681@my.londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:jem0681@my.londonmet.ac.uk)

As many of you will know, I am one half of the student rep team for Level 6 BSc Social work. But for those who don't, my name is Jessica-Rose. I am a final year student on the social work degree at London Met and one of the co-editors of The Loop.

The reason I have become a rep for the second time is to give the students in my cohort a voice, but not only this. Social Work is a tough degree, 2 out of 3 academic

years you are on placement, in addition to having to complete your assignments, essays and for final year, the dreaded dissertation, balancing all of this with your personal life. It's stressful! So I am here to try to help alleviate some of that stress. I have made it a priority to help improve the way the course is delivered. Fortunately, I have a very open relationship with the Social work team here at London Met. The team is very responsive to student's needs and always open to suggestions and constructive criticism.

In my position as student rep, I have had some influence in some of the recent changes to the course, this wouldn't be possible without students making use of reps to have their voices heard. It is great to be able to do this from the perspective as a student as it means that I can feedback positive and negative information, give our input on what is working well and what is not working so well and make suggestions to better the delivery of the course; thus advocating for change so that Social Work students in levels 4 and 5, and students who are yet to come, can enjoy a positive and encouraging learning experience.

If you are a student in level 6 and have something to say. Let me know!! You can email me or catch me on Teams, and I will do my best to ensure that your voice is heard, because it matters!

# CALLING ALL BSC SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS



As I was cleaning my home in preparation for the upcoming celebrations, I realised that I have an awful lot of books, stationary, pens, pencils, folders and so on that by the end of the year I will no longer need.

Many of these books are in great condition and still very good learning materials. Relevant and up to date. Great resources!

This got me thinking.. This may be the case for all levels!! Level 6 will have useful material for Levels 4 and 5, and level 5 may have useful material for Level 4 and vice versa and so on!

We're all students, many of us on an unpaid placement and have spent a small fortune on these items.. perhaps getting a little something back could help. No one likes throwing things like this away.... Do they?

So, here me out, I was thinking..

## **A BRING AND BUY SALE!!!!**

Brilliant right. But I don't exactly know how to pitch this.. can you help me out???

Could we do this online?

Could we have a room where people who want to sell set up a table?

Maybe we could each list what we have to sell, information could be published and given to all cohorts. Buyers would contact sellers via teams?

That's all I've got folks.. any suggestions on how YOU want to do this can really help.

Teams me!! **JEM068**

Jessica-Rose



LONDON  
METROPOLITAN  
UNIVERSITY



NORTH EAST LONDON  
SOCIAL WORK  
TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

## SOCIAL WORK EMPLOYABILITY CONFERENCE

THURSDAY 9TH FEBRUARY 2023

**FOR FINAL YEAR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS ONLY**

Our Partnership with  
NELSWTP attending:

- Havering
- Waltham Forest
- Redbridge
- Tower Hamlets
- Newham
- Barking & Dagenham

### What to expect:

- Interactive event!
- Expert Speakers!
- Peers from across the partnership!
- Career workshop!
- Students get to speak with future potential employers!
- Networking opportunity!



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT THE ORGANISER VASIQA FAROOQ ON:  
V.FAROOQ@LONDONMET.AC.UK OR 0207 133 2516

# GET TO KNOW THE SOCIAL WORK MODULE TEAM

*In this issue, Cindy Martin, co-editor, will be speaking with Donna Jones who is not only Principal Lecturer, Head of Social Work, she is also Interim Head of Subject area in Leadership and Communities, Refugee, Social Work and Youth courses.*

**C: Firstly, thanks for participating in this issue of The Loop Donna. What made you want to work as a Social Worker and was Social Work the profession you always wanted to pursue?**

D: Social work was not always my goal, I began my work ethic in the advertising and publishing business. My first job role was Advertising Production Manager for Classical Music magazines then worked at a Classical Music publishing agency. From these experiences I learnt about managing the stress of meeting strict deadlines, attention to detail and the importance of networking. I had to bring clients onboard for the magazines such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and National Opera company, and the skills I used for this have followed me into Social Work. I later realised that it was quite an empty profession that never made a difference in people's lives and I am about Social change, which led me to swap careers and go into support work with people with learning disabilities, those with mental health problems and survivors of domestic abuse. I decided to train as a Social Worker after my son was born.

**C: How has training to become a Social Worker differed from the training that we now undertake?**

D: The first major difference is that I was training during the last year of full grants and so did not pay course fees. I feel very lucky that I trained at a time when the course was free, as I didn't have the

financial worries that my students have now - but feel strongly that students should not need to pay for their university education. Another difference is that when I attended the University of North London (aka London Metropolitan), my son was 18 months old and they had onsite nursery facilities. The rates were heavily subsidised, which made it easier as I could drop him at the nursery and go to my lectures.

**C: What sector of Social Work did you begin your journey in and can you tell us a bit about the responsibilities you had?**

D: I've always worked with adults and never worked in the children's sector. As a qualified Social Worker, I did hospital Social Work and I also worked with older people in a Rehab Unit as their Social Worker. I came across people with Mental Health and a whole host of other issues as a hospital Social Worker, so I worked with all adults who ended up in my wards regardless of their immediate medical needs.

Firstly the responsibility of the hospital was to free up the beds, my responsibility was to do assessment of needs and to work with medical colleagues around discharge into the rehab unit or back home. The assessments could be home care assessments and adaptation queries which meant I was visiting quite a lot of homes. Working alongside the families to put in place support packages was a key part of my role, so building relationships was very important.

**C: What were your likes and dislikes while working there?**

D: My likes were the clients, I am a storyteller and

I also like listening to stories. I always consider assessments to be listening and gathering people's stories, because they're telling you about their life, what they find difficult and what can make them sad. I just find people and what they have to say very interesting. It is the foundation of my social work practice. As a Social Worker you're allocated a certain amount of time with that client due to resource pressures. I always used to run over that time as I wanted to give people's story the respect

they deserved and listen to the story not just to get information to fill in my form but for the person to feel valued.. From that, I was able to build a relationship with the client and the family, which allowed me to give them a better service.

The dislikes were all the time restraints I was under to get the work done, which meant there was always tension with my line manager. The outcome of this was I learnt how to use my voice to advocate for the people I was working with.



Donna Jones, Head of Social Work, Interim Head of Subject Leadership in Communities, Refugee, Social Work and Youth courses

**C: Great, that was really insightful. What then led you to teach?**

D: I am an avid reader and always have been, I felt that coming into lecturing would give me an opportunity to read a lot and research things that interested me. When I first came into lecturing I was overseeing the placement curriculum as Practice Learning Development Manager. I wanted to develop that area and of course because placements are central to any social work degree, this requires reading articles, journals and books and thinking about how to implement changes to increase placements.

**C: What do you enjoy most about lecturing and why?**

D: I like interacting with the students. I see my students as my student colleagues because in a couple of years we will be working as colleagues. I enjoy learning from the students, by the time I walk out of a classroom I have learnt loads from my students. In my teaching, I enjoy listening in my lectures, so half of the time it is the students telling me their views about the topic from their own cultural perspectives. I also enjoy the humour that students bring to my classroom. Students make me rethink my position on things, I am always learning from their perspective.

**C: We all join Social Work to make a change, but as a lecturer what changes would you love to see us make as Social Workers?**

D: I would like all the students that leave the London Metropolitan Social Work course, to consider somewhere within themselves, that they are activists. That they do not just get pulled into the bureaucracy of statutory Social Work, but there is something in them that wants to make a social change. Whether that be finding your voice and finding your way to use it for social change in the system, that is the thing I would want for my students.

**C: Finally, what useful tips can you give us to succeed on our Social Work training journey?**

D: Being organised with your time is the main one and secondly know that it is not forever! My hope for all the students is to get through the course as smoothly as possible, so that they are not needing to take resits and prolong getting to the end of their course. Use this time to expand your minds, be open to new experiences, perspectives and challenges and know that in two years' time you will be a qualified Social Worker and making a change in society. Finally, feel able to make mistakes now, as you're in a safe environment - learn from them and know you will be supported to grow and develop from them.



Cindy Martin  
Co-editor

## CLASSROOM OFF CAMPUS FREUD MUSEUM TRIP

On 05/12/22 I went with 18 BSc year 1 students to the Freud Museum for a lecture and viewing of the Museum Contents as part of the Lifespan Development module I lead.

The Museum trip was enjoyed by the students. The opportunity to view the house as it was when Freud lived and worked – which included the famous couch, was highlighted as informative and enjoyable. Enthusiastic feedback from students noted that they gained an insight into some of his ideas and how they have been used to understand child and adult development.

The students had a forthcoming child observation assessment task and some students felt it would support them to consider some of these concepts in relation to personality development.

It was nice spending time with the group outside of the University and I look forward to doing more classroom off campus initiatives in later parts of the course.

**Hazel Cutts**

MSc Course Lead



# YOU SAID... WE DID...

Thank you to everybody who completed the Student Experience Survey. We really do welcome your comments so that, wherever possible, we can make the changes to the modules you suggest.

Students across all cohorts consistently reported positive experiences within a range of modules. Positive comments included the engaging, interactive and inclusive approach adopted by the teaching team, the relevancy of the syllabus and the opportunity to study and learn from peers.

Here are some of the changes we have made -

## L4

### **Assessing, Planning and Professional Ethics (SW4007)**

**You said** you may be unsure if the assessment criteria on this module have been made clear in advance

**We did** - we will now go through the assessment criteria in class and answer any questions that students may have.

### **Lifespan Development (SW4010)**

**You said** you would like to view past student work.

**We did** - permission will be sought to share a sample of students' work from previous cohorts.

### **Readiness for direct practice (SW4011)**

**You said** you wanted more fun activities,

**We did** - We are now using different media in terms of the teaching strategy including videos, podcasts and other fun formats and activities.

### **Social Contexts (SW4008)**

**You said** you wished to have more explanation and guidance about the assessment and

**We did** - Introduce a session to go through the assessment again, an extra catch up day for all the groups working on their presentation and one review day in class going over your group ideas for your presentations.

## L5

### **Theoretical Perspectives of Social Work (SW5452)**

**You said** you would like the time allocated to lectures and seminars to be equal.

**We did** - We will ensure that equal time is allocated to lectures and seminars.

### **Law for Social Work Practice (SW5000)**

**You said** you wished for Law workshops to be significant to social work when looking at a case

**We did** - we will now ensure all subsequent case studies and activities will be specifically focussed on Social work practice

## L6

### **Become Research Minded for Practice (SW6P03)**

**You said** you think the research module should start at the end of year two,

**We did** - we are now looking to get this implemented. Dissertation Supervisor details are to be made available in Dec.



## Key themes identifying areas for development across modules

**You said** we would like more support to better understand the assignment tasks and assessment criteria

**We did** - Spent time within modules to discuss the assignment task, assessment criteria and made samples of previous submissions, where appropriate, available.

Offered one to one discussions to discuss essay plans.

Provided examples of student work, where appropriate, on Weblearn

**You said** we would like clarity on ways to contact the academic staff on the module and the commitments by staff to response times for students in class

**We did** - Contact details, and process for contacting academic staff was discussed/explained and is available on Weblearn. All academic staff have expected response times on their email signatures and the Placement Team will also endeavour to respond to any query within 48 hours.

# CRITICAL PUBLISHING SOCIAL WORK UKLOOP30

## Don't Put Us Away

Richard Keagan-Bull

Richard, in his own words, provides a unique opportunity for us to better understand what it is like to live as a man with a learning disability. Richard writes about serious subjects with a very light touch. His book is simultaneously funny and profound. It will be of interest to anyone who wishes to gain an extremely rare insight into the life of a person with learning disabilities, in a voice that is so completely his own.

£18.99 | October 2022 | PB | 184pgs | Critical Publishing | ISBN: 9781915080417



## Social Exclusion in the UK

Mel Hughes (Ed.)

In UK society, there are cultural norms and assumptions that affect many marginalised groups and this book aims to address and challenge these through the lens of the people who have lived these experiences. The marginalised experiences discussed include different types of substance users, care leavers, asylum seekers, offenders, HIV positive, those living in poverty and those who identify as transgender.

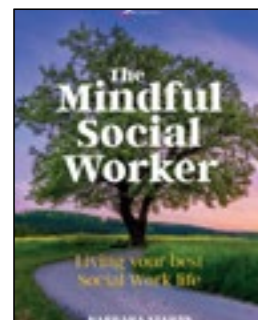
£21.99 | October 2022 | PB | 188pgs | Critical Publishing | ISBN: 9781915080387

## Self-worth in children and young people

Rachel Burr

There has never been a more pressing time to encourage young people and children to engage in methods that allow them to develop a new sense of self-worth and purpose. This book challenges the dominant approaches to children and young people's mental health, and provides straightforward practical strategies that can be used to address emotional upset, loss, and aid recovery.

£19.99 | September 2022 | PB | 126pgs | Critical Publishing | ISBN: 9781914171772



## The Mindful Social Worker

Barbara Starns

Mindfulness and social work values go hand in hand and this book is the perfect guide in self-care for social workers who want to incorporate it into their working lives to positive effect. Looking after your mental health in your working life is important to allow you to do the best job you can and learning mindfulness can really help.

£16.99 | November 2022 | PB | 160pgs | Critical Publishing | ISBN: 9781915080356

## Gypsies, Roma and Travellers

Declan Henry

Drawing from a wide range of perspectives from both inside and outside the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, this book provides readers with all the key elements required to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of these remarkable communities and their cultures.

£19.99 | September 2022 | PB | 214pgs | Critical Publishing | ISBN: 9781915080042



# CLASSROOM OFF CAMPUS

*Classroom off Campus activities have been embedded as important learning experiences at all levels of the social work course.*

*Level 6 students went to the **British Museum** with **Katrin Bain** and **Donna Jones** to consider the role of 'Knowledge' and the construction of 'truth' in relation to their Research Mindedness dissertation projects.*

*Kelly Cooper, Dean of The School of Social Sciences and Professions came along and really enjoyed the energy and enthusiasm of our students.*

*Thanks for the refreshments Kelly!*



# A THEATRE EXPERIENCE NOT TO BE MISSED!

The School of Social Sciences and Professions is excited to be hosting 6 performances of MAD(E) on the 8th, 9th and 10th March!

Booking arrangements to be confirmed.



Click on the image to watch the trailer or visit:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r-pdyQcX\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r-pdyQcX_w)

MANDALA  
THEATRE COMPANY

# MAD(E)

A NEW PLAY BY SEAN BURN

DIRECTED BY YASMIN SIDHWA

MOVEMENT DIRECTION BY MARIE-LOUISE FLEXEN

Suicide is the main cause of death in young people  
- male and female - under the age of 35 in the UK.

We need to 'start by rehumanising those who have been  
dehumanised. And for that we need the art of storytelling'.  
Elif Shafak

In 2018, 1866 young people under the age of 35  
took their own lives. Over three quarters of  
them were boys or young men.

# RACIAL EQUITY AND CAREER PROGRESSION IN SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE

*Save the Date: Wednesday 8th March 2023*

## *A Discussion of Research Findings and Design of Collaborative Framework*

The North East London Social Work Teaching Partnership (NELTP) invites you to attend the full-day event focusing on developing the capacity to address inequality in career advancement. The conference will serve as a vehicle for dialogue, cooperation and coordinated action to address and identify solutions in eliminating barriers that prevent social work professionals who identify as part of Black, Asian and/or minoritised communities from achieving equitable career progression.

The research project consists of focus groups and a survey in order to capture the voices of social work professionals working across and beyond the NELTP. Until now, collected testimonies show how the issue of inequality felt by colleagues from the global majority has a significant presence, and that institutional changes are needed. By capturing the voices of people on the ground, the research team wants to ensure equal representation of Black, Asian and/or minoritised ethnic social workers within senior-level roles.

**We would like to invite social work practitioners, including social work students, AYSE social workers, senior practitioners, agency social workers, managers and directors from across all services, to engage in the co-production of tangible actions and create a community of ongoing learning.**

- Date: **Wednesday 8th March 2023**
- Time: **9:30am (arrival reception) START: 10am - 4.15pm**
- Where: **The University of East London, Docklands Campus, E16 2RD**

**Further information about the event will be sent with an Eventbrite registration link in early January.**

### **The conference will include:**

- Dissemination of the research's findings. Attendees will be provided opportunities to ask questions of both the researchers and panellists.
- Updates about the status and outcomes of relevant initiatives undertaken by local authorities and universities.
- Delivery of workshops in association with particular progression barriers emerging from the research.
- Shaping and embedding a collaborative framework of actions local authorities can take to address the issues identified in our report.
- Building capacity to resolve collaboratively complex issues.

**The event's main aim is to inform the development of evidence-based, anti-discriminatory initiatives at the organisational level. At the heart of this conference is the co-production of tangible change!**



**University of  
East London**



# THE SOCIAL WORKER AND THE MENTOR LIVE PODCAST.

*Cindy Martin*

*Co-Editor*

Listening to Social Work influenced podcasts has now become my daily ritual, to gain insight into frontline workers and to hear the realities of what Social Work is really like. When I saw on Instagram that there was a live event with the Social Worker and the Mentor, I quickly signed up and brought my ticket.

For those who are thinking, who are these people? Well, The Social Worker is Nana and the Mentor is Robert. Nana has been a practising Social worker for ten years and is a team manager of a child protection team, Robert works in education and is a mentor. He helps pupils from unstable backgrounds, together they founded The Social worker and The mentor. A podcast that broadcasts a range of subjects including Burnout to conversations about diversity within Senior Management and Leadership.

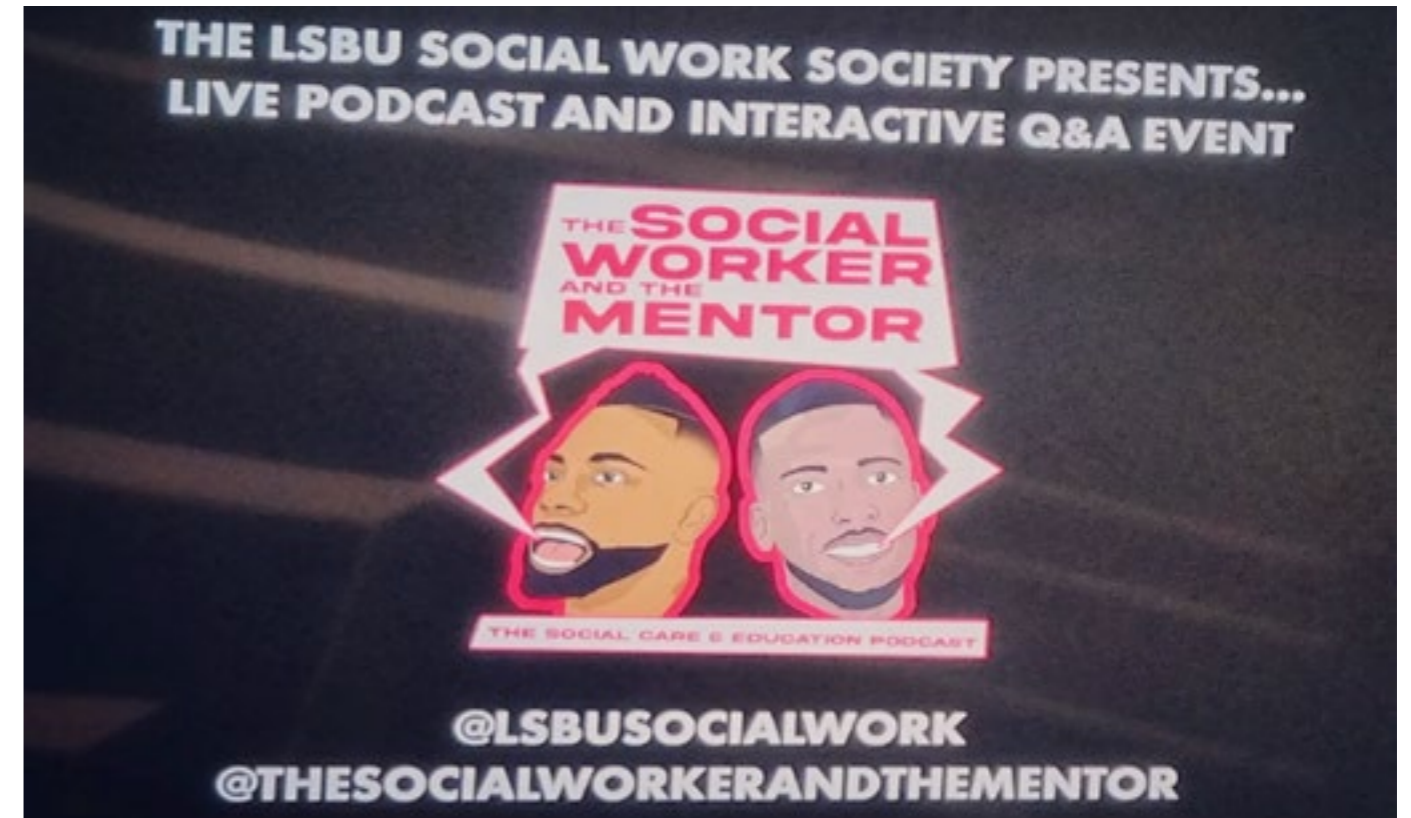
The live podcast was held at London South Bank University at their Social Work Hub, it was amazing to see students from all different stages, not only MSc students but BSc and even a person who was taking the Frontline route. Nana and Robert spoke about burnout, what it may look like and useful tips on how to combat burnout when it happens. They advised us that burnout usually occurs every two to five years and the signs were feeling very lethargic and slow at everything. But, there were ways to help with this to help with your physical and mental health. Both Nana and Robert advised finding an outlet such as the gym or spending a day just getting your hair and nails done. Even advised the importance of taking your annual leave, learning to not be afraid to talk to your manager and explaining issues that may affect your work i.e childcare. An important topic that many are not aware of is also the dangers of a Social Worker, as we're going to

homes of families there will always be an element of danger. But, this element is not spoken about very openly and many do not know unless you ask a practising Social worker who is open to this conversation. Again the top tips to feel safe in these situations are to go in two's if you feel something is not right, to always research the area you will be visiting and speak to your manager about your concerns too. Nana currently has a live petition to set up a panel to support reviews into attacks on Social Workers, this can be accessed by going to this link: [petition.parliament.uk/petitions/623990](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/623990), his currently has under 2000 signatures but needs 10,000 by April 2023 to get the petition seen by parliament!!

Overall this podcast was amazing, it was great to hear from a Social Worker and a School Mentor not only because of their realistic insights but just for the representation too. Not only did I think it was great but so did some of the students in the MSc year 1 too, this is what they had to say:

**"It presented very relevant realities and they both were very transparent with the struggles. Be it around politics in the workplace with managers or families who already hate you because of your title. I feel like I walked out of the show with any rose-tinted glasses we may have had on about the career we are choosing, firmly off!"** Theresa.D

**"The transparency shown by Nana and Robert was truly what I believe students needed to hear, nothing but honest and raw conversations. I learnt it's okay to show your personality; you make yourself relatable when you do that."** Melissa.N



Cindy Martin (foreground) and MSc year 1 students Gloria Mputu, Theresa Dinku and Melissa Namwanje.

# 'BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE STUDENT SOCIAL WORKER HAS DEMANDED A NEW SET OF SKILLS'

*Keeping a 'crap book' at hand for dumping thoughts that pop into her head is useful, final year MSc social work student and BASW Professional Social Work magazine columnist Georgiana Ndlovu finds*

*This article was originally published by Professional Social Work magazine, 13 December 2022*

With the festive season upon us, and Christmas being an event I celebrate with gusto, and a break overseas planned for the entire holiday period, I have been working hard to ensure I meet all of my deadlines for university before I allow myself to enter downtime mode.

My dissertation has been my core focus and it has been one of the most challenging pieces of work I have ever had to complete.

My subject area, loosely, is how social workers might be able to support youth offenders to abstain from crime and what challenges (structural, cultural, and otherwise) they may encounter in that endeavour.

I have been interested in criminal justice and forensic social work for some time now and it was natural to focus my most important piece of work on an area I have a connection with. However, given the sometimes-rigid restrictions I've needed to place upon my dissertation, I have had to be increasingly more disciplined in my approach unlike ever before.

With a background in journalism and as someone with a vivid imagination and hunger for learning, I relish deep diving into my subject

area. But sticking to one topic has been a trial and it is thanks to my university dissertation supervisor that I have some strategies in place to help with this approach that does not come naturally to me.

Initially leaning towards a narrative style of research approach, I am now using a systematic research method to collate my material to minimise bias and control the scale of my findings by using strict search techniques and limiting my resources.

A secondary research project that requires no first-hand interviews and so on has been difficult for me and I have sought the input of a lot of professionals in the youth justice area as well as the illuminating and eye-opening experiences of youth offenders themselves but cannot record these in detail in my piece.

I've been helped immensely by my dissertation supervisor who gave me the most practical and helpful piece of advice I have ever received.

She advised me to contain my thoughts and ideas with what I have coined a 'crap book'. So now I have a notebook beside me at all times when I am working and use it to jot down any

thoughts, ideas or other information that is not relevant to the task at hand.

As a journalist as well as a student social worker, I am an ideas person and constantly looking for information for a story or something that will inform my planned future PhD in criminal justice, criminology and the media. While it is great to be constantly learning and storing up information for the future, it can mean you go off topic easily.

Using the 'crap book' means that I never need to worry about forgetting an important statistic, and never have to forget a great idea that has come into my head out of nowhere. Within this I collate everything from ideas for my future PHD, records of legislation or theories that I can use in my future practice and, of course, what I need to remember to do in my personal life.

As someone with bipolar, I also utilise the strategies and skills recommended by Bipolar UK, which include closing down internet apps when working and using a concentration app. These sound simple, maybe obvious – but until now I was not doing them and implementing these techniques has been transformative in terms of my work output.

In our cyber world, we are spoiled in terms of the resources we have. Whether it be a concentration and focus app, a stress relieving playlist or reaching out to managers and peers.

I use a specific music playlist when I enter work mode and I avoid the radio with its chatter, news and adverts.

I now set out slots for study/work and allow myself a 15-minute break between slots. Putting on my favourite motivational song just before the end of my break gets me geared up to hit the ground running again with renewed enthusiasm.

I have added my lunch hour as a dedicated slot on my calendar to remind myself not only to take it in the first place – when things get busy it can be the last thing on our minds – but also to take it mindfully and to remember to eat as nutritiously as possible.

I give myself rewards for my stints of work ensuring that I have something to look forward to even if it's just a delicious meal or a long hot soak in the bath.

Since utilising my effective hours – bipolar speak for maximising the times in the day you are most energetic/ focused – I now front-load my day, ensuring the hardest tasks are done when I have the most energy for them.

Exercise and a nutrient-packed diet is non-negotiable now as is getting up and outside during my lunch hour, even if it is only very briefly. Listening to my body emotionally and physically allows me to tweak my routine to be more effective. I've never been one for meditation, but I do keep a gratitude journal on a daily basis and have regular massages to offset stress.

I'm more self-forgiving and less self-deprecating too and while the natural 'fight or flight' response to my dissertation deadline is ever present, I have learned to work with it rather than against it.

Becoming an effective student social worker has demanded a new set of skills. This dynamic discipline has demanded organisation and motivation but rewards me with a healthy adrenaline for learning and improving - and a feeling of satisfaction when I have come through for my service users.

Afterall, if I miss a safeguarding meeting due to poor planning or am sleepy when there is a crisis due to lack of sleep, it is my service user who suffers and that simply doesn't sit well with me.





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To contribute to the next newsletter, contact

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