



**BASW**

● for students ●

**BASW UK Student Conference 2026**  
*Creating Community and Connection*

Thursday 19th March 2026

10:00 - 15:00

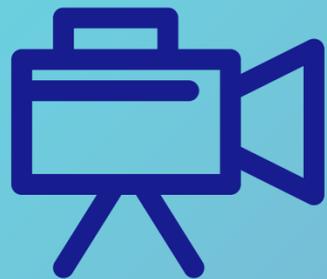
Online - MS Teams

# Welcome!

**Jonny Adamson**

Communications & External Relations Officer

British Association of Social Workers



We will be recording parts of the event throughout the day for post event comms purposes



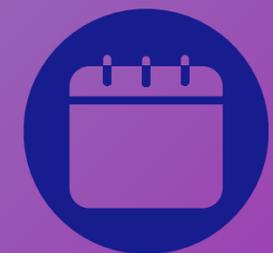
We would love to see you on screen, so if you are comfortable to do so, feel free to have your camera on



Please keep your mic muted unless you are speaking



Pop your hand up or use the chat facility if you would like to input / ask a question



A link to the programme was issued by email and will be available in chat shortly

If you require assistance from the event team, please contact [ProfDE@basw.co.uk](mailto:ProfDE@basw.co.uk)

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## **Keynote: Creating Connection within Social Work Practice**

Bev Crisp, Trainee Social worker, North Yorkshire Council

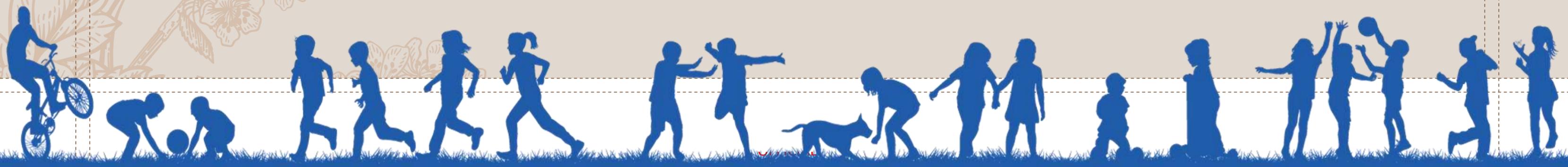


# Connection is the work

Relationships, Communication and Community in Social work practice

Bev Crisp  
Social Work Degree Apprentice

BASW Student Conference 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026



# A quick reflection

**When you think about social  
work,**

**What role do relationships play?**





**‘Don’t underestimate the value of turning up and being present’**

# Relationships in Practice



## Where connection begins

- ❖ Listening
- ❖ Being Present
- ❖ Building Trust
- ❖ Everyday Moments Matter



# Seeing people Systemically

Nobody exists in isolation

- ❖ Family
- ❖ Community
- ❖ Culture
- ❖ Identity
- ❖ Life Experience

# Language and communication

## Language Shapes connection

- ❖ Curiosity over judgement
- ❖ Speak with people not about them
- ❖ Words build understanding

# Professional Community

Connection within our profession

- ❖ Supervision
- ❖ Colleagues
- ❖ Reflection
- ❖ Shared Learning



# Strength in Relationships

## North Yorkshire Practice Model

- ❖ Relationships at the Centre
- ❖ Working alongside families
- ❖ Recognising strengths
- ❖ Sustainable Change

# BASW 80:20 Campaign



## Making Space for Connection

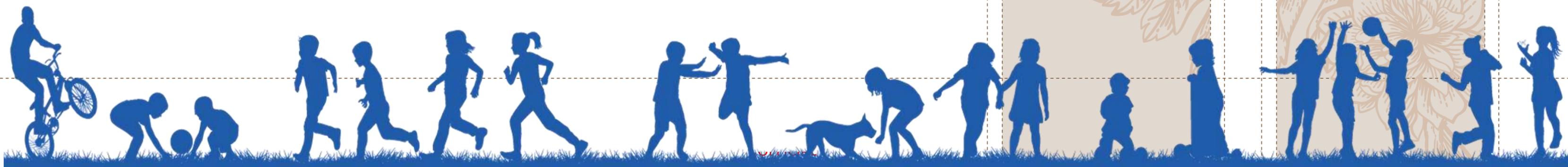
- ❖ Time for direct work
- ❖ Relationship based practice
- ❖ Reducing administrative pressure

# ‘Connection is the work’

Thankyou for listening



NORTH  
YORKSHIRE  
COUNCIL



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## **Keynote: AI, Community, and Connection: Sustaining Human-Centred Social Work in a Digital Age**

Wisdom P Mensah, MA Social Work Student | BASW Student Ambassador, Ann Flynn, Nation Manager: England Social Work Team and Staff Tutor, The Open University and Dr. Sharif Haider, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education, & Language Studies (WELs)

To share own slides?

# AI, Community, and Connection: Sustaining Human-Centred Social Work in a Digital Age

Wisdom P. Mensah  
MA Social Work Student | BASW Student Ambassador  
BASW UK Student Conference 2026



# AI is not a future issue for social work

Digital case recording and transcription tools

Automated summaries and report drafting

Early decision-support systems

Data dashboards and predictive analytics

The key question is no longer whether AI will influence practice, but how social workers navigate it responsibly

# Three tensions shaping AI in social work

Efficiency

Automation

Algorithmic Influence

VS

Professional Judgement

Human Connection

Professional Accountability

# What does this mean for the next generation of social workers?

AI systems increasingly encountered in practice

Organisational guidance still evolving

Accountability remains with practitioners

How can social work remain deeply human in an AI-mediated practice environment?

# Thank you!

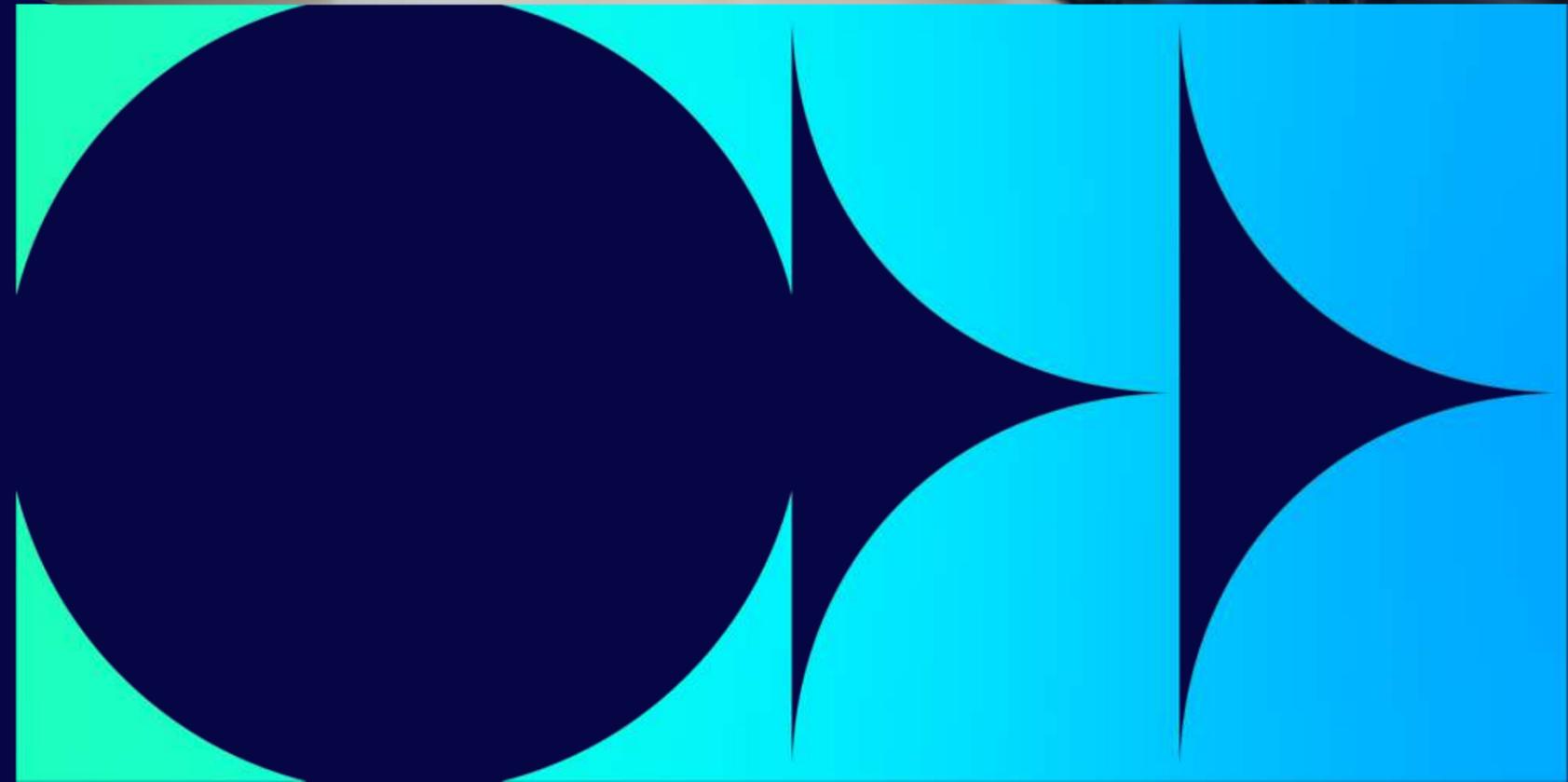


# BASW UK: Student Conference: Creating Community and Connection

*Exploring the emerging use of artificial intelligence (AI) in social work education and practice*

**Social work week 2026**

**Sharif Haider: Senior Lecturer**  
**Ann Flynn: Senior Lecturer**  
**The Open University**



# Aims of the session

- Discuss the current use of Artificial Intelligence(AI) systems in social work and implications for students.
- Examine the moral and ethical challenges associated with employing AI in social work.
- Explore a responsible and ethical approach to using AI systems.

# Case scenario – One

Holy is a newly qualified social worker who has been using a Generative AI tool to help her take minutes, summarise meeting notes, and write standard reports. Recently, her manager received a request from Mark, one of the people with lived experience she was working with, to access his records. While reviewing case recordings, Holy's manager noticed an error. Holy had incorrectly noted that Mark had mentioned "*suicidal ideation and planning to kill himself*" during a recent meeting where he was present. Her manager could not recall Mark saying anything like that. When her manager asked about the note, Holy denied any wrongdoing, noting that the information had been generated by the AI tool the local authority is using. She blamed the tool for doing this.

# **Case scenario – One**

**Do you agree with Holy's statement?**

**...Let's analyse what went wrong.**

# Mechanisms of Gen AI

Different types of AI (Gen AI, Predictive Analytics, etc.)

Machine Learning, Deep Learning, and Natural Language Processing.

Generate new, original content—including text, images, code, audio, and video, based on user prompts

# Mechanisms of Gen AI

Unlike traditional AI that analyses or classifies existing data, GenAI uses models like LLMs and diffusion models.

Models are trained on massive datasets to understand structures, then decode this information to generate new, **similar, yet unique** content.

By learning patterns from existing, large-scale data.

# Utilisation of AI

Magic Notes: Cost £1.50 – £5 for each hour of transcription.

Current utilisation: Magic Notes AI or the general-purpose Microsoft Copilot AI.

Observable time savings; SWs focus more on relations and building relationships.

Predictive analytics – in its infancy; evidence contradictory.

# Data ...Data ...Data

**Privacy and confidentiality:** Training data often includes personal identifiable information (PII) scraped from the internet without consent, leading to potential data leakage.

**Bias and fairness:** Amplify societal bias present in training data.

**Quality and accuracy:** Incomplete, outdated, or erroneous data increase the risk of "hallucinations" or false information.

**Intellectual property and copyrights:** Frequently ingests copyrighted content without permission – legal and ethical questions regarding ownership of the generated output.

# Data ..Data ..Data

**Provenance and security:** Tracking data origins to verify usage rights; inputting sensitive data can cause security breaches.

**Access to quality data:** A shortage of high-quality proprietary data to train and customise models effectively.

**Environmental impact:** Large-scale data centres for training, required immense energy and water for cooling.

## Carbon Footprint

Activity (typical use)	CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions (grams)	Comparison to AI Queries
Generative AI Query	~4.3	Baseline
Driving a gasoline car (1 mile)	~404	Significantly higher than AI queries
Hot shower (10 minutes)	~2,000	Substantially higher than AI queries
Clothes dryer (1 load, ~1 hour)	~1,000	Substantially higher than AI queries
Electric oven (1 hour)	~675	Substantially higher than AI queries
Boiling water in kettle (~1 liter)	~50–70	Significantly higher than AI queries
Microwave (5 minutes)	~40–50	Significantly higher than AI queries
Video Conferencing (per minute)	2.5–16.7	Higher or comparable to AI queries
Streaming Video (per minute)	0.6–1.7	Slightly lower or comparable to AI queries
Online Gaming (per minute)	0.3–1.0	Lower or comparable to AI queries
Social Media (per minute)	0.3–0.5	Lower than AI queries
Web Browsing (per minute)	0.1–0.2	Notably lower than AI queries
Email Usage (per email)	0.02–0.17	Significantly lower than AI queries

## Freshwater Usage

Activity	Water Usage per Minute (milliliters)	Comparison to AI Queries
Generative AI Query	~10	Baseline
Video Conferencing	~10–40	Comparable or higher than AI queries
Streaming Video	~1–5	Lower than AI queries
Online Gaming	~2–6	Lower than AI queries
Social Media	~0.5–1	Lower than AI queries
Web Browsing	~0.1–0.5	Significantly lower than AI queries
Email Usage	~0.1–0.2 (per email)	Significantly lower than AI queries

**Sidorkin (2025); DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.36851/ai-edu.vi.5448>

# THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF GENERATIVE AI

TRAINING BIGGER AI MODELS IS LIKE TAKING...

**300 RETURN FLIGHTS**



FROM NEW YORK TO SAN FRANCISCO

WHAT DOES DATA CENTER WATER USAGE LOOK LIKE?\*

\*FOR THE BIGGEST BRANDS

FOR MICROSOFT, IN 2023:



= 3,120 OLYMPIC POOLS

FOR GOOGLE, IN 2023:



= 9,240 OLYMPIC POOLS

THE CO2 COST OF GENERATIVE AI TASKS:

Per 1,000 inferences:



using the most efficient model

GENERATING 1,000 TEXTS COSTS 9% OF A SMARTPHONE CHARGE



using the least efficient model

GENERATING ONE IMAGE COSTS 50% OF A SMARTPHONE CHARGE



MICROSOFT'S WATER CONSUMPTION



GOOGLE'S WATER CONSUMPTION



THESE INCREASES ARE LARGELY DRIVEN BY AI

JUST 20 - 50 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH CHATGPT COSTS HALF A LITER OF FRESH WATER



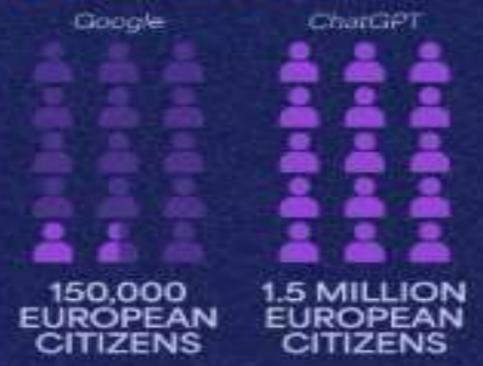
CHATGPT USES NEARLY 10X MORE ELECTRICITY THAN GOOGLE SEARCH\*

For one search or query:

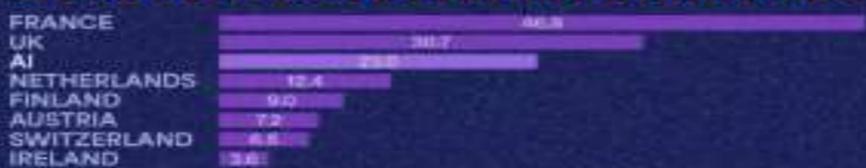


\*before introduction of Google's AI mode

IN A YEAR, THAT ELECTRICITY COULD POWER THE ANNUAL CONSUMPTION OF:



BY THE END OF 2025, AI WILL BE USING MORE POWER THAN MANY COUNTRIES.



BY 2030, AI WILL BE USING THE AMOUNT OF ENERGY THAT JAPAN USES TODAY.

ENERGY FULFILLED FROM RENEWABLE SOURCES (ONLY 50%)



OH NO! BUT SOME SAY THERE IS HOPE.

ACCORDING TO THE IEA, AI GROWTH PREVENTING CLIMATE CRISIS REVERSAL IS AN OVERSTATED RISK.

THERE ARE PLENTY USES FOR AI THAT COULD OFFSET ITS ENERGY DEMANDS.

BUT IF LEFT ALONE, AI'S RAPID GROWTH COULD PROVE A BIG PROBLEM FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

# “Black box”

Deep learning neural networks are often “black boxes” – inner workings are inscrutable to humans.

A lack of transparency and explainability – the question of who is accountable?

# “Black box”

“... in *Houston Federation of Teachers v. Houston Independent School District* 251 F. Supp. 3d 1168 (S.D. Tex. 2017), the Houston Federation of Teachers sued the school district over its use of the Educational Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), an AI-powered tool used to evaluate teacher performance. The union argued that the algorithm was opaque and lacked sufficient explanations for its outputs, making it difficult for teachers to challenge their evaluations. The case was ultimately settled, with the district agreeing to provide more transparency and due process protections” (Cheong, 2024: 2).

Cheong BC (2024) Transparency and accountability in AI systems: safeguarding wellbeing in the age of algorithmic decision-making. *Front. Hum. Dyn.* 6:1421273. doi: 10.3389/fhumd.2024.1421273

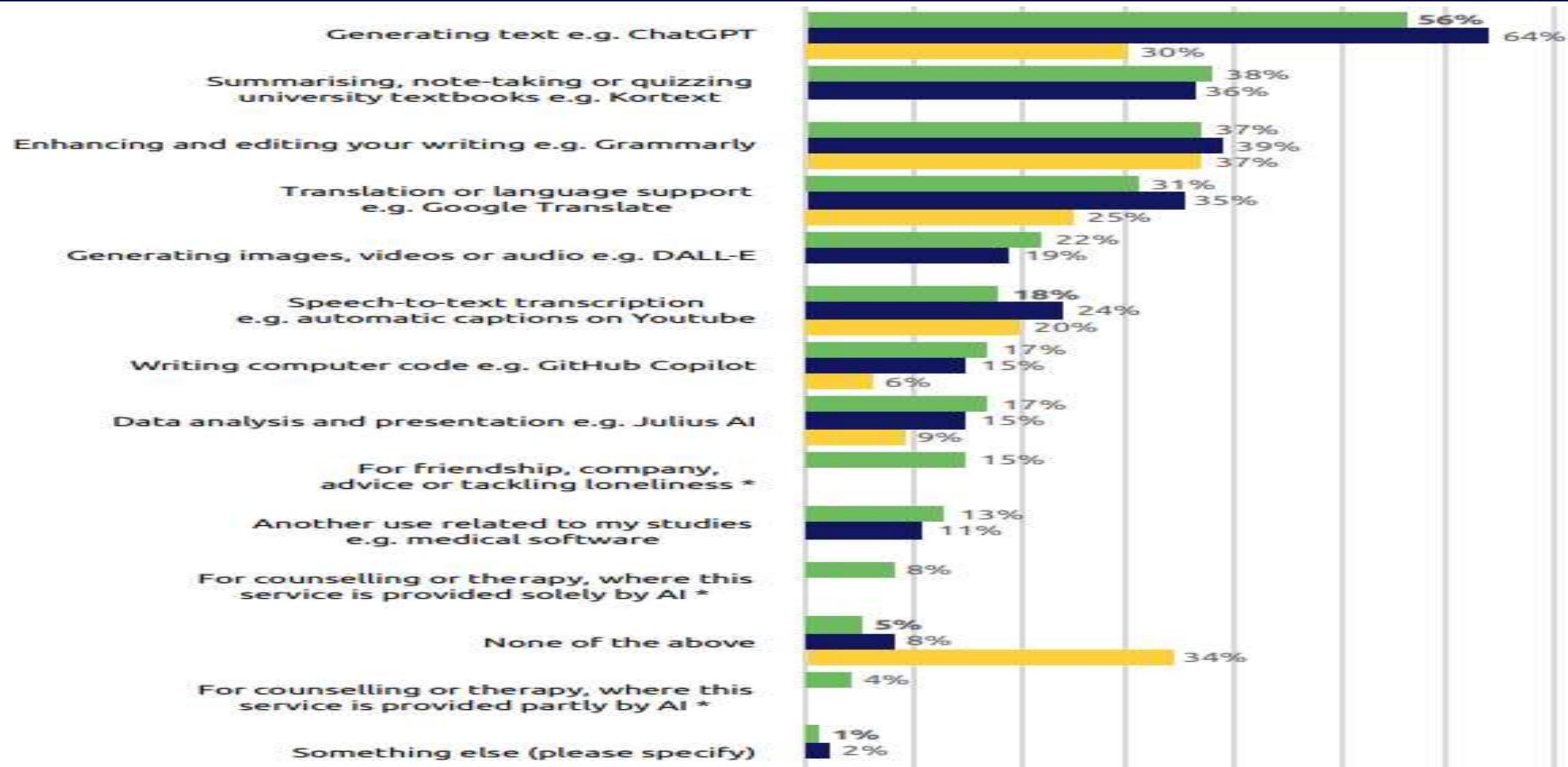
**Case scenario**

**Who should be accountable?**

**Bigger picture ...**

**So, what are the implications  
for social work students?**

**'Which of the following have you used artificial intelligence (AI) for this academic year? (Include AI used for any purpose, including your studies, employment, hobbies and so on)' (Ashcroft, 2026)**



# Take away for students on placement

- AI use is almost universally now used in universities (Ashcroft, 2026) even with assessed work, but styles of assessment are changing in university
- Students also express anxiety about potential misconduct if there are false accusations of about AI being used. For social work students this concern is heightened as it may be a fitness to practice issue
- If risks are not being fully assessed or mitigated, this leaves frontline workers to deal with these on their own, and this has knock on for students through the practice educator
- With inconsistency of messaging within organisations regarding policy and guidance the student may find pressures as they are at the interface of two sets of guidance e.g., placement and university and so important to be sure you are aware of the policy in either space
- Consent for use, what is the person with lived experience signing up to? Do you know? How transparent is the information and how digital literate are they?

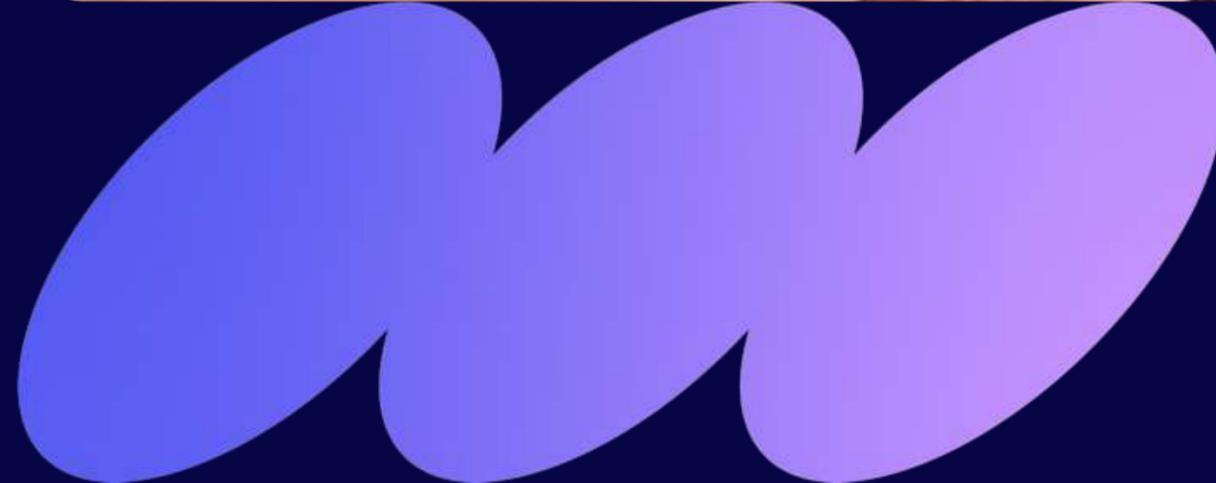
# Take away for students on placement

- Practice educator's may not have the same experience as you of AI, and most of your experience may be social media and so be cautious and aware of the different rules
- There may be an issue of digital access and resulting literacy, social work students on placement may have an uneven experience e.g., use of computer at work but may not have access to similar resources personally. This may cause a digital divide in ability as well as attitude to using it
- A greater need more than ever for critical thinking and creativity
- Professor Patel's message : *'AI is transformative only when used at the right time, with the right training and under strong governance. Safe, effective and ethical use depends on preparing learners to understand both the tool's power and its limits. (in Ashcroft, 2026:33)*

# What is required?

- Human-centred design – wellbeing including staff and people with lived experience
- Transparency with the people we work with; to enable informed consent and advocacy within the agency if the person with lived experience needs more reassurance
- Critical thinking and understanding to be shaped to allow flexibility and adaptability.
- How when and why to use AI tools: definitely to supplement relationship-based work, not replace it
- Policy on data handling and protection against automated unfair treatment
- A robust, structured governance framework; Involving all stakeholders with an understanding of AI limitations
- Understand the differing needs for students who may have a learning support need or are neurodivergent
- Interpreting the need for social justice within AI and implications for equality, diversity and inclusion
- Training – AI literacy, specific AI systems, implications for university's and how to manage

**Any questions  
or comments?**



# References

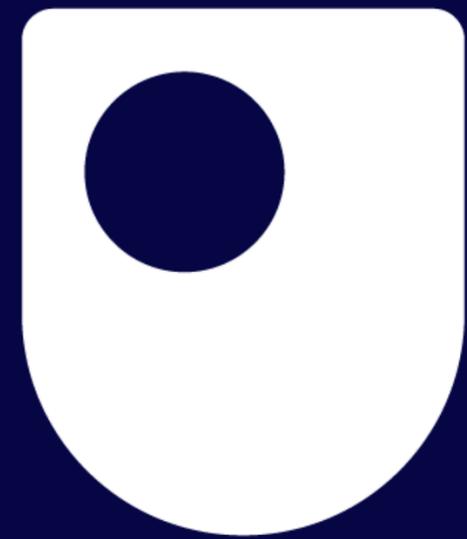
BASW, (2025) 'The BASW Statement on Social Work and Generative Artificial Intelligence' Available at: <https://basw.co.uk/sites/default/files/2025-03/181372%20Statement%20on%20Social%20Work%20and%20Generative%20Artificial%20Intelligence.pdf>

Haider, S., Ferguson, G., Flynn, A., Giraud, J. and Vseteckova, J., (2026) 'Emerging use of AI in social work education and practice', *The Open University*. Available at: <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/about/publications/the-emerging-use-of-artificial-intelligence-ai-in-social-work/>

Rothera, S. and Macdonald, M., (2026), 'Understanding the emerging use of artificial intelligence (AI) in social work education and practice in England', *Research in Practice*. Available at: <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/about/publications/the-emerging-use-of-artificial-intelligence-ai-in-social-work/>

Stephenson, R., and Armstrong, C., (2026) 'Student Generative AI survey: 2026' Kortext, Available at <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/HEPI-Report-199-Gen-AI-Survey-2026.pdf>

**Thank you**



**The Open  
University**

# Workshop Choices

<p><b>A</b></p>	<p><b>Safeguarding, Capacity and Equitable Access to Systems in Social Work Practice</b></p> <p><i>Mandy-Jayne Lace, Cardiff Metropolitan University, BASW Student Ambassador, Founder and Director, Accessibility Partners, Psychotherapeutically informed trainee social worker in Wales, Specialist teacher and SENCO</i></p>	<p>Creating Community and Connection through safeguarding, the Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, and equitable access to support. A psychotherapeutically informed trainee social worker in Wales explores co production, proportionality and least restrictive practice to support people to build lives they deem worth living. Exploring how social workers create community and connection by ensuring people can access systems equitably, lawfully and in ways that uphold dignity, rights and wellbeing.</p>
<p><b>B</b></p>	<p><b>Safeguarding, Ambiguity and the “Transgender Umbrella”: Reflections for Social Work Practice</b></p> <p><i>Matthew Lewis, MA Social Work student at the University of Hull   BASW Student Ambassador</i></p>	<p>Exploring how ambiguity in transgender terminology may impact safeguarding decision-making in social work. It will highlight how the broad “transgender umbrella” can create challenges for assessment, communication, and inclusive practice. The session aims to prompt reflection on how practitioners can balance equality, diversity, and risk within complex real-world cases.</p>
<p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>Co-creating the Nairobi Proposal on Decolonising Social Work Practice Education: From Malmö to Global Action</b></p> <p><i>Tina Odu and Eleanor Hogan (Social Work Practitioners and Project Mentors for student colleagues), alongside European student colleagues and the Project Team</i></p>	<p>We are honoured to invite you as co-creators into the latest stage of an international participatory journey. This project began with an IASSW-funded scoping review and the EASSW-funded co-production of a 10-episode podcast series and international workshop in Malmö. Led by Associate Professor Henglien Lisa Chen (University of Sussex), we are now bringing forward the collective work started in Malmö with 47 international students from Sweden, Finland, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. This interactive BASW session is a critical space to carry on co-creating the ‘Nairobi Proposal’ to decolonise social work practice education, before we take our final push to the SWSD 2026 co-creation workshop in Nairobi.</p>

capacity

BASW SC 2026

## Safeguarding, Capacity and Equitable Access to Systems

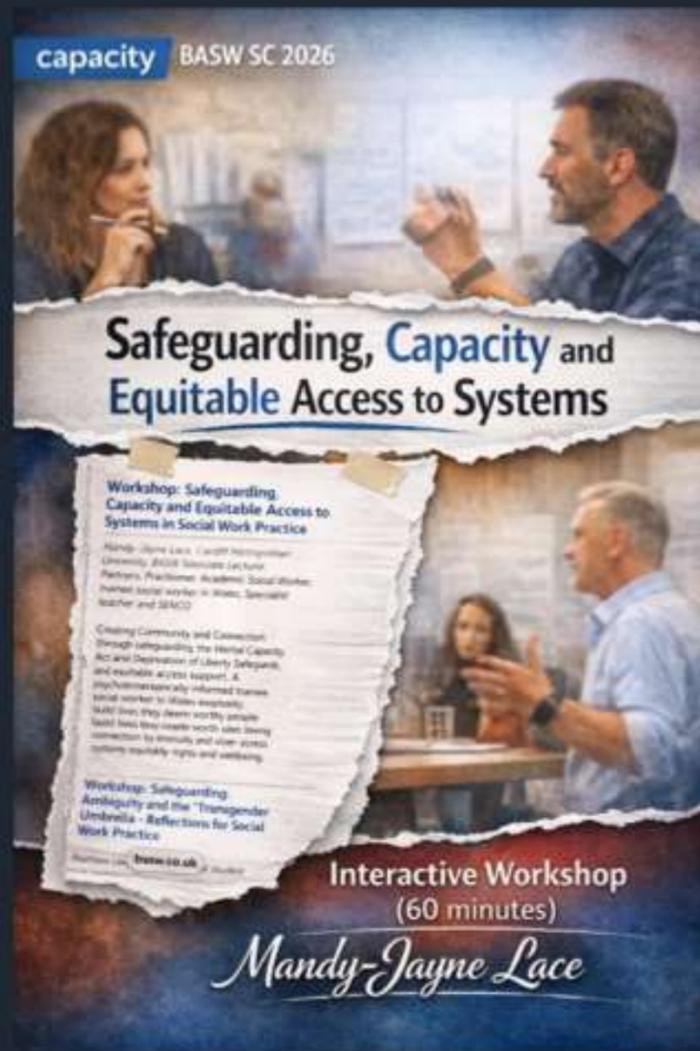
Interactive workshop  
(60 minutes)

**Mandy-Jayne Lace**  
Known as :

**MJ Lace**

[www.mjspeaks.co.uk](http://www.mjspeaks.co.uk)

(NB: note from MJ)



capacity BASW SC 2026

## Safeguarding, Capacity and Equitable Access to Systems

Workshop: Safeguarding  
Capacity and Equitable Access to  
Systems in Social Work Practice

Mandy-Jayne Lace, Lecturer  
University of Hull, Social Work  
Practitioner, Academic, Social Worker,  
Human Rights Activist in Africa, Specialist  
Teacher and SENCO

Creating Community and Connection  
through Safeguarding the Mental Capacity  
Act and Protection of Liberty, Safeguarding,  
and equitable access support. A  
workshop for specially informed trainee  
social workers to learn explicitly  
what they learn through their own  
experience of working with people  
with mental health issues and how  
systems impact rights and wellbeing.

Workshop: Safeguarding  
Ambiguity and the Transgender  
Umbrella - Reflections for Social  
Work Practice

Mandy-Jayne Lace  
www.mjspeaks.co.uk

Interactive Workshop  
(60 minutes)

*Mandy-Jayne Lace*

# Case Study – Stroke, resulting aphasia

- A person has a stroke.
- They understand everything around them.
- But they cannot speak.

People begin talking about them rather than with them.

Decisions are made without their input.

Safeguarding meetings happen where their voice is missing.

*Now imagine the same person with a communication board or AAC device.*

capacity

BASW SC 2026

## Safeguarding, Capacity and Equitable Access to Systems

Interactive workshop  
(60 minutes)

**Mandy-Jayne Lace**  
Known as :

**MJ Lace**

[www.mjspeaks.co.uk](http://www.mjspeaks.co.uk)

capacity BASW SC 2026

### Safeguarding, Capacity and Equitable Access to Systems

**Workshop: Safeguarding, Capacity and Equitable Access to Systems in Social Work Practice**  
Mandy-Jayne Lace, Cardiff Metropolitan University, BASW Associate Lecturer, Partners, Practitioner, Academic Social Worker, trainee social worker in Wales, Specialist Teacher and SENCO

Creating Community and Connection through safeguarding, the Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, and equitable access support. A psychosocially informed trainee social worker in Wales explores how build lives they deem worthy people build lives they create worth later living connection by maturity and elder excess systems equitably rights and wellbeing.

**Workshop: Safeguarding: Ambiguity and the Transgender Umbrella - Reflections for Social Work Practice**  
Matthew Lee, basw.co.uk, student

Interactive Workshop  
(60 minutes)

*Mandy-Jayne Lace*

# Breathe

0:30

**30-second breathing pause**  
MJ Lace



Stretch if you want to. Join in if you fancy it. No pressure.

# Workshop Flow

- Welcome and context
- Mental Capacity Act and safeguarding
- Communication access
- Practice examples (stroke, SPG11, autism)
- System delays discussion
- Breakout activity and reflection

# Facilitator Directions (1-Hour Workshop Flow)

- 0–5 min: Welcome and opening story
- 5–15 min: Safeguarding + Mental Capacity Act
- 15–25 min: Communication access and AAC examples
- 25–35 min: Practice cases (Stroke, SPG11, Autism)
- 35–40 min: System delay timeline discussion
- 40–55 min: Breakout group activity
- 55–60 min: Reflection and closing

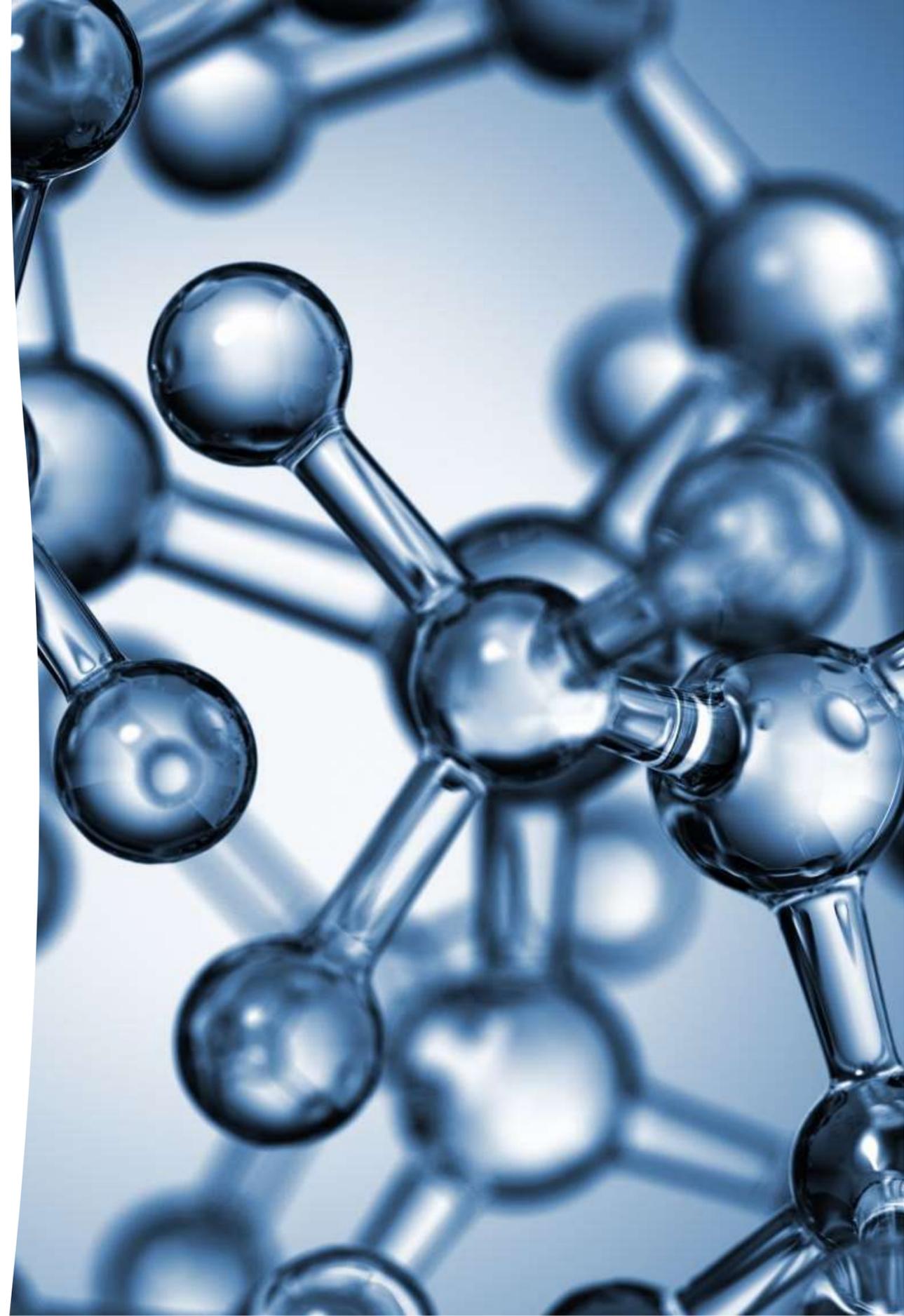
## Icebreaker (3 minutes)

In the chat and by raising your hand  
and we will choose the first three.

Share an example where  
communication barriers affected  
safeguarding



Be ready to share one insight



I use AI, I became qualified to, ethically.  
MJ Lace 2026

## Disclosure: ethical AI, social media, security and safeguarding

AI is a tool in this presentation.

It supports preparation, access and reflective thinking.  
It does not define my practice, judgement or values.

### My professional disclosure

I use AI ethically for drafting, structure, accessibility support and reflective preparation. I remain accountable for accuracy, consent, confidentiality, boundaries, safeguarding and final judgement.

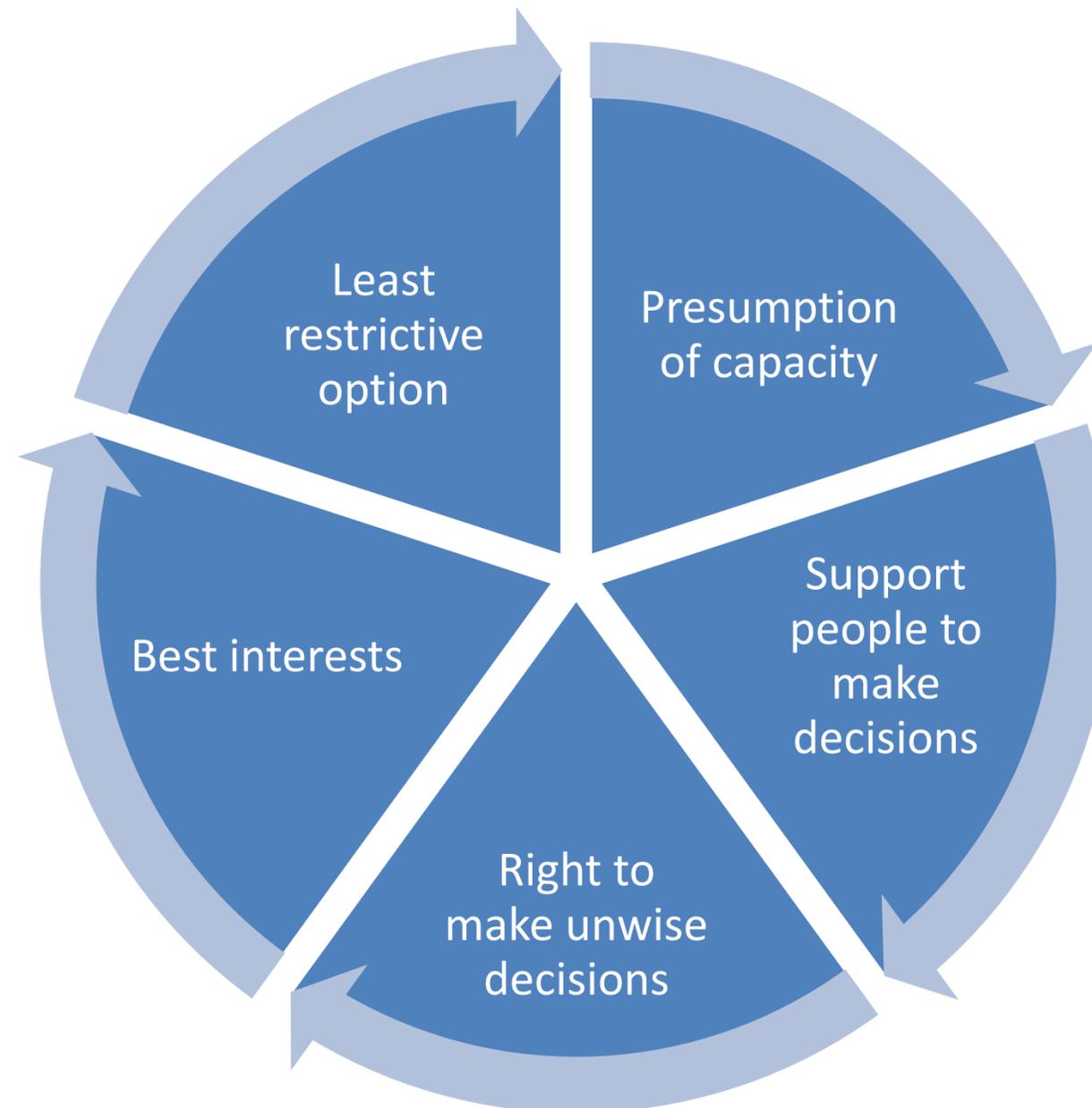


Mindvalley AI Mastery certificate shown for  
transparency: 31 Jan 2026 | 108 CPD credits

**“I used the space between to become more.”**  
— MJ Lace, 2026

- **Code of ethics:** Human rights, social justice and professional integrity stay central.
- **Social media:** The same ethics apply online: boundaries, trust, security and good judgement.
- **Generative AI:** Check outputs carefully. Human oversight remains essential.
- **Confidentiality:** No sensitive personal data in generic AI without informed consent and GDPR care.
- **CPD:** Digital and AI literacy should now be part of safe contemporary practice.

Mental  
Capacity Act  
2005

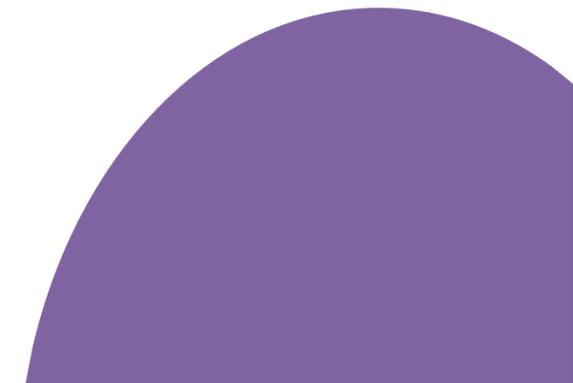


## **Thumb — Presumption of capacity**

**Start by assuming the person has capacity.**

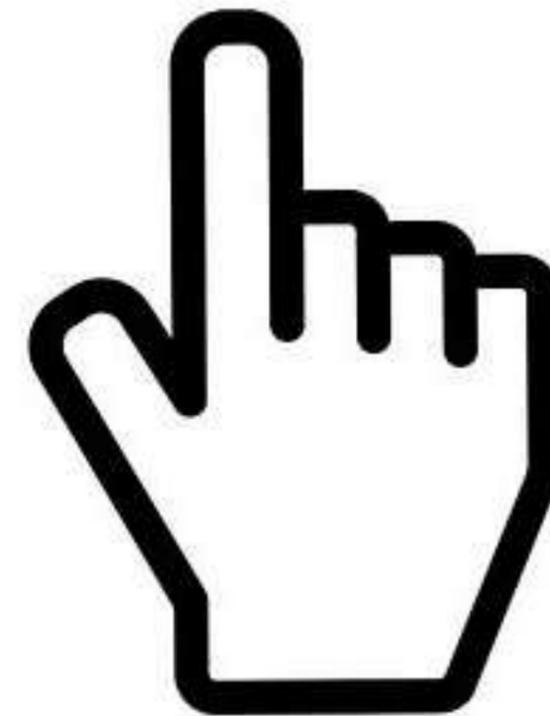
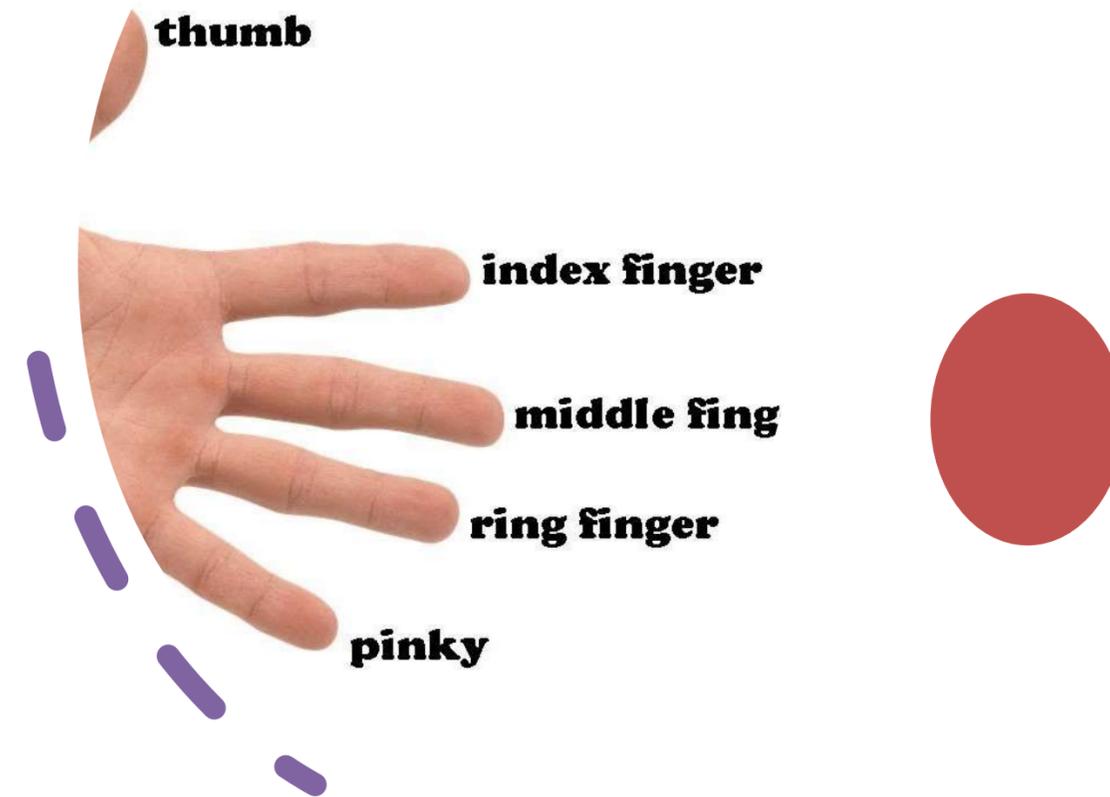
Do not assume incapacity because of diagnosis, disability, age, behaviour, or communication difference. The Mental Capacity Act says capacity should be presumed unless it is shown otherwise.

**Assume the person can decide**



# Index Finger

- Index finger
- Support decisions
- Help first.



**Help first. Assess after**

# Middle Finger

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**Middle finger**

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**Unwise is allowed**

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**Different is not incapable.**

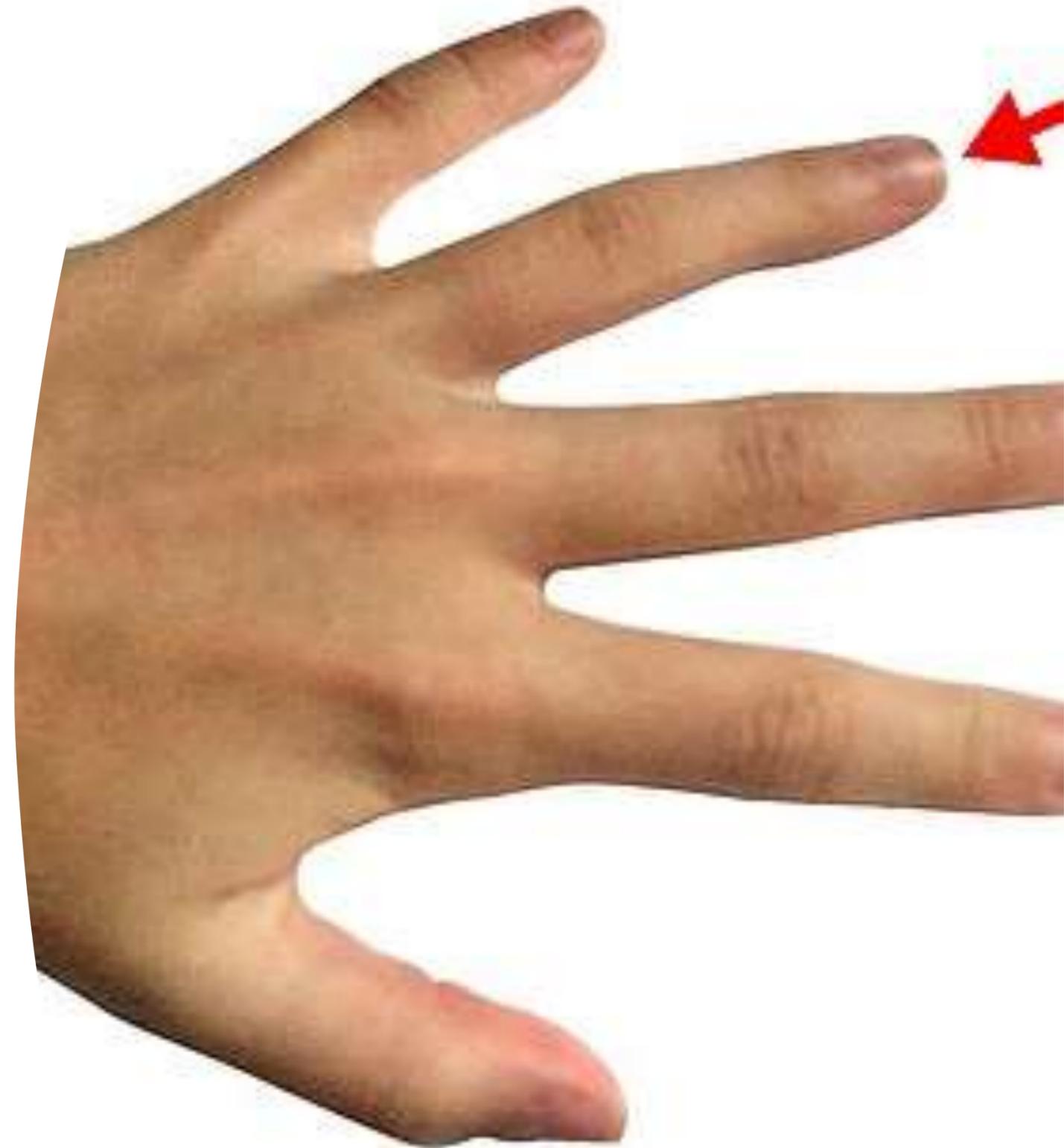
**Bad choice does not equal no capacity**

# Ring Finger

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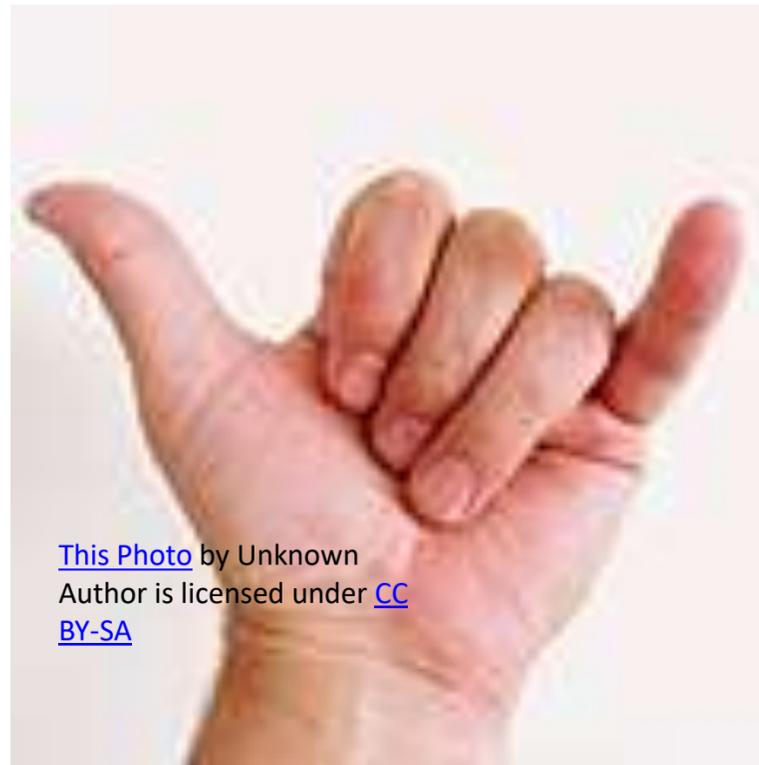
- Ring
- Act in best interests

**Keep the person central**



# Pinkie finger

**USE LEAST RESTRICTION**



[This Photo](#) by Unknown  
Author is licensed under [CC](#)  
[BY-SA](#)

**Safeguarding means safety, dignity, and the right to a voice.**

**Presume capacity, support the decision, respect unwise choices, act in best interests, and choose the least restrictive option.**

# Mental Capacity Act and Communication

- If a person cannot communicate, capacity assessments may be flawed
- Communication tools support participation in decisions
- AAC and accessible communication help uphold MCA principles

**Accessible communication is not optional. It is part of capacity, participation, and rights**

# Safeguarding and Rights

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- Safeguarding protects people from harm
- It must also protect dignity, autonomy and voice
- Communication access supports safeguarding practice



# Co-Production

Working with people, not doing things to them

People are experts in their own lives

Communication tools enable meaningful participation

**Voice and control, co-production, and communication access belong together**

## Communication Tools (AAC)



Communication boards



Speech-generating devices



Eye-gaze technology



Symbol and picture systems

**AAC supports voice, choice, and participation.** AAC is for people of all ages who have trouble with speech or language skills.

# Practice Example: Stroke

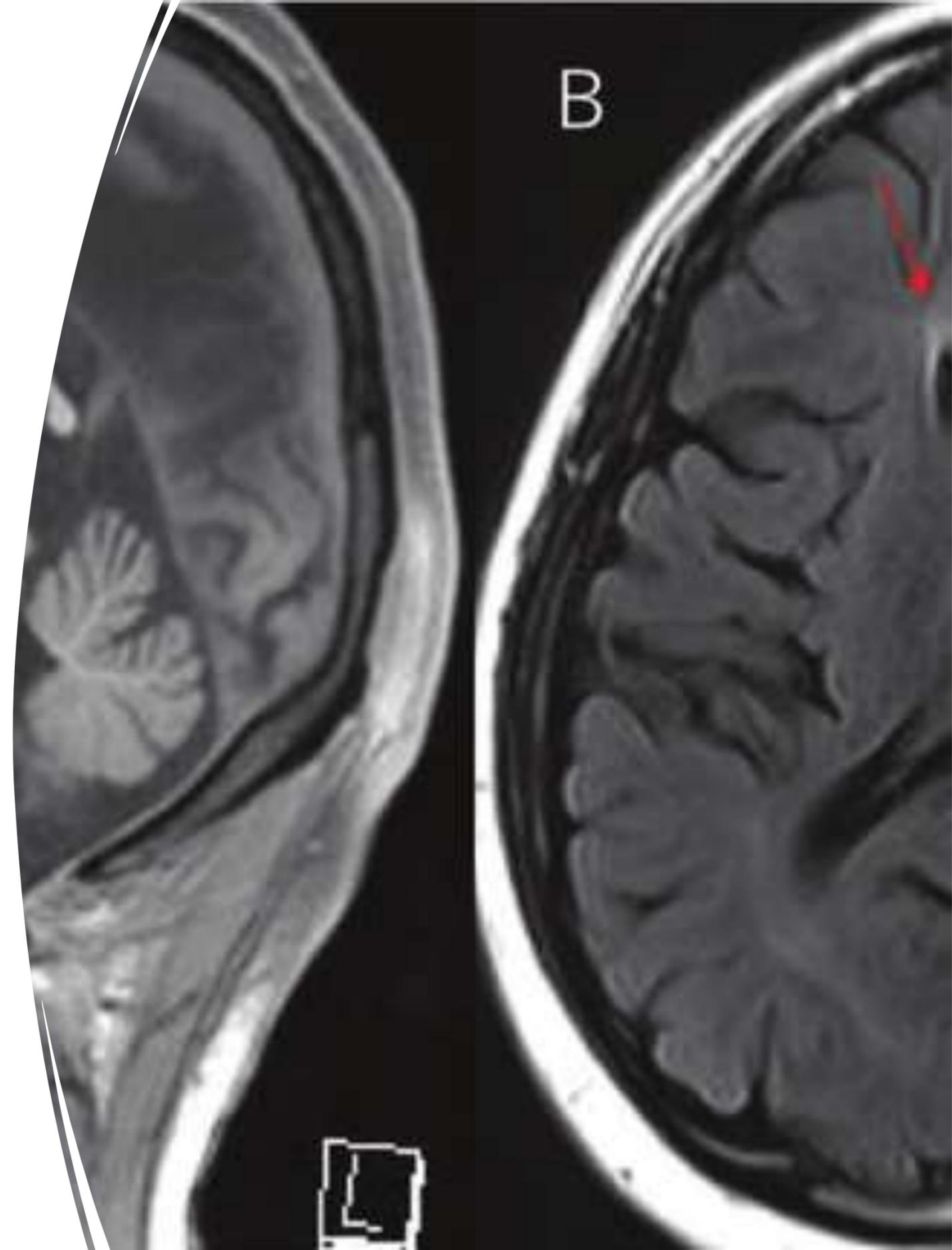
- Aphasia may affect speaking and understanding
- Many individuals remain cognitively aware
- Communication tools restore voice and participation

- **Aphasia affects language. It does not automatically affect awareness. Communication support helps restore voice and participation**

# Practice Example: SPG11

---

- Rare neurological condition
- Speech and mobility decline progressively
- Early communication planning supports safeguarding
- Including an advanced directive



# System Delays

Referral →  
Assessment →  
Funding → Equipment  
→ Training

This process can take  
12–24 months

Conditions may  
progress faster than  
systems respond

# Quick Discussion (5 minutes)

---

- What risks arise when systems delay communication support?
- Send messages in the chat publicly or privately to me, indicate if you are happy for them to be shared by indicating yes or no followed by your message.



# Breakout Activity (15 minutes)

Case: young adult losing speech due to neurological condition

AAC referral waiting time 12 months

What should safeguarding practice do now?

# Breakout Questions

What  
safeguarding  
risks exist?

What actions  
could be  
taken earlier?

Who should  
be involved in  
planning?

# Group Feedback

Each group  
share one risk

One solution

One system  
change  
needed

# Reflection

---

Think of someone you have supported

---

Did they have tools to communicate their wishes?

---

What might you do differently?

**Communication access shapes voice, participation, and safeguarding**



# Capacity Without Communication?

- Mental Capacity Act requires participation in decision-making
- But how can someone participate if they cannot communicate?

Accessible communication is essential for:

- Capacity assessments
- Expressing wishes and feelings
- Least restrictive decisions

Communication access = safeguarding practice



# Final Workshop Discussion

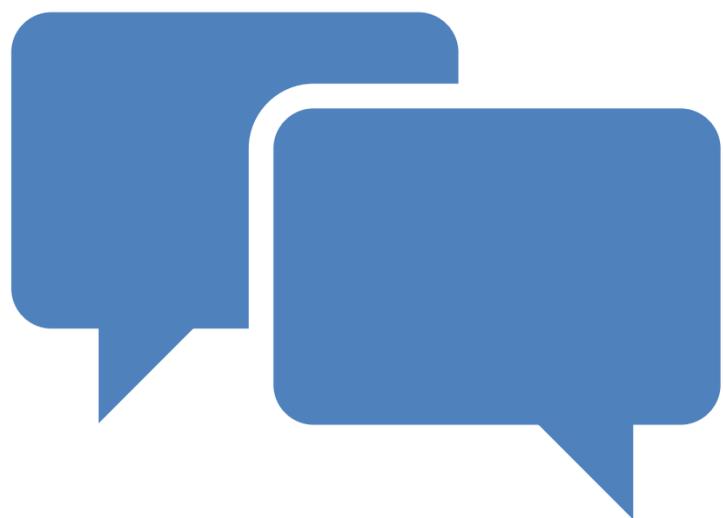
- What would change in practice if communication access was prioritised earlier?

Think about:

- 
- assessments
  - safeguarding responses
  - multidisciplinary collaboration
  - anticipatory planning

# Final Thought

- Speech is only one form of communication.
- When systems delay communication support,
- they are not just delaying equipment.
- They are delaying a person's voice.



When systems delay communication support, they delay a person's voice.

## Closing Thought

# **Safeguarding, Ambiguity and the “Transgender Umbrella”**

Reflections for Social Work Practice

**BASW UK Student Conference 2026**

**Matthew Lewis**

**MA Social Work Student – University of Hull**

**BASW Student Ambassador**

# Session Aim



Not a debate about Transgender Identity  
Respectful Reflective Discussion



Examine how Language may influence  
Social Work Assessments



Explore whether there is Ambiguity within  
Transgender Terminology



Consider how Definitions may Influence  
Social Work Assessments



Reflect on how to Balance Equality,  
Diversity and Safeguarding around  
Gender within Social Work Assessments

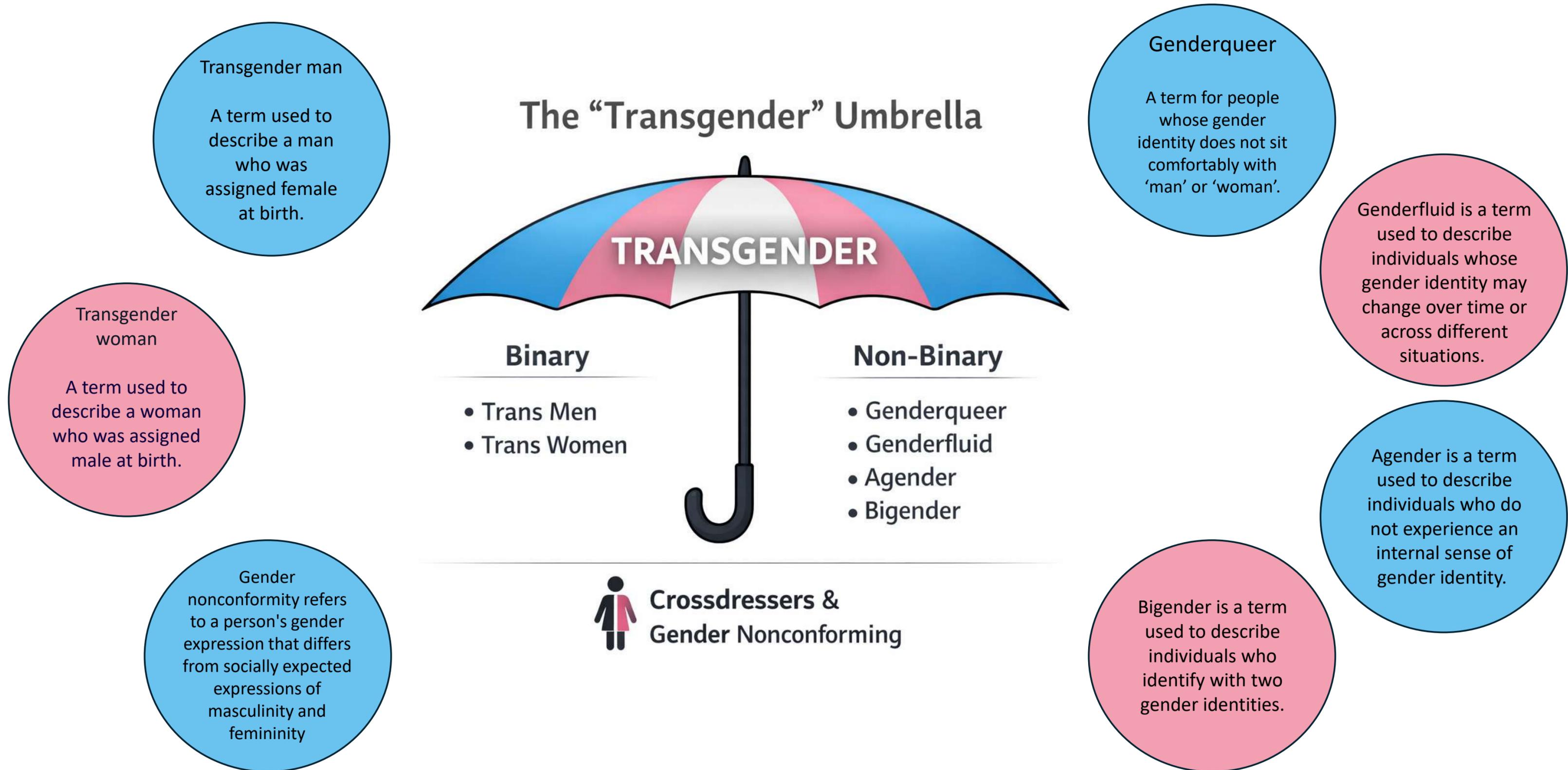
# What is your understanding of the term "transgender?"



- A medical category
- A social identity
- An umbrella term for gender identity
- A person with no gender identity
- A transwoman (male to female)
- Unsure



The Trans Umbrella is commonly used to group together a range of Gender Identities and Expressions.



# Different Definitions in Practice

## Social work England



Social Work England **does not** publish its own standalone definition of “transgender”

Instead, it uses the **Equality Act 2010** definition of **gender reassignment**, the legal framework social workers follow.

Social Work England’s **equality, diversity, and inclusion guidance** is based on the **Equality Act 2010**, which defines a **transgender person** as someone who is:

**“Proposing to undergo or is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.”**

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/about/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>

## NHS England



NHS England **does not** publish a **single formal definition** of “transgender”

But defines transgender as an **umbrella term** for individuals whose **gender identity** differs from **the sex they were assigned at birth.**

Transgender individuals may also **identify as non-binary or gender-diverse**, and their **gender identity is self-defining**, and **does not always** involve a **medical process.**

<https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/corporate-information-and-documents/data-and-information-governance/data-quality-of-protected-characteristics-and-other-vulnerable-groups/gender-identity>

# Different Definitions in Practice

## Stonewall England



Stonewall refers to the term "**transgender**" to **describe people** whose **gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.**

Stonewall uses 'trans' as an **umbrella term** including (but not limited to) **transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, agender, trans man, trans woman, trans masculine and trans feminine and more.**

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources>



## WHO

WHO does **not** define "**transgender**" as a **disorder**. It uses the **diagnostic** category **Gender Incongruence within the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11).**

According to the World Health Organization, **Gender Incongruence of Adolescence and Adulthood** is:

**"A marked and persistent incongruence between an individual's experienced gender and the assigned sex, which often leads to a desire to transition through hormonal treatment, surgery or other health care services to make the individual's body align with the experienced gender."**

<https://www.who.int/standards/classifications/frequently-asked-questions/gender-incongruence-and-transgender-health-in-the-icd>

# The Cass Review

Independent review  
of gender identity  
services for children  
and young people

The **Cass Review** was an independent review commissioned by **NHS England** in **2024**.

## Language and Clarity

“The **Cass Review** highlights that **language** in this area is was **not** used **consistently**, and that **clarity** is **important** for **evidence** and **assessment**.”

Key Findings

Inconsistent Terminology Across Services

Key Findings

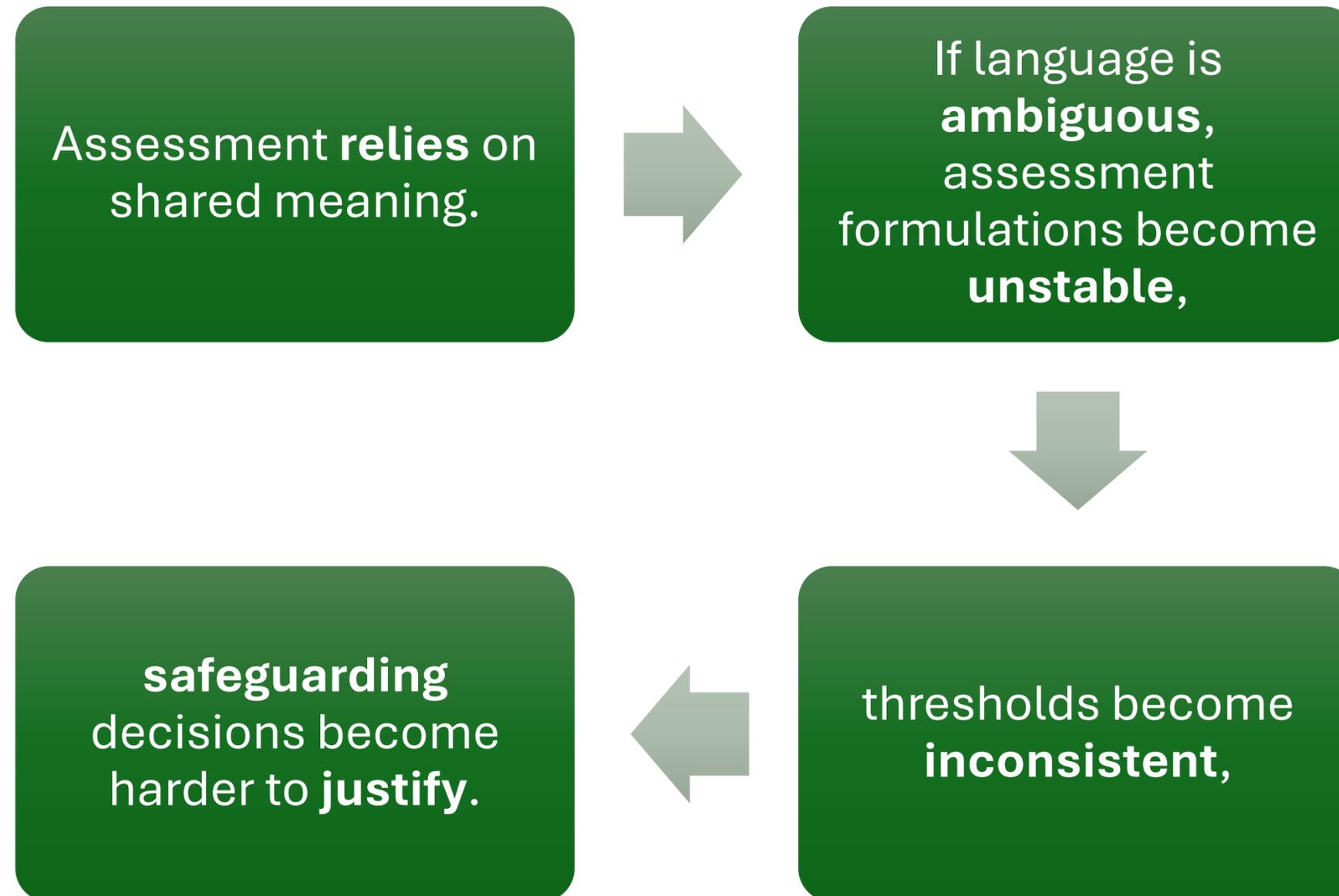
Lack of Shared Definitions

Key Findings

Variation in Assessment Thresholds

“Cass highlights that **unclear language** can **weaken** assessment and evidence pathways.”

# Why Language Matters for Assessment

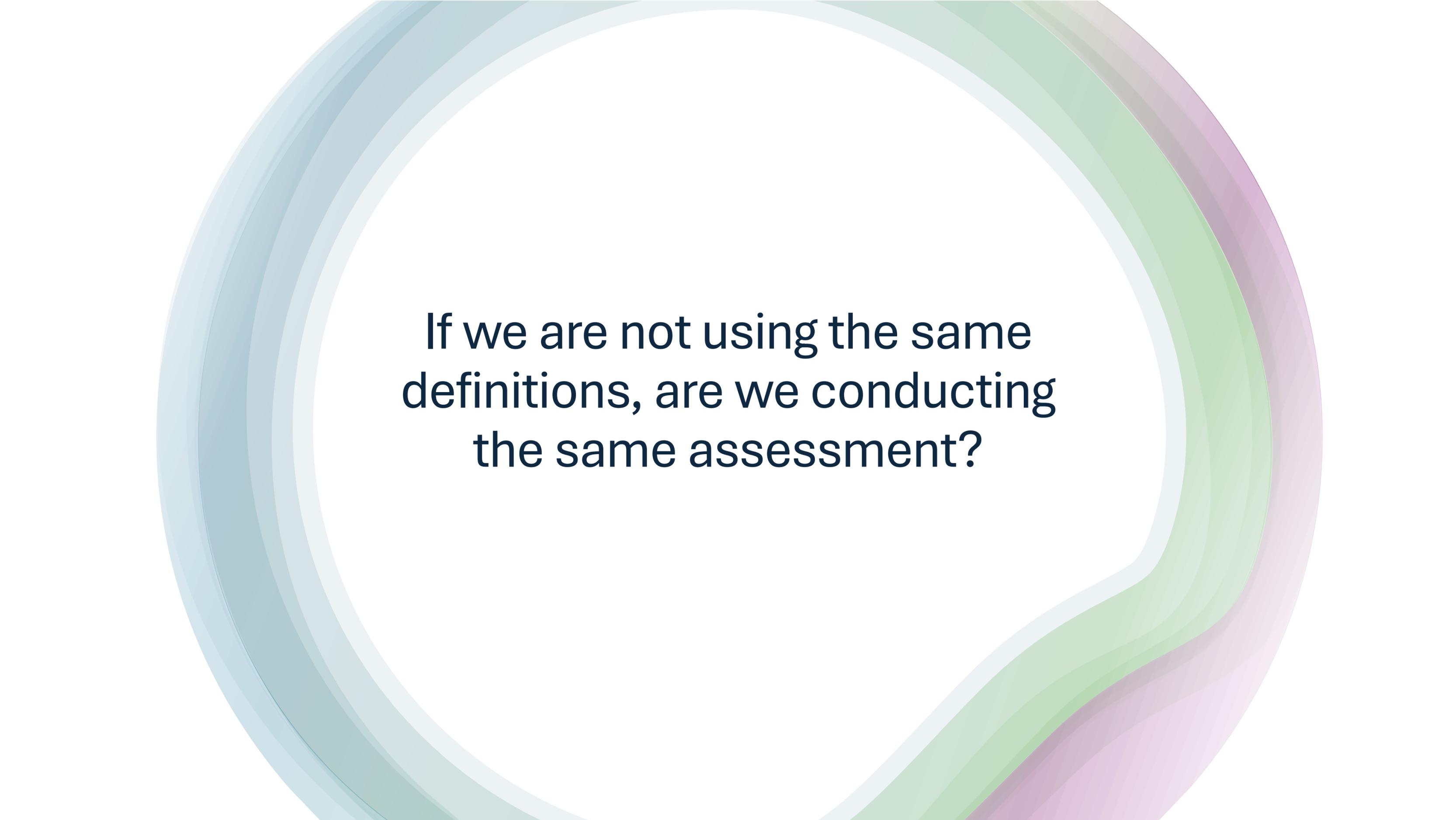


Which model best reflects how the “transgender umbrella” is currently framed in practice?



- Medical Model
- Social Model
- Affirmative Model
- Strengths-based Model
- Rights-based Model
- Unsure





If we are not using the same definitions, are we conducting the same assessment?



**Key message:**

Clarity supports Safe and Consistent  
Safeguarding Assessment

Thank you for your Time and  
Engagement Today

Questions and Reflections Welcome

# The Decolonising Social Work Practicum Podcast

Global Dialogues for Change

Listen to Our  
Episodes



**CO-CREATING THE  
NAIROBI PROPOSAL:  
DECOLONISING SOCIAL  
WORK PRACTICE  
EDUCATION FROM  
MALMÖ TO GLOBAL  
ACTION**

Facilitators: Tina Odu, Eleanor Hogan  
and Dominik Klaffl

# YOUR ROLE AS A CO-CREATOR

- Your perspectives, reflections and experiences are essential in shaping the next stage of this project.
- You can contribute **anonymously or with your name**, whichever you prefer.
- Your insights will directly inform:
  - Ongoing development of the Nairobi Proposal
  - Future teaching, practice education resources and podcasts
- You are part of a global movement to rethink and transform practice education.

Thank you for contributing to this collective journey.

# WELCOME

- The Project: Academic scoping review followed by 10 co-produced podcast episodes where students, practitioners and academics globally shared their challenges and successes in decolonising their own practice.
- A student-led journey
- Tina and Eleanor (NQSWs) and Dominik (International Student Guest).
- We are sharing our process so that together we can strengthen and transform practice education.



# Decolonise and Rehumanise Social Work Field Education



Wayne Reid Bio

## DEFINING DECOLONISATION IN PRACTICE

- Redress colonial legacies and enabling self-determination (Jones et al., 2025).
- Dismantling inherited colonial mindsets and Eurocentric standards.
- Critically examining curricula, including questions of power, benefit, inclusion/exclusion.
- Centre Global Majority voices; challenge marginalisation.
- Collective unlearning systemic, normalised colonial violence.

(Source: Ellis, C. (Host), Reid, W. (Guest), Kulkarni, M. (Producer), Odu, T. and Hogan, E. (Student participants), and Chen, H.L. (Series lead). (2025) *Decolonise and Rehumanise* [Podcast]. *Decolonising Social Work Field Education Podcast*, 15 May. Available at: <https://www.dialogueswfe.org/episode-2>)

# REFLECTION QUESTION (MS TEAMS DISCUSSION)

- In the chat: Did your training help you understand and navigate colonial influences in current practice?
- Share one example or brief reflection from your experience.
- Optional: respond to a colleague's comment or build on their point.





# COLLECTIVE GROWTH THROUGH SHARED ACTION

1

Start: Initial understanding of decolonisation

2

Podcast & Placement: Practice transformed through 10 co-produced podcast episodes

3

Malmö: Confidence built by leading international peers

4

Current Practice: Applying learning in professional roles today

# LEARNING ACROSS BORDERS

Dominik's experiences and perspectives

- Experience with the podcast series
- How this experience has influenced his learning and placement practice



# 5 ACTION PRIORITIES TO DECOLONISING PRACTICE EDUCATION

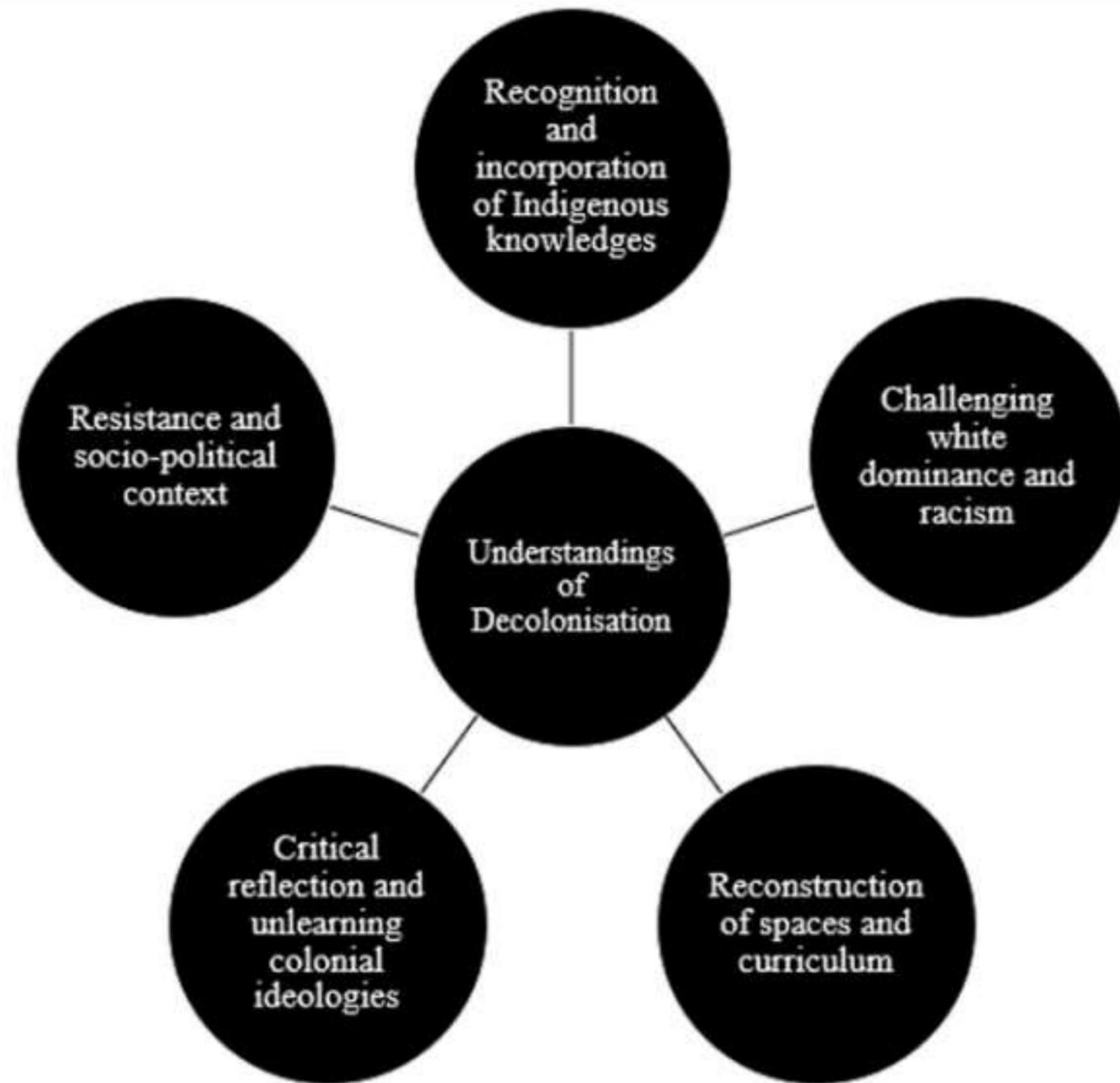


Figure 3. Understandings of decolonisation themes.

## International Social Work

Impact Factor: **1.2**

5-Year Impact Factor: **1.7**

 Open access |   | Research article

First published online January 9, 2025

**Decolonising social work practice field education: A scoping review**

[Michelle Jones](#)  , [Ann Anka](#) , [...], and [Henglien Lisa Chen](#)   [View all authors and affiliations](#)

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? (MS TEAMS DISCUSSION)

- In the chat: Looking at the 5 Action Priorities, share one way the PCF supports or limits our ability to put them into practice.
- In the chat: Which PCF domain feels the most “colonial” to you? Give a brief example of why.
- Optional: respond to or build on a colleague’s comment.

## The 5 Action Priorities (for Decolonising Practice)

- Challenging White Dominance
- Unlearning Colonial Ideologies
- Incorporating Local/Indigenous Knowledge
- Reconstructing Spaces and Curricula
- Acknowledging Socio-Political Contexts

## The PCF (Professional Capabilities Framework)



Global Dialogues for Change

## Decolonising Social Work Field Education

By Decolonising Social Work Field Education Podcast

## EXPLORE OUR RESOURCES

- Continue your own journey of unlearning and acting:
- Listen: The Decolonising Social Work Practicum podcast series (10 episodes) and further learning resources. <https://www.dialogueswfe.org/>
- Read: Our open-access scoping review on decolonising practice education (Jones, Chen et al., 2025). <https://journals-sagepub-com.sussex.idm.oclc.org/doi/10.1177/00208728241303596>

# COLLABORATE WITH US

Reach out via the session evaluation form to engage in:

- **Co-writing:** Our upcoming Open Access e-book project.
- **Co-facilitating:** Future international workshops and dialogues.
- **Research:** Longitudinal impact studies on decolonial practice settings.

"Decolonisation is an active, reflective process... to become more culturally humble and effective practitioners."

# BASW Student Workshop

## Evaluation: Global Action Plan for Decolonising Practice Education



## JOIN THE JOURNEY: FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL ACTION

1. Please scan the QR code to complete our brief session evaluation.
  1. Your feedback is vital to document how these dialogues shape practice education
  2. Your Consent: Contributions are anonymous by default. You can opt-in to be named as a co-creator or join our Working Group via the form.

# CO-CREATING THE NAIROBI PROPOSAL: DECOLONISING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE EDUCATION FROM MALMÖ TO GLOBAL ACTION

Facilitators: Tina Odu, Eleanor Hogan and Dominik Klaffl

Co-respondent: Dr Henglien Lisa Chen, Associate Professor in Social Work, University of Sussex.

E: [h.l.chen@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:h.l.chen@sussex.ac.uk)

# Dynamic Panel Discussion Placements

*Facilitator: Karin Heber, Professional Officer, Scottish Association of Social Workers (SASW)*

*Dimson Uchendu, BASW Student Ambassador*

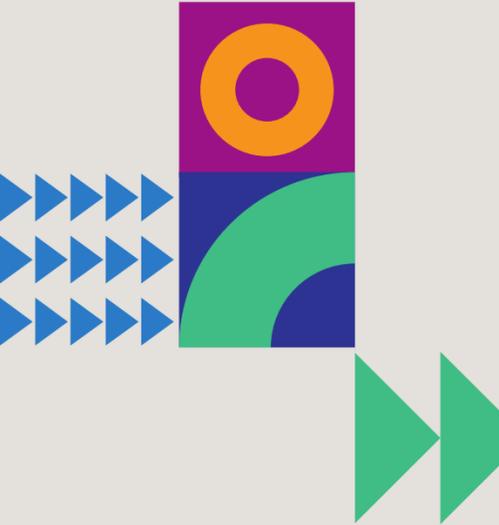
*Jody Brown, previous BASW Student Ambassador &*

*Zanam Batchford, Social worker for Framework HA. (County), Practice Educator. Level 2*

**Keynote: Social work within the NHS or other health focussed organisations, roles and career progression, what you need to know**

Lisa Brett, Chairs of the BASW Social Work in Health Thematic group

Presenters to share own slides?

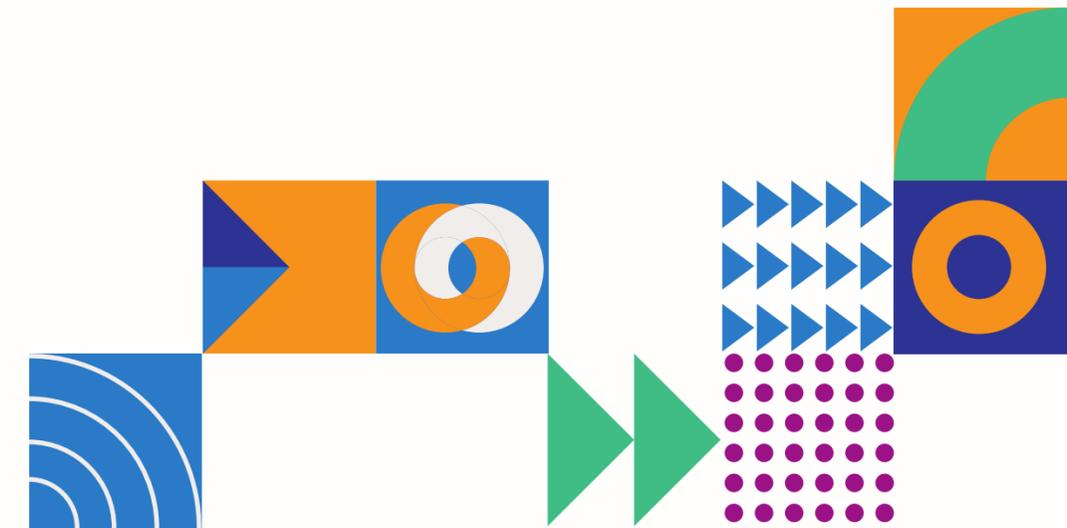


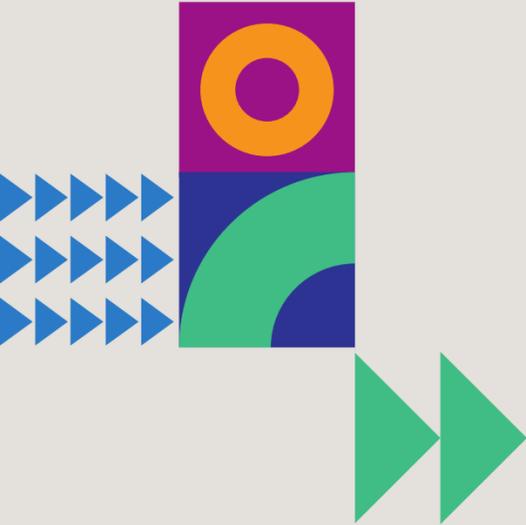
# Social Work within the NHS and Other Health-Focused Organisations: Roles and Career Progression

**Lisa Brett, Consultant Social Worker (CPD)  
Co-chair, BASW Social Work in Health Thematic Group**

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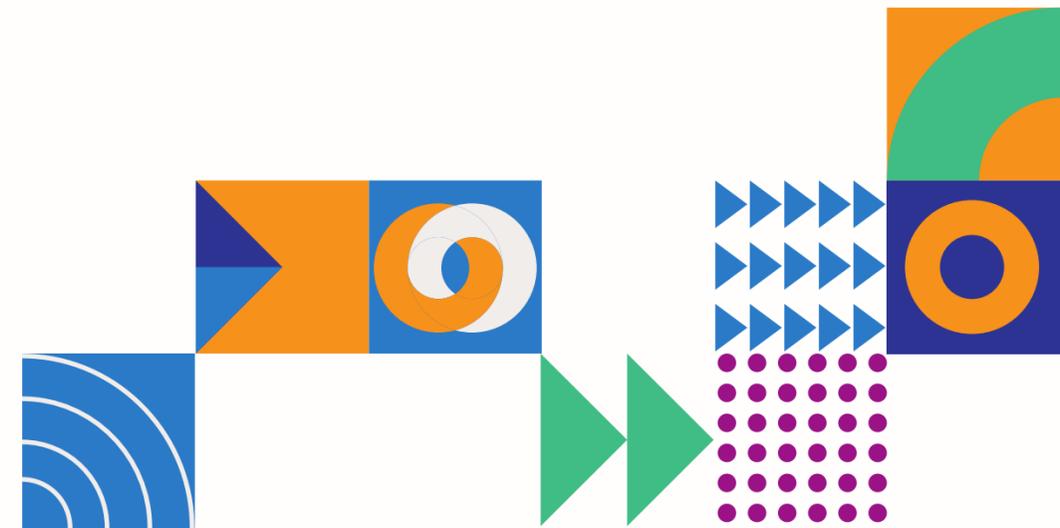


# Summary

- Role of BASW
- Social work landscape
- Role of social work in health-based organisations
- Challenges facing social work in health
- What is BASW doing to support?
- Questions

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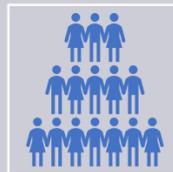
# Who are BASW?



The British Association of Social Workers are the Professional Association for Social Workers



A professional association is a member-led organisation which seeks to promote the profession, the interests of those working within the profession, and public interest.



We have over 22,000 members and teams in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland



We are the strong independent voice of Social Work and Social Workers. We work closely with the Social Work Union (separate entity).

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# What do we know about the social work landscape in England?

**2024**

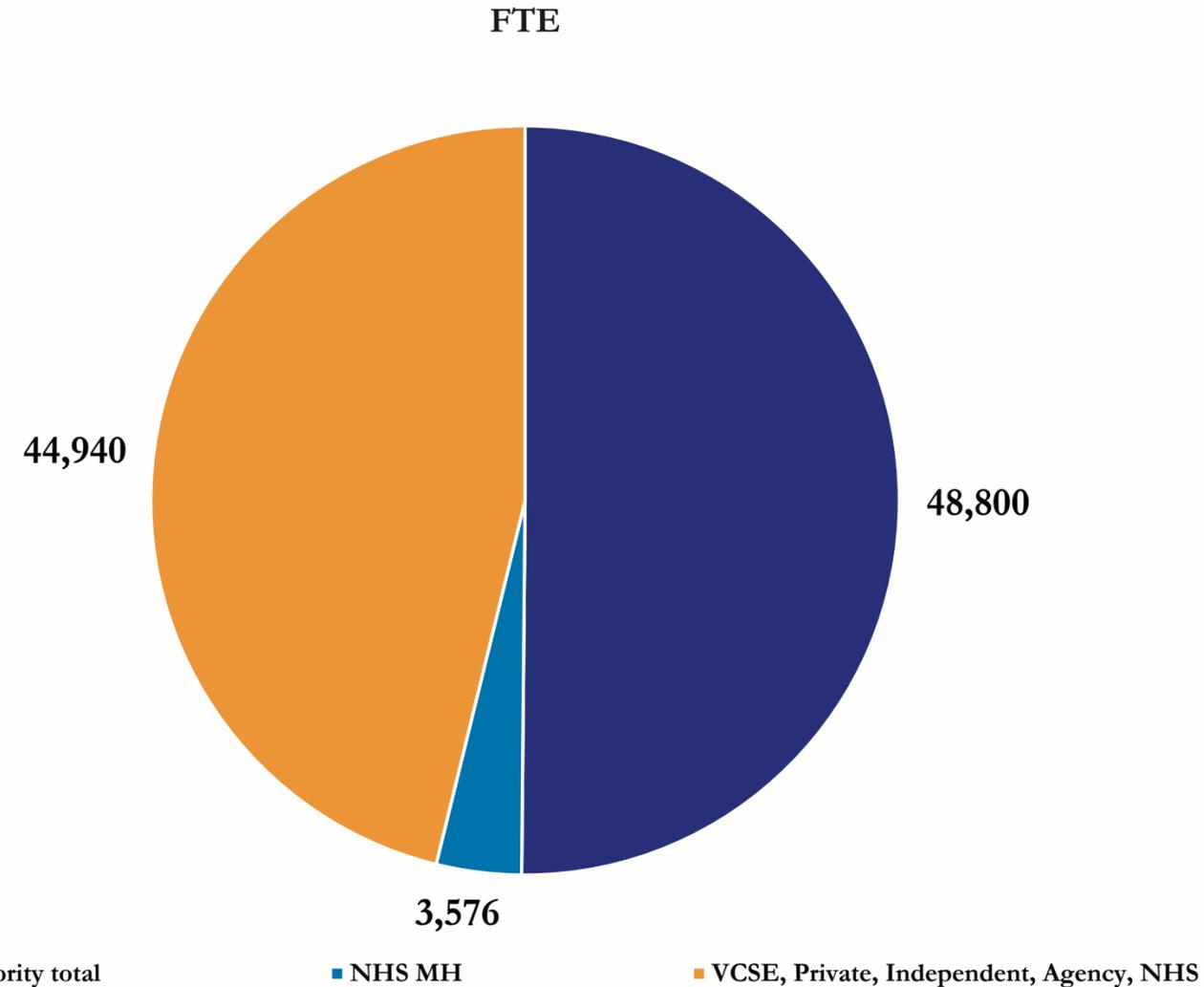
- Approx **102,861** registered social workers <sup>1</sup>
  - **34,300** ( WTE) (2024) SWs in children and families in local authorities <sup>2</sup>
  - **19,200** (WTE) (2024) SWs in adults in local authorities <sup>3</sup>
  - **49,361** in roles with other employers such as NHS, VCSE or working as agency or independents etc.
  - Approx **5343** social workers being identified as being employed by the NHS (Feb 25) (SWE data)
  - **3,420** (WTE) social workers directly employed by NHS mental health services (data from 2023)
- <sup>1</sup> [Demographics diversity of register - Social Work England](#)
- <sup>2</sup> [Children's social work workforce, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)
- <sup>3</sup> [Headline social worker information - February 2025](#)

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# What do we know about the social work landscape in England?

In 2022:



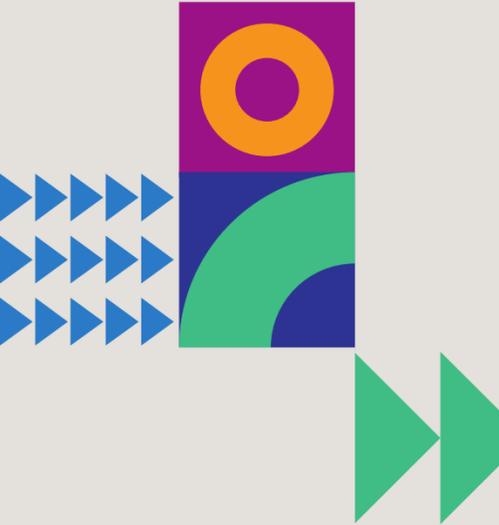
\*NHSBN National Workforce census of Social Workers in Mental Health Services

\*<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data/Workforce-intelligence/documents/Social-Worker-headline-Feb2023-FINAL.pdf>

\* Children's social work workforce, Reporting year 2022 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK ([explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk))

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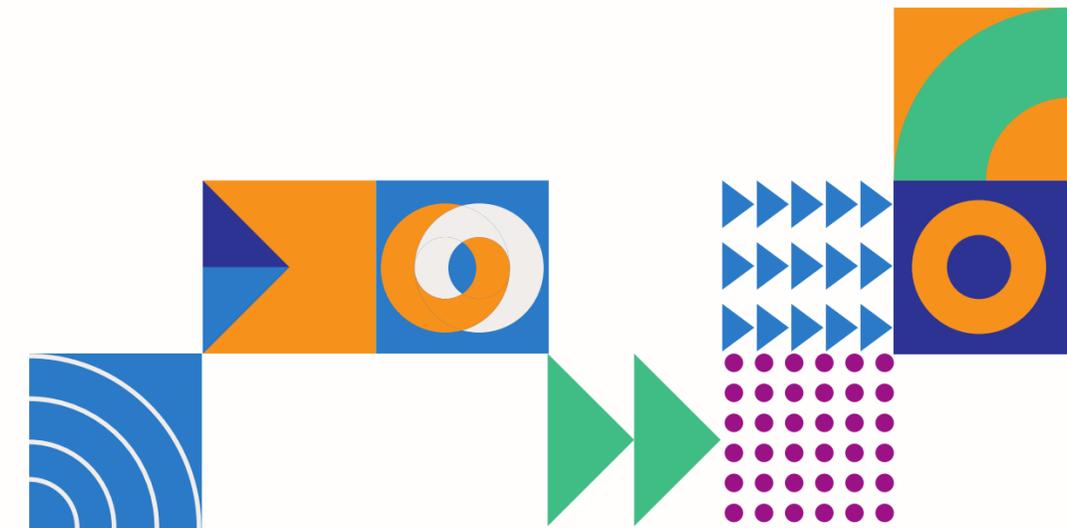


# Roles in health settings

- 5,000 social workers working in the NHS
- Many social workers are based in health-focused agencies outside the NHS
- Examples of roles:
  - Hospital settings
  - Community health
  - Hospice/palliative care settings
  - Adult mental health
  - Primary care
  - CAMHS
  - Adult rehabilitation
  - Drug and alcohol services

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# Scope for SW contribution to the NHS 10 yr plan

- Distinctive skills - assessment of needs
- Fulfilling legal duties including safeguarding
- Advocating for equity and upholding human rights
- Ensuring people and families have access to appropriate support and services

- Unique expertise in addressing the holistic needs of people, which is crucial in community-based models
- Strengthening the role of social workers in preventative and early intervention work promotes wellbeing and resilience
- Intersectional approach which considers wider societal determinant factors

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# Challenges for social workers in health

Navigating a medical-dominant environment.

Limited understanding of social work by clinical colleagues.

Government policy is dominated by reference to SW in local authorities

Limited or no access to funding for training/CPD and glass ceiling in career progression

The Role of the Social Worker in Adult Mental Health Services |  
BASW

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**England**

The professional association for  
social work and social workers

# Challenges for social workers in health

Limited research and guidance to support the recognition of the unique professional requirements of social work in MDT and integrated services

Roles that don't allow use of protected title leading to loss of professional identity

Unequal career mobility as CPD offers, favour other health professionals or local authority employed SWs

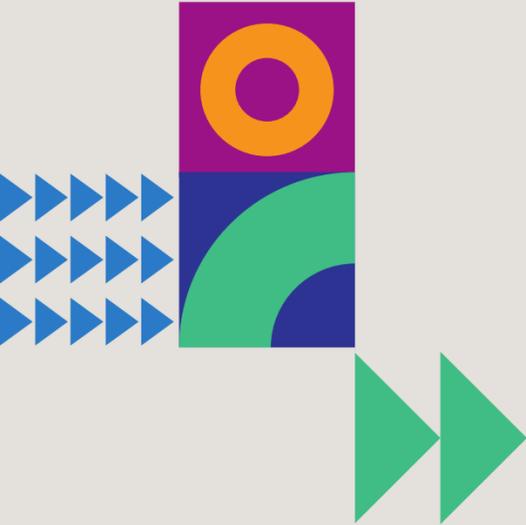
[The Role of the Social Worker in Adult Mental Health Services | BASW](#)

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# What is BASW doing?

- Running regular forums for social workers in MDT settings, providing peer support and opportunities to keep up to date on research and practice developments
- Influencing policy, promoting and supporting research via our thematic groups
- Working with the Chief Social Worker for Adults office and NHS England to address issues relating to lack of training/CPD for social workers in the NHS
- Looking to develop a guide that speaks specifically to the value of SWs within MDT settings
- Contributing to the NHS 10 yr plan and workforce plan consultations and calls for evidence
- Working with NICE to develop case and promote case studies



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# To find out more about the SWiH Thematic Group or for our contact details

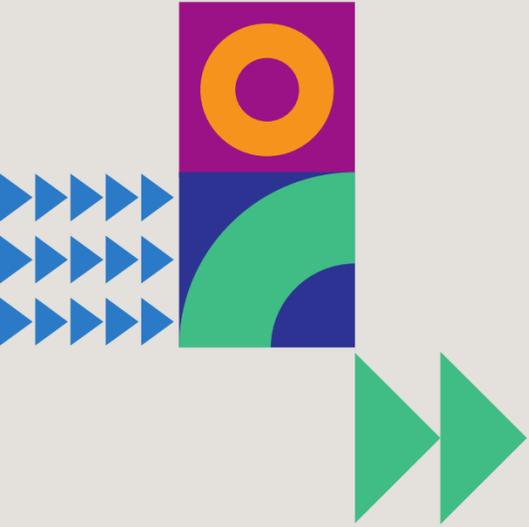
**Scan me**



<https://new.basw.co.uk/support/groups-and-networks/thematic-groups-england/social-workers-health-group>

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**England**

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# Resources

- [Social Workers and Social Care Workforce within mental health services - National report - Accessible.pptx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
- [The Standards for employers of social workers in England 2020 | Local Government Association](#)
- [Transforming Mental Health Social Work report.pdf \(hee.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [NHS Long Term Workforce Plan \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [NHS England » NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard \(WRES\)](#)
- [Anti-Racist perspectives and the AMHP role | 17 October 2023 - YouTube](#)
- [Leadership for a collaborative and inclusive future - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Social Workers in Health Group | BASW](#)
- [Mental Health Group | BASW](#)
- [The role of social workers in palliative, end of life and bereavement care | BASW](#)

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**England**

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# **Keynote: BASW & Social Workers Union - Student Campaigns: Stronger Together**

John McGowan, General Secretary, Social Workers Union  
To share own slides

# BASW

The professional association for  
social work and social workers

# SWU

Social  
Workers  
Union

# STUDENT CAMPAIGNS: STRONGER TOGETHER

**JOHN MCGOWAN**  
**SOCIAL WORKERS UNION (SWU)**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**



Skilled **Employment Representation**  
and a lot more



**SWU** Social Workers Union  
Austerity Action Group



**SWU** Social Workers Union  
Campaign Fund



**Talk to SWU** Social Workers Union  
workplace issues webinar



**SWU** Social Workers Union  
Union Contacts

**GEORGE HANNAH**  
**SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION OF**  
**SOCIAL WORK (SASW)**  
**SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS AND**  
**PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER**

**SASW**

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



## This joint BASW & SWU campaign focuses on:

- Adequate and safe staffing
- Sustainable workloads
- Proper funding and investment in social work services
- Better services through better professional development
- Recognition and respect for social work expertise
- Improved mental health and wellbeing support for practitioners



## SWU and BASW launch new Cross Party Group to focus on social work issues at Westminster

Chaired by Ian Byrne MP, the group brings together politicians from the House of Commons and House of Lords and from across the political spectrum.

The first meeting introduced politicians to BASW and SWU's campaign to tackle poor working conditions in the social work profession.

The second meeting on World Social Work Day 2026 celebrated the positive impact the social work profession has on our society, urged parliamentarians to champion the role of social workers, and the event was marked with an Early Day Motion.

The SWU Campaign Fund was established in 2021 to provide our activist members with access to professional support to campaign on issues and causes they're passionate about.

Any SWU member can submit a campaign idea for funding.

SWU and BASW have supported many successful campaigns through the Fund, and this includes student led campaigns.



**SWU** Social  
Workers  
Union  
**Campaign Fund**

**campaign  
collective**  
creating positive change



**SWU** Social  
Workers  
Union

Campaign Fund

**BASW**  
Cymru

The professional association for  
social work and social workers

## Student led campaign increases financial support for social work students in Wales

This campaign – led by Cardiff MASW students and supported by BASW Cymru & the SWU Campaign Fund – resulted in the Welsh Government pledging action on improving bursaries. Starting from September 2022, the bursaries for both undergraduates and postgraduates in Wales were increased by over 50%.





**SWU** Social Workers Union  
Campaign Fund

**BASW**  
England

The professional association for  
social work and social workers



Emma Lewell-Buck MP

## Over 400 social work students in England write to ministers over bursary failures

26 July 2023

Dear Secretaries of State for Health and Education,

Students on social work courses often complete front-line work as part of their courses, helping the most vulnerable in society. This means many social work students face unique levels of financial hardship as they are unable to work part-time while completing their studies.

Despite this, student bursaries for social workers in England are currently distributed unequally and only around one in six students benefit from them as they are limited in number. Where bursaries are available, the funding for them has been frozen for over eight years resulting in a real-terms cut in support for many students. In addition, bursaries available have been capped at the same numbers (1,500 postgraduate and 2,500 undergraduate) since 2013.

In response to questions from Emma Lewell-Buck MP, Health Minister Helen Whately MP said the Government has “no plans” to assess the adequacy of student bursaries in the coming year.

"To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to help improve (a) the equality of distribution of and (b) access to bursaries for student social workers."

House of Commons written question, 6 March 2023

"To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of bursaries for social work students on access to those courses."

House of Commons written question, 6 March 2023

# CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE THE SOCIAL WORK STUDENT INCENTIVE SCHEME

## THE CASE FOR CHANGE

BASW NI and SWU jointly published research highlighting the dire financial circumstances of social work students in Northern Ireland:  
<https://swu-union.org.uk/2024/05/social-workers-call-for-an-increase-in-student-social-work-bursaries>

**BASW**  
Northern Ireland

The professional association for  
social work and social workers

**SWU** Social  
Workers  
Union

## **Student led campaign wins postgraduate social work bursary increase in Scotland**

This campaign – led by Scottish students and supported by SASW & the SWU Campaign Fund – resulted in postgraduate social work student bursaries in Scotland increasing by almost 50% on average in the 2025-26 academic year. Students can apply for this support through the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) website:

<https://www.sssc.uk.com/careers-and-education/social-work>



**SWU** Social Workers Union

Campaign Fund

**SASW**

The professional association for social work and social workers



# STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

With BASW you get discounted student membership to support your social work course.

You can also opt into the Social Workers Union (SWU) at an additional discounted rate of just 83p per month.

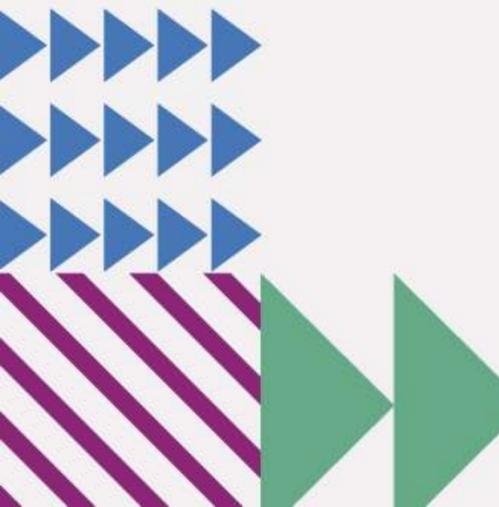
Receive all the benefits of the trade union alongside BASW, your professional association – all under one roof.

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

**SWU**  
Social  
Workers  
Union



Join BASW and SWU today at  
[www.basw.co.uk/membership](http://www.basw.co.uk/membership)



■ **Support your coursework**

Develop your knowledge and skills and carve out your career path with free and discounted CPD.

■ **Student Ambassadors**

A unique opportunity for you to learn and develop. Join projects and events that focus on the student experience.

■ **Professional Support Service**

Confidential 1-1 support and coaching service for social workers and students.

■ **Savings**

Discounted member rate for students and a 50% discount for your first year after you qualify.

■ **Student Hub**

Access a members-only hub of information, guidance, events and resources across the UK.

■ **Careers advice**

Find out more about working in social work and explore your speciality, build interview skills and get tips on writing job applications.

■ **Protection**

Student membership includes £5 million professional indemnity insurance cover for social work placements.

■ **Connect**

Meet and connect with fellow social work students and social workers, to share ideas, discuss your learning and development.



Join now [basw.co.uk/membership](https://basw.co.uk/membership)

## SWU Student package

(in addition to an existing BASW membership)

**SWU is the only UK trade union for, and run by, qualified and registered social workers. Join SWU and be part of one of the fastest growing trade unions in the UK.**

### ■ Become a Union Contact

SWU recruits and trains student Union Contacts who promote membership and activism in universities.

### ■ Access training provided by GFTU

SWU is a member of the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), providing student members with access to training provided by GFTU. GFTU is a group of 30 specialist unions with a combined membership of over 600,000 members.

### ■ Additional legal, insurance and CPD opportunities

SWU offers additional legal, insurance and CPD opportunities delivered and discounted by Dr Neil Thompson.

### ■ Regular e-communication

Receive a monthly SWU newsletter with the latest updates and events to your inbox.

### ■ SWU Campaign Fund

This fund is available for SWU student members to set campaign priorities and engage in activism.

### ■ SWU Austerity Action Group

Meet and connect with fellow social work students and social workers and join in with some student campaigning.

### ■ Eligibility for National Executive Places

Get involved with your trade union and represent the voice of student social workers on topics such as use of supervision and working conditions.

### ■ SWU Assignment Essay Competition

Each year the Social Workers Union seeks to challenge and engage students and apprentices with the SWU Assignment. There are four awards including £500 to each winner.

BASW Student Membership	Additional SWU opt-in
£5.39/ month	+£0.83/ month

Continue your student membership and receive 50% off membership fees for your first post-qualifying year of work.

## University offer

### ■ BASW University Social Work Education Provider Affiliation Scheme

Offering professional support and activities designed to support social work education programmes, plus a discount of up to 15% off for student group membership. Ask your course lead to speak to us!



**SWU** Social Workers Union  
Campaign Fund



**Talk to SWU** Social Workers Union  
workplace issues webinar



**SWU** Social Workers Union  
Union Contacts



**SWU** Social Workers Union  
Austerity Action Group

WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY  
17 MARCH 2026  
#WSWD2026  
#SWUAssignment

# SWU ASSIGNMENT: WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY ESSAY COMPETITION 2026

**The prize:** Four grants of £500

**The criteria:** A 750 - 1000 word assignment written by a Social Work Student undertaking an Undergraduate or Post Graduate Social Work Degree in the UK, Social Work Apprentices and students undertaking specialist pathway routes

<https://swu-union.org.uk/world-social-work-day-student-essay-competition>

**CO-BUILDING**  
Hope & Harmony

A Harambee  
Call to Unite a  
Divided Society



WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY  
17 MARCH 2026  
#WSWD2026  
#SWUAssignment

# SWU ASSIGNMENT: WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY ESSAY COMPETITION 2026

## The Question:

**"How can the social work profession push back against far-right narratives of division, and how can social workers co-build solidarity and hope across communities?"**

The competition will close for entries at the end of day Sunday 14th June 2026.

<https://swu-union.org.uk/world-social-work-day-student-essay-competition>

**CO-BUILDING**  
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# Education Programme

SWU members can access the majority of the General Federation of Trade Union (GFTU) Education Programme training courses **free of charge**, including hotel stays and meals for residential courses.

Residential courses are held at the hotel and training centre, the Quorn Grange Hotel, which is near Loughborough in Leicestershire.

Courses run in a variety of formats throughout the year, with many online options. A full timetable of available courses can be found here:

**<https://gftuet.org.uk/education>**

# GFTU Summer School

## About The Course

This is our annual opportunity to take stock and think about the future of the Movement and where we go next. As we look to build on recent organising and campaigning successes, the course will help participants to think strategically and embrace new ideas.

Our Summer School provides the space and stimulus for a bolder, bigger and better union Movement. This course is aimed at experienced and newer trade union activists who want an opportunity to think outside the box with key leaders from across the movement.

This Summer School will be extra special as it will include the graduation of those that took part in the first ever pilot of the Activist Academy.



## Location

📍 GFTU Quorn Grange

## Course Dates

Summer Term: 13 – 15 July 2026

## Application Deadlines

29/06/2026

## Pricing

For Affiliates: FREE

For Non-affiliates: £425

# SWU leaflets and information can be found at: <https://swu-union.org.uk/resources-training/swu-leaflets-and-information>



## Reducing the risk of doxxing: A mini guide for social workers



The deliberate publication of personal information online without consent, often with the intention to intimidate, harass, or undermine confidence in professional practice



This guidance outlines practical measures to reduce risk and ensure personal and professional safety online

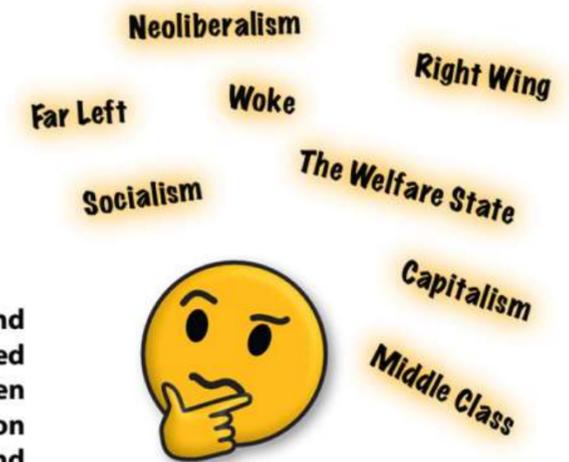


You have the right to safety, privacy, and protection at work



## Quick Reference Guide – Political Terminologies

As social workers our working lives and our personal lives are regularly impacted by politics. But do you "get it" when friends and colleagues use political jargon to discuss these impacts on families and communities, or can it be a confusing minefield?



**SWU leaflets and information can be found at:**  
<https://swu-union.org.uk/resources-training/swu-leaflets-and-information>

**AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD NOW**

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BATTLING THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS  
CAMPAIGN ACTION PACK**

Download your copy here:

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# Wellbeing Toolkit

<https://basw.co.uk/about-basw/campaigning-and-influencing/professional-working-conditions/wellbeing-toolkit-summary>



This toolkit is aimed at accelerating action across all parts of the workplace. It is built on the principle that improvement in organisations – for staff and for the people we serve – often needs everyone involved to work together, and that social workers in practice can be empowered to shape change and use their professional agency and power, individually and collectively.

# Ten ways to thrive in social work

Trainer, author and SWU Ambassador Neil Thompson and general secretary of the Social Workers Union

John McGowan distil top tips from the new 2023 JKP issue of their book *How to Survive in Social Work*

## 1 Expect to struggle

By its very nature, social work is a demanding occupation. With the added pressures of the current inhospitable political climate and underfunded state of public services, it should come as no surprise that a significant proportion of people are struggling to get through their workload. This is nothing to be ashamed of. It is a reflection of the wider context and says little or nothing about individual capabilities. This is not to say that some people do not have their own issues that affect how well they cope with the pressures. But the idea that struggling is a sign of personal failing is a gross (and grossly unfair) oversimplification.

## 2 Don't blame yourself

For far too long there has been a destructive blame culture in social work (and public services more broadly). What can make the situation much worse is when people blame themselves for things not going very well - even to the point where they start to assume they are not competent enough. The technical term for this is 'Imposter Syndrome.' It describes situations where people doubt themselves to the point where they feel they are not good enough for the work expected of them - as if they are an imposter pretending to be a competent worker.

## 3 Be assertive

No, being assertive does not mean being stumpy, difficult or demanding. It means having the confidence and negotiation skills to work towards win-win outcomes. Often it amounts to saying 'no' or at least 'no, but ...' Sadly, we have come across many people who became ill with stress, because of work overload. A significant proportion of them have told us that they just passively accepted more and more work and made little or no attempt to negotiate a more reasonable workload. There are various reasons why this sad state of affairs arises but in most cases it boils down to people either not having the requisite assertiveness skills or choosing not to use them.

## 4 Don't expect a 100% success rate

It has been said that the only profession with a 100 percent success rate is undertakers. No matter how competent we are or how hard we try, the reality is that we will never achieve 100 percent success in social work, nor should we expect to. Imagine how stressful it would be for police officers if they were expected to clear up every crime and convict every perpetrator. The only fair expectation is that they do their best in difficult circumstances. Why should that not apply to social workers too? Things will go wrong and mistakes will be made. But if we are doing our best and acting in good faith, we can hold our heads up high (whatever the gutter press may say).

## 5 Look after yourself

This has been said time and again, but it remains true that far too many people put other people's needs first and thereby put themselves at risk. Not practising self-care is dangerous in any work setting. In such a demanding profession as social work, it is extremely so. It has to be recognised that we are in no position to help people meet their needs if our own needs are not being met. How would you feel if you needed the help of a social worker, but it was clear they were exhausted and on the way to burnout? Would you feel you were getting a fair deal?

## 6 Make use of support

Some organisations are not good at supporting their staff, but even in those that are, there can often be a reluctance to ask for help. It derives from the fact that stress continues to be stigmatised and seen as a sign of a weak individual (rather than the sign of an overloaded system). Surviving - and especially thriving - depend on making full use of the support available and moving away from this dangerous idea that 'support is for wimps.' Anyone doing as demanding a job as social work who is not prepared to make use of support is playing a highly risky game.

## 7 Keep learning

High levels of pressure can lead to a sort of emotional paralysis that stops people exploring new ideas or methods. This therefore acts as a significant barrier to learning. This can then lead to a vicious circle. Because social work is such complex and demanding work, we need to keep learning all the time. Once we stop, our ability to be effective is diminished. This means that our ability to manage our pressures and keep stress at bay is also diminished, leaving us all the more prone to that very paralysis. So, keep learning, come what may, is the key message.

## 8 Don't lose sight of your values

That same paralysis can also lead to losing sight of our values - not intentionally, but because we narrow our focus to just getting through the day, just getting the job done to relieve the massive pressures we are under. This too invites a vicious circle whereby the motivation, drive and reassurance that come from our values are lost. Again it leaves us ill-equipped to cope with the pressure we face. Our values are important not only for ethical reasons, but also for their role in sustaining us through difficult times and territory.

## 9 Support one another

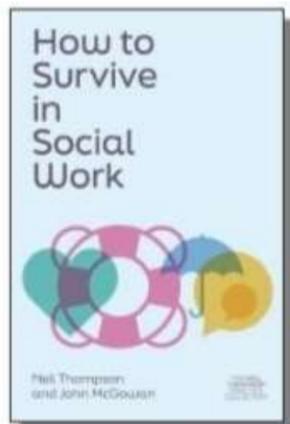
Unfortunately, one of the effects of a high level of pressure is that it can force people to withdraw into their own 'security bubble' for their own protection. This is understandable, but it is also a problem, because it undermines teamwork and solidarity. It is essential in such difficult times that we pull together and support one another. It is what teamwork is all about; it is what BASW is all about; and it is what SWU is all about. Let's make sure that is happens.

## 10 Have faith in yourself

Another consequence of a constantly high level of pressure is that we can lose confidence in ourselves. We feel we are struggling so much that we start to lose faith in ourselves. This too is understandable, but also problematic. If we do not have faith in ourselves, other people will not have faith in us and, without that credibility, our very difficult job becomes even harder, if not impossible.

Thompson, N and McGowan, J (2023) 'How to Survive in Social Work' is published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers

[How to Survive in Social Work | Jessica Kingsley Publishers - UK \(jkp.com\)](https://www.jkp.com)



# REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION:

A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE



A CO-CONSTRUCTED GUIDEBOOK ON BEST REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Download the guide here:



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**THANK YOU**

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# Thank you for joining us today



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