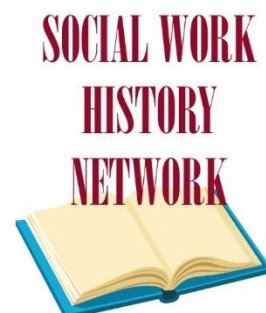


SIR WILLIAM UTTING
FIRST PATRON OF
THE SOCIAL WORK HISTORY NETWORK



The Social Work History Network is honoured to announce that Sir William Utting CB has kindly agreed to become the first patron of the Network



Presentation to Sir William Utting (centre) on his appointment as Patron of SWHN by SWHN Chair Dr David N Jones (left) and Professor Malcolm Payne (right) in October 2025

The citation on the certificate noted that the role of Patron was conferred 'in appreciation of his distinguished lifetime leadership of social work and commitment to the values of public service'.

Bill Utting qualified as a social worker at Barnet House in 1954/5 and completed the Home Office training for the probation service in 1955/6, practising initially as a Probation Officer. He served as the first Chief Inspector of Social Services from 1985 until his retirement in 1991. He then served on the Committee on Standards in Public Life from its formation under Chair Lord Nolan in 1994 until 2001. He was also Chair of the National Institute for Social Work and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Sir William led influential reviews of residential child care and safeguards for children living away from home, including the influential *People Like Us* report (1997). As a frequent attendee at SWHN events he contributed occasional reflections on the development of social work until no longer able to attend due to giving priority to caring for his wife.

Commenting after the presentation in October, Sir William wrote: 'my career as a practitioner lasted little more than a decade but the values of social work underpinned the whole of my half century in various forms of public service'. He concluded: 'Asked to share identifying information, I have always put social work upfront. This is as it should be. The values of social work became part of my own moral framework and informed every other activity I undertook. I am proud to be a (former) social worker and to have contributed to its transition in this country from an unregulated occupation to an accepted profession.'

Welcoming the appointment, Dr David N Jones (Network Chair) thanked Bill for his transparent commitment to social work throughout his career including his time as Chief Inspector. David observed: 'Bill was always known to respect and value social work, especially when he was necessarily critical of poor practice by agencies. His career embodied social work values which informed his influence on the Nolan Committee and in other areas of public life. Bill's lack of pretension and his commitment to living social work values are an inspiration to the global profession and his acceptance of the role of Patron of the History Network is an honour which we cherish', David concluded.



Sir William Utting (centre) with SWHN Chair Dr David N Jones (left) and Arran Poyser (right, former Social Services Inspectorate colleague) in October 2025

See [Social Work History Network](#)

Contact David N Jones, Chair, Social Work History Network through [Stephen Martineau](#), NIHR Policy Research Unit in Health and Social Care Workforce, King's College London.

9 January 2026