Bulletin of the Social Work History Network

Jonathan Dickens writes on Clement Attlee and the social service idea

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About the Social Work History Network

The Social Work History Network (SWHN) exists to explore the nature and growth of social work in order to inform contemporary policy and practice. Founded in 2000, it is an informal network of social workers, historians, archivists, researchers, educators, students, and social work policymakers. The Network meets three or four times a year in the United Kingdom to discuss papers given by invited speakers. Meetings are open to all. The *Bulletin of the Social Work History Network* is an e-journal: it is available on the Network website and via email to those on the mailing list.

To join the SWHN mailing list or to confirm your attendance at a meeting please contact: **stephen.martineau@kcl.ac.uk**

The Social Work History Network is supported by The British Association of Social Workers (BASW), The Open University, the University of Chester, and the Social Care Workforce Research Unit at King's College London.

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Editorial

Sarah Vicary

Editor, *Bulletin of the* Social Work History Network

Something of a mixed bag, this latest edition of the *Bulletin* nonetheless has much to consider and includes subjects as diverse as the historical developments concerning probation, women's mental health activism and Clement Attlee's social work idea. It also contains further evidence that social work history is beginning to be included in social work curricula across Europe and is increasingly being recognised as an important aspect of the profession of social work, its identity and the ongoing debate about its legitimacy.

To begin, Keith Bilton, always a generous contributor to these volumes, recounts the developments that took place leading up to the separate existence of the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO). This occurred even when other, similar Associations, had decided to amalgamate. Keith asks whether this outcome, in effect, led to the decision in England and Wales, although not in Scotland, to disaggregate the education of probation officers and ultimately a separation of the two professions. Keith debates the possible reason for these developments and explores particularly the philosophy and approach of NAPO and its members, along with the strength of a bond which lay in its membership structure and trade union function. He also provides a detailed examination of the differences in Scotland which persist today.

In his article Keith also suggests that gender issues may also have been significant. A second contribution to this bulletin is gender and its influence, here the account by Jeanette Copperman of the attempts to document women's mental health activism since the 1970s. In particular Jeanette is interested in furthering the understanding the role that female mental health activists have had on mental health policy and practice. She also is collecting and archiving materials and wishing to carry out oral histories. Jeanette recounts a personal memoir and also asks our membership to consider contacting her if they feel they can make a contribution in capturing similar voices. As important is the co-production of this history and how it might be used. This aspect is of paramount concern to the Social Work History Network and I am pleased to note the wider interest in such developments.

I have been fortunate to be able to attend a number of social work conferences over the past year and have been struck by the growing interest in the influence of the history of social work, in the debate about its role in its legitimacy as a profession and of the need because of this to include the topic in social work curricula. I have captured some of this experience in my short article the title of which was taken form an art installation I came across in the town where one such conference was taking place. Please take note of the ongoing developments for future conferences, in particular in Edinburgh 2018, a social work academy that is also celebrating its centenary that year, a journal special edition that has a current call for papers, along with the Network's own event which is due in September this year at the University of Chester; we hope to hold a similar event in London.

Dr Mike Burt offers two pieces. One short, outlining the work that is being undertaken at

the Ripon workhouse museum, in particular the ongoing attempts to represent the departments that have been based there. Mike has also provided this issue's book review on '*The Social Worker's Guide*,' a volume of over 400 entries providing an informative guide to the wide range of relevant societies, state policy and provision, legislation and social issues of the period covered by the book. Of particular note in terms of this bulletin is the specific entry concerning women in social work which points to the 'remarkable…history of social progress during the last fifty years…' because of the increase in the number of women involved and enhancement of their status (p.465).

The Network continues to strengthen. Our Steering Group has expanded, updated details of which will soon be appearing on the website and our regular seminars have a robust and increasingly diverse attendance. We are continuing to capture these sessions through various means. This includes audio recordings and providing presentations, where possible, on our website. Some speakers also are kind enough to provide articles for this *Bulletin* based on their talks. One such is that given by Professor Jonathan Dickens on Clement Attlee and the notion of the social service idea, which he argues has always influenced social work history albeit not at its forefront. Jonathan ends his piece by stating that history not only illuminates but challenges the present. So perhaps this mixed bag of the *Bulletin* does have its theme?

Sarah Vicary, *Co-ordinator of the SWHN, is a qualified, registered social worker and currently heads the Social Work Degree programme for The Open University in the North West of England and in Yorkshire*.
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Ripon Workhouse Museum

The Heritage Lottery has made a significant grant to the Ripon Workhouse Museum to take responsibility for all of the other buildings within the site of the original workhouse. The buildings were used by the children's, public health, and welfare departments in the 1950s and 1960s and as a home for older people until 1976. It subsequently served as a district office of the North Yorkshire Social Services Department. Plans are being made to represent the work of each of the departments with an emphasis on the changes which took place. Volunteers have interviewed many staff who worked in the offices. If anyone worked in the buildings the Museum would be interested to hear from them: info@riponmuseums.co.uk —*Dr Mike Burt, University of Chester*

Next Network meeting

Shaping a profession: The historical development of social work education and training
Wednesday, 13 September 2017, 1.30pm-4.00pm
University of Chester, Riverside Campus, Castle Street, Chester CH1 1BW

Professor Ann Davis, *Emeritus Professor of Social Work and Mental Health, University of Birmingham:* 'The social work curriculum: A view from the archives'

Malcolm Jordan, *Volunteer Co-ordinator:* 'Seebohm and Communities: What happened to radical social work education?'

Professor Karen Lyons, *Emeritus Professor, International Social Work, London Metropolitan University:* 'Social work education and training in Europe: A retrospective view'

Why didn't they join the others? The National Association of Probation Officers and the creation of a unified association of social workers – 1966 to 1970

Keith Bilton

What happened?

On 27 February 1963 seven social work associations set up the Standing Conference of Organisations of Social Workers (SCOSW) with the aim of forming a single association of trained social workers.[i] An eighth, The Society of Mental Welfare Officers, joined in May 1964. In October 1965, SCOSW established a working party on the future organisation of social workers, and in November 1966 it issued Discussion Paper No. 2, "The Future Organisation of Social Workers", inviting constituent organisations to choose between a federation and a unified association with eight "specialist subsections". At its annual conference in 1967, the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) decided that, while it could support a federation, it "would not be prepared at this time to give up its separate existence to facilitate the establishment of a single unified body which could assume all the functions of the present organisations in membership of the Standing Conference."[ii] The seven other organisations opted for a unified organisation, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), which came into being in July 1970, and the seven organisations dissolved themselves. Meanwhile, NAPO at its 1969 Annual General Meeting in St Andrews had recorded its belief that "it would not be possible to protect the interests of members of NAPO, or of those whom the probation service cares for, in a unified association of social workers."[iii] NAPO's decisions had been closely contested. Its journal *Probation* noted in July 1970 that, "Give or take a few votes either way, half said yes and half said no, whatever the form of the question and so the

deadlock continued." This comment appeared, however, in an editorial which reported on NAPO's 1970 referendum, in which "70 per cent were against transferring the functions and assets to BASW; and well under a quarter of the membership expressed themselves in favour."

Why?

So why did NAPO decide to continue in being, and should this decision be seen as the beginning of a long road leading to the Government decision that, in England and Wales although not in Scotland, social work education is not an appropriate preparation for the probation and after-care services? Perhaps not. The dominant view in NAPO in the late 1960s was that its members were engaged in social work. "Probation officers are in no doubt about their place in the world of social work, and their training is quite clearly training for social work".[iv] Indeed, probation officers tended, with some justification, to the view that the service offered an environment particularly suited to a professional approach to social work practice. Their service had a higher proportion of professionally qualified staff than did local authority health, welfare and children's departments.[v] They had the valued casework facility of an individual office, and good secretarial support. They had standing. Once confirmed in their appointment by the Home Office, their employment by Magistrates' Probation Committees protected their independence as officers of the court, and created organisational distance between their service and the Home Office and local authorities who paid for it. The legal requirement on the courts to place all probationers under the supervision of a named probation officer, who was then answerable

directly to the court, gave them some protection from unwanted managerial direction. The high value the service placed on independence was also reflected in a view that professionals should seek consultation when they felt they needed it, but should not be required to accept supervision of their casework by a senior officer.

There were of course some probation officers who did not see their practice as a form of social work, and they were in no doubt that NAPO should remain in being. At the other end of the spectrum were the 775 probation officers who joined BASW. The interesting question is why so many of those who saw probation as a social work service voted to keep NAPO in being.

What was special about NAPO?

Of the eight SCOSW organisations, there were three where the bond between members and their association was strengthened by organisational factors. For members of the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers and the Institute of Medical Social Workers, the bond was strengthened by their associations' control of recognition of qualifications for salary purposes, and membership was open only to people qualified in psychiatric or medical social work, but irrespective of where or whether they were employed. For NAPO, the bond lay in the Association's membership structure and trade union functions. Membership was open to all serving probation officers, irrespective of qualification, but to them only. Their salaries and service conditions were negotiated in a joint committee which dealt only with the probation service, whose staff side was wholly provided by NAPO. Whether replacing NAPO by a general social work association would be good for the probation service was always going to be a key question for NAPO.

NAPO also differed from the other seven associations in several other respects. It was the only one to be registered with the Registrar of Friendly Societies as a trade union. The Association of Psychiatric Social Workers (APSW)

and the Institute of Medical Social Workers (IMSW), although they had staff side seats on the relevant Whitley Council for NHS social workers, were registered under the Companies Acts, which was incompatible with registration as a trade union. SCOSW's decision that BASW should similarly be registered under the Companies Acts, taken in part, but not primarily, so that IMSW's resources, by far the largest, could be transferred to BASW, was a real problem for NAPO. Trade union immunities were at that time real and important.

Gender issues may also have been significant. Many male probation officers may have seen a unified association as likely to be too much dominated by women, and may have felt that this would not be the best way to maintain power and influence.

What else was happening?

Differences in style and structure between NAPO and the other organisations were not, however, the main reason for NAPO's decision to continue in being. Anyone who attended annual general meetings of APSW, IMSW and the Association of Child Care Officers (ACCO) would have considered their successful merger improbable. At an APSW general meeting, they would have seen relatively informal, measured discussion of practice issues in which critiques were sometimes trenchant but were always delivered in scrupulously respectful language. IMSW provided a smoothly orchestrated ceremony of secular thanksgivings, addresses and anointments. Unlike those of APSW and IMSW, but like NAPO's, ACCO's AGM was the Association's sovereign body, and debates about policy could be heated, though generally kept on the rails by a sufficient knowledge of Walter Citrine's impeccably logical *ABC of Chairmanship.* These differences could be and were overcome. More important in their effect were legislative changes to the organisation of social work services.

Nigel Grindrod, then Principal Probation Officer for Liverpool but soon to become Director of

Social Work for Paisley, wrote in November 1968: "The Seebohm Report makes no bones about saying that for the new social work Departments to be adequately staffed, particularly so that they can undertake *all* work with children up to the age of 16, it will be necessary for some Probation and After-Care Officers to move to the new Department. This would undoubtedly be very good for the new social work Department...but it would be idle to pretend that it would be good for the Probation Service...and if it is not good for the Probation Service, it will not, in the long run, be good either for Probation Officers or for offenders." Grindrod concluded: "The Seebohm Report foreshadows a first rate service for the law abiding citizen. It is to be hoped that the offender will in like manner have every reasonable facility made available to him as well, though if this is to be brought about the Probation Service must know its place in the future pattern of social work. But that, I think, is something which at the moment is far from clear."[vi]

NAPO was even more concerned about what was happening in Scotland. In April 1964 the Scottish Office published the Kilbrandon Report, which recommended sweeping changes to the by-then-antiquated juvenile justice system in Scotland. Juvenile Courts like those in England and Wales existed only in the four major cities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and in the rest of the country children were prosecuted in adult courts. Kilbrandon recommended the welfare-based system of children's hearings which remains in place today. The report's proposals on what it termed the matching field organisation envisaged a social education department within each local authority's education department, led by a depute director, which would bring together fieldwork, community and residential resources for all children with special needs. The Scottish Office was persuaded to reconsider these proposals, and Megan Browne, Kay Carmichael and Richard Titmuss wrote a 21-page report which was published in October 1966 as the White Paper *Social Work and the Community*.[vii] It

recommended the integration of probation services with all local authority social work services to create a single department of social work in each County and County of City (the four major cities listed above). NAPO was strongly opposed to the total disappearance of the Scottish probation service, but the White Paper's proposals were nevertheless enacted in the Social Work (Scotland) Act, 1968, which still provides the basic framework for Scottish personal social service provision. Speaking to the Social Work History Network, Vera Hiddleston, whose contribution to training for Scottish probation officers was substantial, put it this way: "Around half the offenders on probation in Scotland were juveniles, and the new service badly needed the Probation Officers, the most numerous of all, to staff the departments." [viii] The probation service also had the highest proportion of qualified staff. As Frank Dawtry, NAPO's then recently retired General Secretary, put it, "The destruction of the probation service is not the result of its failure, but of its success."[ix]

When the White Paper was published, NAPO's journal *Probation* gave two responses to its own question: "If probation officers are as much social workers as mental welfare officers or child care officers, why should they not practise their skills as part of a comprehensive service administered by the local authority?" The first response was that "there is intrinsic value in the development of an employer-employee relationship between the courts and the social workers serving the courts." The second concerned "the independence of the courts from any political influences, either national or local. We believe that this independence should also extend to the service which is responsible for preparing reports for the courts about offenders, so that there can be no suspicion, however faint, that any other consideration than the professional judgment of the probation officer has influenced the way in which facts and opinions are conveyed to the courts."[x] The next item in that issue of *Probation* concerned SCOSW's discussion paper on the

future organisation of social workers. "The problem…is whether in a unified association of all social workers probation officers would not only gain the benefits of being clearly identified as social workers, but would lose their own identity as probation officers." The connection between these two concerns is clear.

Twelve months later, anger had replaced dignified restraint in *Probation*'s "Comment" section.[xi] The Secretary of State for Scotland (Willie Ross, MP) had not only confirmed that the probation service would be absorbed into the new local authority social work departments, but had rejected the proposal in the White Paper that the local authorities for this purpose should be the Counties and the four Counties of Cities. He now announced that the Large Burghs, too, would administer their own social work departments instead of their populations being served by the county in which the burgh was located. (The Large Burghs had populations in the tens of thousands, going down to about 20,000 in Coatbridge and Airdrie.) On the absorption of the probation service, *Probation* commented: "We should like to think that the decision had been reached, however mistakenly, in the interests of the clients of the probation service. Cynically, however, we see a large element of political expediency involved. At present local authority social services in Scotland are inadequately staffed, and largely untrained; the probation service is adequate, efficiently organised, and has a wholly trained entry. The destruction of the probation service is not the result of its failure, but of its success, for without its personnel the new local authority service could hardly be established." What to NAPO was cynicism was to the other associations a call to work together in a greater cause. NAPO was strongly opposed, as were the other seven SCOSW member Associations, to the inclusion of the Large Burghs as social work authorities, since this would not only absorb probation services but also break them up into smaller units. When the Social Work (Scotland) Bill was in Parliament, the seven associations had jointly produced briefings

for MPs and Peers. On the matter of the Large Burghs, David Haxby, NAPO's General Secretary, had offered that NAPO would join them in producing a briefing paper on this one issue. When this paper was sent to MPs, Bruce Millan, then a junior Scottish Office Minister and later Secretary of State, observed to the Standing Committee on the Bill that, while it was said that NAPO was against the Bill, they could not be so much against it, because he had in his hand a briefing paper signed by NAPO along with the other seven associations. He said nothing about the limited scope of the briefing paper. This did not go down well in NAPO.

Probation officers' fears that the Government might make local authorities in England and Wales responsible for all social work services to the courts were hardly surprising. In Scotland, the process of change began with Kilbrandon's proposal to give a new local authority department responsibility for serving the juvenile justice system. In England, there had been similar proposals in White Papers (*The Child, the Family and the Young Offender*, 1965, and *Children in Trouble*, 1968) and in the Seebohm Report. Those in the second White Paper were largely enacted, though many were not to be implemented, in the Children and Young Persons Act, 1969. Might England and Wales, too, go further? NAPO's journal put it this way. "Although it is a Scottish Bill it is attracting attention in England and Wales, as some suspect that its shadow or light (depending on one's point of view) could be cast across the border. The different traditions and background in Scotland have been emphasised and members have been quick to point out the significant differences between the Bill's provisions and the proposals outlined in the new White Paper *Children in Trouble*. On the other hand it may be possible to read something into the closing remarks of the Secretary of State for Scotland on the second reading: 'While I believe that there are a few countries with comprehensively organised welfare services, these countries do not have this kind of

arrangement we are planning for children in trouble. No country has made both of these advances, and I am proud to introduce a pioneering measure which, I am sure, will be not only good for Scotland, but which might have something to offer to other countries.'"

Although there seems to be no evidence that the Government ever planned to make similar changes south of the border, it is understandable that NAPO decided in 1970 that this was not the time to risk lowering its guard by entrusting the defence of the probation service to a new association. It is however clear from its choice of words that NAPO saw probation work as an intrinsically professional activity and had no doubt that the profession was that of social work. It was

the value NAPO placed on the professionalism of the area probation services in which its members worked which led its executive committee to recommend members to retain a service association rather than join one whose members were linked only by their membership of a profession.

Keith Bilton is co-founder of the SWHN and former Chair of its Steering Group.

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i   They were the Association of Child Care Officers, the Association of Family Caseworkers, the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, the Association of Social Workers, the Institute of Medical Social Workers, the Moral Welfare Workers' Association and the National Association of Probation Officers.

ii   *Probation* (journal of the NAPO), July 1967

iii   *Probation*, July 1969

iv   *Probation*, March 1967

v   *Report of The Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services* (Seebohm Report), Appendix M, Part II, HMSO 1968.

vi   *Contact* (journal of the Central Council of Probation and After-Care Committees), November 1968

vii   Cmnd. 3065

viii   Paper read to a meeting of SWHN at Edinburgh University on 3 November 2006

ix   *Probation*, March 1968 (The "Comment" section of *Probation* was unsigned, but Frank Dawtry edited the journal.)

x   *Probation*, March 1967

xi   *Probation*, March 1968

The future has a long history: the influence of the study of social work history on education and practice

Sarah Vicary

The future has a long history (Zwolle, the Netherlands)

In August, 2016 I was walking between my accommodation and a conference venue on my way to deliver a lecture on social work history when I came across an art installation with the phrase 'the future has a long history', which I captured in the above photograph. As I attend other social work conferences I am increasingly aware that the history of social work and its influence is attracting much interest. This article tries to capture some of the debate which is arising using some of these experiences and also indicates ongoing developments.

The lack of ties with our predecessors and their theoretical contributions, together with a prevailing forward-looking emphasis, have led to an insufficient awareness of our field's origins and development.

(Marilena Dellavalle, University of Turin, Italy (2017))

So began the session entitled history as a content of social work education that was held at a recent conference on Social Work Education in Europe which was held in Paris in June, 2017. It is of course encouraging to note that this topic is attracting more attention at such events, but also this same speaker had a warning:

The negligence has exposed the professional community to feelings of fragility and loss of dignity.

What is to be made of this discourse? Is it the case that the history of social work is missing from the curriculum of social work programmes and, if so, is this omission resulting in a profession which is not able to defend its own identity or professional legitimacy?

There have been developments in various parts of Europe to promote the study of the history of social work and its dissemination. Marilena, the same speaker, reminded the audience of Reseau Histoire du Travail Social founded by Bridgitte Bouquet and Christine Garcette. Its aim is to research the history of social work in France, by maintaining archives and providing a forum for information sharing and discussion. We were also reminded of the Società per la Storia del Servizio Sociale which was established in 1991 and has worked to promote historical analysis of how social work in Italy has evolved. Its members also conduct research on primary sources, organise seminars and publish historical texts. This very Social Work History Network was also established in 2000 with similar aims.
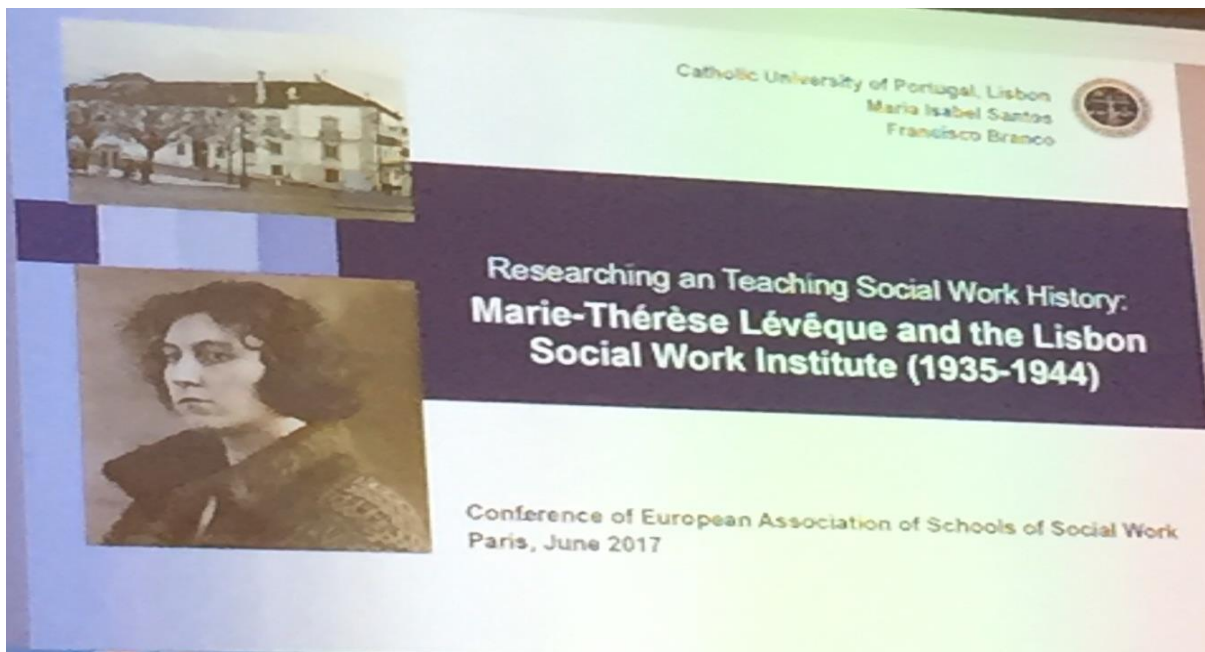
Slide from a presentation by Maria Isabel Santos and Francisco Branco, Conference of European Association of Schools of Social Work, Paris, June, 2017.

A second speaker in the Paris conference, Sanela Basic talked about the history of social work education in Bosnia and of her recent efforts to introduce a course on its history into the curriculum. Her reasons were based on the need to study history in a general sense quoting scholars such as Foucault's (1972) and his belief that the past never dies. She also related these same considerations to the study of the history of social work and provided her thoughts as to why it is important for social work students to have an understanding of its history:

- to develop its distinct professional identity
- to engage in critical self-reflection
- to address professional ethical issues

<div align="right">(Basic, 2017)</div>

Sanela went on to argue that the implications of including social work history in the curriculum are many: that it enhances students' professional education and that, through understanding how social work fits in the broader context of social development and changes, students are better prepared to acquire knowledge on social work methods and fields of practice. But, she also highlighted the challenges: primarily, in relation to her course, that there is a lack of global literature and that which does exist seems to be in the English language only and, in her local context, is almost non-existent (Basic, 20017).

Sanela spoke of a number of ways in which she teaches social work history and these include outlining a chronology; providing a history of different fields of social work, its development in a national context and also through an understanding of the early pioneers. The examples she gave included Jane Addams and Mary Richmond. There are of course other pioneers. The third speaker, Francisco Branco introduced us to Marie-Therese Leveque and her influence on the Social Work Institute in Lisbon between 1935 and 1944.

Other examples of the burgeoning interest in the influence of the history of social work include a pre-conference session that was separately organised by European Social Work Research Association (ESWRA) which has an increasingly active Special Interest Group (SIG) on social work history. In a session in this year's conference that was held at Aalborg University, Denmark, Professor of Social Work at the University of Edinburgh, Viv Cree spoke about stories of social work education. Viv argues that there has been little examination of the history of social work education.
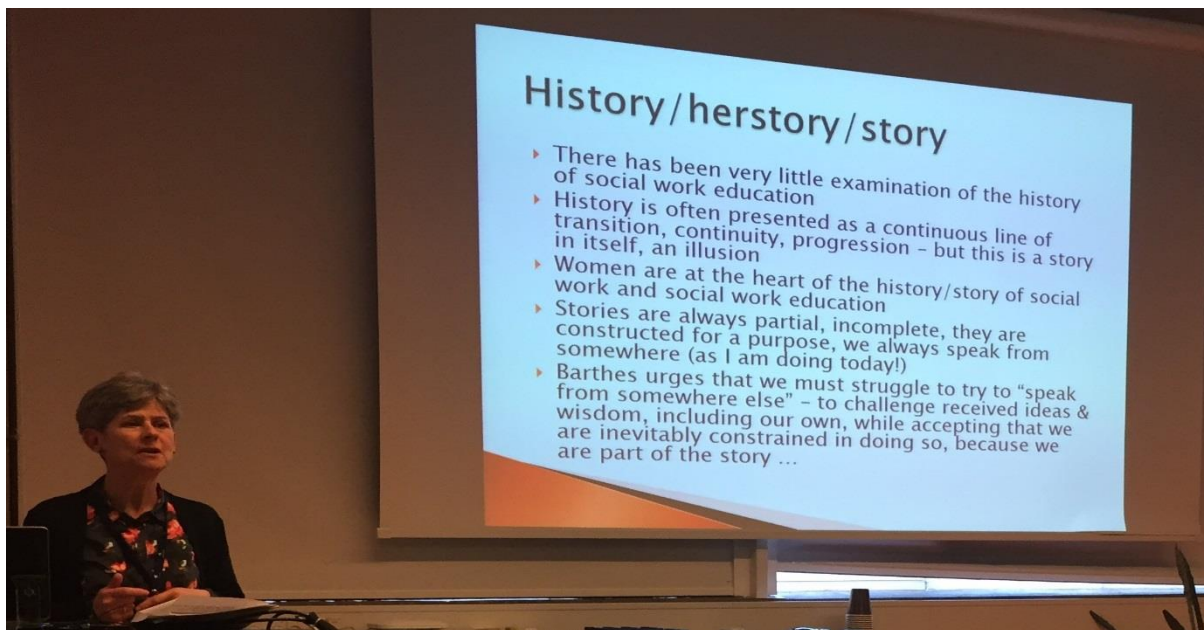
Photograph of Professor Viv Cree talking at Social Work History Special Interest Group pre-conference session, European Association Social Work Research, Aalborg, April, 2017.

Among the issues she raises are the competition between the 'academy', professional associations and government about who owns social work education and also about the ways that knowledge and research has been and is currently used to support particular ways of seeing or being a social worker (Cree, 2017). The matters of identity and the ongoing attempts to assert legitimacy as a profession therefore persist.

Viv also reminded us of the project to celebrate 100 years of social work at Edinburgh: centenary project. I would also like to take this opportunity to advertise the forthcoming event on the history of social work education to be held at the University of Chester this coming September Shaping a profession and which the Social Work History Network hopes to hold again early next year in London.

The eighth ESWRA conference is being held in Edinburgh in 2018.

One of the themes is social work history, identity and practice in changing times and across varied contexts. The Social Work Network is also providing a joint pre-conference event with the ESWRA SIG, April, 2018.

There is also a call for papers for a special edition of the Journal, Practice: Social Work in Action, edited by myself, Professor Jill Manthorpe and Professor Viv Cree. Do please consider submitting an abstract.

Sarah Vicary is co-ordinator of the Social Work History Network.

References

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Branco, F. (2017). *Pour comprendre la Formation en Service Social: Marie-Therese Leveque et l'Institut de Service Social de Lisbonne, Portugal, (1935-1944)* presentation European Association of Schools of Social Work, Paris.

Cree, V. (2017). *Stories form social work education* presentation to Special Interest Group Social Work History, European Association of Social Work Research, Aalborg University, Denmark, April.

Dellavalle, M (2017). *Historie du service social: recherché et enseignement* presentation European Association of Schools of Social Work, Paris.

Foucault, M (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tavistock: London.

Early details of next year's ESWRA conference: http://eswra2018edinburgh.efconference.co.uk/

Call for papers
Journal: Practice: Social Work in Action
Social Work Education – a Local and Global History

2018 is a particularly important year for the history of social work and social work education in the UK. It marks 100 years of JUC/SWEC, which began as the Joint University Council for Social Studies in April 1918 as part of 'post war reconstruction'. Since that time, social work has emerged as an academic discipline and subject in its own right, but always tentatively, uncertain about its status and ambivalent about its place in the academy. This Special Issue invites contributors to question social work education as it has developed in their own country setting with a view to informing contemporary global understanding of aspects of social work practice. Articles will explore the development of social work education and its impact on social work practice. Contributors will be expected to consider the context in which social work education emerged, as well as its underpinning theory and knowledge. Examples will also be welcome covering different modes of delivery. Authors may choose to pick one specific aspect of social work education, for example, practice learning or teaching of anti-discriminatory practice or assessment but will have to locate discussion in its local and global context, paying attention to the social and political issues.

Abstracts of no more than 200 words to be send to sarah.vicary@open.ac.uk no later than 28 July, 2017. Authors whose abstracts are accepted will then be invited to submit papers by 1 December, 2017, Final papers by March, 2018 with publication planned for June, 2018.

Documenting Women's Mental Health Activism in the UK from the 1970s

Jeanette Copperman

In June 2014 a workshop was held at The Open University in London with the aim of: 'Scoping Interest in Creating a Publicly Facing Digital Archive of Women's Mental Health Activism'. The workshop was funded by an Open University Research Development fund and is part of a wider enterprise, still in its early stages, which aims to create a publicly facing digital archive of women's mental health activism. A report of the workshop is available at The Open University's Open Research Online repository. Extracts from the keynote presentations at the workshop will also be available on The Open University website.

The idea for the project was prompted by the resurgence of interest in the history of second wave feminist activism and health in the United Kingdom (UK) and in North America, and the way in which the voices of women who campaigned on health and disability since the 1970s and contributed to redefinitions of health and mental health, have been largely absent from the documenting of second wave feminist activism in the UK. For example, the creation of the open access women's liberation archive at the British Library 'Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the Women's Liberation Movement' is based on oral history interviews of sixty feminists active in the second wave liberation movement and has documented various activities and campaigns, yet the voices and achievements of women who have campaigned in the field of mental health since the 1970s, have yet to be systematically documented. There has also been little written about the influence that female mental health activists have had on mental health policy and practice and the gains and achievements that have been made. Achievements in the UK include:

- *The development of a National Women and Mental Health Strategy by the Department of Health in 2002/3 and subsequent state-sponsored initiatives supporting the implementation of this strategy. (Department of Health 2002, Department of Health 2003)*

- *Recognition that the mental health needs of women in secure settings were poorly met. This resulted in the closure in 2007 of Ashworth and Broadmoor high security hospitals to women and the development of women only medium secure units, and a dedicated women's facility at Rampton high security hospital. (Parry-Crooke and Stafford 2009).*

- *Mental Health Trusts mandated to provide at least one women-only inpatient ward. By 2013 there had been a shift towards providing a women only ward in each Mental Health Trust however the quality of the women only provision has varied.* (Hawley et al. 2013, Agenda 2016)

- *Violence and abuse of women using mental health services increasingly seen as a matter of public policy rather than private or clinical concern, as exemplified by the Kerr/Haslam Inquiry (2005).* (Department of Health 2005; Department of Health 2007, Department of Health 2010; Copperman, 2011)

- *Support from mainstream funders helped establish a robust evidence base that validates the links between women's psychological distress and lives shaped by disadvantage, violence and abuse.* (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence 2014; Williams & Watson, 2015)

- *The development of a well-substantiated literature about how to respond to the mental health needs of women from an array of backgrounds, including those most disadvantaged by their lives and social positions for example.* (Scott & McNeish (2008), Williams & Paul (2008), and the National Centre for Social Research's research (2014): Violence, Abuse and Mental Health in England: Preliminary evidence briefing.

- *The provision of some gender informed services for women including crisis housing and trauma-informed therapies.*

- *Better links between feminists within the women's movement working on violence against women and those concerned with women's mental health.* (Copperman & Williams, 2017, under review)

Yet, the contribution that feminists made to the development of the Department of Health's national strategy, for example, 'Women's Mental Health: Into the Mainstream' (Department of Health, 2002; Department of Health, 2003), and the achievements of organisations such as Women In Special Hospitals in campaigning for safe and appropriate services for women in medium secure settings, have yet to be systematically documented. The interest in documenting this activism overlaps with a growing interest in survivor history and the co-production of historical narratives associated with social justice. The project also aims to identify the different phases in women's mental health activism between the 1970s and the present and how this organising has changed over time in response to different external circumstances.

Social workers along with nurses, psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists have been among the professional groups associated with women's mental health activism in the UK.   This activism has a rich history, one of both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' campaigning and working together for change in mental health provision, with multiple perspectives involved.

The 2014 Workshop

Twenty participants were invited to this workshop because of their expertise and experience in women's mental health and women's mental health activism. They included campaigners, researchers and academics, artists, survivors/users and practitioners/providers/policy makers in voluntary and statutory services. They also included women whose identities crossed all of these categories. Being able to speak from the multiple identities and perspectives that one person can hold, has been one of the features of women's mental health activism. Organisations such as Drayton Park Women's Crisis House, Bristol Crisis Service for Women (now Self Injury Support), Women in Special Hospitals, S.A.G.E. a longstanding multi-disciplinary network providing support to survivors of sexual abuse in Exeter, Southwark Women's Forum, Lambeth and Southwark MIND, Women's Independent Alcohol Service and organisations which include social workers and social work academics took part in the day. Themes from the workshop included:

- Women speaking for themselves
- Safe services
- Diversity amongst women
- Redefining women's mental health needs
- Developing effective services for women
- The relationship of the past to the present

Women coming to the workshop were asked to reflect on their own histories of activism, as I have begun to do below. Participants were also asked to identify their own timelines from the 1970s to the present and also what had influenced them to become active on women's mental health issues. In addition, they were asked to identify some initial themes and organisations that any project arising from the workshop might cover.

Women's Mental Health Activism is a story amongst other things of women working together across boundaries from different professional and personal backgrounds to organise and campaign. Before turning to some of the organising which took place, I am going to describe how I became involved in women's mental health activism in the 1980s to provide some context to the impetus for this history project.

Copperman and Williams (2017, under review) have suggested that women's mental health activism is marked by different phases in organising.
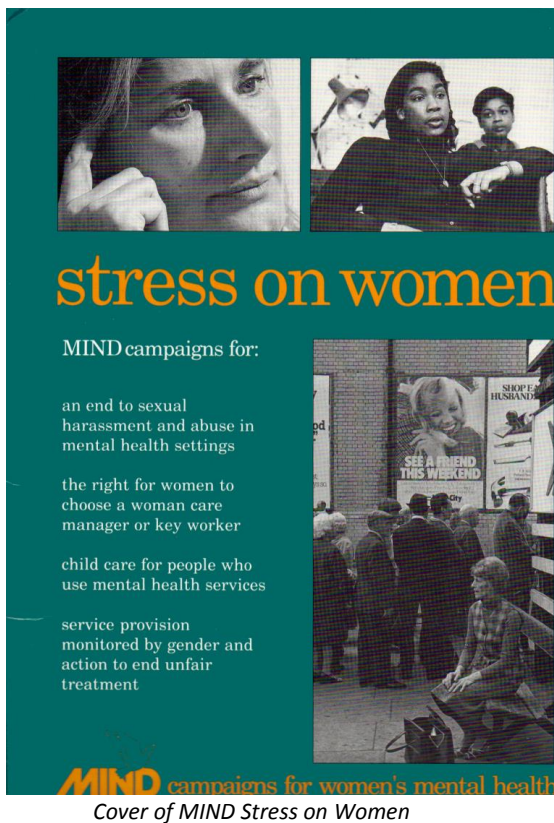
Cover of MIND Stress on Women

Feminist Mental Health Activism: Phases and Landmarks

- Mid-1970s: Academic and personal critiques of psychiatry and its practices, and subsequent formulation and practice of feminist therapy. This was in the context of the emergence of new social movements including the mental health system survivor movement and the second wave women's liberation movement.

- Mid-1980s: Growing momentum to women's organising around mental health issues, including: advocacy, campaigning, and the provision of feminist therapy and counselling for women.

- 1990s: Growth of national feminist organising around mental health in the UK. This involved lobbying the government and coalescing on different campaign issues, for example, MIND's 'Stress on Women' core demands. Increasing attention was also given to articulating the diversity of women' experiences, and to addressing the needs of Black and ethnic minority women, lesbians, older women and women with children.

- 2000s: Institutional recognition by the state of some of the key issues raised by feminist activists and the creation of 'Mainstreaming Gender' – the

national women and mental health strategy and a number of associated initiatives. With the Kerr/Haslam Public Inquiry in 2005 there was state recognition of violence against women in mental health settings and the need for this to be addressed in public policy.

- 2010 to 2015: Retrenchment in public services in response to the banking crisis and the politics of austerityxii; women's mental health forced off the mainstream agenda by cuts in funding and the fragmentation and marketisation of services.

A personal perspective

I became involved by accident, as a member of a Community Health Council (CHC) in the early 1980s whilst working as a women's advisor in a local authority. A rape which had taken place in a local psychiatric hospital was reported to the CHC. This rape was reported by a senior psychiatrist in the hospital who also sought our support as outsiders who could make a fuss. The psychiatrist did not feel their colleagues were taking it seriously enough. At the time, women who reported sexual assault in psychiatric settings were often disbelieved. There was little research about it, and no guidelines or policies which specifically acknowledged sexual assault as a serious problem in mental health settings. The senior psychiatrist was also concerned about the impact on women of the conditions on the mixed sex wards within the hospital in which they practised. The prevailing culture within health services made mental health staff reluctant to acknowledge gender as an issue at all. At the time I worked for the local council as a women's advisor. I enlisted their support to write a letter to the Regional Health Authority asking what action they proposed to take in relation to the rape. The first reaction of the Chief Executive of the hospital was to try to keep us quiet and they even threatened litigation! However, with the weight of the council behind us, the hospital decided to set up an equal opportunities working group to which I was invited. It was an interesting group with some memorable moments.

In order to bring broader perspectives to the equal opportunities working group, with the support of the local authority, I set up Southwark Women and Mental Health Network, a coalition of women who had experienced services, worked in services, and /or were interested in mental health services. The group was set up to identify issues of importance to women in the area. We called a meeting about sexual assault and rape in mental health settings and women attended from across the South East of England and included survivors and workers from various professional backgrounds, including social workers who spoke about reporting rapes and finding themselves trivialised and disbelieved, the women they worked with moved or ignored and no action taken to deal with the perpetrators. These social workers also spoke about practices within hospitals, including restraint, which ignored women's earlier histories of trauma, rape and abuse, and of a lack of willingness to acknowledge gender in mental health settings. Mixed sex wards were the norm at the time and, at the meeting, women described practices within the wards which could be re-traumatising. Examples include being observed in intimate bathroom and bedroom situations by workers who were male. We realised that safety for women, both physical and emotional, was a much bigger issue than in one hospital, or one setting. From this I became involved in campaigning on safety for women in mental health settings over a number of years and later became a founder member of the National Women and Mental Health Network.

Documenting the history

Women who described the background to their own activism at The Open University Workshop were motivated by a range of literature, by their life experiences, professional and personal encounters, as well as the context of the second wave feminist movement which was challenging established norms. The history project hopes to explore personal motivation in more depth.
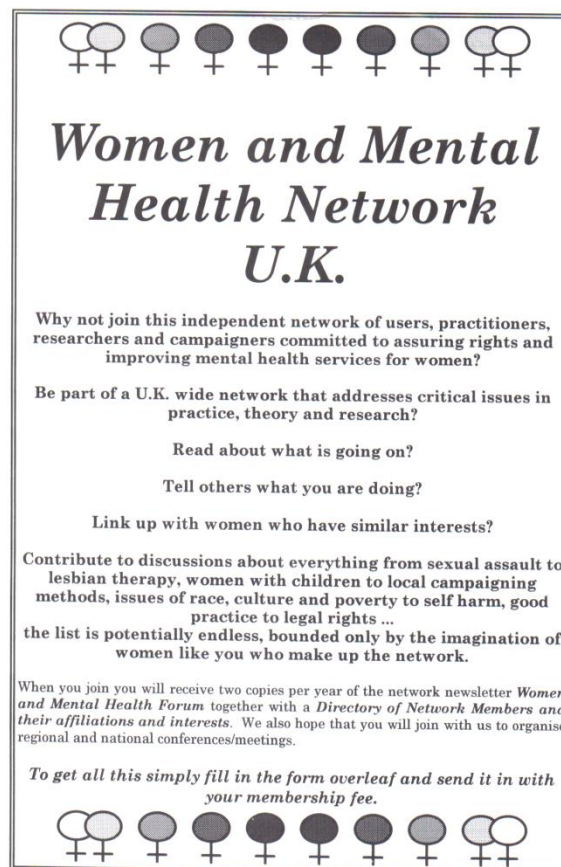
Invitation to join the National Women and Mental Health Network U.K. 1996.

Many groups, such as Southwark Women and Mental Health Network, were set up locally in the 1980s and 1990s across the UK providing alternative mental health services for women, campaigning and advocating on local mental health issues and offering mutual support. National organising also took place. Examples include: Good Practices in Mental Health for Women, (Perkins et al., 1996) the National Women and Mental Health Network, a membership organisation which ran from 1996 to 2002 and published 9 'Forums', the influential Mind Stress on Women Campaign (see illustration) (MIND, 1992; Darton et al. 1994) and Women in Special Hospitals (Parry-Crooke et al., 2000).

Key themes from organising included:

- The 'personal is political' a key feminist tenet and, in this context, the importance of survivor testimony and multiple identities

- Resistance to medical dominance and diagnosis, or, in other words, understanding causes not symptoms

- Safety, violence and sexual assault and access to women key workers and wards

- Motherhood, mental distress and childcare

- Diverse needs including, women in special hospitals, women and self-injury, eating disorders, black women, lesbians

All themes produced a rich and varied literature on good practices in mental health for women. Some also started to grapple with the importance of identifying issues for different groups of women and in so doing prefiguring later discussions within feminism on hierarchies of oppression, the importance of intersectionality and acknowledging the experiences of different groups of women such as black and ethnic minority women, lesbians, older women and mothers. For example, Newham Asian Women's Project and Southall Black Sisters both offer support about the mental health implications of violence against women and girls whilst at the same time offering critiques of racial discrimination within mainstream services and violence and abuse within communities (Siddiqui and Patel, 2010; Yazdani, 1998). The activism of local and national organisations contributed to the development of the Department of Health National Mental Health Strategy, Mainstreaming Gender (Department of Health, 2002; Department of Health, 2003) and later policy initiatives which sought to improve mental health provision for women.

Whilst a lot of information was collected and experiences shared, many of the documents and reports remain in the grey literature, such as paper reports and newsletters, and can, because of this, easily disappear. Local women's organisations are subject to uncertain funding and when groups lose their funding, for example, Threshold a women's mental health organisation in Brighton which has existed for 25 years has recently disappeared and . Valuable information

about campaigns, advocacy work and models of working and organising also disappear with such organisations. As well as campaigning on issues such as safe services and choice of gender of practitioner, there have also been alternative models of understanding and working with distress, such as changing approaches to self-harm and self-injury, which are important to preserve.

The history project hopes to capture some of these voices and understandings that have informed women's mental health activism through collecting and archiving materials, carrying out oral history interviews and exploring ways in which different organisation's archives might be used. It will also be exploring methods of co-producing history with the activists, survivors, researchers, and practitioners involved.

Social Work and Women's Mental Health Activism

Feminist social workers have intersected with women's activism on mental health as practitioners, activists, researchers and managers. The British Association of Social Workers in 1992 published a book on women and mental health (Barnes & Maple, 1992) and also sponsored a conference and workshops to discuss women's mental health. Individual social workers were active within hospitals in bringing the abuse of women to light and in campaigning for the choice of single sex facilities. The lack of safety for women in mental health settings for example has been highlighted a number of times by the trade journal Community Care (Gillen, 2006). The Social Perspectives Network, one of the organisations that social workers were central to, ran, in 2005, a national study day on women and mental health. (Papers from study day 7). The papers brought together many of the themes of women's activism in mental health and the study day was vastly oversubscribed.

There has also been an overlap between the issues with which feminist social workers have been engaged, such as the impact of trauma, sexual abuse, rape and domestic violence on

women and also lobbying for choice of single sex wards and mental health facilities which prioritise emotional and physical safety. More broadly, social work's value base, of looking at the social context for mental distress and the impact of inequalities on mental health, intersects with women's activism in mental health. The interrogation of power and methods drawn from community development and radical social work, such as coalition building and ensuring that lived experience is listened to and that survivor voices are heard, have also been central to activist activities.

Cover of Social Perspective Network Study Day Paper no 7, 'Women and Mental Health' 2005.

 The relationship between social work and women's mental health activism has not been unproblematic, however, particularly in the field of mothers and child protection. The demands that MIND fought for in 1992 have a direct relevance to social work today (Tickle, 2015). A chapter in Women in Context written in the 1990s (Sayce, 1996) highlighted the very real fear that many women had of being pathologised and of having children taken away if help was sought.

This fear is not without foundation today. Women campaigned on the association of the diagnosis of 'borderline personality disorder' with women who have experienced neglect, violence and abuse (Shaw & Proctor 2005). This remains a contested issue in social work, particularly in relation to child protection. Feminists challenged mental health services to recognise 'post-traumatic stress disorder' rather than pathologising women who had had traumatic experiences. They suggested we should be asking, 'what has happened to this woman,' rather than, 'what is wrong with this woman'. Yet, it can still be difficult for social work services to recognise those difficulties. It can also be hard for women experiencing domestic violence to gain effective emotional support for themselves from social work services rather they anticipate punitive approaches towards them as mothers (Humphries, 2003). The Agenda of Alliance for women and girls at risk carried out research in 2016 with Mental Health Trusts in the UK and showed that MIND's 1992 demands have yet to be fully realised (Agenda, 2016). We hope that in documenting the models that were pioneered in the many initiatives that took place from the 1970s to 2010 this will help with thinking about the role of social work in mental health now, about how mental health services are delivered to women in the present, and the evidence base that is used to support social work practice.

If you have an enquiries that the article prompts, or any contributions, thoughts or memories that you would like to share about women's mental health activism – please contact: jeanette.copperman@open.ac.uk.

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Clement Attlee and the social service idea

Jonathan Dickens

Clement Attlee's book *The Social Worker* was published in 1920, but has had a new lease of life recently because it was re-published in 2012, by Forgotten Books, and is also now easily available online. It was reviewed by Dave Burnham in an earlier issue of this *Bulletin* (vol 2, number 1). This article focuses on a key notion in the book, 'the social service idea', highlighting its resonance then and now. (Page references in this article are to Attlee, 1920, unless otherwise stated.)

Attlee was born into a prosperous family with firm Christian beliefs and a strong ethic of 'social service'. He later gave up Christianity, but social service became a pivotal idea in his thinking about social work and society. He was educated at a public school, Haileybury College, and then at Oxford University. After graduating he started training as a lawyer, but one evening in 1905 he visited Haileybury House, a boys' club in the East End of London run by members of his old school. This was to be one of the most important turning points in his life. Attlee started volunteering at the club, and within two years had become its leader. During that time his old ideas about society were turned upside down, as he came to know the boys and the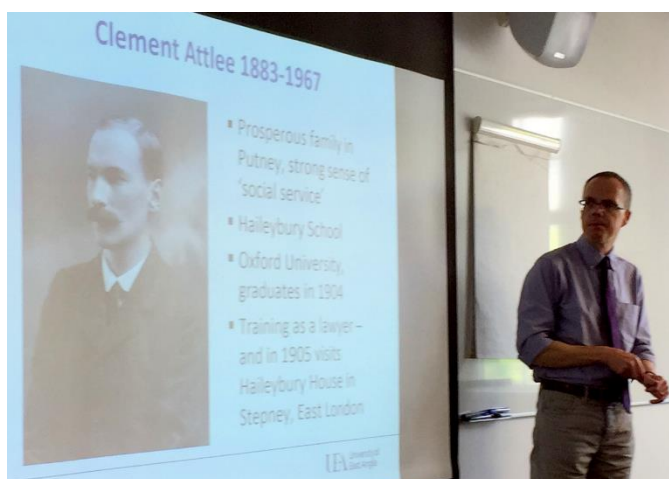ir families, and appreciate the hard circumstances of their lives. He went from not being involved in politics, but a Conservative sympathiser, to being a socialist and an activist, joining the Fabians and the Independent Labour Party in 1907.

To set this personal journey in context, it was a time of intense debate about the nature of poverty – its definition, causes and possible solutions. There were two broad positions, characterised at the time as 'individualists' and 'collectivists'. The former held that individuals were responsible for their own misfortune, and should respond by working harder and leading more responsible lives. Members and supporters of the Charity Organisation Society (COS), were leading exponents of this viewpoint. The collectivists put more emphasis on the social and economic conditions in which people were living, and argued for a greater role for state services to help those in need. These were the trade unions, the co-operative movement, socialists, Fabians and the developing Labour Party. The Conservative government set up a royal commission to consider the reform of the Poor Law in 1905, and it continued after the Liberals came into power in 1906. The two schools of thought were represented on the commission – the individualists led by a leading member of the COS, Helen Bosanquet, and the collectivists by Beatrice Webb. The commission ended without agreement in 1909, Bosanquet writing the majority report, and Beatrice and Sidney Webb the minority report. Attlee worked for the Webbs for a year, 1909-10, on their National Campaign for the Breakup of the Poor Law.

Jonathan Dickens speaking at the SWHN, 21 September 2016

In January 1913 Attlee started working at the London School of Economics (LSE), as lecturer and tutor in social service. He joined the newly

established Department of Social Science and Administration, which had been formed in 1912 by taking over a pre-existing organisation for training social workers, the London School of Sociology – a school that had been run by the COS. It had fallen into financial difficulties, and the merger with the LSE offered a sort of survival. It insisted that the new Department kept the same staff and curriculum for the first two years. It is intriguing to realise that in the years before the First World War, Attlee was teaching social work to a COS curriculum, although he himself was strongly opposed to those ideas – in *The Social Worker* he calls their charity a 'hard and unlovely thing' (p.66), and argues that the COS was 'essentially designed for defence of the propertied classes' (p.73). So Attlee would have been used to taking their ideas, but giving them a different slant. His use of the term 'social service' in his book is a key example of this.

The 2012 edition of The Social Worker *(Forgotten Books)*

society' (p.10), but for those who see society as unfairly structured and in need of reform, it brings a whole new set of expectations. But that ambiguity is vital, because it gave Attlee the opportunity to advance a new idea of social service, setting it in opposition to 'the charity idea'. His concept of social service replaces notions of generosity with justice, benevolence with duty, and condescension with respect. Attlee started as a volunteer himself, so he was not opposed all forms of charity or voluntary activity, but he was very mistrustful of the way the charity could all too easily become patronising and self-serving. He writes 'Very many do not realise that you must be just before you are generous' (p.9).

The Edwardian debates about poverty still sound familiar today, and many of Attlee's ideas about social work also ring true. He writes that social work was formerly done *for* the working classes, but now is done *with* them (italics in the original, p.19). He offers a number of guiding rules for social workers, all of which could have been agreed by members of the Charity Organisation Society, and all of which still apply today. First, social workers should never forget they are dealing with individuals not just 'cases'. He stresses that there is 'no reason and no excuse' for failing to treat people with courtesy (p.136). He also encourages social workers to try to remain cheerful, and keep faith in the general goodness of human nature (pp. 136, 65). Attlee also observes that is important to have patience and tolerance, and a sense of justice. He calls for good working

The book was published as the first in a series called 'the Social Service Library'. Attlee was the general editor of this series, although in the end it did not do as well as the publishers had hoped. It ended after just four books had been published, and Attlee said that he did not make even £25 from the whole enterprise.
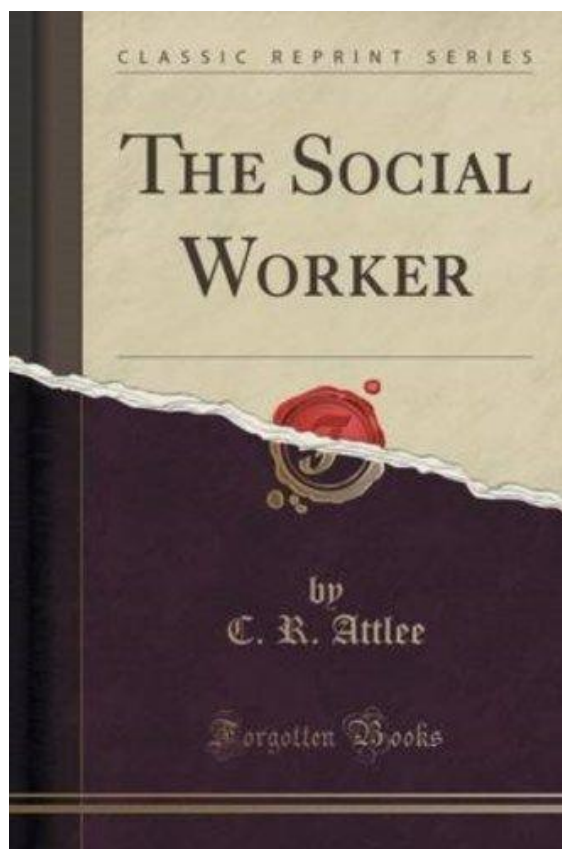
In the Edwardian era 'social service' was a widely used term for charitable and voluntary work, but as Attlee observes in the book, it is a rather ambiguous phrase. For those who think that society is, on the whole, well ordered and just, it would merely be 'a praiseworthy attempt to ease the minor injustices inevitable in all systems of

conditions for social workers, their rights to reasonable hours and fair pay. And he comments that 'the community does not recognise their work is as valuable as that of the stockbroker or lawyer' (p.156).

Attlee was strongly opposed to the COS, but it is It is important to clarify that he was not naive and recognised that individual conduct does matter: for example, he warns that 'the enthusiastic social reformer is sometimes apt to rely too much on bettering environment and not enough on bettering the individual' (p.222).

The notion of social service has played an ongoing role in social work's history – not always at the forefront, but an important undercurrent. Its ambiguity makes it powerful, but also means it has to treated with care – it is one of those phrases like 'participation' or 'community' that everyone can agree with, because they are not necessarily thinking of the same thing. In England, the most notable example is the Seebohm report of 1968, which called for the creation of local authority social service departments (it did not use the term social services departments). The phrase lay behind its vision for these departments, that they would '… reach far beyond the discovery and rescue of social casualties; [they would] enable the greatest number of individuals to act reciprocally, giving and receiving service for the well-being of the whole community' (Seebohm, 1968: para 2). It is an inspiring vision, and a reminder of the value of history to illuminate and challenge the present.

Jonathan Dickens is Professor of Social Work, University of East Anglia. This article is based on a talk that Jonathan gave at a meeting of the Social Work History Network on 21 September 2016. A fuller paper on the topic was published in the British Journal of Social Work*, 'Clement Attlee and the social service idea: modern messages for social work in England', advance access online, April 2017.*

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Book review

Mike Burt

Steering group member, Mike Burt, discusses Rev J B Haldane's *The Social Workers' Guide* (1911)

Maybe not a social work classic this book is nonetheless a landmark text in providing the increasing number of social service workers in the early 20th Century with an informative guide to the wide range of relevant societies, state policy and provision, legislation and social issues of the period. There are approximately 400 entries in alphabetical order. *The Social Workers' Guide* describes itself as 'A handbook of information and counsel for all who are interested in public welfare'. Its preface suggests that '[i]t is being recognised in an increasing degree that service on behalf of those whose lives are deprived of many of the joys and even necessities of life requires not only a kind heart but also an instructed mind' (v). The author was Honorary Secretary of the Southwark Diocesan Social Services Committee.

Because of the increasing range of societies and the importance attributed to local co-ordination the provision of information in a collated form had already been found useful in Liverpool. A *Report to the Chairman of the Liverpool Council of Voluntary Aid on the Charitable Effort in Liverpool* (May 1910) by F.G. D'Aeth (Lecturer and Tutor, School of Social Science, Liverpool University) addresses some of the wider issues arising from the provision of charity, provides a summary of agencies in Liverpool and uses the terms 'social work' and 'social worker' fairly frequently.

References are made to the formation of various bodies which sought to advance social service at

the time, for example the Social Welfare Society, formed in the Metropolis in 1910 to '…bring public departments and local authorities into close relation with societies and individuals engaged in social service and to establish general principles for common action…The chief method…is the establishment of councils of social welfare in each Metropolitan borough' (p.391). In some places there is expression of a concern with which later social workers continued to be familiar. For instance, it is suggested that placing a child in an orphanage was '…by no means always the best remedy…' and that '[c]are should be taken to find an orphanage in which the "institutional manner" is least pronounced' (p.290).

Drawing on the more sympathetic approaches of the guilds of help and councils of social service, the book's depiction of social workers reflects a departure from the perceived harshness of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) and some local relief societies. Moreover, the book clearly established itself within the movement for social reform. Nevertheless, principles of the COS are clearly evident in the importance attached to social workers making thorough enquiries and that co-ordination of social service was essential to avoid overlapping and fraud. In providing such extensive information explicitly for social workers it is clear that clarifying what would help people, and being able to facilitate their contact with the wide range of societies, was considered an important role of social workers.

A specific entry is titled Women in Social Work which points to the 'remarkable…history of social progress during the last fifty years…' because of the increase in the number of women involved and enhancement of their status (p.465). In the work of central government women factory inspectors and boarding-out inspectors of Poor Law children were included; in local government women inspectors to enforce the Shop Hours Act, visitors to enforce the Infant Life Protection legislation, sanitary inspectors and the increasing number of health visitors were included. Under the Poor Law matrons of workhouses and

children's homes and visitors to boarded out children were referred to. Particular approval was given to the increase in women appointed as Poor Law relieving officers or assistants and it was noted that although most probation officers were men, some women were starting to be appointed. In relation to unpaid work the election of women as Poor Law guardians was favourably commented on together with committee membership, for example school managers, school care committees and discharged prisoner aid committees. Reference was made to the numerous home visitors, such as parochial district visiting and the after care of 'feeble-minded' children. Using the heading of professional and institutional work, the work of women's settlements and the key position of paid secretaries and organisers in a wide range of societies including the COS, Girls Friendly Society and the Invalid Children's Aid Association were included. Hospital almoners and matrons of convalescent homes were similarly referred to under professional and institutional work.

The Social Workers' Guide provides a glimpse of the range of social service work during the period of the Liberal government reforms of 1906-1914 which included the years leading up to the First
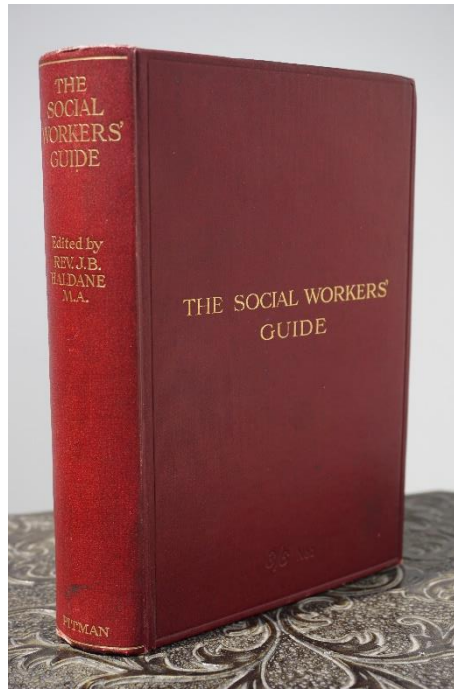
The Social Workers' Guide (1911)

World War. The literature of the COS and Settlement movement during the first decade of the 20th Century used the terms 'social work' and 'social worker' infrequently, however they were increasingly used as collective terms to refer to the diverse work and roles associated with social reform. Their more common use in the D'Aeth report and *The Social Workers' Guide* suggests that it was at the local level that the terms were thought to be a particularly helpful designation.

Dr Mike Burt is a member of the SWHN Steering Group and Honorary Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Health and Social Care, University of Chester.

Reference

Rev. J.B. Haldane (ed.) (1911) *The Social Workers' Guide,* London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd.

A digital copy is available at the Wellcome Library.

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