

Social Work Week 2024 - Speaker biographies

Biographies of the speakers leading our Social Work Week 2024 events.

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Click on the speaker's name to read more about them.

Samantha Baron, Emeritus Professor in Social Work

Samantha is BASW National Director (Cymru).

Sam has considerable experience as a social worker, having qualified nearly 40 years ago. She initially practised within the criminal justice system in England, before working in statutory mental health services as Head of Service.

Sam later became Professor of Social Work at Manchester Metropolitan University and The Open University. As Professor, Sam advised the social work regulator, Whitehall and Westminster, on social work policy and practice. She's the author of *DHSC Practice Framework for Strengths-Based Practice*.

Rebecca Cicero, Improvement and Development Manager, Social Care Wales

Rebecca's lead areas are leadership and well-being, and she's passionate about creating a culture of compassionate leadership, which is a commitment in Welsh Government's *A Healthier Wales* workforce strategy. Rebecca also led on the development of [*Your well-being matters: a well-being framework for the social care, early years and childcare workforce*](#).

Rebecca has worked at the Social Services Improvement Agency, supporting implementation of the Social Services and Well-being Act.

Her other experience includes working as a support worker in adult mental health, and as a policy and research manager at Welsh Government.

Dr Giles P Croft

Giles is a psychology graduate and former NHS surgeon who has spent the last 17 years exploring the notion of what makes us happy. Through trial and error, a variety of careers, coaching individuals one-to-one and running group workshops, he's found what works and what doesn't.

Over the last four years he's taken hundreds of social care staff through his six week "Reconnect Programme", that helps employees see for themselves how to have a better experience of the workplace. In 2021, his groundbreaking approach was found, by an independent advisory body, to be *the* most effective way to improve the well-being of individuals, out of more than 200 different interventions across the UK.

He runs a heart-centred coaching practice, working and living in the Brecon Beacons National Park with his wife and nine-year-old daughter.

Rhoda Emlyn-Jones OBE MA social ethics, CQSW, Dip SW

Rhoda has worked in the voluntary and statutory sectors since the 1970s, helping to develop adult and children's services, health and social care.

She was awarded Welsh Woman of the Year in 2007 for her innovative contributions to effective practice and delivery. She was awarded the OBE in 2008 for services to disadvantaged families through influencing models of best practice throughout the UK.

She now works in an independently, supporting health and social care organisations throughout the UK in strategic workforce development. Her recent work includes building skills and capacity within public services to empower individuals, families, and communities.

Professor Donald Forrester

Professor Forrester is Director of the CASCADE Centre at Cardiff University. His research interests focus on understanding what good practice is in social work and how we can support social workers to deliver best practice.

He has researched the use of Motivational Interviewing in child and family work extensively and has written books on Motivational Interviewing for working with children and families: A practical guide for early intervention and child protection (2022) and The Enlightened Social Worker – An Introduction to Rights-Focused Practice (2024).

Alice Lewis-Gray

Alice Lewis-Gray is passionate about improving the knowledge and understanding of neurodiversity amongst social workers and other professionals. Alice is an experienced social worker, who has worked within the Integrated Autism Service, supporting autistic adults, their families, and

providing consultation to professionals. This experience has shown her how important it is that professionals understand neurodiversity so their practice can be suitably adapted, and neurodivergent individuals can be supported to thrive.

Matt Lloyd

Matt Lloyd is the Prevention and Well-Being Programme Manager for the Gwent Regional Partnership Board (RPB) Support Team. The role includes supporting projects and leading assistive technology developments.

Matt has worked in several digital roles over the past 20 years. He joined the NHS as a project manager in 2020 before moving to his current role, which combines his passion for digital technology with the prevention and well-being agenda.

Fiona McDonald

Fiona is a workplace well-being consultant. As a practice educator she has supported social work students who are neurodiverse. Fiona received a late diagnosis of dyslexia when she was studying for a Master's in social work. She recognised the wider impact dyslexia has and became passionate about helping others working in helping professions who are neurodiverse. She was also awarded *Specialist mentor of the year* by Beacon Support for her work with students with additional needs.

Jake Smith

Jake Smith is the Policy Officer of Carers Wales, the national membership charity for unpaid carers. He has delivered training to hundreds of social workers across Wales through the Carer Aware project which is funded by Welsh Government.

The Carer Aware training covers Good Practice Principles, which Carers Wales co-produced with social workers and carers. During the training, social workers have discussed the challenges and positive practices they've seen when supporting carers.

Meilys Heulfryn Smith

In her role as Supporting Health and Wellbeing Senior Manager at Cyngor Gwynedd, Meilys Heulfryn Smith leads a team whose purpose is to “support people to have a good life in their community”. The team strongly believes that technology has a key role to play in realising this vision, and is actively involved in a number of innovative projects to explore how existing technology can be better used to improve people's quality of life.

Hannah Morland-Jones

Hannah Morland-Jones is Lived Experience Lead for the Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan for Health and Social Care (HEIW and Social Care Wales). Hannah leads on developing national guidance for Lived Experience Workforce and Recovery College.

Hannah's lived experience of mental health challenges and her time as a peer support worker enabled her to establish the first peer led and co-produced

mental health service in Wales - Cardiff and Vale Recovery and Wellbeing College.

Claire Phillips

Claire's 24-year career began in children and family teams. She moved into fostering for seven years and for the last thirteen years has been in adoption practice. Claire feels privileged to work in the field of Adoption and practice through a trauma informed lens.

Since being in a managerial role, Claire has been drawn to the area of traumatic stress for both service users and staff and developing strategies which respond compassionately to traumatic stress.

Dr Lucy Treby

Lucy is a qualified social worker currently working in a local authority, focusing on service development. Over the years she has had a variety of roles within the area of children and families. She recently completed her professional doctorate at Cardiff University, which examined 'The relationship between supervision and practice in child and family social work'.

Aimee Twinberrow

Aimee is the Digital Innovation Lead at Social Care Wales. She has more than 14 years' experience in social care. Aimee began her career as a support worker for adults with learning disabilities. She completed her master's degree

in social work in 2013 and worked in south Wales as a social worker in adult services. She remains a registered social worker.

Aimee spent four years managing frontline community-based services, including domiciliary care and assistive technology, and holds the Health and Social Care NVQ level 5 certificate.

Aimee is passionate about advancing digital innovation in social care. Before joining Social Care Wales, she spent 18 months at Life Sciences Hub Wales, leading projects related to AI and digital innovation.

Cerian Twinberrow

Cerian is a Social Work Engagement and Development Officer at Social Care Wales. Her role includes promoting social work as a valued profession.

Cerian has worked in social care for over 30 years, focusing on supporting adults. She completed her master's degree in social work in 2006 and worked in Wales and England in voluntary and statutory adult services for 16 years. She remains a registered social worker.

Paul Whittaker

Paul Whittaker is a Workforce Project Manager (Peer Support) for the Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan for Health and Social Care. Paul recently co-produced and co-delivered the Exploring Relationship Centred Care training course, a partnership programme between HEIW, Social Care Wales, Intentional Peer Support and Swansea University.

Paul is a peer trainer and consultant at the Cardiff and Vale Recovery and Wellbeing College. He has worked nationally and internationally as a bipolar arts and health practitioner.

David Wilkins

Dr David Wilkins is a Reader and programme director of the MA Social Work course at Cardiff University. David is a registered social worker with Social Care Wales. His research has focused primarily on professional supervision in child and family social work, and how it supports good practice and decision-making. David is also currently carrying out research looking at the accuracy of social work judgements, and the relationship between more accurate judgements and more effective decision-making.