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Social Work Week 2025 - Speaker biographies

Speaker biographies for social work week 2025

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Nia Edy

Nia qualified as a social worker in 2009 and as a practice educator in 2012. She previously worked in local authorities, overseeing training and supporting social work students, practice educators and newly qualified social workers. Nia works in the education quality assurance team at Social Care Wales, working with all regulated social work programmes in Wales. She also assesses international social workers.

Nia has worked in various roles across children services, in community teams and as an independent reviewing officer. Nia loves learning and last year completed a PGCE. She's looking forward to exploring more developmental opportunities in the future.

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

Marian Parry Hughes

Marian is a registered social worker, working as Head of Children and Family Support Services at Cyngor Gwynedd. She has worked in this field since 1988, holding several operational roles within children's services.

She is passionate about promoting the Welsh language in social work, and has a special interest in safeguarding, fostering and workforce training and development.

Marian enjoys spending time with her grandchildren and singing in a choir.

Samantha Stroud

Sam is proud that at the age of 52 she recently qualified as a social worker. She was a hospital-based social work assistant for nearly 15 years and she's now a social worker for Cardiff Council, working in the community.

Sam feels privileged to support individuals and families through tough times. She loves her home and family, who are her solace, and now she's qualified she's taking ice skating lessons to fill the gap previously taken up with hours of study.

Heather Fitzpatrick

Heather qualified with master's in social work in 2011, having previously worked in adult social care. She started her career as an agency worker, working with people with learning disabilities, before working with adults in Essex.

Heather is a qualified practice educator and approved mental health professional (AMHP). She held senior social work roles in hospitals, safeguarding and older adults' services, before moving to Wales.

Since moving to Wales she has worked as an AMHP, a manager of hospital social work services and as a service lead, before returning to front line social work in the Complex Disability Team at Neath Port Talbot.

Heather feels fortunate that she has a job she loves and enjoys. She feels privileged to be a qualified social worker.

Esther Chapman

Esther qualified as a social worker in November 2023, following a career change during the pandemic. Esther works with children and young people with disabilities as a social worker at Carmarthenshire County Council.

She has a specialist interest in autism spectrum disorder / attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and substance use.

Esther has just turned 50 but feels like she's still constantly asking "why and how".

Gwenan Prysor

Gwenan is director of the Master's in Social Work programme at Bangor University.

After qualifying as a social worker in the 1990s, Gwenan's practice experience has mainly been with children and families, and includes safeguarding. She became increasingly involved in social work training and then joined Bangor University.

Gwenan's professional interests are the Welsh language in social work and the impact of early childhood experiences on the well-being of adults. She remains a registered social worker.

Esyllt Crozier

Esyllt is a qualified social worker. She worked in children's services for several years, both as a social worker and as a manager. She joined Social Care Wales in 2019 and is an improvement and development manager leading on social work.

Esyllt is passionate about improving conditions for the social work workforce, and safeguarding.

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).

He is currently exploring the potential that artificial intelligence (AI), has for improving social work practice and is the deputy director of a new Centre for Social Care and AI Learning (SCALE).

Stuart Allen

Stuart is a professor at the School of Computer Science and Informatics, Cardiff University. He's interested in human computer interaction, artificial intelligence (AI), and data science.

He is the director of the Centre for Social Care and AI Learning in Wales, a new interdisciplinary research initiative aiming to apply advanced AI techniques to address challenges in delivering social care.

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.

Glenda George

Glenda is the workforce lead at the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru. She has more than 25 years' experience within organisational development and human resources management across both the public and the private sector. Glenda is Director of People and Experience within Practice Solutions and is the workforce strategic partner within the ADSS Cymru business unit.

Glenda has experience in supporting directors and senior managers to develop and implement transformational change programmes. Her work includes assessing the readiness of social services to implement Copilot into adult social care and piloting AI technology within residential care homes in the Gwent region.

Nicki Harrison

Nicki is a project manager at the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru and has more than 35 years' experience in the public sector. She's a qualified environmental health officer and a Prince 2 and Managing Successful Programmes practitioner with a master's degree in public administration.

She established and managed Cardiff Council's Centre of Excellence for Programme and Project management and was the programme manager for

Cardiff's Transformational Change Programme.

She has worked on a range of projects to improve the outcomes for people accessing social care. She has led teams to deliver projects for ADSS Cymru, commissioned by Welsh Government to take forward goals and actions set out in the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.

She is currently project managing two projects looking at the use of AI in adult social care.

Nick Andrews

Nick Andrews is a registered social worker and is a research and practice development officer at Swansea University, where he co-ordinates the Developing Evidence Enriched Practice (DEEP) programme. The focus of this work is a co-production approach to using diverse types of evidence in learning and development using story and dialogue methods.

Having spent many years in practice and planning in social care services, he's able to make connections between research, policy and practice and has developed an extensive network across Wales and the UK. He's passionate about supporting a shift from process-driven to relationship-centred practice.

Peter Blundell

Peter is a senior lecturer on the MA in Counselling and Psychotherapy Practice at Liverpool John Moores University. He's a qualified and practising therapist,

social worker, researcher and PhD supervisor.

His research interests cover professional boundaries, reflexivity in practice, power dynamics, and anti-oppressive practice. He's interested in collaborative work and has helped establish many communities of practice.

He has an active online presence, engaging in discussions on counselling, psychotherapy, and social work. Peter has a small private counselling practice and offers an external supervision service for professionals.

Peter lives in Liverpool with his partner. They have two rescue dogs. He has an on/off relationship with running and has recently taken an interest in post-humanism.

Jay Goulding

Jay is an engagement and development officer at Social Care Wales, where he helps organisations adopt and embed strengths-based practices, including the collaborative communications programme.

Since qualifying as a social worker in 2003 and later training in systemic family therapy, Jay has held roles such as consultant social worker and performance and development manager for multi-disciplinary teams, including an integrated family support team.

In his current role, Jay champions the knowledge, skills, and values of compassionate, collaborative practice, making sure citizens have “voice, choice, and control.” By promoting strengths-based approaches and compassionate leadership, he supports organisations to foster positive cultures that enhance workforce well-being and improve outcomes for all.

Danica Darley

Danica is a research associate at the University of Sheffield. She has worked with children and young people in care and those in conflict with the law for 15 years.

She has a BA (Hons) in Sociology and Criminology and an MA in Social Research Methods, both from the University of Sheffield. She co-produced her PhD study with young people who have experience in the criminal justice system and children's social care. She also examines the experiences of children in care who are involved with criminal gangs in England.

Danica is a lecturer in Applied Custodial Leadership at Leeds Trinity University. She is a member of the University of Sheffield's Participatory Research Network, the Academic Liaison Network for the Youth Justice Board, and is an associate member of the Alliance for Youth Justice. She is also the non-executive Director of Programmes at the Experience for Justice Collective

Danica's work is important to her. Her interest in prisons stems from having served a custodial prison sentence when she was younger, and her professional roles supporting children and young people led to an interest in relational practice, co-production and participation.

Danica is a mum to two wonderful girls and a whippet. She's married and lives just outside Sheffield. She loves travelling, cooking, baking, dancing, swimming and reading.

Siobhan Maclean

Siobhan has been a social worker for 33 years and became a practice educator in 1995. Siobhan has worked independently for several years. Her work is varied and includes training, devising practice learning resources and consultancy work. Siobhan still very much enjoys working as a practice educator and currently works with a few students a year in an off-site capacity.

From 2004 to 2012 Siobhan was the secretary of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). She co-directed an IFSW project on 'new social workers', which explored the experiences of those in the final year of study and through the first five years in practice.

Siobhan has written widely about social work theory and critical reflection. She makes the knowledge base accessible to busy practitioners. She set up Kirwin Maclean Associates as an independent publishing organisation based on the values and ethics of social work.

Siobhan lives in Northern Ireland and is a practice teacher. She's a fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts and a visiting professor at the University of Chester.

Dr Thomas Kitchen MBBCh (Hon), FRCA, PgCert (Clin Leadership)

Thomas is a consultant anaesthetist at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and a senior clinical lecturer at Cardiff University.

He has a clinical interest in anaesthesia for maxillofacial surgery and major trauma resuscitation.

Thomas is passionate about human factors, research in communication and how our emotional competence relates to personal and team performance, the patient and our self-care.

He lectures on the subject internationally, and also works as co-director of Canopi, a self-referral mental health support service for all NHS and Social Care staff working in Wales.

Fiona McDonald

Fiona is an independent 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.

Florence Smith

Florence is a dyslexic, dyspraxic, AuDHD social worker and practice educator. She uses her lived and professional experience to inform her work.

Florence hosts the website and blog 'The Neurodivergent Social Worker', where she writes to both neurodivergent social workers and to social work employers, advocating for cultural and system changes to facilitate neuro-inclusion within social work.

Florence is also a director of Neuro Inclusive Solutions LTD which provides training a consultancy to social work and social care organisations to help them become neuro-inclusive.