

# Profession needs to hear criticism without treating it as hostility

I write in response to your article, 'Social workers exposed online – the dangers we face' (BASW online).

I want to be clear at the outset that I do not support threats, intimidation, harassment, or the naming and shaming of individual social workers. No professional should be subjected to abuse. That is not what I am raising.

My concern is that articles such as this can unintentionally flatten a very important distinction: there is a difference between unfair abuse of social workers as a profession and evidenced criticism of practice, recording, process, and accountability in individual cases.

In my own case, I was not a formal party to proceedings, yet information about me appears to have been recorded, relied upon, and carried forward without me being given a fair opportunity to see it, respond to it, or correct it. At the same time, I was relied upon in practice for support, communication, and practical involvement. That contradiction matters. I accept that social workers do not act alone and that courts make final decisions. However, that

does not remove responsibility for how information is gathered, framed, recorded, and presented before matters ever reach a final hearing. Nor does it address what happens when concerns about inaccuracies or procedural unfairness are repeatedly raised and then deflected on the basis that the matter is "for the court".

What I have documented in my own chronology is not a theory or a generalised hostility to social work. It is a sequence of contemporaneous concerns showing repeated problems with communication, record accuracy, inconsistent treatment of my role, and failure to properly address concerns when they were raised.

It is also too simple to compare social workers with doctors or nurses in the abstract. Every profession is capable of error. The real issue is whether there is meaningful accountability when concerns are evidenced, whether people directly affected are able to respond to what is said about them, and whether the profession is willing to hear criticism without treating all challenge as hostility.

Many families are not alleging that social workers "want" to remove children for the sake of it. The more difficult and uncomfortable concern is that once a narrative has formed, records, decisions, and responses can begin to align around that narrative in a way that becomes very hard to challenge from the outside.

If BASW wishes to defend social workers from unfair hostility, that is understandable. But that defence should sit alongside an equally serious engagement with the experiences of those who can evidence inaccurate recording, procedural unfairness, exclusion, and failures of accountability. Without that balance, families with legitimate concerns will continue to feel dismissed rather than heard.

Kerry Pearce

## Work with, not against Israeli social workers

The motion passed at BASW's AGM was disappointing. To then present this as a policy for the basis on which the IFSW should expel the Israeli Union of Social workers is a disgrace.

What kind of social workers are we if we cannot help and encourage colleagues both in the UK and abroad to maintain their stance on human rights and best practice, rather than banning them?

Many social workers in Israel, who are required by law to go into the army, choose non-combatant roles. They have been on the streets demonstrating against government policies and for the rights of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

This kind of resolution just emphasises the one-sidedness of the debate in BASW and a total lack of knowledge and understanding about what it is like to live in a country where a terrorist group that has seized control of a neighbouring territory (Gaza) is continually firing rockets into civilian areas.

There are Palestinian/Arab Israelis who are part of the Israeli Union of social workers which clearly demonstrates that the workforce is both inclusive and representative of the whole population. How can it be right to try and hold this group of social workers responsible for the actions of the Israeli government? They are an independent professional body.

Are we?

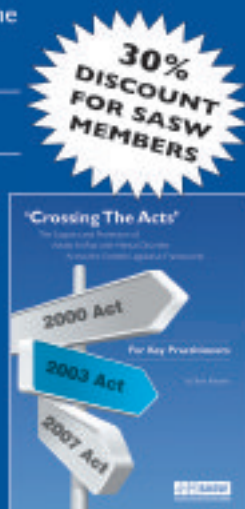
Judi Lyons

## 'Crossing the Acts'

The Support and Protection of Adults At Risk with Mental Disorder Across the Scottish Legislative Frameworks

by Tom Keenan

This work explores the risks of adults with a mental disorder and how the relative Scottish legislation, policy and practice frameworks interrelate to provide them with support and protection. Seeking, primarily, to explore the practical application of duties and powers across the interface of these Acts, this work explores their links and relationships, their thresholds, and their collective application.



SASW Members: £13.97 + p&p

Usual price: £19.95 + p&p

To order visit

<http://shop.basw.co.uk>

(enter promo code WEX7413EGW at check-out to receive the SASW members discount)

## HAVE YOUR SAY

Email: [editor@basw.co.uk](mailto:editor@basw.co.uk) or write to:  
Editor, PSW, Wellesley House, 37 Waterloo Street,  
Birmingham B2 5PP

Please note that while PSW reserves the right to edit letters for length we will always make every effort to not alter the intrinsic content of any correspondence