

Critically explore whether advocates should join the British Association of Social work and Social Workers.

This essay will be exploring if advocates should join the British Association of Social Work and Social Workers (BASW), identifying the positive and negative aspects that surround BASW, and whether an advocate would benefit from joining this particular association. This essay will be exploring and identifying what BASW as an organisation has to offer that would be of use to an advocate, and how the Social Workers' Union (SWU) who work alongside BASW would be beneficial to an advocate rather than other available unions. This essay will also be identifying the differences and similarities between the Code of Ethics for Social Workers and Advocacy QPM's Code of Practice, exploring how these would make a difference to an advocate joining BASW. This essay will also be exploring the benefits that BASW has to offer to its members, and whether they would be beneficial to an advocate. This essay will also mention the Equality Act 2010 and how it will be useful to social workers and advocates in their careers. This essay will be identifying what the medical model of care is and what the social medical model of care is, and whether social work and advocacy come under either of these models of care, and how they would affect an advocates role if they were to join BASW. This essay will also be exploring any legislation that BASW is available that would be beneficial to an advocate in their career path.

The British Association of Social workers is an association of more than 20,000 social work professionals which offers individuals who are a member of this organisation protection, support and the opportunity to potentially develop their careers even further (BASW, 2020). This association offers members different packages to be a part of, therefore different entitlements. Evidently, there are what can be seen as highly beneficial aspects for advocates who wish to join BASW, as there are plenty of opportunities which can be gained, and many different options made available to protect an advocate when out working, such as insurance cover, Social Workers' Union (SWO), the opportunity to gain recognition when mentioning one is a member of BASW, and the chance to further your career (BASW, 2020). By having the support of SWO, who have 12,000 members themselves, and according to BASW, should one have their support, they are guaranteed to be protected at employers meetings (BASW, 2020).

BASW have clearly demonstrated that they want their members to have all they should require readily available to them, however, are they doing all that they can to ensure their members have the ability to thrive in the workplace? BASW and SWU have joined forces with the hope of improving the working conditions of social workers within the UK (BASW, 2020). Both BASW and SWU have spoken out through the form of the media letting the world know that there must be an improvement in social workers working conditions, attempting and encouraging that ministers and MP's will support this. BASW have stated that social workers in the UK wish to do well and want to support their clients to the best of their ability, however are unable to do so due to their poor working conditions, therefore willing MP's to take notice and make change (BASW, 2020).

As with all organisations and professions, there are almost always a set of rules and guidelines for them to follow and abide by. For Social Workers, this would be the Code of Ethics for Social Workers, which contains its own set of rules and guidelines which need to be followed. The Code of Ethics for Social Workers sets out several principles that social workers are required to follow within the workplace, some of these include upholding these principles of the profession such as being reliable, honest, and trustworthy, while maintaining professional boundaries, and not taking advantage

of their position in relation to service users (BASW, 2014). Regarding Social Workers in practice, they are expected to use a variety of tools to engage with service users, such as different techniques, a variety of skills and to engage in specific activities that are appropriate to the current environment, which include group work, family treatment, counselling, clinical social work and therapy (BASW, 2014). In general, the entire Code of Ethics for Social Workers is very broad and covers a range of areas such as human rights, professional integrity and Ethical practice principles, which particularly discusses the importance of empowering individuals whom they work with and using anti-oppressive practices (BASW, 2014), which is very similar to the Advocacy QPM's Code of Practice, where it is also mentioned how important empowering clients is, and to also promote self-advocacy, ensuring their involvement in the decision making process regarding themselves and have the ability to empower oneself (Advocacy QPM, 2014).

In comparison to Advocacy QPM's Code of Practice, the Code of Ethics for Social Workers may be considered as very brief and blunt with what it is stating, whereas Advocacy QPM's Code of Practice is more in depth, and goes over a great deal in detail. There are evidently similarities among the two, both wanting to achieve the same goal of empowering clients, maintaining professional boundaries and ensuring the client receives the support they need. It is difficult to find differences among the two, regarding confidentiality both are very similar, both stating that perhaps one of the only reasons to break confidentiality would be the intention to save a life (BASW, 2014), or if someone's safety is put at risk (Advocacy QPM, 2014). Although, there is a major difference regarding confidentiality in both Codes of Practice/Ethics, in Advocacy QPM's Code of Practice there are several mentions of legislation which mentions ensuring the confidentiality policy should follow the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (Advocacy QPM, 2014), mentioning both Acts several times to ensure that practice is in line and in keeping with both of the Acts (Advocacy QPM, 2014). Whereas the Code of Ethics for Social Workers mentions nothing regarding legislation, and in comparison to Advocacy QPM's Code of Practice, it may be considered quite limited and brief, however still mentioning similar things (BASW, 2014).

As previously mentioned, there appears to be several benefits to joining BASW. One in particular would be the job protection this organisation provides. BASW provides a tailored insurance cover, which is altered and suited to your particular role and level of experience, which would be highly beneficial for an advocate in the various working situations they are placed in (BASW, 2020). Again, as previously mentioned, another benefit for becoming a BASW member would be the Social Workers' Union (SWU) which would in itself have many positive and beneficial aspects, which include free financial health checks, discount on legal fees and a discount on professional developmental courses (BASW, 2020). While being a member of BASW is beneficial in itself, with the extra support of SWU it would appear to be more of a protection and more advantageous than perhaps other unions. SWU is the only trade union that is run by, qualified by and registered by social workers, making it fairly unique, and working together with BASW they aim to ensure that all social work professionals who are members are well protected, in other words social workers speaking up for other social workers (BASW, 2020). With all the positives that come with BASW, it may be considered that BASW is somewhat territorial over their job titles. They continuously mention social workers and social work professionals throughout their website, there is no specific mention of advocates, instead it may be assumed their title would come under 'social work professionals', therefore perhaps losing their independence and their earned job title being downgraded to fitting under an umbrella of titles, rather than maintaining the freedom to work as an advocate, it appears they may be more constricted if they were to join BASW (BASW, 2020).

Although as a Professional Advocate, there are several rules one must follow, one particular guideline is having person centered approach, where it is very much instructed to try to give the client the upper hand, ensuring that they are, if possible and the client has capacity, the one who is in control of their situation and has a say in the final outcome, with mutually agreed plans (Advocacy QPM, 2014). In other words, listening to what the client wants and wishes to happen, and not enforcing one's own wishes or views on their client, and not making the decisions for them. This would appear to be a very significant and a key principle that advocates are guided to follow at all times during their work, however there is no mention of a person centered approach in the Code of Ethics for Social Workers. In relation to Social Workers in practice, there is mentions of respecting clients own personal views, culture, preferences, goals and relationships, however it is not stated that they must not pressure their own views and opinions on the client, which would contradict the principles that advocates are required to follow (BASW, 2014). With this being said, it is stated in the Code of Ethics for Social Workers that they should always treat clients with care and empathy, while following governance frameworks and professional practice. Despite their claims of showing empathy and care, and following governance practice, one would assume that a person centered approach would be as vital to Social Workers as it is to an advocate, and would be an important piece of guidance within the Code of Ethics for Social Workers as it is in Advocacy QPM's code of practice, however it may be assumed that it is not as essential to Social Workers, as there appears to be an equal amount of guidelines to follow, however there are only certain outcomes a Social Worker can achieve, and possibly aim to achieve them whether it is what the client wants or does not want, which is entirely different to an advocates goal in these types of circumstances, therefore this would indicate that this could play a big factor in whether it would be the right move for an advocate to join BASW (BASW, 2020).

It would also be useful to take into account whether social work and advocacy fall into the model of care, which would mean the medical model of care and the social model of care. McCain (2017) explains that if one were to be in favour of the medical model of care, this would suggest that one believes the only way to solve something for an individual would be with the help and support of a professional, whereas the social model of care suggests that it can be oneself who can change the situation. This plays a big factor within the two professional roles and how they handle situations. It may be assumed that Social Workers work through the medical model of care, as they work through a ring of professionals and often refer clients to remedy and aid them through forms such as counselling (BASW, 2014), clearly indicating that they need to have a professional to aid in improving them or their situation, therefore it may be considered that Social Workers work through the medical model of care. Whereas it may be considered that Advocates work through a social model of care. As one of their main goals is to promote self-advocacy within their clients ensuring they are provided the tools to do so while empowering them to find this strength within themselves, demonstrating that they do not always need a professional to speak up for them, baring in mind that they have capacity (Advocacy QPM, 2014). Advocates also provide support and promote supportive decision making, not making the decisions for the client, however, simply supporting them and providing the appropriate guidance should they need it (Advocacy QPM, 2014). There is a clear conflict in relation to the medical model of care and the social model of care, and should an Advocate join BASW, this may contradict what they stand for in relation to their work.

Diverting to a different route, there has also been a lot more developments regarding legislation and social work. This would include The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), where meetings are held

every two months and are open to the public. The APPG have published a report which discusses Social Workers and A New Mental Health Act, which has the goal of social workers maintaining their roles within mental health services, and to enhance their working conditions under a new Mental Health Act (BASW, 2020). BASW states that social workers are an essential worker when it comes to children's and adult's mental health services, and to ensure their roles are protected, a new Mental Health Act is required. An Advocate working in mental health services would clearly benefit from this new Act, and it would provide sufficient job protection in this particular field (BASW, 2020). Another piece of legislation that would support a social work professional is the Equality Act 2010, this particular Act protects individuals from discrimination within the workplace, and all come under 9 protected characteristics such as age, race, gender reassignment, sex, sexual orientation, religion, being married, being pregnant or having a disability (GOV, N.D). This particular Act is highly useful for both social workers or advocates when in the workplace protecting them from both co-workers and the clients they will work with, however it is not mentioned on the BASW website, and would be useful for possible members to be made aware of prior to joining, to ensure they are aware of what support they have behind them (GOV, N.D).

Evidently, there are several positives and negatives to BASW, from what they provide to what they stand for. BASW as a whole seems very passionate about what they stand for, and have many guidelines in place to follow. There are many things one would gain from being a member of BASW, such as the extensive insurance cover they can provide, the chance to get yourself well known as BASW state once one is a member, they will be recognised and professionals will be impressed by this. Another benefit would be the SWU which in itself is enough of a reason to wish to join BASW, due to it being so large and being run by social workers, it comes across that everyone is equal and in the same position. Along with the positives, there evidently negatives too, such as some of the differences which can be found in the Code of Ethics for Social Workers and Advocacy QPM's Code of Practice. In fairness, both provide similar goals of wishing to empower their clients and maintaining a professional relationship with their clients. One key difference however is that advocates are guided to take a person centered approach, ensuring that it is the client who is always in control of their situation and whatever the outcome may be. Advocates will always try to promote self-advocacy within their client and never push their own views or ideas on their client. Whereas Social workers are always in control of the situation it would seem from what is stated in the Code of Ethics for Social Workers, always working through a medical model of care rather than a social model of care, which could prove to be a dilemma for an advocate. There is also the new Mental Health Act which would prove to be highly beneficial for an advocate to have to support them if they are working in the mental health field, this may be considered an inviting factor. It is also alarming that the Equality Act 2010 is not once mentioned on the BASW website, considering how relevant it would be to potential members. With all this being said, it would most likely not be the best choice for an advocate to join BASW. It does appear that BASW are somewhat territorial over their profession, always referring to members as either social workers or social work professions, never once mentioned the job role of an advocate, this would in turn cause an advocate to lose their title, and instead would be just another social work professional. However, if one is not bothered by this, then perhaps BASW would be the right organisation to join, with its many beneficial aspects.

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