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# Sanctuary Social Care

*We are proud to be headline sponsor of the  
Social Worker of the Year Awards 2017.*

We are lucky enough to work with many inspiring social workers across the country, often supporting them throughout their entire careers. The level of passion and commitment shown in this profession is something to celebrate and we will do all we can to help social workers gain the recognition they deserve.

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*Thank you to Community Care for writing the winners' case studies and  
thank you to Sanctuary Social Care for designing the Book of the Night.*







# Welcome from Community Care

## Congratulations to all the winners of the Social Worker of the Year Awards 2017



Whether you won gold or silver, were shortlisted, or came to support the awards, I hope you feel renewed and inspired by the enormous amount of fantastic social work going on around the country.

Social workers are often reluctant to give themselves praise and often try to avoid any appearance of taking the credit for outcomes which rely so heavily on the hard work required from service users themselves.

However, without social workers many of those service users would feel lost and alone and feel quite unequal to taking the journey required to improve their lives. That's why the Social Worker of the Year Awards are so important.

Amid the enormous pressure and challenges of complex case work, we need an opportunity to stop and reflect on the huge difference the profession makes and celebrate those who represent the best of this profession.

I hope everyone in the sector will feel inspired reading the following stories and examples of social workers going the extra mile to improve lives and to help and support those facing immense difficulties.

The numerous testimonials from colleagues both in social work and other professions as well as service users themselves are powerful evidence of the difference great social work can make.

Community Care is proud to be the media partner of the awards which, I hope, remind you of why you should always be proud to be a social worker.

### **Ruth Smith**

Publisher, Community Care and trustee of the Social Worker of the Year Awards



## Gareth Benjamin, Livewell Southwest

Gareth's move towards specialist mental health work has been gradual yet purposeful since he joined Livewell Southwest after qualifying in 2013. But his relentless commitment to rights-based practice has helped him make a rapid impact within the Approved Mental Health Professional duty team, which he moved into in 2016, in preparation for training in this role.

Happiness is an emotion often mentioned by service users describing the impact of Gareth's interventions on their circumstances, which in many cases had previously been anything but happy. This did not go unnoticed by the panel, with one judge commenting: "It brought tears to my eyes to see how fundamentally the lives of service users had been changed."

In one standout piece of work, Gareth helped five people with mental health issues and significant support needs, who had been living in an "extremely squalid" shared house with four other individuals. Within three weeks he had assessed them and identified alternative accommodation, despite facing challenges around communication and managing their fears, linking with other services and accessing necessary resources.

"It is heartening to realise there will be many, many more people that will benefit from his compassion, commitment and creativity," his manager said.

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**Silver Award Winner**  
Barbara Cooley, Essex County Council



“

**"Gareth is a social worker who shows strong commitment to work in mental health services and brings a personal approach to making a difference. His strengths lie in empowerment, relationship-based work and a commitment to rights in a difficult context."**

Gerry Nosowska, BASW

**"An all-round exceptional entry. It was a pleasure to see such a lively and positive endorsement and I genuinely felt the feedback from service users. It brought tears to my eyes to see how fundamentally the lives of these service users had been changed."**

Heather Kent, Adult Social Worker of the Year Award Winner 2016

**"Gareth is a very kind man and has visited me in my new place. He seemed happy that I liked it and told me I was looking well. I have everything I need now and I am very happy."**

Service user feedback

**"I have been overwhelmed by the outset by his relentless commitment to rights-based practice, his drive to challenge the disadvantages faced by mental health service users and his enthusiasm for self-reflective learning."**

Mel Wilson, Advanced Practitioner/AMHP



## Louise Walker, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

With 25 years' experience in a range of roles across adults' and children's services at Redcar and Cleveland council, Louise has brought a rounded, inclusive and perceptive approach to her role as principal social worker at the authority.

A highlight of her tenure, which only began in February 2017, was an event that Louise led to celebrate World Social Work Day, featuring input from a diverse group of service users. These included a young adult with autism who was given the confidence to start work, a man with early onset dementia whose social worker had helped him come to terms with losing his independence, and two young women who had spent time in care and discussed the importance of being listened to. Attendees said they felt proud and motivated by the day, as well as commenting on how good it was to hear children's and adults' experiences being discussed within the same forum.

Louise's other achievements so far have included raising the profile of social work within the council's political framework and providing a space for frontline staff to air their issues with a view to improving working conditions.

The judging panel described her as an "exceptionally strong" candidate.

Supported by:



## Silver Award Winners

Sarah Parsons, Cafcass  
Seanna Lassetter, Birmingham City Council

“

**“Very strong evidence of user partnership engagement in raising the profile of social work as well as raising improvement standards. A key element of raising the profile of social work has got to be with users of services and members of the public.”**

Maris Stratulis, England Manager, BASW

**“Louise's nomination was exceptionally strong. There was demonstrable evidence of raising the profile of social work and social workers were valued (and felt valued) as a result of her work.”**

Rob Mitchell, Principal Social Worker, Bradford Metropolitan District Council

**“Louise actively promotes the role of the social worker and the contribution social work brings not only to social care but to the wider Council agenda. For example, Louise has promoted the work that we are doing with our council services to put social work as a key part of our asset based, community capacity building work.”**

Patrick Rice, Interim Corporate Director for Adults and Communities, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

**“Louise is doing an excellent job of promoting social work and ensuring we feel valued as a profession.”**

Sharon, Team Manager, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council



## Louise Watson, Manchester Metropolitan University

Louise's qualities are perhaps most easily illustrated by her interactions with children during her social work master's degree, completed over a number of years in which she also worked in support roles at Stockport council children's services.

Her selection process at Manchester Metropolitan University included being interviewed by a number of young people, who commented that they would have chosen her to be their social worker. Later, during a placement at Stockport's domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation team – where she now has a job – she was the first person several children chose to disclose their experiences of being groomed and assaulted by adults to. Her practice educator, who called Louise an "outstanding student", praised her "skills in communication, and understanding of young people's needs and how to work restoratively with families".

Louise also impressed with her handling of high-risk domestic abuse cases, implementing theory into her practice and sharing knowledge – including with those who have been on the receiving end of abuse. Despite initially lacking confidence around court work, the latter quality helped her to support a parent who was involved in the first case where a person was found guilty under the new domestic abuse law relating to coercive control.

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## Silver Award Winner

Joseph Vanlint, Liverpool John Moores University

“

**“This entry highlighted Louise’s many strengths, in particular her ability to build relationships and inspire the confidence of young people in distressing circumstances. The nomination also demonstrated her developing professional confidence and leadership potential.”**

Helen Scholar, Deputy Editor, Social Work Education:  
The International Journal

**“Louise is an outstanding student who is widely engaged, has worked very well collaboratively and has really good communication skills in high risk cases.”**

Zoe Betts, Owner, iamsocialwork

**“Mine and Louise’s sessions are going great. She is a lovely supportive woman. She has put all my views forward and I can get along with her well. I feel very lucky to have Louise as a CSE worker.”**

Service user feedback

**“I will always remember Louise because she is one of the few people I trust. I am so grateful I have someone like her in my life to support me and help me. She has helped me understand what I have been through in my life.”**

Service user feedback





## Lynn Lock, Achieving for Children

Lynn juggles her practice educator role with managing the young people's substance misuse service at Achieving for Children, the social enterprise running children's services in the London boroughs of Kingston and Richmond.

The ringing endorsements from past students on Lynn's nomination form speak volumes for her skills, which enable her to equip trainees with the capabilities they need to succeed not just during their placement but deep into social work careers. Several are now managers or senior practitioners.

Something that particularly shines through is her capacity for helping students to overcome doubts and anxieties so they can achieve their potential. "Because of her encouraging style, each day that I spent in Lynn's team, I felt my passion return, my confidence in myself grow, and my motivation for a future in social work reignite," said her most recent student.

As well as her motivational qualities, Lynn's nomination highlighted her dedication to her students, keeping in touch with them many years after their placements, and her adaptability to their needs. The judges added that the impression was of someone who "sees every student afresh", identifying strengths while putting in place tailored support to help people feel at home from the outset.

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## Silver Award Winner

Suzannah Rockett, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

“

**“What stands out is Lynn’s ability to value students whatever their backgrounds. She sees every student afresh and works with them to enable them to achieve their potential.”**

Daniel Hope, Practice Educator of the Year Award Winner 2016

**“Lynn has had a great number of students and her nomination included a very good range of testimonials, including former students.”**

Jane Lindsay, Associate Dean, Kingston University and St George's University of London

**“One thing I like about Lynn is that you can always hear the voice of the child through her work. Although she is an experienced social worker and manager, she is never complacent and continues to put the time in to study and improve her learning and practice.”**

Nick Whitfield, Chief Executive, Achieving for Children

**“Her vision for student social workers is selfless. She assessed me in relation to how well I could develop within the wider social work profession and how well I could develop skills to go on and support vulnerable people over time. This made me feel respected and confident in the process.”**

Student Social Worker





## Virtual Dementia Tour Training Team, Essex County Council

The Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT) uses special equipment to give people with healthy brains a taste of the challenges and sensory impairments faced by individuals with mid-stage Alzheimer's Disease. Originally developed in the US, its UK training provider has now trained Essex council staff to deliver the hands-on course to colleagues and others.

While this was primarily done to ensure geographically dispersed adult social care staff could be trained up as efficiently as possible, the VDT has now been opened up to all council employees, many of whom are also carers. The 11 council trainers – most of them frontline practitioners or social work assistants – manage their responsibilities on top of their day jobs.

Staff and family carers alike praised the power of the VDT training, which frequently leads to profound changes in the ways in which people approach those with dementia. "The experience of the tour was overwhelming," said one older people's team manager. "I had no idea as to the impact dementia could have on day-to-day senses, and how this could leave you feeling."

The judges, meanwhile, hailed Essex's "bold and brave learning and development work" and called for the model to be rolled out nationally.

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## Silver Award Winner

North Kent Children in Care Team 2, Kent County Council

“

**"This entry was innovative and different. It demonstrates thinking outside the box and is experiential and evidence based."**

Prof Hugh McLaughlin, Editor, Social Work Education:  
The International Journal

**"The impact this training is having on both professionals, care homes and families stands out. Dementia is a community issue and this approach is embracing that sentiment, helping growing numbers of people to see the world through the eyes of those who have dementia and therefore be better able to respond to their needs."**

Sherry Malik, Director of Children's Services, NSPCC

**"The training was very uncomfortable and almost painful, but it brought home dramatically the impact on all the senses that dementia has. It has deepened my understanding of people with dementia, and when I meet with people that have this diagnosis, I feel I have a better insight into some of what they may be experiencing."**

Social Worker

**"The experience of the tour was overwhelming. I had no idea as to the impact dementia could have on day to day senses, and how this could leave you feeling. On a personal level, this has helped me understand and support a family member, and explain and give some insight to my wider family."**

Older Peoples Team Manager

## Central Bedfordshire Council, Children's Services

Three years ago, Central Bedfordshire council's children's services department, which employs just under 120 social workers, was in a tricky situation. Around half of children's social workers at the authority, which faces natural recruitment and retention challenges because of its proximity to London, were agency staff, with 54% of posts sitting vacant.

Since then, Central Bedfordshire has made sweeping changes. Teams have been restructured into smaller units with non-caseholding managers, helping to improve practice standards and bring average caseloads down from around 30 to 16.

An innovative academy has also been set up, combining children's social work learning and development opportunities with those available to early years professionals. This has enabled social workers to access bespoke child-focused training in order to meet their needs.

Underpinning these headline changes has been a focus on supervision, communication and support – including external counselling, which some social workers have said has helped them stay in their jobs. The vacancy rate among children's social workers is now down to 18%, with 91% saying that they receive regular supervision and 97% understanding their team's aims and objectives. The judges noted that the improvements at Central Bedfordshire indicated that a "whole-systems approach" was in place.

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**“A clear commitment for the development of social workers. I liked the joined-up thinking with early years as there's clearly a lot of learning overlap. A good range of endorsements.”**

Andrew Ellery, AE Social Care and Education Ltd

**“Central Bedfordshire understand their staff and how to make them feel confident, well developed and well supported. There is clearly confidence in the leadership and confidence in the learning environment.”**

Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive, Cafcass

**“Central Bedfordshire is a forward-thinking employer focused on recruiting, retaining and above all supporting Social Workers. As a result, CBC Social Workers are empowered to make a difference through research informed practice.”**

Amanda Thorpe, Head of Social Work, University of Bedfordshire

**“By adopting a joint strategic approach with senior operational management, HR, and The Academy along with team managers buy in, we have achieved significant progress. A key example being our quality of social work practice has consistently improved. Children tell us that they are happier with the service now they have more consistent support with fewer changes of worker.”**

Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council

**Silver Award Winner**

East Sussex County Council – Children's Services Department





## Nicky Skinner, Devon County Council

Nicky's career as a social worker, now spanning almost three decades, has seen her consistently strive to break down barriers between health and social care, in the process earning respect from colleagues across a range of disciplines.

The endorsements on her nomination return time and again to her skill, commitment and person-centred focus when handling complex cases, whether navigating difficult family dynamics or standing up to hostile questioning in the High Court. "Nicky has a consistent calm demeanour and provides a stable link between health and social care, ensuring the best possible care is provided for the individual," said one community nurse team manager.

Her team members similarly highlight that calmness under pressure, as well as Nicky's good humour, wisdom and ability to empower and support staff, when discussing the qualities that make her shine as a manager. But her leadership is also evident from her ability to handle tightening budgets – she was the first team manager in Devon to meet her financial savings targets in 2016-17. At the same time, she has enthused her team and explored ways in which strengths-based approaches and non-statutory services can be used to support people.

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## Silver Award Winner Elizabeth Thorpe, Calderdale Council

“

**“Evidence and endorsements verify that Nicky is a great team leader who balances practice quality, managing volume and supporting her team to take a good practice approach to risk assessment and management.”**

Lyn Romeo, Chief Social Worker for Adults

**“A great manager who balances management skills with best practice social work.”**

Mark Harvey, Co-Chair, PSW Network

**“Nicky approaches any issues or problems calmly and this helps the whole team during stressful times and when dealing with complex cases. I have watched her be very gentle and understanding with both the people in need and carers, but always ensuring she gets the right course of action and decisions for the person.”**

Shiobhan Pickering, Community Matron for Dementia, Royal Devon and Exeter Foundation Trust

**“Nicky has trusted me to be able to be the social worker I want to be and to be competent enough to do this. I am very grateful for the opportunities that Nicky has provided and feel prepared and look forward to my future as a social worker”.**

Newly Qualified Social Worker



## Leanne Baines, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

The team Leanne leads, Stockport council's ASPIRE domestic abuse and sexual exploitation unit, is described on her nomination as the best of its kind in Greater Manchester and, arguably, in the country. Since taking the helm in 2015 she has played a huge part in setting those standards – starting with the challenging task of ironing out differences in approach between social workers and the police officers co-located with them.

Leanne's commitment to high-quality social work practice is evident from the esteem in which other professionals hold her. "Leanne's approach is one of unconditional positive regard – it's evident she seeks to truly understand families, and she manages difficult conversations, in difficult times, fantastically," said one colleague.

She also delivers training within the local authority and to GPs, foster carers, councillors and others, tailoring it to her audiences and drawing on cutting-edge research.

Despite the demands on her time, Leanne's team invariably mention her supportiveness and availability as a manager – "her phone is never switched off until she knows everybody has finished safely for the day" is a typical remark. Tellingly, her team has the lowest turnover rate within Stockport children's services, with no one having left in the past two years.

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## Silver Award Winner

Marcos Vicinanza, London Borough of Hillingdon

“

**“Leanne delivers energetic, enthusiastic and cutting edge practice but holds her social work values as her badge of honour.”**

Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker for  
Children and Families

**“Leanne appears not only to be a reflective practitioner who is driven to implement policy and practice changes within the organisation, but is not afraid to challenge so that the best outcomes are achieved. Leanne has demonstrated that she will engage with service users who do not see her as a professional but someone who will listen, support and protect them.”**

Liz Hewitt, Skylakes Social Work

**“Leanne is a pleasure to work with and is respected universally by peers, close colleagues and partners alike. Her dedication, hard work and selfless efforts to achieve the very best for children and families is fundamental to the success of Stockport family services and Stockport LSCB.”**

Rebecca Key, Service Leader, Locality CSC and Aspire

**“Leanne's commitment to her work is evident and she has an energetic, enthusiastic ‘can do’ attitude to her work which is infectious to all those around her. She is inclusive, and always brimming with ideas to improve the offer for children and families, and to reach those who are difficult to engage.”**

Una Hagan, Performance and Development Manager,  
Safeguarding Unit



## Sexual Exploitation Hub, Newcastle City Council

Newcastle council's sexual exploitation hub, established in 2015, is the first of its kind in the way it addresses sexual exploitation seamlessly for both children and adults.

The multi-agency team, including adults' and children's social workers, voluntary, community and health sector members and police, works with many people who fall outside the remit of mainstream services, including individuals who are hard to engage with. Its original members all remain in post, with a strong team ethos as well as access to psychological support helping to sustain their commitment to challenging roles.

Safeguarding people – many of whom have experienced appalling abuse – and helping them move on are the hub's primary objectives. But it has also offered crucial support to those pursuing justice through the court system. The hub has worked with several hundred children, young people and adults, and 82 convictions of sexual exploitation perpetrators have been achieved with its assistance. As a result of the hub's work, local awareness of sexual exploitation has risen. Staff have developed policy, procedures and tools for working in the area, as well as speaking at regional and national events.

The judging panel described the service as "a national beacon of best-practice".

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**Silver Award Winner**  
Hospital to Home, Derby City Council



“

**“This team is the first of its kind nationally to address sexual exploitation of adults, and making it of equal relevance to adults as children.”**

Natalie Valios, Content Editor (Adults), Community Care

**“This is a national beacon of best practice. A gold standard service, developing tools, showcasing what they are doing at a national level and developing best practice models.”**

Ruth Smith, Publisher, Community Care

**“The team have continued to be there for the victims under the most difficult of circumstances showing empathy, patience and understanding. Small steps, a brew. A text. A phone call. A friendly face. The staff are there for the people they support no matter what, yet still manage to retain that professional distance.”**

Linda Gray, Service Manager  
Safeguarding Adults, Newcastle

**“Thank you for helping me get through yesterday and all of the support before, that means a hell of a lot to me. I couldn't have done it without you, you're amazing.”**

Service user feedback.



## Pathway Team, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

East Riding council's Pathway Team has put the needs of young people leaving the care system at the heart of what it does, and this is reflected in an impressive range of outcomes.

The team has ensured that 95% of young people are in suitable accommodation, and has well-established Staying Put arrangements, with 75% of care leavers remaining with their foster carers until they are 18, and 15% staying with carers when they become young adults.

Staff have also developed a strong partnership with local colleges, training providers, and the Jobcentre plus, which has seen 71% of care leavers go on to further education or employment. In some cases, young people who left school with no qualifications have been supported into a situation where they are thriving at a university or on an apprenticeship.

The service was rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted in December 2016, and the team credits its success to "getting the basics right and really understanding what works". The judges said it was "lovely to see such a shining example", and were impressed with the endorsements from young people the team has supported, who described staff as "loyal, dedicated, hardworking, and always there when needed".

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## Silver Award Winner

Coastal and North East Ipswich Child in Care Team, Suffolk County Council

“

**“This entry showed a really strong focus on driving the pathway and the team were clear on the outcomes they wanted to achieve. It is lovely to see such a shining example.”**

Sharon Martin, Chair, National IRO Managers Partnership

**“Excellent results in terms of the team's work with young people. It is very evident that they are enabling young people to move on from the care system.”**

Richard Ashdown, London Borough of Redbridge

**“The Local Authority is immensely proud of this team and their successful outcomes for our young people. We have every confidence in the team's approach to relationship building, their fantastic 'stick ability' and genuine desire to 'look after' our young people.”**

Pam Allen, Head of Children & Young Peoples Support & Safeguarding Services

**“The Pathway Team should win an award because the amount of support that I have received and also other young people have received is invaluable. Their dedication is unquestionable and I honestly would say if it wasn't for the Pathway Team's help and support then I wouldn't be living in my own house with a young family, working full time and classed as a 'success story'. They supported me to make me who I am today.”**

Former care leaver





## Gary Spencer-Humphrey, Hampshire County Council

Gary's strong commitment to community-based social work made his application stand out. Since qualifying in 2016, Gary has used a range of community resources to help people build resilience. This has included taking the time in his lunch breaks to visit the town centre and speak with shopkeepers about opportunities available to service users.

In one case, Gary's local knowledge enabled him to support a 40-year-old woman with a severe and enduring mental illness to reconnect with her local community. He knew that a local charity was looking for peer support volunteers and after discovering that the woman had undertaken a mentoring course at college, he was successfully able to link her to the service.

The service user described Gary as "very calming" – a sentiment echoed by colleagues in his application. Gary is valued by his team as a "committed and reliable team player" who is mature, motivated and enthusiastic in his approach, and always supportive of others.

The judges were also impressed by Gary's appointment to a mental health tribunal panel, and his extensive voluntary experience with St John's Ambulance, a youth offending team, and as a special constable. They credited him as being a "very competent social worker".

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## Silver Award

Helen Simpson, Gloucestershire County Council

“

**“Super supportive, very committed, really keen on his own development. Hugely impressive and a good team member.”**

Zoe Betts, Owner, iamsocialwork

**“Gary's entry provided really strong practice examples and showed his ability to lead. He receives excellent feedback from service users and has shown great ability to link with his local community.”**

Jamie McEwan, Newly Qualified Adult Social Worker of the Year Award Winner 2016

**“Gary's social work practice is enhanced by a wealth of knowledge and experience from a wide range of personal and professional life experiences. This is evident in the mature and calm manner that Gary approaches his practice, in particular in crisis intervention.”**

Jo Ackerman, Consultant Social Worker, Hampshire County Council

**“He listened to what I had to say. Very knowledgeable. Excellent. I felt very relaxed. He's truthful. Very calming.”**

Service user feedback



## Dean Radford, Sheffield City Council

Dean stood out to the judges as someone who is "tenacious, creative and passionate".

He was nominated for his astounding work with a terminally ill woman from Africa and her seven-year-old child, who were placed in Sheffield by the National Asylum Support Service.

Dean worked tirelessly to overcome the challenges he faced in securing adequate housing and support services for the family. He visited the mother in hospital many times, and assisted her to write a will expressing her last wishes and a goodbye letter to her child two days before she died, as well as helping to arrange the funeral. He did all this alongside providing emotional support to the child and navigating them through loss, a court order and care proceedings.

The judge in the case praised Dean's work, and his manager said that in her career she had "never seen a social worker have such a positive impact as on the case described within this nomination". She recalled how at the mother's funeral, the first thing the child did was run to Dean and jump into his arms, which she said was "powerful evidence" of all he had achieved.

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## Silver Award

Becky Taylor, Essex County Council

“

**“Dean has a very busy mixed case load and has used a wide range of approaches. Something really stood out about him. Used his pre-qualifying experience, grew during his qualifying period and then really moved on.”**

Prof June Thoburn, Outstanding Contribution Award Winner 2016

**“Dean stood out as someone who is tenacious, creative and passionate in his work.”**

Emily Tiplady-Ead, Children's Social Worker of the Year Award Winner 2016

**“Dean has gone above and beyond to ensure children have a ‘rolls royce’ service from him, and all services working with them. He has fought for them and achieved more than I thought could be possible given the climate of cuts and case-loads. By using his assertiveness, knowledge and friendly persuasion, the impact Dean has made on children's lives is profound.”**

Christine Bennett, Assistant Director

**“I would say from a Foster Carers perspective that it's rare to come across social workers like this and this family have been really lucky to have him on their side. He has worked hard for them and at times has been a tower of strength. I know that the little child thinks highly of him.”**

Foster carer





## Vidhya Biju, Birmingham City Council

Vidhya is described by her colleagues as a social worker who approaches every case with passion and commitment and is always willing to go the extra mile for her service users.

Vidhya's career began in her native India in 1999, where she worked in the slums and resettlement colonies of New Delhi. She moved to Birmingham's busy children's services department in 2004, where she consolidated her social work practice over a 10-year period.

Now based in a busy acute hospital, Vidhya is constantly juggling the competing demands of NHS staff and service users' families, but her nomination demonstrated that she meets these challenges head on and always puts people's rights and wishes at the heart of her practice.

One case example highlighted how an elderly lady had been able to return home from hospital and maintain her independence, thanks to Vidhya actively engaging her neighbour and daughter to create a support network and ensure any risks were managed appropriately. The neighbour said Vidhya was an "incredible lady" who showed "kindness, patience and love".

Vidhya was praised by the judges for having an exceptional depth of social work practice, and always getting it right for her clients "first time, every time".

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## Silver Award

Vicki Ingham, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

“

**“Great example of an excellent hospital social worker who always goes the extra mile and puts the users' wishes and rights at the heart of her practice. She clearly gets it right, first time, every time!”**

Lyn Romeo, Chief Social Worker for Adults

**“Vidhya is working in a very challenging environment, practising good social work principles in a high pressure, multi-agency setting. She is sticking up for people, promoting their independence and has received very good endorsements from colleagues in other agencies.”**

Simon Williams, Director, Local Government Association

**“Vidhya is a very caring individual, who truly takes a holistic approach when undertaking assessments in relation to the long-term care needs of individuals who may not be able to return home following a hospital stay. She quite rightly places the service user at the centre of everything she does.”**

Graeme Betts, Interim Director of Adult Social Care and Health

**“We asked many questions regarding Dad's future care and these were answered politely and efficiently. We were never made to feel we were asking too much and felt that Dad's care was as important to Vidhya as it was to us.”**

Relative of service user



## Jackie Dowding, London Borough of Havering



Jackie is described by her colleagues as "the social worker that all social workers aspire to be, and the social worker that all vulnerable children deserve" – and it's easy to see why.

Jackie taught herself to read and write, and qualified as a social worker in her 40s. Now 74, she remains committed to frontline practice, never missing a visit or review, and even regularly makes a 12-hour round trip to Wales to visit one of the children on her caseload.

She has often been commended by judges, independent reviewing officers and Ofsted for her dedication and the testimonials in her nomination highlighted how the passion and advocacy she has for the young people in her care is "second to none".

One example of this was Jackie advocating strongly for looked-after children whose experience of care was being impacted dramatically by having different social workers. Her intervention resulted in long-term cases now only being held by permanent team members.

Jackie's sense of humour also shone through in her nomination, with stories of her recently 'rapping' at an event in celebration of looked-after children's achievements. Tellingly, the young people present all commented on how they wished she was their social worker.

Supported by:



## Silver Award

Jason Sedgman, Central Bedfordshire Council

“

**“Jackie isn't conventional. Here's someone who is absolutely still an individual.”**

Paul Ringer, Chief Executive, Spurgeons

**“She has huge creativity and has covered every area. She's a natural who has added to her repertoire and her social work toolbox. She hasn't stood still!”**

Prof June Thoburn, Outstanding Contribution to Social Work Award Winner 2016

**“Jackie could be described as a lioness; she is committed, fiercely protective of her young people and is not afraid to voice her opinion with management when advocating for them. Likewise, she builds such strong and respectful relationships with her young people that they are able to see where her advice and decisions come from even if not agreed to.”**

Lorraine Bartlett, Team Manager

**“I have worked with Jackie for some years now. I am in awe of her energy, strength and understanding, her wonderful way of telling a child how it is, but ending that supervision on a laugh and a wink. A truly one off who is a wonderful social worker and support.”**

Foster carer





## Carolyne Willow, Article 39

Carolyne boasts a long social work career, in which she has tirelessly championed the rights of children. After qualifying in 1988, she spent seven years in local authority children's services, before moving into the voluntary sector to work as a children's rights advocate.

Between 2000 and 2012, she was the national coordinator of the Children's Rights Alliance for England. Here, she coordinated two submissions to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, and wrote extensively on advocacy and safeguarding children in custody.

In 2015, Carolyne set up a new charity, Article 39, which focuses on the rights of children in institutional settings. Her achievements with this fledgling charity have been remarkable, perhaps most notably leading the 'Together for Children' alliance to campaign against the exemption clauses in the Children and Social Work Bill, which risked limiting children's rights.

Carolyne organised a petition that received over 100,000 signatures, and her colleagues said it was arguable whether the clauses would have been dropped, had it not been for Carolyne's "energy, commitment and unflagging leadership".

The judges praised Carolyne for significantly changing legislation for the better, challenging inequality and "absolutely campaigning for everything social workers believe in."

Supported by:



## Silver Award

Nikki Mahony, Hampshire County Council

“

**“Carolyne has significantly changed legislation for the better. She’s challenged inequality and social justice.”**

Marion Russell, Principal Social Worker,  
Cornwall Council

**“Wow, what a journey. Absolutely advocating for everything we believe in.”**

Sarah Read O'Toole, Skylakes Social Work

**“With all of her work for the charity, Carolyne remains focused on and upholds the core values of her social work background – defending and respecting the equality, worth and dignity of children whilst displaying both integrity and competence in all that she does. Carolyne is a tremendous Director and a fearless and powerful defender of children’s rights.”**

Alex Gask, Trustee, Article 39

**“Too many in our profession fail to stand up publicly and speak out for vulnerable children in care and juvenile justice system. I have tremendous respect for Carolyne. One sentence? ‘In a world where too many see the troublesome child, the child in care, or the child in custody, Carolyne sees only the child needing support - and then she offers it’.”**

Ian Dickson, Campaigner and former care leaver.



## Andy Butler, Surrey County Council

Andy stood out to the judges as a social worker who has never lost touch with the frontline.

His career started at age 18, when he started work as a community service volunteer, before later moving to Wandsworth and taking up the role of residential social worker for children.

After qualifying in 1980, Andy led the development of one of the early 'patch-based' social work teams, and worked part-time for a church developing a variety of community groups.

For the past 27 years Andy has worked for Surrey council, where he is currently the principal social worker for adults' services. He has been truly inspired by the Mental Capacity Act, and trains and lectures at universities and conferences on this subject, as well as regularly advising colleagues on the most complex socio-legal cases. Alongside his professional career, he has volunteered as a local magistrate for nearly 30 years, sitting in criminal and family courts.

Andy's colleagues said he "absolutely lives" the core principles of what a good social worker should be, and his strong commitment to supporting the rights of individuals and his promotion of equality and justice have made him the "go to" person for professional advice at the council.

Supported by:



## Silver Award

Mark Trewin, Bradford Metropolitan District Council

“

**“His subject expertise and commitment to high standards of practice means he has been able to be a key influencer at both local and national levels.”**

Judy Cooper, Editor, Community Care

**“Andy started out as a community service volunteer and kept that ethos throughout his career spanning 43 years. He’s also been able to shape and influence change and motivate others.”**

Bianka Lang, Overall Social Worker of the Year Award Winner 2016

**“Andy is key to Surrey County Council’s work in Adult Social Care as well as a much wider audience, and is always willing to provide advice, support, and his expert knowledge on a range of issues. I recognise Andy as a person who is able to shape and influence change, as well as inspire and motivate others.”**

Helen Atkinson, Strategic Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health, Surrey County Council

**“When Andy speaks in a meeting we all listen carefully because we know it will be a high value contribution. His written advice on complex situations is second to none. His most important qualities, however, are complete integrity, a fundamental belief in protecting citizens’ rights, and an innate sense of justice and fairness.”**

Jim Ledwidge, Independent consultant and advisor to ADASS on CHC





## Ray Jones



Ray has always been a voice for social work and has been unafraid to speak out, sometimes against the trend, for the profession and vulnerable people he passionately believes in.

Ray spent 14 years as director of social services in Wiltshire, where he pioneered the integration with health services that is now standard policy across England. He then moved into a career in academia, through which he has published five books, including his analysis of the Peter Connelly case and the impact of media and political behaviour on those involved.

Ray became a key commentator on child protection after Baby P hit the headlines, at a time when very few voices were being heard. He has chaired safeguarding boards, led the improvement of "failing" children's services, and also provided behind-the-scenes support to the social workers involved in Peter's case, a testament to his integrity and compassion.

He was also the first chief executive of the Social Care Institute for Excellence, chaired BASW and, entirely voluntarily, chaired the Social Worker of the Year Awards charity for three years. During his time as chair, Ray was instrumental in raising the profile of the awards and overseeing its year-on-year growth.

As his long-time colleague and friend, Peter Hay, says, "Ray's consistency of purpose, clear values, and passionate commitment are to be respected and deserve recognition accordingly."

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“

**“Ray has given a lifetime of service to leading social work. His unique contribution has been made as a Director, academic, as Chair of BASW, Chief Executive of SCIE, author and commentator. In all of these roles, Ray has led with clear values. Ray has always had a passion for great social work and a desire to promote the very best of the profession. Ray chaired these awards to recognise great practice and its fitting that we recognise his immense contribution to social work.”**

Peter Hay CBE, Chair of the Board of Trustees,  
Social Work Awards Ltd

**“Ray is a man of huge integrity who has consistently stood up for the social work profession for more than 40 years. He has shown great courage in defending the profession against unscrupulous, ill-informed media attacks. Drawing on his vast policy, practice and academic experience, he is not afraid to put his head above the parapet on the national stage. Behind the scenes, his humanity and compassion shine through, quietly supporting social workers when they need it most. Ray is an inspiration and a huge asset to the social work profession.”**

Ruth Smith, Publisher, Community Care

**“Where does one start when it comes to talking about Ray. He is simply the best, better than all the rest, one of a kind. Ray is and will always be a special person and will always have a place in the awards. Why....because of his dedication, drive, commitment and vision. Ray saw my vision and drove the awards on to where it is today.”**

Bev Williams, Founder, Social Work Awards



## Vidhya Biju, Birmingham City Council

“If I ever need a social worker, I would absolutely want it to be Vidhya”. This sentiment was echoed throughout the endorsements in Vidhya's nomination, as well as by the judges.

As a hospital social worker, Vidhya's work takes place in a busy environment, where she is often only involved with service users and their families for a short period of time. However, despite this, her nomination showed that she has had huge impact on the lives of many.

In one case, Vidhya went above and beyond to ensure an elderly woman could return home from hospital. Health colleagues said it was too risky, the woman's daughter lived 10 miles away, and the woman herself was a private person and was worried about having carers.

Vidhya took the challenges in her stride, and her approach resulted in the woman's daughter agreeing to stay with her until she was gradually introduced to a carer of her choice. Vidhya also retained case responsibility after discharge to help the family apply for a direct payment.

The board of trustees selected Vidhya as Overall Social Worker of the Year because she typifies everything that is good about the social work profession.

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“

**“Vidhya is a social worker who clearly lives and breathes the profession. It is clear to see how Vidhya's real life experience of witnesses issues of oppression, discrimination and poverty underpin her approach to social work.”**

Rob Mitchell, Principal Social Worker, Bradford Metropolitan District Council

**“Vidhya typifies all that is good about our profession. Her track record says it all, having come from working in the slums and resettlement colonies of India to hospital-based adult social care, via many years in children's social care, in one of the most challenging areas of the country to work in. What comes shining through is her dedication, her compassion, her kindness and her willingness to “go the extra mile”.”**

Joanna Nicolas, Independent Child Protection Consultant

**‘Partnership plus plus’ is what Vidhya does best. Formidable and deeply human she demonstrates passion and commitment, energy and relentless focus on achieving best outcomes for those she works with. She is truly inspiring.”**

Ana Popovici, Deputy Director of Children's Services, London Borough of Hillingdon



## List of finalists 2017

### Mental Health Social Worker of the Year

- Andrew Thomas, London Borough of Croydon
- **Barbara Cooley, Essex County Council**
- Billy Melvin, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- **Gareth Benjamin, Livewell Southwest**

### Raising the Profile of Social Work

- Essex Social Care Academy, Essex County Council
- **Louise Walker, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council**
- Sarah Parsons, Cafcass
- Seanna Lassetter, Birmingham City Council

### Student Social Worker of the Year

- Chelsea Higgins, University of Hull
- Joseph Vanlint, Liverpool John Moores University
- **Louise Watson, Manchester Metropolitan University**
- Nabeela Talib, Oxford Brookes University
- Suzanne Rowe, The Open University
- Zoe Stanyard, De Montfort University

### Practice Educator of the Year

- Ali Bell, Cornwall Council
- Amanda Lewis, Birmingham City Council
- Jim Fox, Shropshire Council
- **Lynn Lock, Achieving for Children**
- Suzannah Rockett, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

### Creative & Innovative Social Work Practice

- Family Safeguarding Teams Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire County Council
- Linda Nelmes, Cafcass
- **North Kent Children in Care Team 2, Kent County Council**
- **Virtual Dementia Tour Training Team, Essex County Council**

### Best Social Work Employer

- **Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Services**
- **East Sussex County Council Children's Services**
- Essex County Council Children & Families
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

### Team Leader of the Year, Adult Services

- Elizabeth Thorpe, Calderdale Council
- Jill Hughes, Worcestershire County Council
- Melanie Wilson, Livewell Southwest
- **Nicky Skinner, Devon County Council**

### Team Leader of the Year, Children's Services

- Clare Luby, Achieving for Children
- Hannah Foxcroft, Ealing Council
- **Leanne Baines, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council**
- Marcos Vicinanza, London Borough of Hillingdon
- Sarah Carter, Essex County Council
- Sharon Turner, Essex County Council

### Team of the Year, Adult Services

- AMHP Team, Northumberland County Council
- Essex Mental Health Family Group Conferencing Service, Essex Partnership NHS Mental Health Trust
- **Hospital to Home, Derby City Council**
- Langdon Forensic Social Work Team, Devon County Council with Devon Partnership NHS Trust
- **Sexual Exploitation Hub, Newcastle City Council**
- West Somerset Community ASC Team, Somerset County Council

### Team of the Year, Children's Services

- Adoption Team, Gloucestershire County Council
- **Coastal and North East Ipswich Child in Care Team, Suffolk County Council**
- No Recourse to Public Funds, London Borough of Waltham Forest
- Oldham Phoenix Team, Oldham Council
- **Pathway Team, East Riding of Yorkshire Council**
- The Children in Care Specialist Team, Essex County Council

### Newly Qualified Adult Social Worker of the Year

- David Evenden, Hampshire County Council
- **Gary Spencer-Humphrey, Hampshire County Council**
- Helen Simpson, Gloucestershire County Council
- Lisa Holliday, Thurrock Council
- Nicole Jones, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

### Newly Qualified Children's Social Worker of the Year

- **Becky Taylor, Essex County Council**
- **Dean Radford, Sheffield City Council**
- Jack McWaters, Achieving for Children
- Jayesh Rushi, Lancashire County Council
- Rosemary Smith, Ealing Council
- Senita Kaur, Doncaster Children's Services Trust
- Susan Hook, Essex County Council

### Adult Social Worker of the Year

- Claire Lillywhite, Hampshire County Council
- Isabel Andrews, Leicester City Council
- Michelle Bradford, Gloucestershire County Council
- **Vicki Ingham, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council**
- **Vidhya Biju, Birmingham City Council**

### Children's Social Worker of the Year

- Deion Grant, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- Donna Kessler, Hertfordshire County Council
- Hannah Tull, Essex County Council
- **Jackie Dowding, London Borough of Havering**
- **Jason Sedgman, Central Bedfordshire Council**
- Mark Davies, Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Nicola Silk, Rutland Council
- Vanessa Alexander, Ealing Council

### Championing Social Work Values

- Andrew Deller, Lifecraft
- **Carolyn Willow, Article 39**
- **Nikki Mahony, Hampshire County Council**
- Rachel Keetley, Norfolk County Council

### Lifetime Achievement Award

- **Andy Butler, Surrey County Council**
- Duart Peacock, Hampshire County Council
- **Mark Trewin, Bradford Metropolitan District Council**
- Shelagh Butler, Cafcass

### Outstanding Contribution to Social Work

- **Ray Jones**

### Overall Social Worker of the Year 2017

- **Vidhya Biju, Birmingham City Council**

## Thank you to our judges

**Ali Bulman**, Independent

**Andrew Ellery**, AE Social Care & Education Ltd

**Annie Hudson**, London Borough of Lambeth

**Anthony Douglas CBE**, Cafcass

**Bianka Lang**, Overall Social Worker of the Year Award Winner 2016

**Brendan Clifford**, Capacity4care

**Carol Long**, Young Epilepsy

**Cath Gormally**, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

**Daniel Hope**, Practice Educator of the Year Award Winner 2016

**Dez Holmes**, Research in Practice

**Elizabeth Njenga**, BASW

**Emily Tiplady-Ead**, Children's Social Worker of the Year Award Winner 2016

**Gerry Nosowska**, BASW

**Heather Kent**, Adult Social Worker of the Year Award Winner 2016

**Helen Scholar**, Social Work Education: The International Journal

**Hugh McLaughlin**, Social Work Education: The International Journal

**Isabelle Trowler**, Chief Social Worker for Children & Families

**Jamie McEwan**, Newly Qualified Adult Social Worker of the Year 2016

**Jane Lindsay**, Kingston University & St George's University of London

**Jenny Molloy**, BASW

**Judy Cooper**, Community Care

**June Thoburn**, Outstanding Contribution to Social Work Award Winner 2016

**Liz Hewitt**, Skylakes Social Work

**Lyndy Romeo**, Chief Social Worker for Adults

**Mandy Barker**, Hertfordshire County Council

**Mandy Nightingale**, Principal Social Worker of the Year Award Winner 2016

**Margaret Willcox**, ADASS President

**Marion Russell**, Cornwall Council

**Maris Stratulis**, BASW

**Mark Harvey**, Hertfordshire County Council

**Natalie Valios**, Community Care

**Parmjit Chahal**, London Borough of Harrow

**Paul Ringer**, Spurgeons

**Richard Ashdown**, London Borough of Redbridge

**Rob Mitchell**, Bradford Metropolitan District Council

**Ruth Smith**, Community Care

**Ruth Hardy**, Community Care

**Sarah Read-O'Toole**, Skylakes Social Work

**Sharon Martin**, National IRO Managers Partnership

**Sherry Malik**, NSPCC

**Simon Williams**, Local Government Association

**Zoe Betts**, iamsocialwork

Hampshire County Council is proud to support the **Social Worker of the Year Awards 2017** and congratulates all the finalists

We hope the **Social Worker of the Year Awards** will continue to be an inspiration, and encourage colleagues in our profession to excel even further than they already do.

We're particularly pleased to sponsor the Mental Health Social Worker of the Year Award. One in four people in the UK experience a mental health problem each year, needing highly skilled individuals to support them, and the work that these mental health social workers do is greatly valued.

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- UNESCO World Heritage site, Saltaire village.



Bradford Council is proud to support the Social Worker of the Year Awards



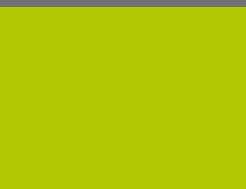




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## Congratulations to all finalists and winners!

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