

The **Social Work** Show

Event Programme

28 September 2026

Manchester Deansgate Hotel

Headline Sponsor



Media Partner



Social Work Today

A COMPASS event

compass
events



“Direct work runs through us like a stick of rock.”

Develop your social work career in North East Lincolnshire

Join a team where children and families are at the heart of everything we do.

- Relational approach
- Always learning and growing
- Supporting future social workers
- A place where everyone belongs



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Advanced Social Worker

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EVENT DIRECTOR
Kellie Doubtfire

CONTENT EDITOR
Rik Clarke

PUBLISHING EXECUTIVE
Sophie Marland

EVENT ACCOUNTS
Emma Barnes

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Mark Pearson

COMPASS
The Barn, St James' Square,
Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 6AP
T: 01892 784804; F: 01892 784796
www.compassjobsfair.com
admin@compassjobsfair.com

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Visitor information

Speak to the organisers

The COMPASS team can be found in the Exhibition Hall. Come and find us for any questions relating to this and future events. You are also invited to network and chat with us in the Exhibition Hall at 4.00pm, where you can also collect your CPD certificate.

Free seminars

All seminars are free to attend. However, entry to the seminars is on a first-come, first-served basis. To adhere to the Health & Safety Regulations there is a maximum capacity for the seminar rooms. If you are unable to attend the seminar of your choice please come to the COMPASS stand and we will arrange to have any questions answered for you.

Photographs

Photographs are taken throughout the day. These will be used in promotional literature for future events. Attendance at the event signifies acceptance of this use.

Would your organisation like to exhibit next year?

To reserve an exhibition stand for next year's Social Work Show, please speak to one of the COMPASS team and we will be able to discuss your requirements.

Refreshments and other food options

Drinks, sandwiches and hot food will be available to purchase throughout the day from The Little Kitchen in the Exhibition Hall. You are very welcome to have lunch with colleagues in the seating areas situated around the hall.

Social Work Today

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Ann-Marie Matson,
Director of Children's Services,
North East Lincolnshire Council

Sometimes, the starting point tells us very little about the destination

Welcome from Ann-Marie Matson,
Director of Children's Services,
North East Lincolnshire Council

Social work asks a great deal of you. It asks you to bring love, hope, courage and professional curiosity into some of the most difficult moments in people's lives. You navigate the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, yet every day you keep showing up for children, young people and families. That is why I remain so proud of our profession.

It is also why North East Lincolnshire Council is proud to sponsor this year's Social Work Show. Events like this give social workers from across children's and adults' services time to come together, learn from one another and reflect on the opportunities ahead. My heartfelt thanks go to everyone working so hard to make the event a success.

Proceed until apprehended

More than 30 years after beginning my journey in children's services, I can still recall children and families whose stories have

stayed with me. To have played even a small part in their lives remains one of the greatest privileges of my career.

I could never have imagined that journey would take me from working directly with children and families to becoming a Director of Children's Services. I was fortunate to have leaders who recognised my potential and encouraged me to become the best I could be.

One piece of advice has stayed with me: "Proceed until apprehended." It has served me well (mostly).

Their belief taught me something important. When we recognise people's strengths, hold high ambitions for them and create opportunities to grow, remarkable things can happen. Sometimes, the starting point tells us very little about the destination. That is true for children and families, and it is true for social workers too.



We talk. We reflect. We support.

We are now preparing for the most significant reforms to children's social care in a generation. Change will bring challenge, but also an opportunity to strengthen partnerships and shape practice for the future. Behind every reform, structure and professional debate is a child, young person or family relying on us to get it right. Whatever changes around us, relationships must remain at the heart of our profession.

"You navigate the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, yet every day you keep showing up for children, young people and families."

In North East Lincolnshire, that belief shapes Our Children, Our Future. Our relational approach is rooted in direct work, reflection and learning. We talk. We reflect. We support. We are ambitious for social workers to deepen their expertise, develop others and lead the future of our profession.

Thank you for everything you bring to this extraordinary profession. Visit our stand, join our sessions and speak with our team. We would love to meet you.

Let's keep on keeping on.

Our Children, Our Future.

Ann-Marie Matson, Director of Children's Services, North East Lincolnshire Council

Join seminars throughout the day by North East Lincolnshire Council

KEYNOTE SESSION

11.00 – 11.40 Seminar Room 1

Leading change, transforming lives through relational practice

Ann-Marie Matson,
Director of Children's Services

2.00 – 2.40 Seminar Room 2

Good supervision: Developing practice through learning and reflection

Julie Bettany, Deputy Service Director - Practice, Standards and Principal Social Worker

3.10 – 3.50 Seminar Room 3

Children's social care reforms: Is your practice ready for the future?

Harriet Malkin, Deputy Service Director, Safeguarding and Disability Help, Protection, Care, Care Leavers; and Helen Davis, Children's Strategic Lead

Please note: All seminars are first-come, first-served so please arrive early to ensure you have a seat.

Pop by and say 'hello' at our stand or visit

www.nelincs.gov.uk/socialworkjobs

Speak to the following organisations in the Exhibition Hall

HEADLINE SPONSOR

North East Lincolnshire Council

Children, young people and families are at the heart of everything we do at North East Lincolnshire Council. Our relational approach places direct work, strong relationships and professional curiosity at the centre of practice. If that sounds like your kind of social work, pop by our stand for a chat.



MEDIA PARTNER

Social Work Today

Stay up to date with all things social work via our free e-newsletter sent out every weekday. With information on social work jobs, news, events, CPD and more, Social Work Today is the platform for the social work sector. To be a part of this global community and to find out more visit www.socialworktoday.co.uk.



Advanced Social Care Services (ASCS)

Nationwide social work support for adults, children and families. ASCS provides experienced, quality-assured Independent Social Workers for assessments, specialist casework and complex situations. We offer responsive capacity when services need it most, with robust governance, clear reporting and a focus on better outcomes.



BASW England & SWU

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is the UK's professional membership organisation supporting over 20,000 social workers. We champion social work and help members achieve the highest professional standards. The Social Workers Union (SWU) is the only UK trade union for, and run by, qualified and registered social workers.



Become

The national charity that's here to support every child and young person with experience of the care system. They tell us what's not working. Together, we fight to make change happen. We deliver free services to young people, train the professionals around them, and campaign for change within the system.



Blackpool Council

Blackpool Council Children's Services. Graded outstanding by Ofsted in June 2026 who said that children and their families now benefit from consistently high-quality, innovative services and that the DCS and CEO ensure an environment where social work can flourish.



Cheshire East Children's Services

With significant investment, renewed energy and a commitment to Families First reforms, Cheshire East is transforming support for children, young people and families. We're recruiting passionate social workers roles to help shape services, drive meaningful change and achieve the best outcomes for local families.



Circles of Practice

Ubuntu and Harambee in action. Circles of practice take us out of our silos to positively engage working alongside people who are making key decisions at critical times in their lives, well supported by employers in this complex work; co-creating policies, practices and actions based on inclusion, intergenerational respect, mutual understanding, celebrating our differences, agreeing on our shared futures.



COMPASS

Come and meet the team who put this event together. We have over 30 years' experience specialising in events, marketing, and publishing for the social work and social care sector. We also organise events throughout the year across the UK, including the COMPASS Jobs Fairs and the Social Work Show in Manchester and Birmingham.



DNA Legal

DNA Legal is the UK's leading DNA, Drug & Alcohol testing provider. For over 20 years, we've worked to ensure justice for families regardless of their living environment, historic drug use or race. To date, we've supported over 12 million people on their journey as they transform their lives. With a team that doesn't just care, but loves, DNA Legal ensures every angle of testing is covered and made simple.



Exemplar Health Care



Exemplar Health Care provides nurse-led complex care across 60 homes in England. We work with Social Workers to find the right placements for adults whose needs can't be met in standard nursing care, including those with failed placements or delayed hospital discharges, ensuring safe, stable, and appropriate care and support.

Forensic Testing Service



Forensic Testing Service (FTS) specialises in comprehensive forensic drug and alcohol investigations, providing expert analysis tailored for legal proceedings. Unlike routine testing labs, FTS offers in-depth evaluations that ensure accurate interpretations, reducing the risk of misleading results. Their advanced approach is crucial for reliable, evidence-based decisions in family court cases.

Collect your CPD certificate at 4pm in the
Exhibition Hall from the COMPASS stand

Home From Home Care



Home From Home Care provides specialist residential care services to adults in Lincolnshire with learning disabilities, autism and complex physical and mental health needs. We specialise in supporting complex care needs, offering tailored care and support plans, collaborating closely with families and healthcare professionals. We are committed to empowering individuals to live fulfilling and independent lives.

Lextox



At Lextox, we provide hair drug and alcohol testing, blood alcohol testing, DNA testing and SCRAM Continuous Alcohol Monitoring® for family law cases and childcare proceedings. Our dedicated client managers provide a hassle-free, fully-managed service from start to finish, ensuring you are kept up to date at every stage. Since Lextox's inception, we have, and continue to, set the bar for quality service and have built a client base of over 17,000 family law professionals and local authorities across the UK.

Relationships are central to social work practice. The Relational Social Work Podcast explores the importance of connection and relationships in social work, celebrating excellent and innovative practice 'with' amazing children, young people and families, and having honest conversations about some of the struggles which we can face in children and families social work.

Each episode is a conversation between hosts, Matt Clayton and Hannah Bedford, with prominent guests from the field of social work

Exhibitors

Use the map on page 10
to find your way around

Liverpool City Council

Liverpool is a world-famous city and thriving cultural destination. In Children's Services we are inclusively working together as one team, to safeguard our children and young people.

Come and speak to us about our exciting opportunities, training and development and benefits to support you in your social work career.



Nagalro

Nagalro is a professional association promoting independent, child-centred social work practice, working with children and families and representing children in public and private law proceedings. Members enjoy a range of benefits including expert advice, high-quality training and professional indemnity and public liability insurance of up to £10 million. Visit our stand to discover how membership can support you.



Nova Care Group

Nova Care Group provides specialist, trauma-informed care for children and young people with complex needs. We create safe, nurturing homes where lives can be rebuilt through exceptional care, mentorship, guidance and therapeutic support. Driven by extraordinary people, we're committed to transforming futures, strengthening communities and delivering life-changing outcomes.



Nurture Futures Ltd

Nurture Futures Ltd is a practice-informed consultancy supporting organisations to improve outcomes for children, families, and communities.

We provide consultancy, training, coaching, and practice development in trauma-informed, relational, and culturally responsive practice, helping professionals strengthen relationships, transform systems, and create safer, more equitable environments where children can thrive.



ParentAssess

ParentAssess is a leading training provider dedicated to equipping social work professionals with practical skills and essential knowledge.

Our specialist parenting assessment model is the most widely recognised framework in the UK. We offer a diverse range of training courses for all professionals working with families in social care.



Rebuild Rise Families Ltd

When families face their hardest moments, the right support can change their story. Rebuild Rise Families brings experienced social workers, therapists, mentors, parent coaches and family practitioners together, providing responsive, relationship-based support across Early Help, reunification, placement stability, kinship, care leavers and complex family intervention.



Sisu Services

Sisu Services provides high-quality residential family assessment and support, helping parents develop the skills, confidence and understanding needed to care safely for their children.

Our nurturing, evidence-based approach combines robust social work assessment with compassionate, individualised support, placing children's welfare, family relationships and positive long-term outcomes at the heart of everything.



All exhibitors listed here have an employer profile on our website

Information about all Social Work Show exhibitors and advertisers can be found on our website. You can get information about current job vacancies, open days, training opportunities, and new products, as well as follow up on conversations you've had today. Profiles will remain live for **one month** after this event, so make the most of today and visit:

www.thesocialworkshow.com

The Social Work Show

Whole-family support for complex families with multiple needs

When families have multiple and overlapping needs, finding the right combination of support can be challenging.

Rebuild and Rise Families provides a **flexible, one-stop support service**, working alongside professionals and families to understand individual circumstances, identify needs and provide tailored support that reflects each family's unique experiences, strengths and insights.

We support families navigating complex systems and proceedings, helping parents and carers understand processes, prepare for meetings, engage with professionals and make their voices heard.

Our work can support families involved with **children's social care, care proceedings, Child Protection and Child in Need processes, education, health and other services**, with the aim of strengthening family relationships, preventing breakdown where possible and reducing the risk of repeated referrals.

We also support care leavers and families transitioning out of care, helping to provide continuity, understanding and practical support at important points of change.

If your local authority can describe the support a family needs, we can work with you to provide it.

**Speak to us today
to find out more.**



**Rebuild
& Rise
Families**



View our services

Meet the Founder

Crystal Williams is the heart and Founder of Rebuild and Rise Families. With almost 20 years of experience as a qualified social worker, she has dedicated her career to supporting families.

"At Rebuild and Rise Families, my team's approach is built on clarity and warmth. We translate the technical side of social care into clear, actionable steps so you can feel empowered.

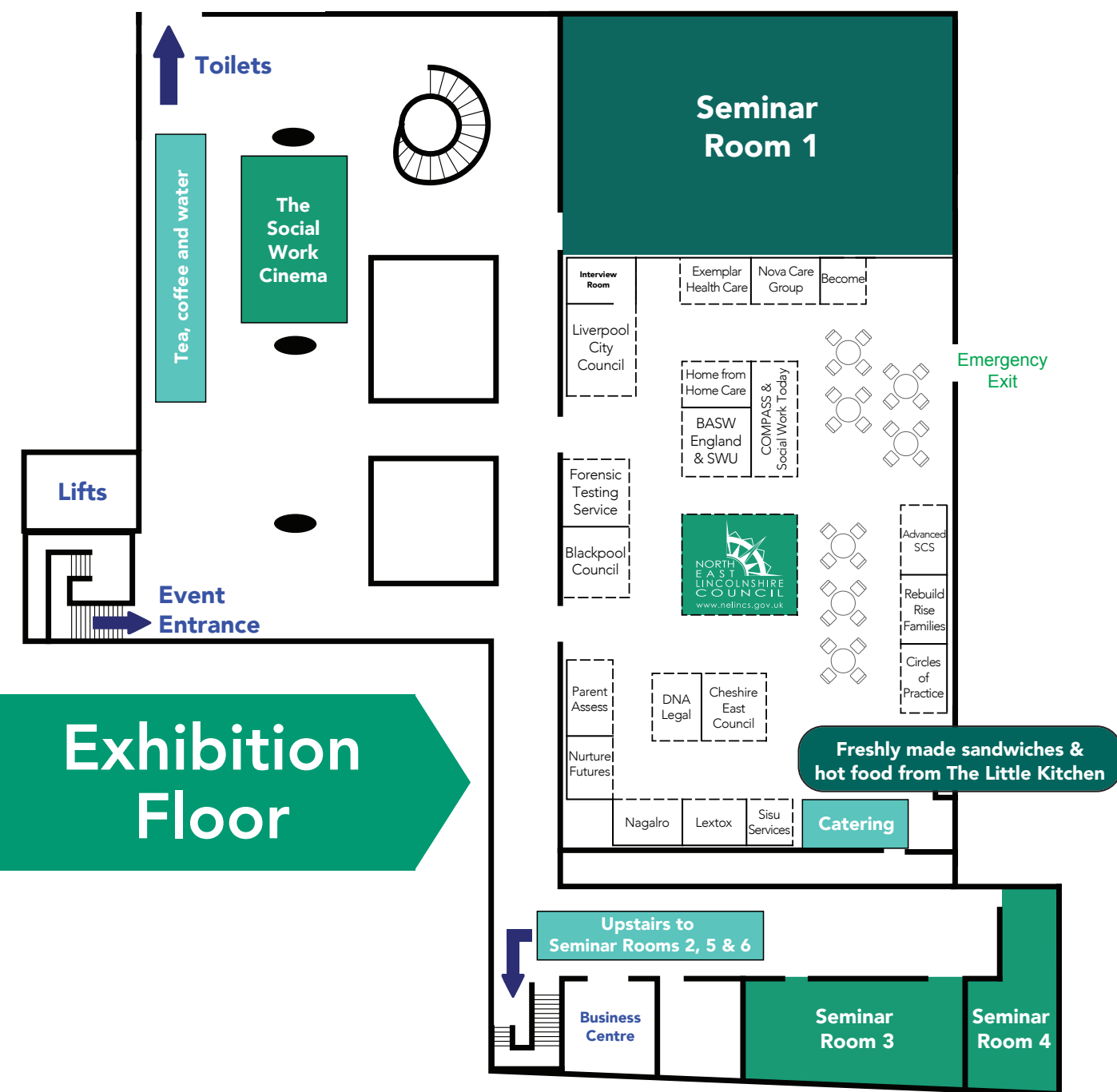
"Whether I am preparing you for a difficult meeting or helping you rebuild after a crisis, my mission is to equip you and your family with understanding the social care journey and most importantly helping you understand how you and your family got to the position.

"The mission is to offer as much support as possible to give you and your family the best outcomes possible. We hope to empower you to have a voice with professional integrity and deep compassion."

Together, we hope to help you and your loved ones navigate your journey toward a stronger and more stable future for you and your children.



Event Plan



The Social Work Show

28 September, Manchester Deansgate Hotel



Seminar Room 1

10.00 – 10.40
Anti-discriminatory practice in 2026
Dr Neil Thompson, Independent Writer, Educator and Adviser

11.00 – 11.40 **KEYNOTE**
Leading change, transforming lives through relational practice
Ann-Marie Matson, Director of Children's Services, North East Lincolnshire Council

12.00 – 1.00 **PANEL SESSION**
How do we keep our social workers? The challenges for social work in England's coastal regions
Host: Dave Callow, SWU General Secretary
Panellists: Prof Jermaine Ravalier, Dr Joe Hanley, Dr Paulina Wagrzynek, Dr Nazm Berry, Marria Riaz

1.10 – 1.50
People, Problems, and Potential: Managing change in social work and social care
Dr Neil Thompson, Independent Writer, Educator and Adviser

2.00 – 3.15 **PANEL SESSION**
Leadership in the helping professions: Embracing emotional complexity
Host: Claudia Megele, social work leader, researcher and author
Panellists: Chris Wild, Tim Fisher, Kayleigh Rose Evans, Samantha Russell

Exhibition Floor

Seminar Room 2

10.00 – 10.40
Courageous Conversations: Meaningful direct work with children and young people
Emily Bailey and Shannen Slevin, Practice Leads, Liverpool City Council

11.00 – 11.40
Not just a placement decision, the impact on real lives: Good care from the perspective of service users
Exemplar Health Care's Service User Ambassadors

1.00 – 1.40
Who holds the pen? AI, professional judgement and the future of social work
Claudia Megele, national social work leader, researcher and author

2.00 – 2.40
Good supervision: Developing practice through learning and reflection
Julie Bettany, Principal Social Worker, North East Lincolnshire Council

3.20 – 4.00
Holding Fast: Innovation, connection and diversity in challenging times
Dr Beverley Barnett-Jones MBE, Nurture Futures

Upper Floor

Seminar Room 3

10.00 – 10.40
Professional identity in social work
Wayne Reid, Professional Officer, BASW England

11.40 – 12.20
Understanding grooming and the normalisation of intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse
Claire Connors, Trainer, ParentAssess

12.40 – 1.20
Parents who experience repeated separations: A lived experience approach, leading with hope
Bertie Goffe, Blackpool Council

2.10 – 2.50
"But what do social workers do?" The value of social work in multi-disciplinary practice
Denise Monks, Professional Officer, BASW England

3.10 – 3.50
Children's social care reforms: Is your practice ready for the future?
Harriet Malkin and Helen Davis, North East Lincolnshire Council

Exhibition Floor

Seminar Room 4

11.40 – 12.20
Working Together Differently: Equity and preventative support for neurodivergent people
Samantha Russell, Neurodivergent Social Worker and Educator, Practice Development Officer

12.40 – 1.20
What should you expect from being part of an Independent Social Work Panel?
Sandra Van Empel & Amanda Walsh, Independent Social Workers, Advanced SCS

1.40 – 2.20
Understanding FASD: Rethinking therapeutic care for neurodivergent children and families
Anna Webster, Trainer, Neurowise

2.50 – 3.30
The Forensic Lens: Gaining clarity in complex safeguarding cases
Steve Nurdin, Senior Account Manager, Forensic Testing Service

Exhibition Floor

Seminar Room 5

11.40 – 12.20
The Child the System Only Sees in Pieces: A lived-experience perspective on whole-child practice
Emma Mitchell, Founder, ELM Editions

12.40 – 1.20
Risk in child protection: Vagueness to validity
George Bull, Independent Social Worker

1.30 – 2.00
Setting up as an independent social worker: Practical tips
Vicki Shevlin, Independent Social Worker

3.30 – 4.00
Connecting meaningfully with families and avoiding "assessment robot" mode
Vicki Shevlin, Social Work Trainer

Upper Floor

Seminar Room 6

10.20 – 11.00
Strategies for interview success
Vicki Shevlin, Social Work Trainer

11.40 – 12.20
Before you knock: Confidence and safety in home visits
Vicki Shevlin, Social Work Trainer

1.40 – 2.20
What About Me?: Reconnecting with the social worker you were when you qualified
Joe Z Mairura, Independent Trainer

2.40 – 3.20
Understanding madness: A new psychosocial model of mental health in practice and theory
Dr Robert Murphy, Author

Upper Floor

Social Work Cinema

As a way of extending our free programme, this area offers a selection of short films and pre-recorded webinars:

10.00
What's Your Job? A series
North East Lincolnshire Council

10.30
"I'm feeding my chickens whilst talking to children"
Interview with Victoria, Social Worker, North East Lincolnshire Council

12.40
Family justice 2030: What a Child needs Webinar
Nuffield Family Justice Observatory

2.10
Safeguarding Adults Reviews – themes and implications from a national analysis
Mental Capacity Law and Policy

2.40
Should social workers be named in the media?
Social Work Sorted

3.15
Getting yourself active in care environments
Disability Rights UK

3.30
Why co-production matters in social care
SCIE

3.35
Language in social work
IRISS

3.40
Making things more equal: Tackling Inequalities
SCIE

3.45
Deprivation of liberty – the fundamentals
Mental Capacity Law and Policy

Upper Floor



Collect your CPD certificate from 4pm

Conference Programme

Find your way around the conference

See the full event plan on page 10

Seminar Room 1 next to Exhibition Hall	Seminar Rooms 2, 5 & 6 upstairs	Seminar Rooms 3, 4 & the SW Cinema on the Exhibition Floor
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10.00 - 10.40 Seminar Room 1	Developing anti-discriminatory practice in 2026 Dr Neil Thompson, Independent Writer, Educator and Adviser & Visiting Professor, The Open University  Consideration of issues relating to discrimination and oppression can give rise to considerable anxiety, confusion and concern, partly because of the complexities involved and partly because of the legacy of earlier oversimplified and aggressive approaches to the subject matter. This seminar seeks to dispel that legacy, establish clearly why tackling discrimination and oppression is not an optional extra and offer guidance on how to make constructive progress in 2026. Dr Neil Thompson is highly respected for his longstanding and highly influential work in this area. He emphasises the importance of allyship and the need for people to come together in wrestling with these issues.
10.00 - 10.40 Seminar Room 2	Courageous Conversations: Meaningful direct work with children and young people Emily Bailey and Shannen Slevin, Practice Leads, Workforce Academy, Liverpool City Council  Difficult conversations are an essential part of social work, yet they can be challenging to navigate with confidence and compassion. This session explores how meaningful direct work can create opportunities for courageous conversations with children and young people about their experiences, wishes and worries. Through hands-on activities and reflective discussions, attendees will build confidence in exploring sensitive issues, addressing concerns and handling conflict.
10.00 - 10.40 Seminar Room 3	Professional identity in social work Wayne Reid, Professional Officer, BASW England  In a profession facing increasing complexity, scrutiny and change, how do we stay connected to our values, purpose and identity? Join Wayne Reid, Professional Officer and Social Worker at BASW England, for an engaging, thought-provoking session that explores what it truly means to be a social worker today. This inspiring presentation examines how professional identity is shaped by our values, ethics, lived experiences, organisational cultures and the evolving landscape of social work practice. Drawing on contemporary research, practice wisdom and real experiences from practitioners, Wayne will challenge participants to reflect on the factors that strengthen – and sometimes undermine – our sense of professional self. The session also shines a light on the impact of racism and inequality within the profession, exploring the experiences of Black and Global Majority social workers, practice educators and students and considers how the Shades of Bias resource was created to address this and how this relates to professional identity. Expect honest conversations. Critical reflection. Practical insights. And a renewed sense of pride in the profession. Don't miss this opportunity to reconnect with your professional identity - and help shape the future of social work.
10.20 - 11.00 Seminar Room 6	Strategies for interview success Vicki Shevlin, Social Work Trainer, COMPASS  Whether you're a seasoned professional or just starting out, this session will cover everything you need to know to shine in your next interview. Learn practical tips for managing nerves and anxiety, effective responses to interview questions, and showcasing your unique personality. Discover how your social work skills are transferable to interview scenarios and gain confidence in your ability to communicate your qualifications. You'll leave feeling calm, confident and ready for your social work interview.

Conference Programme

11.00 - 11.40 Seminar Room 1	KEYNOTE SESSION Leading change, transforming lives through relational practice Ann-Marie Matson, Director of Children's Services, North East Lincolnshire Council  Join Ann-Marie Matson, Director of Children's Services, as she shares North East Lincolnshire's transformation journey. Discover how courageous leadership, a relational practice model, workforce investment and a relentless focus on children and families have driven improvement, strengthened practice and created a service where children, families and staff can thrive.
11.00 - 11.40 Seminar Room 2	Not just a placement decision, the impact on real lives: Good care from the perspective of service users Exemplar Health Care Service User Ambassadors  In this session, Exemplar Health Care's Service User Ambassadors share their lived experiences of moving through services, including what works, what doesn't, and what truly makes a difference to their lives. Through real stories, they'll explore what it feels like when care isn't joined up - and how the right support, environment and relationships can help rebuild confidence, independence, and stability. You'll hear directly about the impact of decisions made at referral stage, what people value most when moving into a new home, and how small conversations can shape long-term outcomes. The session will challenge and support you to reflect on key questions, and consider how to ensure the person - not just the placement - stays at the centre of every decision.
11.40 - 12.20 Seminar Room 3	Understanding grooming and the normalisation of intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse Claire Connors, Trainer, ParentAssess  This seminar explores the process of grooming and how it can contribute to the normalisation of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Participants will examine the dynamics of grooming and normalisation, including how these behaviours may be linked to experiences of childhood and adult trauma. The seminar will review recent Serious Case Reviews to identify key learning points and explore how indicators of child sexual abuse were overlooked or missed. Emphasis will be placed on understanding and amplifying the voice of the child, enabling practitioners to recognise signs of harm and engage in open, curious, and supportive conversations with parents and carers. The aim of the seminar is to equip practitioners with the knowledge, confidence, and practical strategies needed to work effectively with families where child sexual abuse is a concern. It will provide guidance on discussing risk with parents and carers, supporting professional curiosity, and promoting safeguarding interventions that prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children.
11.40 - 12.20 Seminar Room 4	Working together differently: Equity and preventative support for neurodivergent people Samantha Russell, Neurodivergent Social Worker, Educator, and Practice Development Officer  This session explores how reasonable adjustments and inclusive practice can support neurodivergent people to thrive across all aspects of life, including accessing social care services, employment, education and community opportunities. Drawing on the principles of the Care Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010 and strengths-based practice, participants will explore how the duty to prevent, reduce and delay needs for care and support can be applied through practical, person-centred adjustments. The session will consider how the Equality Act 2010 can promote equity and help identify and remove barriers faced by neurodivergent people and staff. Participants will develop greater confidence in having strengths-based conversations about neurodiversity, wellbeing and support needs, while considering how early conversations and appropriate adjustments can prevent distress, reduce the risk of burnout and help prevent needs from escalating.

Collect your CPD certificate at 4.00pm from the COMPASS stand in the Exhibition Hall

Conference Programme

11.40 - 12.20
Seminar Room 5

The child the system only sees in pieces: A lived-experience perspective on whole-child practice

Emma Mitchell, Founder, ELM Editions

Children and families can become fragmented across professional systems, with each service holding a valid piece of the story but no one necessarily holding the whole picture. Drawing on Emma Mitchell's lived experience of foster and residential care, 16 years' experience within the care sector, and her experience as a parent navigating education, health and social-care systems for a child with invisible needs, this practical session explores what happens when the system sees the child in pieces.

The session will consider how professionals can distinguish observations, professional interpretation, family knowledge and the child's own voice, while identifying what may be missing from a single-service or single-incident picture. It will explore practical ways to reduce unnecessary repeated storytelling, turn information into clear actions and ownership, and maintain continuity when professionals or services change.



11.40 - 12.20
Seminar Room 6

Before you knock: Confidence and safety in home visits

Vicki Shevlin, Social Work Trainer, COMPASS

Home visits are not simple, especially in safeguarding. Entering someone's home means stepping into their world. It requires sensitivity, self-awareness, and practical preparation.

This seminar explores what happens before you knock, focusing on how practitioners can prepare mentally, emotionally and practically for visits that may carry risk, uncertainty or emotional intensity.

Participants will learn how to take five minutes to plan for safety — including assessing known risks, considering travel logistics and thinking about when to visit alone or with a colleague. The session will also cover communication strategies such as leaving written notes or letters appropriately and ethically, maintaining confidentiality, and providing families with clear, compassionate messages even when contact isn't made.

Equally important, the seminar will offer grounding and self-regulation techniques that help social workers bring calm and presence into the home. From mindful breathing to managing tone and pace of speech, participants will discover small but powerful ways to build trust and de-escalate tense situations.



12.00 - 1.00
Seminar Room 1

PANEL SESSION

How do we keep our social workers? Recruitment and retention of social workers in England's coastal regions

Hosted by Dave Callow, Social Workers Union

Panellists: Professor Jermaine Ravalier, Dr Joe Hanley, Dr Paulina Wegrzynek, Dr Nazm Berry, Marria Riaz

Social work in coastal areas has high vacancy rates, reliance on agency staff, and good people leaving faster than you can replace them. This talk shares findings from an NIHR-funded programme that set out to understand why coastal areas seem to get hit harder than most — and what's actually working to turn things around.

The headline finding is that pay isn't the main driver of people leaving. What matters more is whether workers feel supported day to day: manageable caseloads, supervision that actually helps rather than just monitors, and a sense they're not on their own. In coastal teams, which tend to be smaller and more spread out, isolation is a bigger factor than in cities — workers often don't have a critical mass of peers nearby to lean on, share cases with, or learn from.

The talk will walk through what retention actually looks like in practice in the coastal authorities we studied — the things managers did that made a measurable difference — and what to avoid. We'll finish with practical recommendations you can take back to your own teams, plus a look at what this means for how workforce funding and support should be targeted going forward.

This is a findings-first, practice-focused session — less theory, more "here's what worked and why"



Collect your CPD certificate at 4.00pm from the COMPASS stand in the Exhibition Hall

Conference Programme

12.40 - 1.20
Seminar Room 3

Parents who experience repeated separations: A lived experience approach, leading with hope

Bertie Goffe, Workforce Development & Inspection Readiness Lead, Blackpool Council

Blackpool has some of the highest rates of families with parents who experience separations from their babies. Over the last two years we've been trying a new approach that is still in development — WAVES.

WAVES is a therapeutic offer supporting parents to recognise and recover from trauma, it is complimented by support from parents with lived experience ('Parent Supporters'), supporting parents in pregnancy and after babies are born. We have been supported by a wider leadership culture to start small, learn and grow slowly, and we are constantly learning from this new approach. The team have time to build relationships, understand parents' histories in ways we haven't done before and ultimately to be hopeful. This session will share what we have learned so far.



12.40 - 1.20
Seminar Room 4

What should you expect from being part of an Independent Social Work Panel?

Sandra Van Empel & Amanda Walsh, Independent Social Workers, Advanced SCS

What does good support actually look like? And how can quality assurance strengthen your practice without getting in the way of your professional judgement?

In this session, ASCS will explore what social workers should expect from the organisations they choose to work with. From access to varied opportunities and responsive support to our unique quality assurance model, we'll take an honest look at what sits behind a well-supported panel.

Whether you're considering independent work or already working on a panel, this session will ask an important question: are you getting the support you should be?



12.40 - 1.20
Seminar Room 5

Risk in child protection: Vagueness to validity

George Bull, Independent Social Worker

As social workers we are constantly dealing, talking about and assessing risk. Yet our language and thinking around risk is muddled leading to a misunderstanding of concepts and a false comfort in our actions and assessments.

George Bull, Independent Social Worker, suggests the clearest possible definitions of the key terms to ensure professional clarity. Uncertainty, Likelihood, and Risk are all defined and made explicit from one another, clearing up the foggy language that pervades our profession.

Utilizing the work of Munro and Sterenborg et al George discusses how we view risk in a social work context and how we can do better, ending with the hard question: at £16 Billion a year how much safety do we create as a profession? What else could we do instead?

1.00 - 1.40
Seminar Room 2

Who holds the pen? AI, professional judgement and the future of social work

Claudia Megele, national social work leader, researcher and author

Artificial Intelligence is transforming social work practice, offering opportunities to improve efficiency, recording, assessment writing and the analysis and communication of practice. From drafting assessments to summarising meetings, AI has the potential to reduce administrative burden, enhance efficiency, and free up more time for direct work with children, adults and families. However, it also raises important questions about professional judgement, digital competence, risks, and the future skills required of the workforce.

As AI becomes more embedded in practice, important questions emerge. Are we gaining efficiency at the expense of professional expertise? Could AI-generated content make assessments sound increasingly similar, dilute professional voice, weaken professional judgement, or overlook risk, complexity and uncertainty?

As technology begins to influence not only how social workers record practice, but also how they analyse information and formulate professional judgements, how do we ensure that critical thinking, curiosity and professional judgement remain at the heart of social work?

Based on her latest research into this area, Claudia Megele will explore how AI is influencing practice and consider how it can be used critically, ethically and responsibly. Most importantly, the session invites delegates to consider not only what AI can do for social work, but also what should remain distinctly and necessarily human within social work practice.



Conference Programme

1.10 - 1.50 Seminar Room 1	People, Problems, and Potential: Managing change in social work and social care Dr Neil Thompson, Independent Writer, Educator and Adviser & Visiting Professor, The Open University Social work and social care are under more pressure than ever. In this session, Dr Neil Thompson offers a framework for making sense of it – and makes a case for the kind of leadership development the field actually needs. Let's face it, social work and social care are not in the best of places these days. There have always been difficulties and challenges – that is the nature of the work – but the modern scene takes us well beyond the familiar. The problems and the barriers to progress have multiplied, and they will not resolve themselves.	
1.30 - 2.00 Seminar Room 5	Introduction to Independent Social Work Vicki Shevlin, Social Work Trainer Thinking about becoming an independent social worker but unsure where to start? This practical session offers an honest introduction to the realities of independent practice, helping practitioners understand the different routes into self-employed and freelance work. Whether you are actively considering independent practice or simply exploring your options for the future, this interactive session will conclude with an open Q&A, giving delegates the opportunity to discuss their own circumstances and ask the practical questions that matter most.	
1.40 - 2.20 Seminar Room 4	Understanding FASD: Rethinking therapeutic care for neurodivergent children and families Anna Webster, Neurodiversity Coaching Psychologist, Neurowise This session explores Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and its relationship with other forms of neurodiversity, including ADHD and autism. It will consider why traditional approaches do not always work for children and families affected by FASD and neurodiversity, and why social care practitioners may need to think differently about therapeutic care and support. The session will introduce the Neurowise SPARCS model, a brain-based approach to therapeutic care for neurodiversity and FASD. Drawing on its application in practice, the session will explore how a different approach can support children and families while helping professionals better understand their needs and respond in ways that promote more positive outcomes.	
1.40 - 2.20 Seminar Room 6	'What About Me?': Reconnecting with the social worker you were when you qualified Joe Z Mairura, Director, Imara Development Programmes This reflective workshop invites social workers to reconnect with the sense of purpose, enthusiasm and authenticity that brought them into the profession in the first place. It provides an opportunity to step back from the demands, expectations and pressures of professional and personal life and consider what their practice is telling them about how they are experiencing their role. Through guided reflection, participants will be encouraged to consider what they need to reclaim their energy, confidence and sense of purpose, and how reconnecting with themselves can contribute to more conscious and transformative social work practice.	
2.00 - 3.15 Seminar Room 1	PANEL SESSION Leadership in the helping professions: Embracing emotional complexity Hosted by Claudia Megele, national social work leader, researcher and author Panellists: Chris Wild, Tim Fisher, Kayleigh Rose Evans, Samantha Russell This session explores the different dimensions of leadership within the helping professions, recognising that effective leadership is shaped not only by formal roles and responsibilities, but also by relationships, influence, emotional complexity and lived experience. Through a series of quick-fire talks from experienced practitioners, educators, activists and practice leaders, the session will consider what leadership looks like in different contexts and why it matters at every level of professional practice. The quick-fire talks will explore: Emotional Complexity and Leadership; Relational Leadership; Leadership, Influence and Impact; Why Practitioners Need to Talk More About Leadership; and Neurodiversity and Leadership. The quick-fire talks will be followed by a panel discussion, giving attendees the opportunity to explore these themes further and put questions directly to the speakers.	

Conference Programme

2.00 - 2.40 Seminar Room 2	Good supervision: Developing practice through learning and reflection Julie Bettany, Deputy Service Director - Practice, Standards and Principal Social Worker, North East Lincolnshire Council North East Lincolnshire is committed to creating a culture of learning, support and professional excellence. Find out about the award-winning Foundations for Practice induction programme to leadership development, specialist training and CPD opportunities. Hear about how practitioners benefit from a strong learning culture, high-quality supervision, clear career pathways and opportunities to shape and influence practice while delivering ambitious children's social care reforms.	
2.10 - 2.50 Seminar Room 3	"But what do social workers do?" The value of social work in multi-disciplinary practice Denise Monks, Professional Officer, BASW England This interactive session will explore a question we've all been asked at some point—often by colleagues from different professional backgrounds—and one that can be surprisingly difficult to answer without simply listing tasks or functions. Yet we know that social work is so much more than that. Together, participants will examine the "golden thread" that defines us as social workers, and the unique value this brings—not only to the people we support, but also to our colleagues and the wider communities we serve.	
2.40 - 3.20 Seminar Room 6	Understanding madness: A new psychosocial model of mental health in practice and theory Dr Robert Murphy, Author, Mad in the UK In this session, Dr Murphy invites participants to understand how they might achieve a mind of their own despite the pitfalls they encounter on their journey through life. He sets aside psychiatric diagnoses and psychological conditions which medicalise and pathologise our feelings, thoughts, and actions. Instead, he focuses on madness as a state of mind we can all experience if distressing and disturbing circumstances conspire to overwhelm us and 'drive us crazy'. He emphasises that madness is a temporary and not a permanent state of mind, providing we can understand the source of our overwhelming feelings and thoughts, and the reasons for our actions. Becoming conscious of the source of each feeling can then signpost a way through our madness.	
2.50 - 3.30 Seminar Room 4	The Forensic Lens: Gaining clarity in complex safeguarding cases Steve Nurdin, Senior Account Manager, Forensic Testing Service In the complex world of social care and safeguarding, the difference between a life-changing decision and a missed opportunity often lies in the quality of the evidence. When a family's narrative is complex and the risks are high, social workers need more than just data—they need clarity. Join Forensic Testing Service (FTS) for an insightful session on how advanced forensic testing acts as a powerful lens, cutting through the "noise" of difficult cases. We will explore how to move beyond basic lab results to achieve a deeper, more accurate understanding of substance misuse and risk.	
3.10 - 3.50 Seminar Room 3	Children's social care reforms: Is your practice ready for the future? Harriet Malkin, Deputy Service Director, Safeguarding and Disability Help, Protection, Care, Care Leavers; and Helen Davis, Children's Strategic Lead, North East Lincolnshire Council This informative session will explore the national children's social care reform agenda and what it means for practitioners entering and progressing through the profession. Attendees will gain an understanding of key developments, including the Families First Partnership Programme, the Kinship Zone and Social Work National Professional Development Offer and the evolving role of practice leadership. Drawing on North East Lincolnshire's approach to workforce development, the seminar will consider how organisations can support early career practitioners to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to thrive in a changing landscape, while ensuring the workforce is equipped to deliver the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families.	

Conference programme

3.20 - 4.00
Seminar Room 2

Holding Fast: Innovation, connection and diversity in challenging times

Dr Beverley Barnett-Jones MBE, Nurture Futures

This workshop explores why understanding diversity, identity and inequality remain central to effective social work practice, particularly at a time when Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives are increasingly challenged.

Drawing on the Professional Standards for Social Workers and the soon-to-be implemented Early Career Framework, including Standard 4: Explores Identity to Deliver Anti-Discriminatory Practice, the session argues that cultural humility, anti-discriminatory practice and understanding identity are not only professional responsibilities, but the catalyst which sparked the most innovative social work practices and innovations we have witnessed these last 15 years.

Through practice examples and an interactive Strength Ring exercise, participants will reflect on the qualities needed to lead and practise effectively in challenging times, including courage, curiosity, integrity, hope, and cultural humility.

The session will encourage social workers, educators, and leaders to remain anchored to evidence, ethics and human dignity while continuing to innovate, connect and create better outcomes for children and families.



3.30 - 4.00
Seminar Room 5

Connecting meaningfully with families and avoiding "assessment robot" mode

Vicki Shevlin, Social Work Trainer

Assessments can be among the most challenging aspects of social work practice, particularly for newly-qualified practitioners. This session offers a practical and reflective approach to building confidence in assessment, planning and recording.

Vicki will explore why assessment work can feel overwhelming in the early stages of practice and explain how a clear understanding of statutory guidance and local authority policies can support sound professional decision-making, particularly when navigating disagreements or uncertainty.

Through practical examples and actionable advice, attendees will leave with greater confidence in approaching child and family assessments, applying professional judgement, and producing assessments that are both evidence-informed and person-centred.



The Social Work Cinema

As an innovative way of extending our free programme, *the Social Work Cinema* offers a selection of short films, pre-recorded webinars and digital content covering a wide range of topics.

Looking at Life: Artwork by care-experienced people serving prison sentences will be showcased between screenings.

What's Your Job? A series	10.00	Getting yourself active in care environments	3.15
"I'm feeding my chickens whilst talking to children" An interview	10.30	Why co-production matters in social care	3.30
Family justice 2030: What a child needs webinar	12.40	Language in social work	3.35
Safeguarding Adults Reviews: Themes and implications	2.10	Making things more equal: Tackling inequalities	3.40
Should social workers be named in the media?	2.40	Deprivation of liberty: The fundamentals	3.45



See you at our next event...

The Social Work Show

Birmingham 15 March

"Great event with many interested candidates wanting to work for us. I would definitely recommend it. We can't wait to join the next event!" *Service Manager*

A COMPASS event


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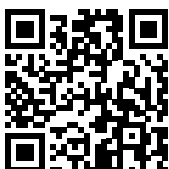

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