



Greater Manchester Social Work Academy Newsletter - Autumn 2025



1 - Meet the GMSWA Team (Click to view)

Janine McLoughlin - Project Lead Mobile: 07824475918, Email: Janine.Mcloughlin@bolton.gov.uk

Frances Bassett Mobile: 07385 534379, Email: Frances.Bassett@bolton.gov.uk

GMSWA Website: GMSWA

GMSWA Email: GMSWA@bolton.gov.uk

Together we work across Greater Manchester with our partners from our four Universities and ten Local authorities for both Children and Families, Adults and Mental Health sectors. Our Goal is to collaboratively to equip social workers at all stages of their career with the tools and experience they need to give the best service to the people and families of Greater Manchester.

Return to Social Work



With funding from the North West Regional Improvement Plan Pilot, we launched our Return to Social Work Course in collaboration with Cheshire and Merseyside Teaching Partnership. Teaching started in April 2025 with supervised placements following from May onwards.

2025 Highlights:

- 36 Students
- 100% satisfied with the Course
- 100% Planning to return to Social Work position in Greater Manchester
- 80% Planning to return to Social Work position in Cheshire and Merseyside

- 10 students to date have registered with Social Work England and have secured jobs
- Remaining students in the process of completing placements/ re registering

Return to Social Work 2026 - Funding now secured

Following the success of our 2025 cohort, we have secured funding for another cohort for 2026 and are widening our regional collaboration to include Blackpool.

- **Regions** included: Greater Manchester/ Cheshire and Merseyside and Blackpool.
- **45 places** – split between the 3 regions (15 each).
- Teaching to commence on **9th – 12th Feb 2026**
- Employability day – **16th June 2026**
- Supervised practice placements to start from **April 2026**.
- **48** RTSW enquires/ contacts received since April 2025.

Applications now open: [Return to Social Work \(2026 entry\) | The University of Manchester](#)

Closing date for applications: 26th January 2026

Please help us to promote this course across the region and share details with any social work colleagues who are no longer registered who are wishing to return to practice.

Practice Learning Updates



Social Work Placements

Over the summer we began our placement planning, with 250+ final year social work placements needed across the partnership, we are on target to meet this demand thanks to our employer partners allocating placements and supporting the training of practice educators.

Placement Feedback from our students, collated via the QAPL (Quality Assurance in Practice Learning) demonstrates the high quality social work placements that we provide along with fantastic Practice Educators:

- **Final placement rated good or more: 95%**
- **Recommend their placement: 95%**
- **Recommend their PE: 97%**

NON DRIVING STUDENTS

We are expecting to have a higher number of non driving (final year) student social workers for 25/26. Therefore we need all employer partners to continue to support placement opportunities for non driving students – reminder below of Employer Placement Commitment:

Percentage (of expected placements offered to non drivers)

- LA/ Organisation with **Large and strong** transport infrastructures: **Manchester**
- Non driving placement **target is 60%** (Split between Children 30% and Adults 30%).
- LA/ Organisation with **good** transport infrastructures: **Bury/ Oldham/ Rochdale/ Salford/ Tameside/ Trafford**
- Non driving placement **target is 35%** (Split between Children 17.5% and Adults 17.5%)
- LA/ Organisation with **average** transport infrastructures (lack tram): **Bolton/ Stockport/ Wigan**
- Non driving placement **target is 20%** (Split between Children 10% and Adults 10%)



2 - NEW PE Mentor Training

NEW Practice Educator Mentor Training

Our collaborative programme developed with Cheshire and Merseyside Teaching Partnership. Launched in October, offering training for new PE Mentors and Experienced PE Mentors.

Future Dates for Training are:

New Mentors: 29th January 2025

Experienced Mentors: 11th Dec 2025 and 3rd March 2026.

Further information and how to be book can be found on the website: [GMSWA Practice Education Training Programme – GMSWA](#)

Practice Educator Training and CPD

Our training brochure is updated and available on our website <https://gmswa.co.uk/cpd/> this includes details of our Practice Educator Training and our Practice Educator and Student Masterclasses which can be booked via Eventbrite

Practice Educator Masterclasses: [Click here](#)

Student Masterclasses: [Click here](#)

We are continuing to work with our colleagues at Cheshire and Merseyside to look how we can support and share resources for Practice Educators, we will keep you posted on any developments.

Workforce and CPD Updates



Social Work Relational Leadership Programme

Our 5 day programme designed and delivered by Ali Gardner (Director of Head, Heart and Hands in Practice) and Siobhan Maclean (Kirwin Maclean associates) was developed to support social work managers and leaders to embed relational approaches, develop positive relationships with teams when working change and complexity, and supporting the supervisory relationship with team members.

The **Adult cohort** started in May 2025 and concluded in September

Highlights:

- **27** managers/ leaders completed the course
- **100%** found the course beneficial to their leadership development needs

Positive feedback Impacts:

- **Intervision & Supervision Models:** Widely appreciated by the group and implemented in practice.
- **Reflection Techniques:** “Head, heart, hands” and “Stretchy square” were mentioned as valuable tools to take into practice.
- **Situational Leadership:** Recognised as a key takeaway for adapting leadership styles.
- **Identity & Values:** Reflection on personal and professional identity was impactful to the group.

The **Children and Families cohort** started in September with 30 managers/ leaders from across our GM local authorities enrolled, this cohort will run through to February 2026.

Practice/ Research Month - Safeguarding and Mental Capacity 2025

Our CPD programme for our third Practice/ Research month is now ready and has been shared across our networks, it has been very popular with many workshops selling out in the first week. Therefore we are seeking to have some workshops repeated in March for our World Social Work Month events.

For the full event programme and how to book: [Click here to Book](#)

Workshops include:

- Neil Allen - Hoarding, Capacity and Court of Protection
- Mark Cooper - Mental Capacity - Back to basics - The Mental Capacity Assessment
- Lads like us - Trauma informed Practice

- Dewis Choice - Dementia and Domestic abuse - Improving responses
- Salford Council - Mental Capacity - best interest decision making
- Wigan Council - Making Safeguarding personal
- Wigan Council - Supporting survivors of Domestic abuse
- Children's Society - Financial exploitation of children and young people

The Children's Society are hosting a series of free CPD events on Child Exploitation and abuse as part of their #lookcloser campaign, see below:

- **Safeguarding transgender young people from exploitation:** Tuesday 18th Nov 10am - 12pm, [Click here to book](#)
- **Anti racist practice to tackle child exploitation:** Thursday 11th Dec 1pm - 3pm, [Click here to book](#)

Career Fair 2026

University of Salford will be hosting our Annual Careers Fair on **Thursday 5th March** - planning is underway, where we have GM employer stalls, ASYE workshops, Interview workshops and CV/ Application workshops for students.

Full details and how to book as a student or for a stall will be shared soon.



4 - Careers Fair 2026

Mental Health and AMHP Group Updates



On **Tuesday 21st October** we held our first Greater Manchester Mental health Social Work Conference at the Pendulum Hotel in Manchester. What a fantastic day it was! Our focus was on communities and strength based practice in mental health.

We had a jam packed programme with keynote speakers, VCSE stalls, workshops and updates from our strategic leaders for Mental Health. Resources and a highlight video from this event will be available on our Mental Health website page: [GMSWA Mental Health](#)

Highlights:

- 125 Social Workers attended
- 8 Mental Health VCSE stalls

Keynotes from:

- Mick Ward from Nurture Development - The neighbourhood as the primary unit of health.
- Dr Matt Gaskell from North West Gambling Service - Gambling Harm: A public health emergency behind closed doors.
- Denise Monks - BASW - The Mental Health Act and what it might mean for practice

Workshops from:

- Lads like us - Trauma Informed Practice.

- Dr Colin King - Drapetomania and Whiteness in psychiatric care
- Mick Ward - ABCD Model - Challenges and implementation

Summary of intended actions from our social workers following the conference:

- Integrating **gambling-related questions** into assessments
- Promoting **ABCD principles** within teams
- Sharing **resources and learning** with colleagues
- Enhancing **trauma-informed approaches** in practice
- Advocating for **anti-racist and culturally aware practices**
- Reflecting on **personal and professional identity** as social workers
- Encouraging **community connections** and co-production

Comments from Attendees:

"A great event, my first time at anything like this for mental health social work and I hope there will be more events to come"

"I thoroughly enjoyed the conference, the variety of speakers, workshops and stalls was great"

AMHP Conference

Our third Mental Health AMHP conference is happening on **Friday 12th December** at Friends' Meeting House in Manchester. The focus for this event is AMHP and Interpreters working together in MHA assessments and the Right Care Right Person Model. We have confirmed our keynote speakers:

- Professor Alys Young (University of Manchester)
- Professor Sarah Vicary (Open University)
- Dr Rebecca Tipton (University of Manchester)
- Dr Ceila Hulme (University of Manchester)
- Dr Natalia Rodriguez Vicente (University of Essex)
- PhD student Michael Brown OBE (University of Birmingham)

Full details and how to book will be shared Early November across our AMHP network.

AI and Social Work

Following actions from our Governance Board, noting the increasing use of AI in social work, we have collaborated with Josh Behan- Delvin and Dr Pat Cartney at the University of Manchester to submit a UKRI Impact Accelerator Account (IAA) starter fund proposal.

Objectives of the proposal are to:

- Scope current practice arrangements for how AI tools in social work are currently used across GMSWA employers partners
- Develop and share understanding of the benefits and challenges of AI for employer partners
- Identify opportunities to strengthen social work practice and education in this area.
- Produce a report to consolidate and to disseminate locally held knowledge to wider stakeholders.

Our Governance Board have agreed to support the proposal and the engagement with employer partners to participate in online workshops.

We will share funding updates hopefully in November and workshops details will follow soon after. Please do support us by participating in this research.

