

Journey of Professional Social Work in UK and USA

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INTRODUCTION

Social work is a profession for those with a strong desire to help improve people's lives. They assist people by helping them cope with issues in their everyday lives, deal with their relationships, and solve personal and family problems. This is a profession in which trained professionals are devoted to helping vulnerable people and communities work through challenges they face in everyday life. Social workers practice in a wide variety of settings, united in their commitment to advocating for and improving the lives of individuals, families, groups and societies. Social workers are found in every facet of community life, including schools, hospitals, mental health clinics, senior citizens, elected office, private practices, prisons, military, corporations, and in numerous public and private agencies.

Historical Development of Social Work in United Kingdom (UK)

The history of social work in the UK is a complex storyline shaped by evolving attitudes toward "poverty, welfare, and social justice". From the early role of the Church to the establishment of the modern welfare state, significant developments like the Elizabethan Poor Law, the Poor Law Revisions, and the Beveridge Report have influenced the field of social work. Voluntary organizations such as the COS and the Settlement House Movement further emphasized the need for both individual support and broader social reforms. Understanding these historical foundations provides essential insights into modern social work and the challenges that continue to shape the profession today. The late 1960s and early 1970s was a remarkable period in the growth and development

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of social work in the UK. This period was a particularly historic moment which marked the formal recognition of the emerging profession itself. Seven professional associations (the Association of Child Care Officers, the Association of Family Case Workers, the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, the Association of Social Workers, the Institute of Medical Social Workers, the Moral Welfare Workers' Association and the Society of Mental Welfare Officers) came together to establish "The British Association of Social Workers (BASW)". Social work research and social work education were not far behind. Early in 1971, the first issue of the British Journal of Social Work (BJSW) was published, and a few years later, the new Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) discharged its first qualified workers into newly created, unified Social Services (Social Work in Scotland) Departments. A new profession with an ambitious brief was born, eager to claim its place on a public service landscape dominated by other long-established occupations other long-established occupations. (Grant et al 2020)

1597	The Tillage Act	Criticized those lords who had converted land to pasture and he lamented the decay in tillage in the country.
1601	The Elizabethan Poor Laws	It categorized the poor into three groups: The Able-Bodied Poor – those who could work and were expected to do so. The Impotent Poor – individuals unable to work due to age or disability. Dependent Children – young individuals who required support.(Cree, 2002)
1795	The Speenhamland System	Introduced to alleviate poverty, this System supplemented wages with parish payments, adjusted based on bread prices and family size.
1834	The Poor Law Amendment Act of	It centralized control of poor relief under the newly formed Poor Law Commission, reducing the influence of local parishes. Grouped into: Deserving poor and ‘Undeserving poor (Cree, 2002)
1869	Charity Organization Society(COS)	COS was formed to regulate charity and almsgiving and give it an organized structure.
1875	Settlement house created in East Landon	Samuel A Barnett and A Toybee attempted to create an environment in which they could aid the poor working class through education.
1903	Social work education	The first social work training programs emerged, including the London School of Economics’ (LSE) social administration program.
1908	Subsequent Reforms	Introduction of old-age pensions in 1908, sought to address the inadequacies of the Poor Law system
1919	National Council of Social Services	This council aimed to promote social services and voluntary work.
1940	Youth Employment Service	This service marked the beginning of government-funded social work training.
1942	Beveridge Report	Beveridge identified five «Giant Evils» in society: Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor, and Idleness. Beveridge proposed a comprehensive social insurance system funded by the state to provide «cradle to grave» protection.
1948	Ministry of Health	Introduced the «Training of Social Workers» scheme, which led to the establishment of social work courses at universities.
1948	National Health Service (NHS)	NHS report laid the groundwork for the creation of the NHS in 1948, which provided free healthcare for all citizens.
1962	Training	Social work training become more formalized with the introduction of the certificate of qualification in social work
1964	British Association of Social Workers (BASW) founded	BASW played a crucial role in promoting social work education and its professionalization.
1965	Standing conference of organizations of social worker	Aimed to promote cooperation and standard among social work organization.
1971	1. Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW)	CCETSW regulated social work education and training.
1990	Care in the Community	Aimed to shift care from institutional settings to community-based services
2001	General Social Care Council (GSCC):	GSCC registered and regulated social workers in England.
2010	Social Work Reform Board Established	This board aimed to reform social work education and practice.
2012	The College of Social Work	This college provided a professional body for social workers.
2019	Social Work England	This regulates social work education, training, and practice in England.
21st Century (2000-present)	1. Personalization and co-production: 2. Austerity and funding cuts: 3. Digital social work:	1. Personalization and co-production have become key principles in social work, emphasizing user-led services and collaborative practice. 2. Austerity measures and funding cuts have significantly impacted social services, leading to increased pressure on social workers and reduced services. 3. It has emerged, with increased use of technology to deliver services, communicate with users, and enhance practice.

Historical Development of Professional Social Work in USA

The history of social work in America begins with the development of public programs during the 1840s and 1850s to address the issues of poverty in big cities, mainly due to their rapid growth and the large influx of immigrant populations that were steadily arriving in the United States. The inception of the social work profession in the US can be traced back to the late “nineteenth century” beginning with charity work performed by local churches and communities hoping to meet the needs of the poor. (Nsonwu, Casey, Cook & Armendariz, 2013). Many innovative individuals began to raise voice about social injustices during the rise of the industrial revolution.

Many major cities wanted to attract business, so taxation was kept to a minimum. This left little or no money to provide social services for the poor. This lack of protections for the most vulnerable Americans caused progressives to criticize the lack of government intervention and involvement in social welfare. Stanton Coit founded the first settlement house, University Settlement, in New York City’s lower east side in 1886 after he toured settlement houses of England (Trolander, 1991). Jane Addams founded Hull-House in 1889 in Chicago. Hull-House was a successful settlement house located in an area that was largely populated by poor working immigrants. Residents of Hull-House were provided with multiple services including day-care and kindergarten for children, a library, art classes, adult literacy courses, music, and various other facilities (Paul, 2016).

1861–1928	Mary Ellen Richmond	Regarded as the mother of professional social work along with Jane Addams, founded social case work, the first method of social work and was herself a Caseworker. Important books she published : <i>Friendly Visiting among the Poor in 1899</i> , <i>Social Diagnosis in 1917</i> and <i>What is Social Case Work in 1922</i> (Leighninger, 2019)
1860 to 1935	Jane Addams	To open Hull House in Chicago in 1889. Hull House was one of the first American settlements to provide services for immigrants and the poor. She had served as the first female president of what’s now known as the National Conference on Social Welfare, established the National Federation of Settlements.
1880 to 1965	Frances Perkins	In 1909, seven years after beginning her pursuit into social work, Perkins launched an investigation on childhood malnutrition among school children in New York’s Hell’s Kitchen.
1912 to 2010	Dorothy Height	Height helped organize the seminal March on Washington protest in 1963, established the YWCA Center for Racial Justice in 1965, and helped launch the National Women’s Political Caucus in 1971
1879	Charity Organisation Society	The first COS in the US was established to regulate private charity.
1886	settlement house	The first settlement house was established in the US by Stanton Coit which came to be known as <i>Neighbourhood Guild</i> .
1889	<i>settlement house movement</i>	The year 1889 marked the establishment of the Hull House by Jane Adams and Ellen Gates Starr in Chicago to reduce the gap between different socioeconomic classes.
1895	Chicago University	Started to impart training to people working for the poor.
1898	Columbia University	social work class was offered in the summer, social workers have led the way developing private and charitable organizations to serve people in need. Social workers continue to address the needs of society and bring our nation’s social problems to the public’s attention
1900	Term social worker	Simon Patten coined the term ‘social workers’ for friendly visitors.
1915	Abraham Flexner declared in a report	social work is not a profession since it lacks a knowledge base and techniques
1917	milestone in diagnostic social work	Mary Richmond published her book ‘ <i>Social Diagnosis</i> ’ which was influenced by the diagnostic school of thought. (Richmond, 917)
1920	Clinical role of Social worker	Social worker was working in hospital, public schools, child welfare agencies, family agencies and settlement houses.
1930–40	Crisis intervention	Social worker were involved in the crisis of great depression and world war II

1929-1941	The Great Depression[GD]	GD led to a significant expansion of government-funded programs, which continue to shape social work practice today. The era highlighted the importance of social justice and advocacy in social work, with many social workers actively working to address poverty, inequality, and systemic injustices. The GD accelerated the professionalization of social work, with increased emphasis on education, training, and standardized practices.
1940-50	mental health	Social worker addressed mental health concern of veterans and general public
1952	Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)	CSWE became the accrediting body for social work education programs
1955	National Association of Social Work[NASW]	NASW was formed to promote the professional development and maintain standards of the profession
1969	CSWE Accreditation Standards	These standards ensured that social work education programs met rigorous quality standards.
1979	NASW Code of Ethic	This code established ethical guidelines for social work practice.
1984	Founded Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA):	CSWA represented the interests of clinical social workers.
1980-90	Regular regulation	The Reagan administration reduced federal commitment for social services spending, which lead social work organization to lobby for regular regulation.
1990-2000	temporary assistance for needy families[TANF]	The aid to families with dependent children was replaced with a block grant program called TANF
2000s	coalitions and collaborative undertakings	Social work organizations come together to discuss coalitions and collaborative undertakings to bridge the divide between academics and practitioners
2008	Introduced CSWE's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)	EPAS emphasized competence-based education and assessment.
2016	Launched NASW's Grand Challenges for Social Work	this initiative aimed to address pressing social issues, such as poverty, inequality, and climate change
2020-30	Growing demand, Diverse settings, Diverse settings, Licensure, Challenges	[a] The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts a 13% increase in social work jobs [b] Social workers practice in various settings, including hospitals, schools, non-profits, government agencies, and private practices.[c] Social workers specialize in areas like mental health, substance abuse, child welfare, gerontology, and healthcare.[d]Social workers are licensed by individual states, with requirements varying by state.[e] Social workers face challenges like high caseloads, limited resources, and burnout.

Briefly, It can be said that social work's roots were planted in the 1880s, when COS were created to organize municipal voluntary relief associations and settlement houses were established. It was recognized as a profession in the 1900s; by the 1920s, social workers were working in hospitals, public schools, and family agencies. The also provided aid during the Great Depression and World War II and helped address the mental health concerns of veterans and the public after the war. The profession stagnated in the 1970s, and social work organizations lobbied for legal regulation in the 1980s. This led to the establishment of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in the 1990s. In the 2000s, social work organizations came together to discuss ways to bridge the gap between academics and practitioners.

Studying a social work degree in the USA as an international student offers a comprehensive and rewarding educational experience, preparing individuals for impactful careers in the field of social services. Typically spanning four years for a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree and an additional two years for a Master of Social Work (MSW), these programs cover various modules to develop theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Core modules often include social welfare policies, human behavior and development, research methods, and clinical practice. Students may also choose specialized electives in areas such as child welfare, healthcare social work, or school social work, tailoring their education to align with specific career goals. Graduates of social work programs in the USA enjoy promising career prospects as the demand for qualified social workers continues to grow. With an MSW degree, graduates can pursue clinical roles, such as licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), providing therapy and counseling services. A PhD in Social Work is a research-intensive doctoral degree designed to equip individuals for impactful careers in academia, research, and policy analysis. This program involves an extensive commitment to independent research and culminates in completing a substantial dissertation. The best social work courses in the USA, these are the top-ranking universities in the US News & World Report Rankings by(2023): [1]University of Michigan--Ann Arbor [2] University of Chicago [3]University of Washington [4] Washington University in St. Louis [5] Columbia University [6] University of California--Berkeley [7] University of North Carolina--Chapel Hill [8] University of Texas-Austin [9] Case Western Reserve University [10] University of California--Los Angeles.

UK and USA

There are some similarities between social work in the USA and the UK, but there are a couple of important differences.

One of the biggest differences is that in the UK child and family social workers serve as child protection workers, whereas in the USA child protection and social work are separate professions.(Singer,2014).There is an opportunities for Collaboration among both the countries (US and USA).

Area	UK & USA
Shared knowledge and best practices	social workers can share knowledge and best practices, enhancing service delivery and outcomes
International research collaborations	Researchers from both countries can collaborate on studies, advancing the evidence base for social work practice
Professional exchanges	Social workers from both countries can participate in professional exchanges, promoting cross-cultural understanding and skill-sharing

At present, both the countries are facing Common Challenges. These challenges are

Area	UK & USA
Funding constraints	Both US and UK social work sectors face funding constraints, impacting service delivery and workforce morale.
Workforce shortages	Both countries experience workforce shortages, with high vacancy rates and limited recruitment pools.
Increasing demand	Both countries have seen increasing demand for social work services, driven by factors like poverty, inequality, and mental health concerns.

CONCLUSION

The history of social work education continues to evolve as a response to these varied social and cultural perspectives on common problems in human development. Social workers have taken up the challenge of not only addressing the immediate suffering of those whom they serve, but also critiquing and working to improve economic, political, and social circumstances defining both individual and collective well-being. The profession of social work is firmly established itself in many countries and the demand for trained social workers is ever increasing. Social workers today practice in a variety of settings: hospitals, mental health and community centres, schools, social service agencies, employment settings, courts and correction. In private practice, they provide clinical or diagnostic testing services covering a wide range of personal disorders. Although most social workers are employed in cities or suburbs, some work in rural areas.

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