

Behind BASW's announcement

The British Association of Social Workers has told Community Care magazine it has dropped plans for a joint membership scheme with UNISON, and decided instead to offer a discount on BASW membership for social workers who belong to unions or other professional associations.

UNISON's national officer Helga Pile said: ***"The BASW have not discussed their new proposal with UNISON before announcing it to the press. UNISON has not signed up to any offer or affiliation scheme with BASW. If BASW does approach us with a proposal we would need to consider and consult within the union before any decisions are made. Unless you were intending to join BASW anyway, we would therefore suggest that you don't take up this offer at the current time."***

Only 1 in 8 social workers belong to BASW, although it is the largest social work professional association in the UK. It has therefore been actively looking at ways it can boost its size and profile.

BASW's AGM voted in 2008 to develop a link-up with a trade union. Although there are a couple of other unions with very small numbers of social workers in membership, BASW was keen to talk to UNISON as we represent nearly 45,000 social workers in the UK. During 2009 UNISON held a series of meetings with BASW to explore options for creating a UNISON-BASW joint membership scheme which would allow those social workers who wished to join both organisations for a single membership fee.

The talks were put on hold in September at BASW's behest. We have continued to liaise on areas of mutual interest, while recognising that in some areas we do have significant policy differences – such as on privatisation of social work.

4th March 2010

