

# There's more than just meds to tackling mental ill health

**P**ills and talking therapies continue to dominate in mental health at the expense of social work, said Think Ahead.

The flagship fast-track training scheme for mental health social workers called for greater recognition of social factors.

Natalie Acton, Think Ahead's co-chief executive, said: "There has been so much focus on mental illness recently and greater awareness of how it affects people. But a lot of attention has been focused on medicine and talking therapies. We don't think people's social circumstances has been discussed well enough."

Acton highlighted statistics from mental health charity Mind that found 41 per cent of people who had considered or attempted suicide cited financial and housing pressures, while 29 per cent cited job loss or work difficulties and 25 per cent relationship breakdowns.

"These are the kind of issues mental health social work can help with," she said. "We want to promote social approaches in mental health because we think social work is the missing piece of the puzzle."

Acton said the way services were delivered needed to change to reflect this.

"People say they often feel marginalised in their teams. One of the things we are trying to do as an organisation is to raise the profile of mental health social work so more people can understand the improvements it can bring."

Think Ahead students are trained in interventions such as motivational interviewing which Acton says are evidenced to help people change their circumstances.

Like Frontline – its forerunner that specialises in children and families social work – the scheme is backed with generous government funding, receiving £4.2 million in 2016/17.

Participants get a training bursary of £17,200



Think Ahead's co-chief executive Natalie Acton

(£19,100 in London) in the first year, after which they gain a social work degree. They get a salary paid by the employer and on-the-job training in year two.

To concerns that such training creates a two-tier system with fast-track candidates considered elite, Acton said: "We think there is value in every route for social work. It's not a one-size-fits-all."

Think Ahead also stresses it attracts candidates who wouldn't otherwise have gone into social work, with 93 per cent not applying via any other route.

## Government CAMHS plan 'ignores' social work role

BASW criticised the 'near absence' of social work in a plan to transform children's mental health care.

The association said the government's response to a green paper consultation on the issue ignored

the profession's role in improving young people's mental health.

BASW said: "This is incomprehensible,

as social workers are coordinators, practitioners and often the point of delivery for these services."

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"You have to be passionate about contact with all sorts of people with all their difficulties, their potential, and their various circumstances"

**Social worker Elvira Monreal Rodríguez, nominated for a #europeanhero award**

### View from WESTMINSTER



**Madeleine Jennings, Senior Parliamentary Affairs Officer**

## Time to get influencing

As the summer draws to a close and parliamentarians return to Westminster there are a number of opportunities for BASW members to influence policy and legislative agendas.

Starting on the 5 September and going on throughout the Autumn, parliament will be scrutinising the new Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill. The BASW Mental Health PPEG and Adults PPEG have formed a working group to draft suggested amendments to the Bill which would bring it closer to the original Law Commission recommendations.

The 11 September is the first All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Work meeting of the new term. BASW's Policy Officer Dr Godfred Boahen will be speaking on a panel about untested models of delivering social services in local authorities.

Later this month BASW will be hosting fringe events at the Labour and Conservative Party Conferences. We're partnering with the Alcohol and Families Alliance to discuss ways that families can be protected from alcohol-related harm and with the Children's Society on the experiences of 16 and 17 year olds on the edge of care. Email [madeleine.jennings@basw.co.uk](mailto:madeleine.jennings@basw.co.uk) for more information.