



1974-2024

# CommunityCare

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

## Timeline: how social work has changed over the last 50 years

- 1968**

Seebohm report recommends the amalgamation of different functions – such as children’s departments, the home help service and welfare services – into a single social services department.

**Local Authority Social Services Act** receives royal assent, creating a framework for a single social services department in every local authority.
- 1970**

**British Association of Social Workers** forms through the amalgamation of seven different branches of the profession, including the Association of Child Care Officers and the Institute of Medical Social Workers.
- 1972**

**Certificate of Qualification in Social Work** introduced as a generic professional qualification for social workers.

**Community Care** magazine publishes first edition, edited by Mark Allen.
- 1974**

**Maria Colwell Inquiry** report is published. Maria was seven years old when she was killed, in 1973, by her stepfather after being returned from foster care to the care of her mother. The inquiry report includes concerns about inter-agency and inter-professional working, limitations in the sharing of information and the content of social work training.
- 1983**

**Mental Health Act** receives royal assent. The act gives hospitals powers to detain, assess and treat people with severe mental health problems, as well as requiring social services and health bodies to provide aftercare services to people discharged to the community after compulsory hospital stays.

The House of Lords hands down its landmark legal judgment in the **Gillick case** (*Gillick v North West Norfolk and Wisbech Health Authority*) which confirmed that children under 16 with the relevant competence can consent to certain decisions and acts without parental agreement.
- 1986**

**NHS and Community Care Act** makes local authorities responsible for funding, planning and means-testing community care services, based on needs assessments of older and disabled people.
- 1989**

**Children Act** receives royal assent. The act aimed to simplify the patchwork of existing legislation and strengthen protection for children.

The first **Government of Wales Act** legislated for the establishment of the Welsh Assembly and health, social care and education were among the policy areas devolved to Wales. This started the process for separate social care legislation in England and in Wales.
- 1990**

The **Human Rights Act** incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK domestic legislation; it provides additional scrutiny of social practice and an opportunity to promote a culture of rights for service users.
- 1997**

First **Community Care Live** event held

The then New Labour government implements several of Laming’s recommendations through the **Children Act 2004** and its wider **Every Child Matters** agenda.
- 1998**

Landmark judgment by the **European Court of Human Rights** in the ‘Bournewood case’ (*HL v the United Kingdom*) concludes that domestic law failed to provide adequate legal safeguards for the admission and detention of compliant incapacitated patients in psychiatric hospitals, and violated Article 5 of the ECHR.
- 2000**

**Community Care Inform Children** launches to provide essential practice guidance, legal information and learning tools for social workers and other practitioners working with children and families.
- 2003**

**Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)** come into force – these were a response to the ‘Bournewood case’, and aim to ensure that adults who lack the relevant capacity are provided with adequate legal protections if they are being deprived of their liberty in hospitals and care homes.
- 2004**

The **General Social Care Council** is closed down and the regulation of the social work profession and social work education in England transfers to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).
- 2005**

The **College of Social Work** is set up as a professional body for social workers, aiming to improve standards across the profession.
- 2007**

**Care Act and Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act** receive royal assent – they consolidate and streamline into single statutes, 60 years of piecemeal adult social care legislation.
- 2008**

The **Frontline** fast-track course begins, training just over 100 participants to become children’s social workers through an intensive, practice-focused course. This is followed, in 2016, by Think Ahead, a similar fast-track course that trains mental health social workers.
- 2009**

The Supreme Court’s decision in ‘**Cheshire West**’ (*P v Cheshire West and Chester Council & Anor*) lowers threshold for a deprivation of liberty requiring authorisation, prompting a sharp rise in DoLS case numbers.
- 2011**

**Community Care Inform Adults** launches to provide essential practice guidance, legal information and learning tools for social workers and other practitioners working with adults.
- 2012**

The government appoints the first ever **chief social workers**, Lyn Romeo and Isabelle Trowler, to oversee improvements in social work practice at a national level.
- 2013**

**Baby P (Peter Connelly)** case triggers national outrage, after it emerges that the 17-month-old boy died at the hands of abusive carers despite 60 contacts with police, health and social workers.
- 2014**

**Eileen Munro** publishes the final report in her government-commissioned review of child protection.
- 2015**

BBC Panorama documentary exposes serious neglect and abuse of people with learning disabilities and autism at **Winterbourne View** hospital. As a result, the hospital is closed down following a Care Quality Commission review.
- 2016**

The **College of Social Work** closes after government funding is cut and it fails to gain the number of fee-paying members expected.
- 2019**

**Social Care Wales** is set up by the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 and becomes the regulator for social workers, social care workers and social care managers in Wales.
- 2022**

**Social Work England** becomes the specialist regulator for social workers in England, taking over from the HCPC.
- 2024**

**Community Care celebrates 50 years** reporting on and supporting social work.