



### Transcript:

#### WHAT IS SOCIAL WORK

[Music Playing]

#### Sam Swan Emergency Duty Team

Narrator: Sunday morning, and Sam Swan, an Emergency Duty Social Worker is starting a long shift. Sam, like all EDT colleagues, works when others don't; weekends, nights and bank holidays. The work is diverse and the case load usually heavy.

Sam Swan: We cover the whole spectrum of social work really, in terms of working with children and families, mental health services, people with learning disabilities and people with physical disabilities, and also old people. So really we cover a wide spectrum.

Predominantly, and nine times out of ten, we work on our own. We work through the night, which means that we have to prioritise work, we have to do assessments and investigations. So there is a lot of responsibility and accountability really, because obviously we have to stand by those decisions that we make at that time.

Narrator: After a handover from the colleague she is relieving Sam's work starts. Almost immediately the phone calls begin.

Sam Swan (Telephone): *That's custody ... okay appropriate adult, okay.*

Narrator: A sixteen year old is being held at Telford's main Police Station, suspected of carrying an offensive weapon. By law an appropriate adult must be with him to safeguard his welfare and ensure that he understands all procedures, and any charges being brought against him. As his parents are refusing to attend, that role will fall to Sam.

Sam Swan (Telephone): *So the officers are ready to go, but the solicitor is not there yet? Okay, well if you can give me a call when the solicitor has gone into consultation I will come along then. Alright then, so we will give you a ring just before we arrive, okay?*

Narrator: Sam's next case is a woman at a local hospital who is causing staff concern. Sam may need to undertake a mental health assessment. She discusses the case with the co-sited community nurse crisis team.

Female Speaker: *She has been placed on a ward where she has continued to complain of physical complaints.*

Sam Swan: *But their medical investigations don't identify that there is any medical problem? Okay, so she is known to us?*

Female Speaker: *Yes she is.*

Sam Swan: *She is care co-ordinated is she?*

Female Speaker: *She is, yeah.*

Sam Swan: *Presumably they will let us know if they become concerned about her behaviour and ...*

Narrator: Jointly they decide that no immediate action is needed as the hospital will hold the patient until Monday. And Sam's phone is ringing again, it is the call she has been expecting from the custody suite.

Sam Swan (Telephone): *It is. She is in consultation? Okay, so we will come over. See you shortly, bye-bye.*

That was the sergeant from custody there. The solicitor has arrived, so we need to make our way over to custody.

Narrator: The EDT role demands experience, and Sam has plenty. She left school at sixteen and came into social work through an admin job.

Sam Swan: I was appointed as Social Work Assistant, and I also had a varied case load at the time – I worked at the local psychiatric hospital. I also had a few cases where children were on the child protection register, as it was known at that time.

I qualified in 1995 and chose to come back into predominantly child protection. I became team manager, covering the north side of Telford. I stayed in team management for probably about four years, until a job came up in EDT.

*Morning, how are you?*

Police Officer: *Very well thank you.*

Sam Swan: *Good, good.*

Very rare opportunity for a job to come up in the emergency duty team where I am now, so it was an ideal opportunity really to go back in as a practitioner. Because you have that experience, and knowledge base, I think it is fair to say that we

all feel fairly confident in doing the job. But that's not to say that it's not tough at times, and sometimes you do question is this the right thing to do?

*Okay then, cheers.*

Well this one actually was record time I would say; we were in and out really within probably about an hour, which is pretty amazing, that's pretty good. He admitted it, he was charged, and he has been bailed to go to court a week on Wednesday.

Narrator: Back at the office there are concerns that an elderly woman is not coping alone at home.

Sam Swan (Telephone): *Because she is having four calls a day isn't she? So she will have had a morning one.*

Narrator: Sam checks in with the woman's home care service.

Sam Swan (Telephone): *So it's the same carer going in, so that's good, so she will notice if there is any change won't she? If there is anything she is worried about? Okay, alright then. Thanks Linda, bye.*

Narrator: It seems to be good news, and Sam will continue to monitor the situation. In the meantime there is a new message waiting.

Sam Swan: That is our "Shropdoc", our out of hours GP service, who want help with a lady who is suffering with severe anxiety, and some symptoms of depression.

Narrator: A phone call to the doctor who has visited the patient reveals the woman's condition could be serious.

Sam Swan: *The fact that she is not eating and drinking, from a medical point of view, how will that impact. She sounds very unwell ... alright then, bye-bye.*

Right, so I have got to co-ordinate a full Mental Health Act assessment on this lady. She is a sixty-four year old lady who he says is not previously known to mental health services, and has problems with anxiety now for the past month or so. Things have escalated in the last ten days.

Narrator: This assessment now takes priority over Sam's other referrals, and she swings into action. Several phone calls later she is on the road. As an approved mental health practitioner Sam's job is to coordinate and take an active role in the assessment.

Sam Swan: I have arranged to meet the psychiatrist, and another GP, at the address. The three of us have to assess and agree a plan really.

Narrator: It's up to Sam to look at alternatives to hospital, and ensure the woman's rights are protected.

Sam Swan: We need to talk to the husband and get his views about the situation, and then make a decision then about the best way forward.

Narrator: Over the course of two hours Sam and the doctors decide the woman does need to be admitted to psychiatric hospital. The woman's husband agreed to support the decision of the team.

Sam Swan: Oh dear! Mental health assessments are always difficult, it is quite stressful - she was really very sad. And I think the way we wrestle with that is you have to decide what is in the best interest of the service user really.

Narrator: As evening falls EDT manager Helen Jones, arrives to discuss the day's case load with Sam.

Helen James: *What sort of a day have you had today then?*

Sam Swan: *Oh it's been pretty busy actually.*

Helen James: *Yeah.*

Sam Swan: *In fact, I am glad you have come in because there are one or two things we can probably pass over for tomorrow. But I need to just run them past you then if that's alright.*

Narrator: Sam agrees with Helen that it would best if they attend the next case together. It's a child protection matter and requires a home visit.

Sam Swan: They are families where daytime services have got concerns about neglect, and issues around a lack of supervision, and the parent's lifestyle. So in the day time it's difficult to obtain evidence – if that's what's needed – of what is actually going on in the families in the evening. So that's what we are going to do.

Helen James: We will need to check the family home, see if the children are in bed, make sure that there are enough provisions, but generally that things are okay and mum is coping well.

Sam Swan: *Alright, I will just get my bag out of the car.*

Helen James: *Okay.*

Sam Swan: *I've got my ID.*

Helen James: *Yeah.*

Narrator: There are nearly two hundred children in Telford under Social Services protection. Sam and the Emergency Duty Team regularly undertake these checks for their daytime colleagues.

Sam Swan: She was in bed when we got there, so she was quite defensive, I suppose understandably if we had woken her up. But the children were asleep in bed, there was no suggestion that she

had been drinking, which is the major concern really, is about her drinking and her lifestyle.

Helen James: You expect to have some defensiveness when somebody is calling at your house at that time really.

Sam Swan: Yeah, it is quite late really.

Narrator: In fact it is now after 11pm, Helen goes home to sleep before her Monday starts, but Sam's shift continues. There is still work to be done on several referrals from the morning. A mother of three is claiming her jealous partner has threatened her.

Sam Swan (Telephone): *It is in relation to a child protection matter with domestic violence incident.*

Narrator: The man is already wanted by officers. If he is in custody Sam can take the opportunity to speak to the woman. She is now checking that with the police.

Sam Swan (Telephone): *He has made threats to burn down the house with the children in it but ... so he has not been arrested? He is not in custody at the moment? Okay. Great thanks for your help. Cheers, bye.*

Okay the situation remains the same, so I will just hand that back to safeguarding in the morning, let them know that he has still not been arrested, and they will just liaise with the police again in trying to co-ordinate something.

Narrator: Fifteen hours after the start of her shift the calls keep on coming. Many are from carers reporting looked after children who have overstayed their curfews. Sam risk assesses each case.

Sam Swan: The outstanding thing now for me is to write all the work up that I have done today, so that is really going to take up my time over the next few hours. And hopefully try and get a bit of rest period as well.

Really the rewards of the job are the outcomes; whether it's the outcomes for children or for any client group. It is the diversity of the work really, you come on duty, you really don't know what you are going to be faced with that day. And I enjoy that, and it's challenging. There is a lot of on the job decision making, quick thinking, that's what I enjoy.

As an Emergency Duty Worker one of the rewards is, for instance for an older person, there are a lot of old people who want to be at home, and they feel safe at home, that is where they want to be. And quite often we just get referrals saying this person can't be at home, they have got to go into residential care. And there are ways of avoiding that sometimes, and it's good if the outcome means that we can provide support to enable that person to maintain their independence. The same can be said, I think, of people with learning disabilities; it's good to feel that you are helping people with learning disabilities to

maintain their independence, and to become a part of the community really.

Narrator: It's Monday morning and Sam's shift is completed. Her colleagues now take over, and they are another part of what she finds rewarding about the job.

Sam Swan: There is some good work that takes place, and there are a lot of people who work really hard. There is a lot of humour, in the day time service there is certainly a lot of team support for each other. And whilst we might not get the recognition for it, for the reasons of confidentiality or human rights legislation – all kinds of reasons for that – but what's good about daytime services certainly is that you can actually recognise it with each other, and you can say to each other you did a really good job there, and that was a tough decision, but it was the right decision, and you did well.

And I think the thing about social work is that we learn a lot from each other, that's a good thing. And there is a lot of camaraderie between individuals, and do have a laugh sometimes, because that is the sort of thing that keeps you going.

[End of Recording]