Episode 55: Undarmaa

Hi and welcome to Social Work Spotlight, where I showcase different areas of the profession each episode. I'm your host, Yasmine McKee-Wright, and today's guest is Uni, a case manager working in youth crisis accommodation. Originally from Mongolia, Uni has developed her passion for supporting children and young people from traumatic and disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their circumstances and build their quality of life through love and understanding.

Yasmine Thank you so much Uni for coming onto the podcast. Really glad that you could take this time to have a chat about your career so far.

Uni Thank you so much for having me. I cannot believe, but I'm here.

Yasmine I'd love to ask firstly, when you started as a social worker, and what drew you to the profession?

Uni So I started as a youth worker in June 2019, actually. So I'm very new in the social work field. But I have had two, three years of experience back in Mongolia when I was student. I used to do lots of volunteering in youth sexual health service. I used to answer anonymous phone calls from young people about protection, abortion, and I used to participate in group that go around high school or first years of uni, to show how to use you know, how to protect, what is safe sex, what is consent, how to use condom. So I used to be the kind of person that hang around with volunteer people. And then I came here to study social work because in Mongolia trafficking women into countries such as China, Turkey, Russia for sex work, sex slave, and you can just see a newspaper, there is a two three pages of advertisement that looking for a young woman this much tall, this position in a hotel reception in China. But anyone can identify that's not true. That's a sex slave. But because of people don't have enough information. And there is no services to bring information into society about this. And it's severely corrupted government. So they ,they know it, but they just don't want to know it. They know but they don't want to do anything because it's corrupted. And I am sure that the police department, the head of everybody's involved here. So that was horrific. And I, my friend, lucky she, she realised before she took that job offer, but her friend was victim of this crime. And I heard horrible story, horrible, horrible stories, how she was slave, as a sex worker in China and how she was, you know, brave enough to escape. So that become my interest to become a social worker. So I came here, but because I came here with zero English, so I had to start from beginners course, completed one year half course. And I had my daughter that I had to take back, and then all these

diploma courses, because my English wasn't enough to be accepted in Masters, so it took a long year. And then I had my second child. And soon as uni started I had my third, so it was a long journey to become a social worker.

Yasmine And quite disrupted from the sounds of things.

Uni Yeah, but I was like, and at the end of my social work study, I had strained my ankle, like severely. I had to use crutches when I was doing my thesis and placement. And I was still, no …

Yasmine Far out. It's exhausting enough going through that.

Uni But I was lucky that I was supported. My lecturers, because it's a field of social work, all the lecturers have social work background. You know, they're very sensible, they're very aware of all these things. So that's why I was lucky to be able to keep going and graduate. I had the right support that I need at that time.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni Yeah. Even just going through my life, all these things, I really learned that support is very important.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni It doesn't have to be financial or something metal but just you have someone that believe in you or someone that open to hear you, listen you. All the support is very important in life. Without support no one can do anything, but my life really showed me this. Sitting here talking to you. If I didn't have all their support I wouldn't be able to even come to Australia, even have my children, even be able to start, finish my study and working in youth homelessness sector. And yeah, support.

Yasmine And how did you come to Australia? Like, why did you choose Australia?

Uni Because I knew that I wanted to have a baby in Australia. Back then the overseas student health cover was covering pregnancy, which is beautiful compared to England, compared to America. But now they took it off.

Yasmine Interesting.

Uni Took it off, so sad. Yeah.

Yasmine Yeah. Okay. And so you just, you didn't know anybody. You just thought I'll come here and, that's incredibly brave. Firstly, moving to a new country. Secondly, having a child in a country where you don't understand the language.

Uni And no English. Yeah.

Yasmine Yeah. Far out. So I guess you could then relate to a lot of people that you support, in terms of feeling like you're sinking part of the time and needing someone to provide some guidance and support.

Uni Yeah, absolutely.

Yasmine Wow. Before you studied social work, you did a Bachelor in Philosophy and Politics.

Uni And political studies, yeah.

Yasmine Is that something that you have kind of integrated into your social work practice?

Uni Yes. So what happened is, I wanted to become actually back then, I wanted to become a nun. And my parents didn’t approve. So I choose that Bachelor, because it had philosophy. I really didn't care about the politics, but it was just as it is. I had to, I couldn't take off the politic part. So it was kind of class that designed together. So I really enjoyed Buddhist philosophy, as a philosophy to view the world. So I used to spend hours in campus library to read about, you know, what is, what is peace? What are these, we all have same heart. You know, it's all same. And but why, every bad things comes from human, why we do bad things hurt each other? I learned a lot, lot. And that helped taught me, you know, to practice my heart, I guess. To see things through my heart. So I guess that helped me a lot to have my own view of about life, about people. Yeah, and it definitely helped to work as a social worker, too.

Yasmine Yeah. Was there something about your upbringing in Mongolia maybe, that got you interested in that sort of study?

Uni Yes, so Mongolia we are people from nomadic culture. That it's, you know, we believe in the mother earth. Nomadic cultures means people move according to the nature. They don't change nature for their comfortable or living, but they live following the nature, respecting and loving. I'm not lucky that I didn't grow up 100% nomadic. In

contrast, I was born and raised the city, but my grandparents were very, religiously they're very Buddhist. And on top of that, they were really believe in Mother Earth, and believe in humanity. Like my grandmother, she's still alive. And she still says that, you know, the only difference between you and animal is that, not that you have a brain smart, you have a beautiful heart. And I think she really teach we have to love people. And love is not a one thing. Love is very generous. And don't be afraid to love.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni Another important part of nomadic culture is that it's a group oriented culture. Even, you know, we live in a circle, it's called yurt. Circle yurt, there's no room. It's not an individual centered culture, it's centered of group and community. And I feel so many similarity between nomadic culture and Aboriginal culture in terms of focusing on group and community and the spiritual belief that the land, the Mother Earth, the spirit of elders, so I see so many similarities there. So the, because of that culture, I think it's not just me, people who have that culture, they learning that standing for each other, like standing for, for the people, not putting ourselves in front, rather putting the community or person next to you or people next to you as important. I think I learned from my culture a lot from that as well. It's not just Mongolia. I feel it's, it's very similar with Aboriginal culture, and all other people who believe in spirituality as well.

Yasmine It must have been difficult leaving your family when they were so instrumental in your life.

Uni Yes, it is. It was difficult. I still have days that I miss my family. Yeah, but I have two children, and they identify themselves as Australian and I respect them. It's true. So I have some responsibility to be here. Otherwise, yeah, my heart misses my family and my culture and my people, too.

Yasmine What has led to this point in your career then?

Uni So I think after I graduated, I applied to the job as a youth worker at the service that I'm working now. So I started as a youth worker. When I was doing my Masters, before the second placement my supervisor asked, which are the areas that you feel that you're not confident, you don't want to do, you don't want to go in your career life? And I said please don't put me any places with children. I have my own children. I know, I'm sure I cannot do this. And they put me with a placement where I support children, young people. And that was, the day I started there, it changed my understanding, it changed it actually about, it actually changed about myself that why I was thinking that I wouldn't be able to work with children? Actually, I enjoyed from the

first day, especially with the young people. And so I got that positive experience and motivation, and I was applying for mostly children or young people support services. So I was lucky to start as a youth worker there. And again, from the first day, it sounds very funny, like from the first day I decided this is where I'm going to work for rest of my life. I know where I will work, it's homeless young people. I wish, I really want, that's my dream that I lose my job because there's no homeless young people. That is my dream. And since then I was lucky to do different roles. And now I'm working as a full time, as a caseworker role. I think I like how I started working, as a youth worker, more, more real connected work, like a face to face in the evening, having all those beautiful chats, just hanging around playing or just sitting together doing nothing. All these experiences actually helped me to grow as a social worker. And then I did, I was doing outreach caseworker for a couple of months. And that was another extraordinary experience in my career. And that was a privilege to be able to visit people's home, to be able to hear their experiences, to be able to accepted at their home, you know, having coffee. Yeah, I think that was the highlight of my career. And I learned a lot. For example, you know, the referral, of course DCJ, or whatever the assessment, whoever called the helpline, they're concerned, and it's good, keep calling, keep letting know. And then the referral comes with all this information. And then I tried to reach out them and I was lucky to be able to visit home and of the day, I just learned that these people are you know burned out parents.

Yasmine Right.

Uni I think visiting these young people and their family just brought me another deep level of understanding what is homelessness. I think the way the system is running in Australia around child protection and youth homelessness, I don't think it's doing good enough. For example, so I work in crisis service. Crisis service is like a short term accommodation, three months. Young people come in, three months is nothing. It's such a small time. And there are so many pressures that have to do this and this case. And we cannot keep them. Because it's the nature of the organisation service, nature of the funding, nature of the political, and then you have to send them somewhere. And so many times I know that they go different services. They come to us from different service, and then they move another service and then move another service and then come back. And it's just a waste of resource. And it's just another trauma for these young people. There's no place, a space for healing, understanding crisis. Like everybody's working in this field working super hard. Over time, trauma from the work. These people are putting so much hard work, but it's just the system that runs, you know, crisis service. And then if they fit in the criteria for other services, such as longer medium, then they move there. So there's a condition, criteria. Personally, I wish that we should tackle out these crisis service, I think we should take it out. It should be just

supported accommodation for young people. And every services have main way. For example some of them can be services that there is no criteria of how long they stay. If the young person develop trust there, they're settled, and it's better for young people to stay in one place as long as possible. Then there is a healing happens, then there is, it's not as stable. I think it's just the short term support is going but it's not good enough for these young people. So if you take off the crisis service and then take off the length, all services, all accommodations should take off the length. So any young person like the place, that service, then they can stay there as much as they want, even until they're turning 17, 18, to be able to move independently. And if that young person doesn't like the service, then can go another one without any pressure of length or pressure of condition or criteria. And I think if system changes that way, and put more resources and more workforce in that way, I think that that will improve the current condition of youth homeless services. Even when we are full house, when we try to find if someone calls and we're full house, and we try to find another service, there's, there's not enough service. Everybody's full, you know. Even DCJ, I wish that they put lots of, you know, they changed the philosophy of when things really escalated. They wait until when things really, really escalated and then start to work. I think they should change it opposite. Put more workforce, more funding into the intervention, that when there is a vulnerable mother, bearing a child, then start supporting from there. And don't leave. We know that in, when young person comes crisis service., most of the time, there's a huge trauma in family. Most of the time mum went through a lot of trauma, too. And there are so many times that there was a DCJ support or other services support earlier then, you know, then stop. It's very, very sad. But I think we're not trying enough or doing enough. So I think if the system or I mean, to be honest, if politicians, if the people in the higher positions, if they really, really want to improve the current situation in this field, then I think we have to completely change the philosophy and the method and put lots of heart there. Yeah, and support in the early intervention.

Yasmine So it sounds like it's retraumatising for these young people.

Uni Yes, it is. It's, it's another trauma, just being in this system, going around all these different services, always in the crisis environment, through a lot of trauma. And then you know, your peers going through a trauma and you are in that environment, it's, it will be projected to you as well. And how we expect them go to school, how we expect them to engage in routine? The environment is not letting them to do that. So that's why the environment must change.

Yasmine Yeah, sounds like the system is really disjointed.

Uni Yeah.

Yasmine And to what extent do you feel your organisation has capacity to change the way funding is distributed or policy is developed?

Uni So the organisation that I work, it's for young woman only. It's a refuge for girls, and all the workers are women. And we have recently, last year and a half, we introduced new program at the refuge. It's a three days of day program. The people who work on this project, the board, all the previous case managers, the CEO, the aim of this is to give the young people who don't have school the opportunity to learn new things, you know, just to be exposed to study environment, you know, have a tutor or other activities during the day, just to give motivation to go back to school. And also, you know, have a plan for the day. And I think that that was a beautiful thing that people did. And I am very proud and lucky to be able to be part of this team, because it's a very, every single person in this team has a beautiful quality. It's hard to explain that just, you know, I feel like I work with my own sisters. I never feel that I'm coming work, you know, like, colleague. It's just it's so feminist and so trauma informed and on top of that, like a social advocates. And very cool. It's a beautiful little sisterhood. And everybody works above and beyond. Every single person. I think that's what they are doing in our own level to change this system, And we are very well known by our trauma informed staffs, which is a beautiful, important thing. Yeah. And I think in this industry, trauma informed approaches, I think it's not just an approach to use at work. It's as a society, I think everybody should have this as a philosophy. And I learned a lot from this book. Like I learned a lot in the classroom but wasn't really, you know getting on my head, that really understanding. But during my second placement, my supervisor gave me this, she always has these books, few books from Bruce Perry, Dr and gives her students to read and that changed my understanding into another level.

Yasmine Yeah, that's 'The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog' by Bruce Perry.

Uni So all these good people's books, really teaching all of us. And recently, he's getting really famous, too.

Yasmine 'Connections' by …

Uni This is his second book: Karl Deisseroth, is one is second book. The first one is 'Projection'. Because English is not my first language, compared to Dr Bruce Perry's books, I experienced a bit of difficulty to understand because lots of academic recovery. Otherwise overall beautiful books, really good explanation about emotion, how our brain works about mental health, mental health conditions, how to understand. The

books from Dr. Bruce Perry, it's a very general, a beautiful language that anyone can understand. Yeah.

Yasmine Those are such great resources. So so many people have recommended those to me. And I'll definitely put links to those in the show notes so people can go off and have a look. But yeah, definitely really accessible, like you were saying, with Bruce Perry. I have a question that just I thought of: a lot of the refuges and youth support programs that I know of are geared towards, or at least the funding is geared towards young females. Is there a lot of funding for young males? Why might that be the case, do you think?

Uni I don't think I have a right to answer that question, because I never work with youth service that supports young males, boys. So …

Yasmine There must be a good answer.

Uni I don't know.

Yasmine Something to do with vulnerability, but then still surely young men are just as vulnerable.

Uni In our organisation feel challenges that well, yes, we girls, and then what someone from you know, born as a male and then transition to woman that why we cannot accept if that person identify as a woman. So we all, we at the organisation, we also have that challenge.

Yasmine So you can't accept someone who identifies, like is it based on their Medicare card? How does that eligibility work?

Uni So based on my experience, there was one referral. It happened when I started working as a youth worker. There was a person, young person who transgender and the answer from the organisation was we couldn't take because it's only for girls.

Yasmine Because you could very easily make the argument that it's probably really good for other people in the facility to be exposed to people with different backgrounds.

Uni Yeah. I think I should explore the history of my organisation more, I think, just reflecting on my answer to that good question. I think I need to do a lot more exploring. But I joined, and because it was girls refuge as well, and I still love work here

because it's a woman's only organisation, supporting women and all the workers are women as well.

Yasmine Do you find that helps the clients associate better with you? Or do you find maybe there's a risk there that you might associate with them?

Uni Another big reason is that we have lots of young women come to our service from sexual assault, or being sexual assault before. And there's, they come with that huge trauma. And this is one of the few spaces they can feel …

Yasmine Safe.

Uni A little bit safer, less trigger. Yeah.

Yasmine And it's really important to gain their trust.

Uni Yes, yes. That is a huge reason.

Yasmine Well, if you find out anything about young men and refuges, definitely let me know. I'd be really interested in knowing more.

Uni I think there are many semi independent or a little bit longer term services that have both gender, because young people move there when they're a little bit settled.

Yasmine Sure.

Uni Yes, but when they're in crisis, yes. It's better to consider all the triggers and you know, safety.

Yasmine That makes sense.

Uni And environment, yeah, is very, very important. Yeah.

Yasmine You mentioned you have a really wonderful group of colleagues.

Uni Yeah.

Yasmine What are their backgrounds? Are they all social workers, or do they come from different backgrounds?

Uni Social workers. Yeah, all of them are, all of them social workers. For example evening staffs, most of you have daytime social work job in services, in disability services or other youth services, and then evening as a youth worker. Yeah, and all of them.

Yasmine That's incredible.

Uni And multicultural as well. Yeah, very inclusive, very cool people.

Yasmine Okay. They're going from one very difficult day job to a very difficult evening job.

Uni I think when you have that much strong passion, I think you're going not to just a job. Yeah, it sounds very stressful, but there are beautiful moments happening in these spaces as well, that just, you know, being around with these young people. And yeah, it is hard, but it is, it's a beautiful job.

Yasmine What's the most memorable scenario that you can think of?

Uni Memorable …

Yasmine Or that touched you in a particular way?

Uni I don't know if it's because of my nomadic cultural background, my heart just, my heart just connects very easily with Aboriginal community. Whenever we have Aboriginal young person, I just love to be around. And there was one young person who was having some minor psychotic episodes. That time, I think the psychosis was induced by drug use, but wasn't diagnosed. She didn't have an opportunity to be able to get right supports, I guess. So she came when she was in crisis. And that was soon after I started my job, when I was very, very fresh. And everybody tells me that whenever she's in the house, like every few minutes she come and “where's Uni? When is Uni coming?”. And I had a beautiful experience with this young person. And I, we used to walk to, well we're not allowed to take young people to get cigarettes, because it's, it's a, you know, it's not good. But to be honest, cigarette is their coping mechanism. They used to it for many years, they haven't had the chance to build healthy coping strategy.

Yasmine Yeah. And in the middle of a crisis is not a time to change that.

Uni Yeah, absolutely. And guess what, people are, some people talking about to change that. Can you believe. So I just want to let people who makes policy just, you know, hey come to work in crisis service before you make your decision. So she, we used to go walk for a like hour to get the, because not all places sell cigarettes for child and I cannot allow, I'm not allowed to buy for them. So I just …

Yasmine We're not naming any names.

Uni Yeah, so I just walk with her. I think those, it's not a, it's not a like a job or case management. But I love those memories. I love those experiences. This is the connection, yeah. And I remember my colleague, she asked "why is this easy for some people to communicate with some younger people, and then it's hard for others?" It's always like that. And I experienced sometimes very difficult to communicate with a specific person, and then other people come together really well. So it is very common. So my colleague asked how we communicate with this young person? What are you doing? I just thought maybe those walks, you know, just those walks we went to buy ciggies or those walks that we went to the parks. We didn't talk any serious things. We didn't do any case management, but we just enjoyed walking and you know, talking random things. I think yeah.

Yasmine Yeah, cool. Given that the work itself is really difficult, from my perspective at least it sounds really difficult, what support do you need to maintain your motivation and stay connected to those people?

Uni For me, my own motivation is my safety in the workplace. What I say by safety is trust. Be human beings. We can have different answer, or you can have different opinion or not agreeing. But as long as we trust each other, like I trust, then that's my safety. And that's all about it.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni And I got that trust from this team.

Yasmine Yeah. Do you have many opportunities for professional development?

Uni Yes. Yeah, a lot of, yeah. That is another important thing, and also having a good supervisor, good supervision, that is very important in this field. I work in an organisation for short time, and the main reason I decided that I didn't want to continue is I felt that I don't have, you know, enough supervision support.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni So I think supervision, having that space to share the challenges is, I think very important.

Yasmine Why do you think someone's made a very conscious decision to employ a lot of social workers in this facility instead of say someone who's a psychologist or has a community services diploma? What is it, do you think, about social work that lends itself well to the field of homelessness and crisis?

Uni I think one of the criteria was actually either work experience in social work, or has a degree. But I remember that we, actually one of our colleague who just left, she worked with us about a year, I think she was studying psychology. And she graduated, now she, she moved. She moved different state, but she was actually studying psychology. And there was one person, now she is not working with us, I think she was a very experienced community development worker as well.

Yasmine Okay. It's just you happen to have a lot of social workers at the moment.

Uni Yeah, I think so.

Yasmine Yeah. What do you think is different about that? What is it about our training, do you think?

Uni I think, for example, we learn systems theory as a part of important theory to work in this field. And that helps us to understand there are so many things impact a person to make a decision or to make a choice. I'm sure in different fields they study this as well. I think the other thing is actually, for me, I feel it's related to the person who chooses to study social work that we have that same shared passion towards justice, human rights, values. I think before even studied social work we have this shared same will and passion and empathy. And then from that, we want to become social worker.

Yasmine Yeah. So it's not an accident.

Uni No.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni Oh yeah, we have actually, in our team we have a very beautiful environmental scientist as well. And she's an amazing social worker, and I call her, I mean, she's working here, and she's a social worker. But she has a science degree.

Yasmine Interesting. We've discussed a couple of things that make it really difficult to do your job, such as not having a space for healing in that position, and people are already starting from a space of disadvantage. But what else do you find really challenging? I'm just thinking there must be a sense of helplessness. And how do you help this person because they're just going to get moved from one thing to the next?

Uni That is everyday challenge. Even though the young person's settled during this crisis and move to the, if the young person and family, the family connection therapy works, or that connection gets some healing and you know, become in a state that they can live together, and that is beautiful when the young person goes home. But it is not very, very common. Most common is usually young person moves to longer term accommodation or exited for, you know, that's another reason that I was mentioning services have criteria which not supposed to have. So because of the criteria, because of the consequences, because of the condition, young people exists to whatever, wherever and that is, that is very sad. That is very hard. So that is another reason that if we really think we are trauma informed, you know, everybody in this field is trauma informed, if we talk a lot about it, then make action. Action is not just talking oh I understand. That's not trauma. Action is make the environment, bring the houses that are settled without condition, without criteria. Yeah, they will abscond, they will make mistake, they will go use marijuana, but you know it takes time. We weren't there 15 years in that person's life. Now we just three months and we want to do it's, it takes another 15 years, maybe takes forever.

Yasmine Yeah, it's not gonna happen in three months.

Uni Yes. If really want to do the right thing, if really want to do trauma informed, then change the house, change the policy.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni And it's always hard that it's the family usually because the family or mum dad itself went through a lot of trauma when they were children. Probably if we do more search then probably their previous generation went through a lot of trauma. So it's, it's so hard to say that it's family's fault. To be honest, it's society's fault.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni It is government's fault. So it's so hard that even they go to longer term accommodation. That is still, what is more safer than family? What is more beautiful than your own family and own people and own person?

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni They might not have a big house or many rooms. They might be sharing a little room, but that's the family.

Yasmine Yeah, they have each other.

Uni Yeah. That is my everyday challenge. I really wish they put lots of resources and funding on intervention and family in connection. Yeah.

Yasmine I know that you're fairly new to the Australian context, but maybe you've heard from your colleagues who have been working in it for a little bit longer. What changes have they seen over time in this setting? I'm thinking there have been small changes probably in terms of the type of homelessness supports that are around, maybe the stigma to some degree around homelessness. But like even just small things, like I think there's better understanding that a person doesn't choose to become homeless, or they might have been very successful and then something happened to them.

Uni Yeah.

Yasmine So it's not their fault. But are there any other changes in this setting over time in terms of either how we support people or even the impact that social workers have over time?

Uni So from people that I met in this field who are a bit older than me, like I hear that even just five, six years ago, trauma informed approach wasn't here. So everybody agrees that that is bringing a lot, a lot of change.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni Yeah. Still needs, yeah, in some level. Yeah. But they say that compared to five years ago, there's lots of training, free training and lots of focus on this approach and all the services trying to be trauma informed, which is beautiful.

Yasmine Yeah. Hopefully, that gives you and other people hope, because if there has been change, hopefully there can be further change. It's just hard to see that happening.

Uni I think these, I believe it's not just, this is children. Yeah, young people is still children. I don't think it's just a specific service or specific policymaker's responsibility. I think it's every single human beings responsibility. I think if we all of us change the way we live in this society, as you know, we live very selfish. We live only care about our own family, my this, but if we change that, open your heart, check on your relative who you lost track. Know about them.

Yasmine Especially at the moment with COVID when everyone's isolated.

Uni Yeah, just check on just a random person.

Yasmine Yeah. Are there any other areas of social work that you might be interested in? I know you're passionate about mental health and education and politics, but it sounds as though you've really found your niche here.

Uni Yeah, no. I think I'm going to be furniture in this.

Yasmine Amazing.

Uni Yeah.

Yasmine Really hone your skills and see that change happen over time, hopefully.

Uni Yes. Maybe some of the young people who stayed with us, specifically one who is staying with us, she really wants to become a social worker. She just turned 17. And I think when she comes back as a social worker will be still there, still here. Yeah, that's what we agreed.

Yasmine Perfect. Are there any other projects or programs that you get to work on at the moment?

Uni No, but I have a short experience of working as a community development worker in Mongolian community. And yeah, I, I learned a lot as well. I also worked Intensive English High School, which is one of the very multicultural communities. I was lucky.

Yasmine The one in Surry Hills?

Uni Yes, it's a beautiful place. So I might do something in the multicultural community.

Yasmine Yeah.

Uni I did couple of volunteering at Wayside Chapel, then because of COVID I wasn't able to do that. But I got my first shift starting from March, so I'm happy with that.

Yasmine That's exciting.

Uni It's a community service. It's a beautiful service. There's no condition, no criteria. It's whoever comes can have shower, can have a food, can have a chat, can change clothes, essential needs. And they have social workers and case workers there if they need they talk with them. It's a cool service. Very cool service. No age limit, but mostly I saw only adults.

Yasmine Yeah, it's an incredible service, and the CEO is actually a social worker, the CEO and Pastor. So I interviewed Jon for episode 27. So go check that out if you haven't already. But yeah, their tagline is 'Love Over Hate'. So it's really about providing that unconditional love and care and support to people who are experiencing homelessness. Similar to what you're working with, but just that isolation, and it's even sadder that they had to stop that volunteer support during COVID. So I'm really glad to hear that's opening back up.

Uni Yeah, I think they opened quite early, it's just me I wasn't able to. Yeah they're very cool people. One common thing in, everywhere in social work field, even though I, sometimes I support young person and go to other service, there's always beautiful human beings.

Yasmine Yeah. Well, I'm slightly biased, but I think we're great. Yeah. Oh my goodness, such amazing stuff. Before we started recording, you were saying I'm really not sure that my work is interesting or that I've got much to say about it. But clearly you are so passionate about working with young people and calling out injustices, especially. And even just you were saying it's a privilege to be able to meet people in their space and being welcomed into their homes. And I think it takes a special kind of someone to be able to connect with someone like that, and to be able to gain their trust, especially when they've had so many reasons not to trust you. And even been a mentor for other people, someone wanting to be a social worker, largely probably because of

you. So yeah, I think the other thing we tend to do in this profession is downplay the role that we have and what we do, and our skills and capacity. And I think, hopefully this conversation will highlight to people that, firstly it's us as people who come into this profession in the first place, who want to make a difference, but then the training that we have, and the opportunities that we get through the work that we do to be that change and to support people in their context within a wider system becomes a little bit more obvious. And hopefully that's encouraging for other people. Is there anything else you wanted to say about the work that you do or about being a social worker?

Uni I just want to tell that when we talk about trauma informed approach, there's a beautiful organ we can use. It's our heart. So I just want to say, doesn't matter social worker or whoever, just use your heart. Practice your heart. Let's start using our hearts.

Yasmine Yes. Thank you. It's such a wonderful opportunity to chat with you. I really, really appreciate you taking the time to do this. And I can't wait for other people to hear your passion and the excitedness you have, and just your drive to support people in the best way you can.

Uni I feel very embarrassed actually, to give this, but I feel very, very, I feel very beautiful that I was able to talk. And I, you know before I felt that I will feel stressed, anxious, but I actually connected really well with you. I think you facilitated this space safe, which is very important for me, which is trust. And yeah, I actually enjoyed. I think I talked from my heart. So yeah, that's me. And I'm very happy to be social worker and I will be social worker until I die.

Yasmine Which will be a very long time from now. Thank you again, so much.

Uni Thank you so much. Thank you

Thanks for joining me this week. If you would like to continue this discussion or ask anything of either myself or Uni, please visit my Anchor page at anchor.fm/socialworkspotlight, you can find me on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter or you can email swspotlightpodcast@gmail.com. I'd love to hear from you. Please also let me know if there is a particular topic you'd like discussed, or if you or another person you know would like to be featured on the show.

Next episode's guest is Dani who has worked in a variety of roles including counsellor, mentor, trainer, clinical supervisor, advocate, manager, and leader. Dani has a particular interest in supporting women with ADHD and reducing the incidence of missed diagnosis, and misdiagnosis. She is the Founder and CEO of The Divergent Edge, an

organisation working with adolescents and adults combining counselling and coaching strategies to support people to manage (and celebrate) their ADHD.

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