Welcome to SPA Online!

SPA Online enables members of the UK Social Policy Association to connect with other members and the SPA Executive Committee. It is a place to share information and news, connect with others that share your social policy and social research interests, and contribute to SPA debates and developments. It also enables the wider social policy community (researchers, the media and policy practitioners) to connect with, share information with and find out about the SPA and its members. This guide provides information about how to get started and how to make the most of SPA Online.

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1 Getting started

1.1 Sign up

As a member of the SPA you will receive an email inviting you to sign up and log in to SPA Online. If you are a member and haven’t received an email inviting you to sign up, this could be because the email address contact for you that the SPA holds is out of date. If this is the case please email admin@social-policy.org.uk

The email invitation to sign up to SPA Online will contain a webpage link to SPA Online. Follow the link in the email invitation and you will be taken to the login screen in Fig. 1.1.

![Login Screen](image)

Fig. 1.1

The signup pages will ask you for basic personal information that will populate your user profile on SPA Online. The signup pages will prompt you through the process. A green tick will appear along each section of the signup process once all of the information has been successfully input.

Some tabs will allow you to import personal details using your social media accounts. For example in Fig. 1.2, you are asked if you would like to link your SPA Online profile to your LinkedIn profile. This will sync your SPA profile’s professional details with the professional details on your LinkedIn account. This saves you time having to input this information manually. It will also take your profile picture from LinkedIn so that you do not need to upload a profile picture for your SPA Online profile. Your LinkedIn and SPA Online profile will remain in sync, meaning that if you update your professional details on LinkedIn, it automatically updates your professional details on your SPA Online profile. Connecting your social media profiles with your SPA Online profile is completely optional.
1.2 Login

After your initial signup, Fig. 1.3 is the login page that will appear every time you sign in to SPA Online. Sign in using the email address that the platform invitation was sent to and the password you created during the signup process.

If you connected your SPA Online profile with a social media account when you signed up, you can then login using these accounts by clicking on the “Use your social networks” link.

If you forget your password, click on the “I forgot my password” link and you will be asked to reset your password.
1.3 Platform homepage

Once logged in, the first page you see will be the SPA Online homepage (Fig. 1.4). This page will give you an overview of any news and updates posted - such as posts from members of the SPA Exec, other SPA members and SPA Online users (such as publishers/conference organisers) and SPA social media updates.

The yellow arrow on Fig. 1.4 is pointing to the area where members can share their own news and views which will be visible to the rest of the SPA community. When you share something other SPA community members will be able to “like” and reply to the posts you make. In line with the ethos and aims of the SPA, SPA Online users are expected to communicate respectfully and in non-discriminatory ways on the forum. SPA Executive Committee members have administrative roles and functions to address any issues in these respects.

To the right of the newsfeed are lists of featured blogs and a list of most recent members.

![Fig. 1.4](image)

By clicking the icons just above the newsfeed (as indicated by the orange arrow in Fig. 1.4) you can sort these updates to show these posts separately. This is useful if, for example, you would like to view a list of the most recent blogs that have been posted. You press the relevant icon to filter out all other posts and only blogs relating to that source feed will appear.

1.4 Navigation bar
At the top of every page of the platform, you will see the same navigation bar. Clicking on the Social Policy Association logo on the top left will always take you back to the home page. From here you can also access the Members’ Directory and Members’ Blogs, which will be explained later in this guide.

On the top right corner (as indicated by the yellow arrow in Fig. 1.5), is your Account area, where you can change your personal profile and settings. To do these, click on Account and a dropdown box will appear. You then have the option to select My Profile and Settings. From here you can also choose to logout of SPA Online completely.

Fig. 1.5
2 Managing your account and personal details

2.1 My profile

From the Account dropdown box, click on the My Profile button to access your own personal area of SPA Online. In My Profile you can tell other members of the SPA and those visiting SPA Online about yourself by adding a short biography. You can edit your profile by clicking the pencil icon near the top right under the navigation bar (Fig 2.1).

Below your profile you can insert your social policy and social research interests, selecting from the list provided. This allows other members, and non-members, to search for you based on your areas of social policy and/or social research interest and expertise.

The SPA Online ‘search’ function is based on these details provided by members’ and linked to members’ profiles. You can list as many policy and research interests applicable to your professional work and research. Your name, job title and research interests are visible to non-members.

You are in full control of how much of your personal information is visible to other members. You can use the Settings area to select which information to show and what to hide (see Section 2.2).

Fig. 2.1
2.2 Settings

Click Settings on the Account dropdown box to check and to modify your personal preferences. These include privacy settings and password change options (Fig 2.2). For example, you can choose to hide your email address.

Fig. 2.2

To hide your email address from your profile, tick ‘Hide my email from My Profile’ (Fig 2.3).

Fig. 2.3
When you tick the box the system auto-saves your new preferences and you will see a green box in the right hand corner of the screen confirming the change (Fig 2.4). You will still be able to see your own email address on your profile but it will be hidden from other members.

Fig. 2.4

To show your email address again you can un-tick the box following the same procedure.
3 Finding other members

The search function allows you to easily communicate and network with other SPA members. It also enables other members and those using SPA Online to get in touch with you.

The member directory can be accessed by clicking Members on the navigation bar, from any page of the platform.

Fig. 3.1 shows the full Members directory. The address book view automatically sorts members by their first name. You can click on a member name to see their profile.

It is possible to search for other members, for example, by their name and what their social policy and social research interests are.

![Fig. 3.1](image)
4 Viewing and posting blogs

You can use blogs to share knowledge, ideas and discuss the latest news developments.

4.1 View blogs

If you click on Blogs in the navigation menu you can select from the dropdown box between reading Latest blogs, and My Blog (Fig. 4.1).

You can search for blogs based on author, title, and tags. Editors’ Picks (shown by the yellow arrow in Fig. 4.2) is a list of the best blogs that have been posted by members, selected by SPA Exec members.

As Fig. 4.2 shows, each blog will appear with the title and a short preview of the content of the blog. Click on the title of a blog to read it in full. You can comment on blogs, ask questions, add your own insights and start conversations.
4.2 Edit blogs

As Fig. 4.3 shows, there are three square buttons on the top right of the blog post: a white pencil button [to edit a post], a blue button with a star [to publish a blog on the homepage and highlight it to other users] and a red button with an x [to delete a post completely].

Members are able to edit and delete their own posts using the white pencil button and the red button with an x.
4.3 My blog

In the My Blog area you can see your previous blogs. If you are logged in via additional social media accounts, you can also share these blogs on the linked social media platforms too.

To write a blog, click ‘Blogs’ in the top navigation bar and in the dropdown menu click ‘My Blog’ (Fig 4.4)

Fig. 4.4

Click on the blue ‘+ New’ button on the top left corner to write a new blog, as shown by the yellow arrow on Fig. 4.5

Fig. 4.5

Fig. 4.6 shows the blog editor. In the body of the blog, you can edit the text as you would with any other word processing software. You can also upload images and files using the button with
a picture, and embed videos from YouTube or other video platforms using the button showing a ‘play’ arrow.

Blogs automatically save as you type so you do not need to worry about your progress being lost if you lose internet connection. You can also create a blog and save it as a draft to publish later.

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You can add tags to your blogs to allow readers to find them easily. After typing a tag in the “Tags” field (as indicated by the yellow arrow in Fig 4.7), click “Add” at the end of the field to create the tag. Tags can only be added one at a time.
The blog area is designed to be informative, insightful and encourage communication and networking between members. To ensure everyone has an enjoyable experience of the blogging platform please do not post discriminatory language or anything of an offensive nature.

The admin of the SPA platform (SPA Exec members) have full editing/deletion rights of any content which members post on the platform. Any content that is deemed inappropriate by the admin will be modified or removed.
5 Providing feedback

Click Feedback in the navigation bar, to the left of the Account button. This will show you the feedback box in Fig. 5.1 where you can give feedback or provide information to the administrators of the platform.

![Fig. 5.1](image-url)