

The Centre for  
the Social History of Health  
and Healthcare, Glasgow



British Social Work:  
From the Second  
World War to the  
Seebohm Report  
(1968).

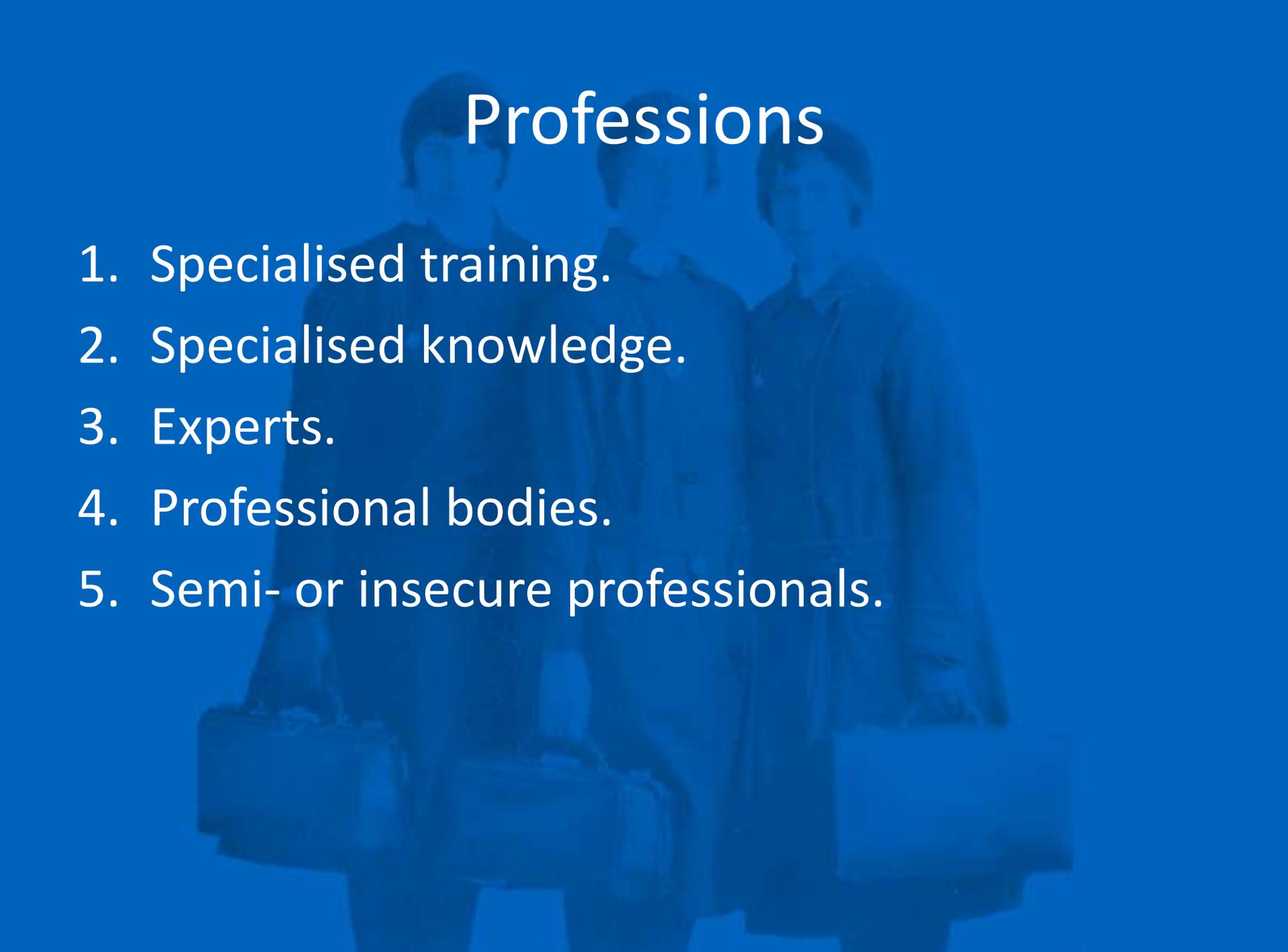
John Stewart



# Introduction

- Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*.
- Seebohm Committee – Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services, sponsored by Home Office, Education and Science, Housing and Local Government, and Health.

# Professions



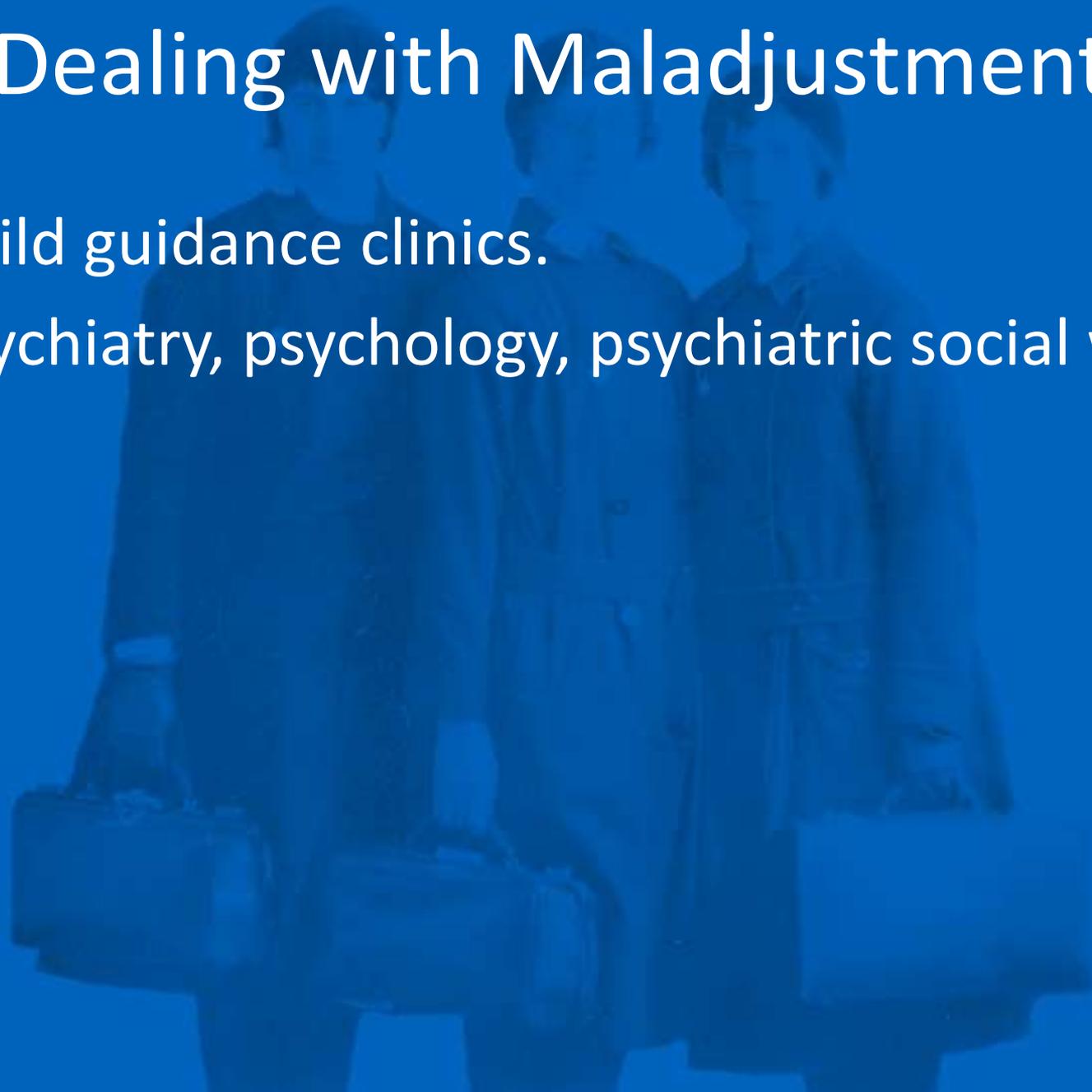
1. Specialised training.
2. Specialised knowledge.
3. Experts.
4. Professional bodies.
5. Semi- or insecure professionals.

# Psychiatric Social Workers (PSWs).

- LSE Diploma in Mental Health (1929).
- Late 1960s some 800 PSWs in England and Wales.
- Maladjusted children – 10% of child population.

# Dealing with Maladjustment.

- Child guidance clinics.
- Psychiatry, psychology, psychiatric social work.



# Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, mid-1940s

- 'all important to gain some understanding of the child's relationship to his parents and brothers and sisters and of their attitudes to him'.
- Short term treatment - 'skilled and carefully-timed advice-giving, coupled with reassurance and suggestion. It follows, therefore, that ideally this treatment can only be used with certain types of parents, for those...who are relatively stable'.
- Long term treatment...where 'the main difficulties lie with the parents themselves rather than with the child. The usual practice is for the PSW to treat the parent, while the child is also receiving treatment from another member of the...team'.

# PSWs at World Child Welfare Congress, Zagreb 1955

- Professor of Psychology from University of Strasbourg ‘who reminded us of the great change in attitude in the past fifty years, from the ready placement of children in large institutions to the realisation of the need to keep (family) members together if at all possible, or, in the event of a complete breakdown, to find some kind of substitute family’.
- Among authorities cited by Strasbourg Professor on ‘perils of separation’ was John Bowlby.

# Four points from extracts.

1. Environment – emotional landscape of child's family not socio-economic circumstances.
2. Family dysfunction – medico-psychological, not moral (in theory at least).
3. PSW's therapeutic role (Barbara Wootton – 'fantastically pretentious façade, and a tendency to emphasize certain aspects of social work out of all proportion to their real significance' while downplaying others; T.H. Marshall – 'social worker must not pretend that she has the skill to diagnose and treat psychological ailments or the authority to tell her fellow-citizens how to lead their lives' ).
4. De-institutionalisation, 1948 Children Act, child as individual – biologically, psychologically, socially.