



The professional association for  
social work and social workers

## All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Care

### Professionalisation of the Social Care Workforce Inquiry

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is the professional association for social work in the UK, with offices in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. With over 20,000 members, we exist to promote the best possible social work services for all people who may need them, while also securing the well-being of social workers working in all health and social care settings. We also provide secretariat support to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Social Work.

It has long been BASW's policy to support moves to professionalise the social care workforce by registration and regulation. Most social care workers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are either registered or on their way to registration by the Scottish Social Services Council, Social Care Wales and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council respectively. Only in England is this not the case, nor are there currently any known Government plans to do so.

Social worker is a protected title, social workers across the UK are registered, regulated and measured against clear standards, benefitting from an accredited continuing professional development (CPD) framework. We believe that the social care workforce would benefit from a similar, though not necessarily identical, professional structure and that the benefits of such a system would be felt by the workers themselves but also those they care for. We understand that existing qualifications and training can be undertaken but that they are not universally mandatory, that there are no minimum standards and that in 2017 less than half of all social care workers had any relevant qualifications at all<sup>1</sup>.

Registration and accompanying regulation would allow social care service users, their families and wider support networks to verify the qualifications of their care workers and provide them with a clear route for redress.

Social care workers do extremely important and often intimate work, supporting some of the most vulnerable people in society either in their own homes or in a residential care setting. In all cases these workers hold power over those they care for; too many cases continue to arise where that power is abused. Because these abuses of power are not necessarily criminal, individuals and their families are left with the option of costly and time-consuming legal processes. Public protection, which is central to the social work regulatory system, is an important reason to formalise social care work. It would return a degree of power to vulnerable people by providing a transparent and open system of accountability for care workers is an important reason to support their registration and regulation.

Just as important is giving social care workers themselves power over their lives, careers and employers. According to Skills for Care a quarter of care workers are on zero-hour contracts (as opposed to flexible contracts), there is a very high turnover rate and there are 90,000 vacancies at any one time, these facts do not speak to a happy workforce. These problems are expected to become more widespread as the population of vulnerable elderly

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<sup>1</sup> Skills for Care, 2017



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grows. By 2030 there are projected to be 13.25 million people aged 65 or over - an increase of 36% since 2016. A huge recruitment drive will be required to fulfil the demand for social care, and it is vital for the working conditions of social care workers that they have the protection that would come with registration and regulation. It is also vital for the safeguarding of vulnerable people that a large-scale recruitment drive not be allowed to push down the quality of care.

BASW supports the National Association for Social Care Workers in its efforts to professionalise the care workforce. We support the Careforce campaign to influence the care force strategy in the forthcoming Social Care Green Paper and look forward to campaigning alongside social care workers and services users for a better care system.

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