



Health Minister's Vision – What Social Workers Need to Know

On 25 October, Health Minister Michelle O'Neill launched her ten year vision for Health and Social Care (HSC) in Northern Ireland – [Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together](#).

We now have a great opportunity for positive change and NIASW intends to work with the Department of Health, our politicians and all other stakeholders to ensure the true interests of the social work profession are represented.

How can you, the social worker, influence the implementation of Ministers vision?

Starting this month, the minister is engaging with staff and service users to get a collective view of the future structure of health and social care services (HSC).

Consider what changes you would like to see in your workplace and how you undertake your role. Also think about any available opportunities you have within your own organisation to engage in positive change.

We know that unnecessary paperwork, staff vacancies, excessive caseloads and an increase in case complexity all contribute to the unpaid hours social workers regularly undertake.

If you'd like to invite a NIASW representative to your workplace, then please get in touch.

Would you like to be a part of NIASW's Professional Practice Issues discussion events?

The Older People and Physical Disability group will be meeting on 24th November, 5 -7pm at the NIASW Office, 397 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 3GP. To reserve your place, please contact Amanda a.beattie@basw.co.uk.

The Social Work Strategy: The Minister's vision commits to strengthen the social work profession by fully implementing the [Social Work Strategy](#) published in 2012. NIASW will continue to support the delivery of the strategy and looks forward to it benefitting front line practitioners.

Reducing Bureaucracy: The vision acknowledges the need to reduce bureaucracy and put in place more effective service planning and delivery. It also commits to freeing up time for care by equipping social workers and other HSC staff with new technology, which NIASW endorses.

NIASW has consistently highlighted the pressures faced by social workers as a result of unnecessary bureaucracy. Most recently, [Above and Beyond](#) highlighted the need for a whole system approach to tackling unnecessary bureaucracy within social services with a focus on developing IT solutions.

Care in the Community: The vision focuses on care in the community and provision of acute care at home, with hospital admissions only in instances where treatment can't be provided in the community.

NIASW is supportive of this approach, as it will benefit those vulnerable service users who may find hospital admission challenging.

Children's Services: The vision contains the following commitments:

- Full delivery of the *Healthy Child, Healthy Future* programme to promote health and wellbeing among children and young adults.
- Development of the capacity of the Family Support Hub network.
- Expanding the range of placement options for Looked After Children and to take steps to secure permanence more quickly, via service redesign and, if necessary, legislative change.

Multi-disciplinary Teams: Primary care will be enhanced, with the future model based on multi-disciplinary teams embedded around general practice. The approach will see GPs working in partnership with social workers, pharmacists, district nurses, health visitors and other health professionals.

Mental Health: Prioritising mental health and delivering better specialist mental health services.

Support for carers: Improving support for carers to enable them to do the things others without caring responsibilities take for granted, such as; working, socialising, taking breaks or going on holidays.

Workforce Strategy: Enhancing the health and wellbeing of the HSC workforce, pursuing a positive change process, and developing a Workforce Strategy

Reform of Adult Social Care: A programme of reform of adult social care and support with consultation in April 2017 on approaches for ensuring the long term sustainability of the system.

Transformation Oversight Structure: Establish and seek members for a transformation oversight structure, with work beginning in November 2016.