

# BASW

in Westminster



*Looking ahead towards the General Election*

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There must be a General Election before 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 – key possibilities are July or November 2024

# Manifesto 2019

# BASW

The professional association for social work and social workers

## BASW UK – A Social Work Manifesto

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) calls on parliamentary candidates from all parties to pledge their support for social workers and the children, adults and families who use their services.



#SWManifesto19

#SocialWorkPledge19

### Supporting social work and social workers

#### 1 Invest in the social work recruitment, education, professional development and retention initiatives we need for the next decade

According to research conducted by BASW and the Social Worker's Union with Bath Spa University, in 2018 60% of social workers were looking to leave their current job within the next 15 months. Of those respondents nearly 40% are looking to leave the profession entirely.

Staff turnover in children's services in England according to the Department for Education is going up year on year and currently stands at 16%, further official figures show that in Wales 15% of the 2017/18 social work workforce left the profession.

A thriving health and social care workforce also requires a flexible immigration policy which includes ensuring that the rights and dignity of foreign health and social care workers are protected.

#### 2 Promote the role of social workers in multi-professional, integrated health and care

Properly delivered integration and multi-disciplinary teams can provide the best possible outcomes for all. Social workers are crucial to bringing different sources of support together to best effect, working closely with families and carers and protecting rights and dignity.

However, too often the social work contribution in integrated settings lacks investment and leadership.

BASW expects the next Government to amplify the role of social workers in all integrated settings where our expertise can transform the lives of our most vulnerable citizens and tackle some of our biggest quality and value challenges.

#### 3 Tackle poor working conditions and unfeasibly high workloads of social workers

Compared to the UK average, working conditions for social workers were worse than 90%-95% of other employees in both public and private sector occupations, according to research by the Social Worker's Union and Bath Spa University.

Social workers worked an average of 64 days per year more than they are contracted to, an average of 11 hours a week. High case and administrative loads are a major source of stress and the quality of support to children and adults depends on providing social workers with the right conditions.

Recent Community Care research has shown that almost 73% of social workers don't have a clear career development plan. BASW and our partners know how to turn this around through better working practices – but it also takes investment.

#### 4 Support and invest in social work practice that promotes rights, dignity, self-determination and the potential of all children, adults and communities

BASW's 80/20 campaign research showed that one of the main stressors for frontline social workers is the lack of resources for services users and the lack of time spent working with them face to face.

Relationship based practice is fundamental to social work but too often administrative work that is easier to measure has to take precedence to the detriment of children and families.

Social workers play a key role in helping people with mental health needs or learning disabilities live independent lives outside of institutional care.

Empowering community social work, focusing on people's strengths and assets, is crucial to supporting families to accessing the right support at the right time.

# Devolution

- General Elections are usually fought on UK wide issues.
- If current polling is correct, Labour could well gain seats in Scotland (helped by recent SNP problems), the Senedd is already controlled by Labour (with help from Plaid) & Northern Ireland has no current functioning Assembly
- Social work legislation is devolved...so a change at Westminster *doesn't* change social work legislation in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales ...but DOES effect England.
- BUT - where there is increased funding in England, this will trigger the Barnett Formula allocation and will result in increased funding for devolved nations

# What will a new Government inherit?

- If elected, Labour will be inheriting a major mess – huge demand from the public to tackle lots of issue at once – healthcare, cost of living, over-stretched local authorities, immigration, job creation, housing
- Plus - the financial debts left by Covid
- Plus - extra unexpected new bills – Defence / Ukraine
- Plus - low / no economic growth – fewer businesses to provide tax income and fewer jobs
- Taxing the rich won't fix the public finance – too few of them!
- Major cynicism about politics having the potential to be a force for good (Partygate, sex and money scandals, Truss, Covid Inquiry etc etc)

# It's not just about legislation

- There are only about 150 sitting days per year in Parliament – and some of those won't be allocated for government legislation
- Only the biggest priorities will get legislative time (especially in the early years)
- We think for us most changes will happen at policy level – so our relationship with civil servants is equally as important



# Keeping social work as the focus

- We support policies not parties
- This is not about our own political views and priorities (important though they are) - its about the needs of social work and social work service users.
- With 22,000 members BASW spans a range of political views - so the need not be side-tracked by niche issues
- Our area of expertise and mandate is social work practice.
- For many politicians social work is a niche issue (everyone has been to a school or used the NHS - relatively few have had a social worker) so the need to constantly explain to politicians in plain English why what we do is essential and that this is based in law and isn't an optional extra.
- If there is a Labour victory, there will be many MPs who have a lot to learn.

# BASW 2024/5 Election Manifesto

- Created with BASW members through working with SIGs, committees and thematic groups
- Brings together already-established policy positions within BASW that are the responsibility of Westminster into one document
- 40 asks that we will campaign on ahead of – and after – the General Election
- We are not limited to these 40 asks – we can adopt new ones as BASW committees and groups identify ways forward to address issues in social work



# After the election

- Work with new politicians, governments, civil servants
- Empower our membership to advocate for their interests, both personally and professionally
- For example, students – unique obstacles such as bursaries and increased pressure RE cost of living – we need to students to make sure we've captured the voice of the future of the profession
- Keep an eye on legislative plans by the next Government to see where we can identify where we could have most impact

# BASW's Manifesto

