

Summary of BASW England's Response to Care Review

Combining:
Stable Homes, Built on Love
Child and Family Social Worker Workforce Consultation
Children's Social Care National Framework Consultation Document

Professional Capabilities Framework



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An End to Austerity

An allocation of just £200 million over two years, to 12 pathfinder areas falls pitifully short of the £2.6 billion requested by the Review of Children's Social Care and doesn't address the current chronic lack of resource caused by austerity, exacerbated by COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis for every local authority. We want to see immediate funding in every locality based on existing evidence - the proposed pathfinders are unnecessary and divisive.



Improve Working Conditions

Retention of social workers is crucial: improving working conditions is key; for social workers to remain in their roles, caseloads must be manageable, supervision protected and promoted, more creative flexible working options provided, safe working environments provided, development opportunities readily provided, and support provided to those with caring responsibilities. Routes to social work should be funded equally and bursaries made liveable.



Eradicate Careless Settings

A third of 16 and 17-year-olds now live in care-less settings. Under the new regulation and inspection regime, they may be forced to live in caravans, barges, shared accommodation with vulnerable adults, or in bedsits without a door lock. Government should not spend £143 million on legitimising previously illegal accommodation, but use existing children's homes regulations which would ensure all children receive the same level of care.



Protect Public Service Values

The proposals for Regional Care Cooperatives and the regional structures risk loss of local knowledge and, crucially, of relationships. Restructuring creates uncertainty and we have a workforce that is chronically fatigued. RCCs will mean children in care are still exposed to market rather than public service values. The risk of children being moved out of area will also increase, leading to increased risk of poor mental health, exploitation and adverse experiences.



Target Market not Workforce

Whilst market forces have led to rising costs in relation to agency staff and we recognise that an unstable workforce leads to inconsistency and at times poor quality service for children and families, the underlying causes of what motivates people to pursue agency roles needs to be urgently addressed with consideration for the flexibility afforded to workers. The march of privatisation more generally threatens stability of the workforce, children's placements and the extent to which services receive direct investment.



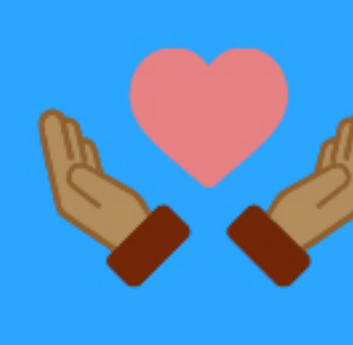
Act on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

We were concerned there was little reference or mention of issues relating to equality, diversity, and racial inequalities and anti-racist/anti-discriminatory practice. Except for looking at disability as a specific area for development - which was still lacking in depth, there is little emphasis within the Stable Homes Built on Love strategy, on how other protected characteristics held by children, young people, and their families, were going to be tended to.



Protect Social Work Role

The social work role is critical to delivery of good care and is highly skilled and must not be diluted by passing on accountability for social work tasks amongst professionals with no background in this area. Enabling a 'broad range of practitioners to be case-holders for children in need' will potentially put children at risk and lower standards of practice. In the development of new dashboard and practice guidance, the issue of who determines, designs and measures will be significant. Social workers and people with lived experience must be central to this work.



Safeguard Relationship Based Practice

Our 80:20 campaign highlighted that social workers spend just 20% of their time on direct contact with children and families. Relationships must be fostered and protected in every sphere of social work. We reassert our support for lifelong links being nurtured for children in care and care leavers: including with adult birth family members and siblings, and former fosters carers / residential care workers and friendships formed in care.



Centre Children's Rights

Children's rights were an afterthought within the strategy, as evidenced by a children's rights impact assessment which failed to meet industry standards. There is a risk that a focus on 'cutting red tape' and 'bureaucracy' will lead to loss of rights for children, parents, & carers. Furthermore, children aged 16 and 17 have been needlessly deprived of their rights. In the establishment of universal care standards, we urge that existing rights are built upon, not diluted. We support strengthening the IRO role - but this has had reported weaknesses. Reassurance is needed that this is to be protected.



Strengthen Early Intervention

BASW agrees there is too much variation in the quality of help received by families, and efforts to address the postcode lottery are urgently needed. It is right that every area in England should provide the same level of supportive and welcoming Family Help service, and that multi-agency working should be promoted. However, concerns remain as to how roles will be defined within such teams. Children in need should not be deprived of their right to S.17 provision through restructuring of services, nor should they be deprived of the right to qualified social workers who can assess and meet their needs.