

## Briefing for Peers – Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill

From: British Association of Social Workers (BASW) England

Date: April 2025

### Key message summary

**1. The Role of Social Workers in reform agenda**

BASW stresses that without proper investment in social workers' professional development, retention, and recruitment, the Bill’s ambitions will be weakened by workforce instability and burnout.

**2. Anti-Racism and Cultural Competence in Safeguarding**

The Bill must reflect the recommendations of The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel recent safeguarding report on race and racism: The sector cannot afford to ignore the findings of the *“It’s Silent – Race, Racism, and Safeguarding Children”* report.

**3. Tackling Profit-Making in Children’s Services**

Capping profits is a step forward, but BASW calls for a fundamental shift toward public and relationship-based care models with reinvestment in local authority provision.

**4. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Teams – Concerns Over Premature Rollout**

BASW warns that mandating multi-agency teams without full evaluation risks undermining safeguarding principles and the vital, distinct role of social workers.

**5. Kinship Care**

While legal recognition and local support for kinship carers are welcome, these reforms will only succeed if backed by adequate funding, therapeutic resources, and practical assistance.

**6. Integration and Commissioning of Care**

The move toward Regional Care Cooperatives must strengthen, not replace, local authority capacity, and avoid disrupting effective existing systems.

### Overview and issues for consideration

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) England welcomes the intent behind the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill to strengthen support for children and families. However, we believe reforms will only be effective if the role of social work is fully recognised and supported throughout.

## ***1. The Role of Social Workers in reform***

Social workers, and the strong and trusting relationships they strive to build with families, are vital to early intervention, safeguarding, and long-term support for children and families. Yet there is no equivalent investment in post-qualifying development for social work as seen in health or education. Without a clear, funded professional development offer, at both the early career and specialist practitioner level, alongside support for retention and recruitment, the Bill's ambitions risk being undermined by workforce instability and burnout.

- BASW urges the Government to adopt the £2.6 billion investment programme recommended by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.
- There must be urgent action to reduce reliance on profit-making providers and to build capacity in public and not-for-profit services, which will require ring fenced capital grants for Local Authorities.

## ***2. Anti-racism and cultural competence in safeguarding***

The findings of the **Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report** — “It's Silent – Race, Racism, and Safeguarding Children” — must be a turning point. The Bill must reflect the need for urgent change. There must be a stronger, explicit commitment to anti-racist safeguarding practice and cultural competence across all provisions, and to commit the DfE to proactively sharing the best practice that will support the required improvement across the safeguarding system.

- Systemic racism continues to result in missed warning signs, particularly for Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage children.
- The adultification of Black boys and the silence around racism in safeguarding must be directly addressed in both training and practice.
- The Bill should be amended to ensure all safeguarding and wellbeing services are delivered through an anti-racist, culturally curious, and intersectional lens.

## ***3. Tackling profit-making in children's services***

We support moves to cap profit in children's care services, but this should be a first step toward ending profiteering altogether.

- Local authorities need to be offered ring fenced capital grants to develop in-house children's homes and kinship care support.
- Services must prioritise welfare and relationship-based care, not marketised models of provision.

#### ***4. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Teams – concerns over premature rollout***

The mandating of multi-agency safeguarding teams risks disrupting existing safeguarding principles and undermining the distinct role of social workers. While collaboration is vital, it must be based on evidence and clarity of remit.

- The government must pause further rollout until there is full evaluation of the pathfinder pilots.
- Funding provided to pilot areas has been significant, clarity is needed on whether similar support will be available to all local authorities.
- Narrow remits focused on information sharing, without practice leadership, risk confusion and duplication of roles.
- Proposals to remove the independent case conference chair role, risk impartiality in decision making being lost.

#### ***5. Kinship Care***

We welcome the focus on kinship care, especially moves to define kinship carers in law and develop a “kinship local offer.” However, these changes must be backed by adequate resourcing. Many kinship arrangements break down due to lack of financial support, therapeutic provision, and practical assistance.

- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) should be implemented early in the process and shaped by local flexibility.
- Children’s voices and emotional needs must be central to decisions, with more support for therapeutic life story and permanency work.

#### ***6. Integration and commissioning of care***

BASW supports collaborative approaches to care planning but is cautious about regional care cooperatives (RCCs) that could prioritise efficiency savings over children’s welfare and create unnecessary disruption to areas who have good commissioning systems already in place.

- RCCs must be about strengthening, not replacing, local authority capacity.
- Residential care should not be seen as a “last resort” but a valid, local, and therapeutic option when in the best interests of the child.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations to Peers**

- Call for urgent clarity on how the government will incorporate the safeguarding report’s recommendations into this legislation.

- Press for a halt to the national rollout of multi-agency safeguarding teams until pilot evaluation is complete.
- Push for a fully funded comprehensive social work development programme to underpin the Bill's reforms.
- Support calls to end profit-making in children's social care and reinvest in local, publicly provided services.

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