

The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Prime Minister
Sent by email

Monday, 20 July 2026

Dear Andy,

A re-introduction to BASW

Firstly, a huge congratulations from all of us at the British Association of Social Workers on your recent election as a Member of Parliament and your appointment as Prime Minister. We are delighted for you, and thrilled that there will be a social work ally occupying this position.

You have been a friend to BASW throughout the years such as on the Social Work in Disasters campaign and you gave a virtual address to our membership at recent BASW England conference. Your work on the Hillsborough Law Now campaign has been inspirational, and we are proud to have formally supported that campaign.

We are writing to you now to highlight the issues that we're actively campaigning on that we hope you will be able to consider as you create your own government and vision for the country.

1. Progressive approach for social work

As you may be aware, social work has for many years been subject to a case management approach which at times can be experienced by the people we serve, as bureaucratic and failing to meet their needs. We advocate for social work to be embedded within communities, delivered with and by communities with a clear preventative focus and accompanying resources. BASW understands people, place and the importance of the social fabric of our society and how to provide support to people at place. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this further with you and your government.

2. Working conditions for social workers

This is a major concern for us and the repercussions of not getting it right will be devastating for both the workforce, and the people social workers work with. There needs to be a root and branch approach, considering every aspect such as caseloads, unpaid overtime, bullying and harassment, assaults by members of the public, and the portrayal of social workers in the public arena.

We are also campaigning for social workers to be exempt from the proposed new rules on 'earned settlement'. The UK cannot afford to lose overseas social workers from our workforce, and we hope your government will recognise this and keep social workers on the 5-year settlement pathway.

3. Child asylum seekers

We have firmly opposed the National Age Assessment Board (NAAB) since its creation as part of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022. It is ineffective, biased, and expensive. It should be scrapped and the funds diverted to local authorities to provide expertise training on age assessments for their own social workers. The conflation of immigration enforcement and child welfare is harmful to both social work and the young people affected by NAAB decisions.

We also oppose the proposed use of Facial Age Estimation technology to assess age of age-disputed unaccompanied asylum-seekers. FAE technology is no more accurate than social worker assessments and does not have human judgment to take social factors (such as illness, trauma, malnourishment) into consideration. It is a waste of government resources and ignores social work expertise in this area.

Social workers are everywhere. We are in hospitals, communities, GP practices, schools, charities, local authorities, prisons, and care homes. We have a unique insight into the challenges that face the country, and once you are settled in, we would be delighted to meet with you and your team to discuss the wide-ranging issues that are impacting social work.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Baron'.

Professor Samantha Baron
Interim Chief Executive
British Association of Social Workers

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