

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Investment in Continuing Professional Development for Social Workers employed in the NHS

We are writing on behalf of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) England and our Mental Health and Social Work in Health thematic groups to raise an important issue affecting social workers employed within the NHS.

There are now over 5,000 registered social workers employed by NHS Trusts in England, the majority in mental health services, but with growing numbers employed within other services such as prevention roles in GP practices, palliative care and rehab to name just a few. Social workers play a vital role in multidisciplinary teams, supporting individuals, families and communities with a rights and relationship-based preventative approach that complements clinical care.

Despite this, social workers employed by the NHS are currently excluded from the national Continuing Professional Development (CPD) budget available to other regulated professions such as allied health professionals, who receive £1,000 per head over 3 years. This is creating an uneven playing field in terms of professional development and undermines efforts to build a confident and skilled workforce across the system.

We have had helpful discussions with Professor Mark Radford to explore alternative funding routes. However, we do not believe these are appropriate or effective for social workers. We have also raised this issue with the Chief Social Worker for Adults. Despite this engagement, we have encountered barriers within the Department, and it remains unclear what levers we can unlock to address the issue.

This exclusion stems from previous Treasury decisions under the former government. We believe the time is right to revisit this under your leadership. The new government's commitment to long-term NHS workforce planning and integrated neighbourhood-based care creates a timely opportunity to resolve this. We recognise that social workers are not the only professional group facing CPD funding challenges, but we want to highlight the positive case for ensuring that social workers in the NHS are fully supported to develop and grow in their roles and the benefit this will have for all.

NHS-employed social workers currently rely on local workarounds to access training, but these are often unsustainable and insufficient to meet the standards set by Social Work England. Restoring parity with other professional groups would allow employers to plan robust CPD pathways and invest in the capability of their social work workforce.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or relevant colleagues to discuss this further and to support practical solutions. We are confident that resolving this issue will contribute positively to the NHS's future workforce and the delivery of integrated care.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Name

BASW England Mental Health and Social Work in Health Thematic Groups