BASW
The professional association for social work and social workers

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Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0EU

Karin Smyth MP
Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care)
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0EU

13/11/2026

Dear Secretary of State and Minister of State,

Re: Follow-up regarding Continuing Professional Development (CPD), workforce parity, and early career support for NHS Social Workers

We are writing to follow up on our previous correspondence dated Sept 2025, where we highlighted our ongoing concerns with a lack of access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for social workers employed in the NHS. This was sent to the former Secretary of State to which we have not yet receive a response.

We also note with interest the recent Parliamentary Question response provided by Karin Smyth MP regarding NHS funding allocation and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for social workers. The response highlighted that employer responsibility for CPD sits with service providers and referenced the Department's funding of up to £2.3 million annually for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

While we welcome the ongoing national commitment to the ASYE framework, the current delivery mechanisms and broader workforce structures leave significant gaps for social workers employed within the NHS. We wish to highlight three critical areas that require urgent ministerial attention:

1. Inclusion of Social Workers in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan and access to CPD funding

NHS social workers remain excluded from the central NHS workforce plan, which directly restricts their access to the dedicated national CPD funding stream allocated to Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and nurses, which equates to £1,000 per person over a three-year period

Social workers in healthcare settings deliver vital, complex interventions including safeguarding people, facilitating safe and timely hospital discharges, working with people in their local communities and upholding human rights within legal frameworks such as the Mental Health Act and Mental Capacity Act. Embedding social workers into NHS workforce planning is essential to removing barriers to equitable CPD funding, ensure

continuous professional development, and support retention across integrated care settings so this vital work can continue.

2. Disparity and uncertainty in early career frameworks

While many NHS Trusts currently provide an excellent ASYE offer, this pipeline is now severely jeopardised for NHS social workers who work with children and families.

The Department for Education's (DfE) new Early Career Development Programme for children's social workers is designated exclusively for local authority employees. Despite repeated requests for clarity from sector partners, no guidance or commitment has been provided regarding the equivalent offer or funding mechanism for children's social workers employed within the NHS, for example Social Workers in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE), or independent sectors. Without parity of access across employers, health trusts risk losing early-career children's social workers and career mobility will be limited for those who do not commence their career within local authorities. This additionally risks local authority social work, losing out on the breadth of knowledge and skills that social workers with experience of working in other organisations.

3. Professional recognition and seeing the value of Social Work

Social work brings a distinct rights-based, social model of health to multidisciplinary teams, yet social workers within health settings face a persistent lack of formal recognition.

An increasing number of NHS social workers report being routinely expected to measure, justify, and defend the value of their core responsibilities. This has escalated to the point where frontline social workers have had to independently design workload tools to demonstrate the operational time and resource they save for colleagues in other healthcare professions which is a burden not placed on other professional disciplines. We urgently need national leadership to champion the distinct expertise of social workers in healthcare, ensuring they are valued as equal partners alongside clinical colleagues rather than evaluated solely through administrative metrics.

BASW's requested key actions
To address these ongoing inequities, we respectfully request:

1. A clear timeline for integrating NHS-employed social workers into broader NHS workforce strategy and expanding central CPD funding access beyond traditional AHP and nursing categories.

2. Joint departmental clarification from DHSC and DfE regarding the early career development framework for children's social workers employed outside local authorities, particularly within NHS Trusts.

3. A meeting with Ministers and officials to discuss how DHSC can better support and recognise the social work workforce across health and care settings.

We look forward to hearing from your offices shortly.

Yours sincerely,

Samantha Baron
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