

The Rt Hon Robert Buckland MP  
Justice Secretary

**Sent by email**

Cc: *The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP*

Monday, 19 April 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

## Parliamentary Petition: Assaults on Social Workers

Last weekend, our petition requesting that the Government adds social workers to the list of professions that it is an additional offence to assault passed 10,000 signatures. As you will be aware, this means that the Government will now respond to the petition. This letter is to further inform you about the petition and our recommendation of how this can be resolved.

The British Association of Social Workers is the professional membership organisation with over 22,000 members in the UK. In partnership with the Social Workers Union which has a membership of 14,600 members and is the only UK trade union for and run by qualified and registered social workers, we request that you lay an amendment at Committee Stage of the Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill to amend the *Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018* by adding social workers to the list of professions that is in additional offence to assault.

Social workers as part of their statutory duties regularly work with people in situations of severe stress: for example, child safeguarding, domestic abuse, mental health and vulnerable young people. Occasionally, this stress spills over into violence against social workers themselves.

As the professional membership organisation for social workers, we regularly hear from our members about difficult and challenging circumstances that they have had to work in as part of their job. There is no shortage of stories from social workers about their experiences of being threatened or assaulted when on duty. This is unacceptable.

Social workers are entitled to parity of esteem with other public sector professionals such as health workers in the NHS. This is not an attempt to penalise those individuals who use social work services and are genuinely vulnerable, but an important right for social workers knowing that they enjoy the same legal protections as other professionals in similar situations.

We believe that social workers should have been included in the 2018 Assaults on Workers Act and we are now asking the Government to right this historic wrong.

With best wishes,

*Ruth Allen*

*John McGowan*

Dr Ruth Allen  
BASW UK Chief Executive

John McGowan  
SWU General Secretary

*We have also sent a duplicate of this letter to the Home Secretary.*

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