

13 key principles for taking forward the Social Work Task Force recommendations

– a shared position from the Association of Directors of Children’s Services(ADCS) and the Association of Directors of Adult Services (ADASS).

Introduction

We strongly welcome the Task Force’s report and believe that it provides a solid foundation for building a coherent and sustainable profession, operating in a framework that recognises the challenges and complexity of social work and provides the support required to meet those challenges.

We believe that there are some key principles that should shape the responses from central government, employers and the sector as a whole, in order to ensure the reform programme meets the expectations of all involved in driving improvements.

Local control

- Local authorities are, together, the biggest employer of social workers in England. We recognise our responsibility for playing a part in developing the workforce that we need. Ensuring that our current workforce has all the support, training and supervision necessary is vital to improving outcomes for vulnerable adults, children and young people.
- In order to do this, we need the flexibility to design local solutions and partnerships, within nationally designed standards. We welcome the balance between need for coherence and consistency at a national level and the need for locally appropriate solutions and partnerships.
- We further welcome the recognition that all improvements must be driven by local and national coalitions of employers, front line staff and service users – consensus on standards and roles will not be easy to achieve but will make the solution sustainable for the long term.
- There is a lot of good and innovative practice in local authorities that must feed into recommendations for national standards and the search for local solutions.
- We commit to rise to the challenge of working with HEIs on developing local and sub regional models for supporting social workers - to provide both a generic initial degree and sufficiently rigorous specialization through placements, prequalifying year and continuing CPD.

National obligations

- The programme of reform as proposed by the Task Force is a 10 year programme and will require consistent and sustained attention to maintain momentum and make the most of this opportunity.
- The 10 year reform programme must be suitably and appropriately resourced across the system. Local funding will not be sufficient to meet the sustained improvements required and central government must play a role in securing these resources;
- We support the proposal for a National College for Social Work – but in the light of financial pressures, duplication of effort and resources must be kept to a minimum. There is a need to streamline the organisations involved in regulation and inspection of the social work profession;
- There is a great need for join-up at national level to drive the reform programme, including where necessary legislative changes, across the different departments concerned with social work;

Public perception and reputation

- We welcome the National College as an opportunity to raise the profile of social work and to improve public perception through increased openness and transparency.
- In the meantime, the Associations will work with individual councils to encourage them to tell their stories.

Implications for inspection

- We will work closely with the inspectorates and the sector to help ensure that the national standards on caseloads, supervision and resourcing complemented by the inspection frameworks in a clear and transparent way;
- A mature approach will be required in the next few years while local authorities strive to improve more quickly than at present. Inspection and regulation must be flexible enough to allow for innovation at a local level to meet the challenges presented by this report.