

Date: 5 July 2016

Dear Colleague,

Children and Social Work Bill

We are writing to let you know that we have published further information setting out in detail our plans for reforming the regulation of social work.

Part 2 of the Children and Social Work Bill outlines proposals for a new regulator for social workers. On Tuesday 28 June we published a policy statement and indicative draft regulations which you can find here:

http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2016-0569/Policy_Statement_Social_Work_Regulation_June_2016.pdf and here, respectively: http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2016-0569/Indicative_Social_Work_Regulations_England_June_2016_FINAL.pdf

Our proposals set out an ambitious reform agenda intended to establish a bespoke, sector specific regulator delivering a comprehensive regulatory framework with a strong focus on practice excellence and raising standards from initial education through to post qualification specialism and to key leadership roles.

We anticipate the new regulator will:

- Publish new professional standards, aligning with the Chief Social Workers' Knowledge and Skills statements;
- Set new standards for qualifying education and training, and reaccredit providers against these standards by 2020;
- Maintain a single register of social workers, annotating it to denote specialist accreditations;
- Set new, social work specific, standards for continuous professional development;
- Oversee a robust and transparent fitness to practise system;
- Approve post qualifying courses and training in specialisms such as Approved Mental Health Professionals and Best Interest Assessors;
- Oversee the proposed new assessment and accreditation system for child and family social workers;
- Oversee the required arrangements for successfully completing the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE); and
- Make effective use of workforce-related data available to it to offer insight and advice which informs and supports workforce planning by both local and central government.

We intend to establish an executive agency which will formally be part of the Department of Education for accounting and accountability purposes. However, it will be jointly overseen and supported by both the Department of Health and the Department for Education with governance arrangements to reflect this. We anticipate the new body will be fully operational in 2018.

We know this closer relationship to Government may cause some debate. Government intends that collaboration, consultation and engagement with the social work sector will be a key feature of both the development and running of the new regulatory framework. The indicative regulations and policy statement make clear commitments here, including ensuring that standards will be developed in partnership with the sector and only agreed or changed after proper consultation.

In addition, the agency's operations will be governed by detailed, binding, regulations and its published framework documents. While the agency will set standards on behalf of the Secretaries of State, decisions about the quality of individual social work training programmes and the fitness to practise of individual social workers will be managed at arm's length from Ministers. We are committing to reviewing the agency's operations after three years, and considering then whether it can be moved onto a more independent footing. Taken together we believe this will deliver a transparent, fair, stable and effective regulatory framework.

Government remains committed to the maintenance of a unified profession and both Departments will continue to share policy responsibility for social work. We encourage you to read the policy statement and indicative regulations and our officials would be happy to discuss them in more detail with you.

I look forward to engaging with you further on these issues.

Yours sincerely,



Almudena Lara
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