UNISON’s 10-point plan for protecting vulnerable children

UNISON is the union for social work in the UK, with more than 40,000 social workers in membership. Following recent tragic cases, child protection social work is under the spotlight. Social workers in this field do an extremely difficult job, yet their voice is not heard in the debates about what has gone wrong and how the system needs to change. We have been asking our members about the changes they think are needed in social work and based on this UNISON is campaigning for a 10-point plan to improve the way vulnerable children are protected.
UNISON’s 10-point plan for protecting vulnerable children

1. **Co-working on all child protection visits:** Child protection visits to be done by two practitioners providing improved safety, a second pair of eyes and a second opinion.

2. **More social workers and support staff:** An urgent action plan to fill vacancies and to review staffing levels across all social work teams.

3. **National caseload management standards:** Enforced through the inspection process and regularly audited by the council leadership, with sanctions against employers who breach the Code of Practice for Social Care Employers.

4. **More resources:** A planned programme of government investment in children and families’ social work.

5. **Cull of bureaucracy:** A root and branch zero-based review of all bureaucracy and consideration of measures used to cut red tape in schools. Overhaul of performance indicators which skew priorities.

6. **Re-establish homecare services for children and families:** Homecare workers to act as ‘the eyes and ears’ of social services, provide practical assistance with care, and observe children and families closely.

7. **Complete overhaul of the Integrated Children’s System:** To create a system that is fit for purpose, commands the confidence of social workers, and facilitates joint working with health, education and the police. Immediate remedial measures by councils, where the system is impeding effective, efficient work.

8. **Better support and more reflective practice:** Social workers should have at least two years post-qualifying experience before being allocated child protection cases. There should be consistent, high quality supervision that is both supportive and challenging, focuses on the needs of the worker, not the organisation’s performance indicators and builds in time for reflection and mentoring.

9. **Review of legal processes:** A review of the decision to hike court fee levels for local authorities; and of CAFCASS’s funding and capacity to ensure that resource constraints are not influencing legal proceedings and outcomes. Consideration of what can be learnt from the Scottish Children’s Hearings System.

10. **Measures to rebuild morale, confidence and status of social workers:** Redress the devastating impact on morale through a sustained campaign to promote positive public awareness about what social work achieves.

For more information or to join UNISON call 0845 355 0845 Monday – Friday 6am – midnight and Saturday 9am – 4pm Textphone 0800 0 967 968 www.unison.org.uk

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