

## Joint response to open letter from Evidence Based Social Work Alliance (EBSWA)

**We are the professional regulators for social workers across the UK. We set standards for safe and effective practice, we set standards for and quality assure the education and training of the social work workforce, and we investigate concerns about social workers. Our primary purpose is to protect the public by working with social workers to uphold safe and effective practice and promote confidence in the profession.**

We have come together to write a joint response to your open letter dated 9 February 2021 where you raise concerns about current policies and practices regarding sex and gender identity, particularly in relation to children and young people presenting with gender dysphoria.

The regulatory standards for social workers and educators across the UK support person-centred, rights-based practice and are based on principles of non-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice. They set out clear standards of professional conduct and practice that social workers must meet in their everyday work, ensuring that nothing they do, or do not do, harms the people they support.

We recognise that over and above these regulatory standards, social workers work with a wide range of legislation, practice standards, and employer policies and procedures. This may include policies and guidance on specific and thematic areas of their work. While we contribute to national policy and guidance in areas relevant to safe social work practice and public protection, we do not as a matter of course, produce this guidance ourselves.

There is a range of UK-wide and national-level guidance, produced by central government and devolved administrations respectively, aimed at child-centred safeguarding activity<sup>123</sup>. These guidance materials describe the responsibilities and expectations of everyone who works with children, young people and their families. It sets out how agencies should work together with children, young people, parents, families and communities to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

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<sup>1</sup> [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [Getting It Right For Every Child \(GIRFEC\) | Policy drivers | Policy for Scottish education | Scottish education system | Education Scotland](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland Word \(338 KB\) \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

In implementing guidance in practice, we expect social workers to uphold their professional standards and codes, and explore ethics, theory, research and practice approaches in the course of their supervision. All UK social work regulators recognise supervision and the respect for an open and respectful learning culture as fundamental to a safe and developmental practice environment. You can find further guidance on each of our websites.

We note the concern you raise about instances of threats, bullying and intimidation among social workers. We expect all social workers to meet and uphold their professional standards and codes, this includes in workplace settings, online and among peers.

Each of our websites offer guidance on the concerns that are appropriate for regulatory investigation. This includes guidance for raising concerns locally and guidance for social workers who feel they are experiencing bullying or intimidation within the workplace. This advice can be found in the concerns-raising areas of our respective websites:

- [Social Work England](#)
- [Scottish Social Services Council](#)
- [Social Care Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland Social Care Council](#)

As the four UK regulators for social workers, we see it important to recognise and respond to your open letter jointly to articulate our role, the importance of social workers upholding our standards and codes, and set out how to raise concerns that are appropriate for regulatory investigation.

We welcome further thoughts and advice on how we might best engage on this issue and what role you consider for the UK regulators in ongoing consideration of the matters you have raised.

Kind regards,

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Social Work England

**Patricia Higgins**  
Interim Chief Executive,  
Northern Ireland Social Care  
Council

**Sue Evans**  
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