Summary: Intervention & Options

Department /Agency:
Government-wide IA, lead department is DCSF

Title:
Impact Assessment of the social work reform programme

Stage: Consultation    Version: 4    Date: 17 March 2010


Available to view or download at:
http://www.

Contact for enquiries: Emily Wilson    Telephone: 02077838533

What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary?
Social workers play an essential role in protecting children and young people from harm and in supporting people of every age who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances. It is clear, however, from the evidence gathered by the Social Work Task Force that social work is facing some acute challenges and concerns. These include the quality of initial training, recruitment and vacancy rates, and the status of the profession as a whole. These issues and others have an impact on day-to-day practice, so social work is falling short of PSAs.

What are the policy objectives and the intended effects?
Overall, social workers will become highly skilled and trained, well supported by their employers, and more able to provide a high quality service. The workforce will be fit for purpose, outcomes for service users and carers will be improved, and the public will be confident in the profession.

What policy options have been considered? Please justify any preferred option.
One option would be to do nothing.
The accepted option is for Government to introduce a programme of social work reform, to implement the 15 recommendations of the Social Work Task Force.
Specific policy options have not been identified, and will be developed following publication of the implementation plan. Further impact assessments for these options will be completed as necessary.

When will the policy be reviewed to establish the actual costs and benefits and the achievement of the desired effects?
The costs and benefits will be reviewed throughout the reform programme. The first major checkpoint will be the refreshed implementation plan expected in early 2011.

Ministerial Sign-off For consultation stage Impact Assessments:
I have read the Impact Assessment and I am satisfied that, given the available evidence, it represents a reasonable view of the likely costs, benefits and impact of the leading options.

Signed by the responsible Minister:

Date: 16/3/10
### Summary: Analysis & Evidence

#### Policy Option:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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#### Costs

**ANNUAL COSTS**

- **One-off (Transition)** Yrs
  - £

- **Average Annual Cost (excluding one-off)**
  - £

**Total Cost (PV): £**

**Other key non-monetised costs by ‘main affected groups’** Key non-monetised costs cannot be fully determined until options have been developed for all policy strands, and will be an important part of future impact assessments. However, some of the likely costs are listed later in this impact assessment.

#### Benefits

**ANNUAL BENEFITS**

- **One-off Yrs**
  - £

- **Average Annual Benefit (excluding one-off)**
  - £

**Total Benefit (PV): £**

**Other key non-monetised benefits by ‘main affected groups’** Detailed benefits will be identified as policy options are developed. However, these will include better outcomes for service users resulting from a confident, highly skilled and experienced profession of social workers, who are better supported by their employers. Overarching benefits will be discussed later in this IA.

### Key Assumptions/Sensitivities/Risks

A more detailed description of the assumptions, sensitivities and risks will be provided once options have been developed and costs and benefits identified. One possible risk is that many of the costs may depend on demand e.g. number of applicants to social work courses, future size of the workforce.

### Price Base Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Net Benefit Range (NPV)</th>
<th>NET BENEFIT (NPV Best estimate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
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</table>

- **What is the geographic coverage of the policy/option?** England
- **On what date will the policy be implemented?** From 17th March 2010
- **Which organisation(s) will enforce the policy?** N/A at this point
- **What is the total annual cost of enforcement for these organisations?** £
- **Does enforcement comply with Hampton principles?** Yes
- **Will implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?** No
- **What is the value of the proposed offsetting measure per year?** £
- **What is the value of changes in greenhouse gas emissions?** £
- **Will the proposal have a significant impact on competition?** No
- **Annual cost (£-£) per organisation (excluding one-off)** Micro Small Medium Large
- **Are any of these organisations exempt?** No No N/A N/A

#### Impact on Admin Burdens Baseline (2005 Prices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increase of £</th>
<th>Decrease of £</th>
<th>Net Impact £</th>
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**Key:** Annual costs and benefits: Constant Prices | (Net Present Value)
Purpose of this impact assessment

This impact assessment covers the overarching social work reform programme, and will accompany the Government’s initial implementation plan. It is intended to identify the overall purpose, rationale and benefits of a social work reform programme.

It also discusses how the reform programme will now be taken forward and what value for money and impact assessment work will be carried out alongside it.

Specific options for each policy strand in the programme have yet to be developed, so this impact assessment cannot offer any detailed analysis of costs and benefits and the predicted impacts. Further impact assessments for each policy strand will be published once options have been identified, developed and consulted on.

A new burdens assessment and an equality assessment are also being produced alongside this document.

Introduction to social work

Helping children, families and adults who are in crisis or in difficult or dangerous situations to be safe, to cope and to take control of their lives again requires exceptional professional judgement. Social workers have to be highly skilled in their interactions and must draw on a sound professional understanding of social work. And they have to be able to do all of this while sustaining strong partnerships with the children or adults they are working with, and their families: sometimes they will be the only person offering them the stability and consistency that they badly need.

At the same time, social workers must be able to make and to defend complex professional judgements about when legal powers should be used to ensure that people are safe. They need to be able to draw in the different skills of other professionals to support their clients. And they must be able to handle the very considerable personal and emotional impact of the cases on which they work.

In adult services, social workers are essential to the delivery of personalised services and to achieving better outcomes with adults of all ages who need services, support or protection. Social work is focussed on supporting independence, promoting choice and control for people facing difficulties due to disability, mental health problems, effects of age and other circumstances.

In 2008-09 there were 690,000 adult clients for whom a first assessment was completed by Adult Social Services. This was an increase of 6 per cent from 2007-08. Overall, there were 1.78 million clients receiving services during 2008-09, an increase from 1.77 million in 2007-08. On 31 March 2009, 234,000 people aged 18 and over were in local authority funded permanent or temporary residential care. Also on 31 March 2009, 166,000 older people aged 65 and over were in a permanent residential care home placement, and 11,300 were in a temporary residential care home placement (from Community Care Statistics published in September 2009).
An estimated 385,000 children receive services as Children in Need in England, every year [data from 2005]. All of these children will be receiving support from a social worker to some extent (social workers are also responsible for the initial assessments which will deem some children not 'in need').

These and other statistics show that the amount of work that social workers are doing (and the need they are identifying) is increasing. Statistics from 2008/9 demonstrates significant increases in the number of assessments being conducted by social workers, and of the number of children being identified as needing services through core assessments for children in need, or child protection plans.

In 2008/9 there were:

- 547,000 referrals to children’s social services (an increase of 1.6%)
- 349,000 initial assessments (an increase of 9.1%)
- 120,600 core assessments (an increase of 14.7%)
- 37,900 children who became the subject of a children protection plan (an increase of 11.5%)

On 31 March 2008 there were 59,500 children in care. Data suggest that the number of Care Orders has increased since Haringey and that so, therefore, has the population of Children in Care.

These children are vulnerable to very poor outcomes and social workers have a critical role in improving outcomes for them (they have specific responsibilities in assessing needs and providing support packages, but also must work alongside others in the workforce who have important roles in relation to these children’s outcomes). Their work is therefore critical to delivery of DCSF’s PSAs:

- **PSA 10**: Raise the educational achievement of all children and young people.
- **PSA 11**: Narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers respectively.
- **PSA 12**: Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people.; Improve children and young people’s safety
- **PSA 13**: Improve children and young people’s safety
- **PSA 14**: Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success.

In 2007 there were 26,400 social workers in children’s services. Since 1998, there has been a 39% increase in the headcount numbers of social workers working in children’s services, from 18,900 in 1998 (Personal Social Services Staff of Social Services Departments, September 2006, Information Centre). Vacancies for children’s social workers stood at 9.5% in 2006. Turnover rates were also high at 9.6% in 2006 (Children’s, Young People’s and Families Social Care Workforce Survey: Main Report, 2006, LGAR). These figures do not compare favourably with other professions. In teaching for example, vacancy rates for teachers in 2006 stood at 0.6% (School Workforce in England, DFES, 2007). 64% of Local Authorities in 2008 reported difficulties in recruiting children and families social workers; the highest proportion of LAs reporting difficulties for any job category across the whole local government workforce (Local Government Workforce Survey 2008, LGAR).

**Social Work Task Force**
In 2008 the Government established the Social Work Task Force to conduct a 'nuts and bolts' review of the profession and to advise on the shape and content of a comprehensive reform programme for social work.

The Social Work Task Force’s interim report concluded that there are severe challenges impacting on the quality and capacity of the social work profession. It identified a 'vicious circle in which service improvement becomes hard to achieve', as a result of factors including:

- Widespread staff shortages which are seriously compromising social workers’ ability to deliver quality on the front line
- Inconsistent and sometimes inadequate support to front line social workers from their managers, their technology and tools, the research and information they can access, and because of lack of time for and quality of supervision, reflective practice and continuing professional development
- Arrangements for education, training and career progression not producing or retaining enough social workers suited to the full demands of front line practice, and
- Lack of a single focus of responsibility for promoting the profession, improving public understanding, spreading best practice and driving up standards
- Poor public understanding of the profession and a lack of a clear account of how the effectiveness of social workers should be judged, leading to concerns about de-skilling or mechanisations of social work roles, which compromise quality

Justification for Government intervention

Analysis that supported the 2020 Children and Young People’s Workforce strategy concluded that a value-for-money and sustainable model of workforce reform would be one in which government intervenes in the workforce – where evidence/priorities show it needs to – in such a way as to support employers, the profession and educators in developing workforce quality and capacity but with the objective of getting the sector to the point where it can sustain quality and capacity with minimum government intervention, and government can therefore step back.

Applying this approach to social work, we can see Government needs to intervene to:

- Establish a sustainable system, in which employers, educators and the profession all have clear roles in supporting the workforce and work together to do so, and have the levers and ability to influence the workforce to maintain quality and capacity, including in response to changing pressures and priorities; and, while that is developing, to intervene directly to

- Address immediate quality and capacity concerns, but do so in ways which support development of the system above which is led by a coalition of employers, educators and the public and not wholly dependent on government.

Recommendations / policy areas

The final report of the Social Work Task Force, ‘Building a safe, confident future’, published on 1 December 2009, made the following 15 recommendations for social work reform:

1. That criteria governing the calibre of entrants to social work education and training be strengthened.

2. An overhaul of the content and delivery of social work degree courses.
3. That new arrangements be put in place to provide sufficient high quality practice placements, which are properly supervised and assessed, for all social work students.

4. The creation of an assessed and supported year in employment as the final stage in becoming a social worker.

5. More transparent and effective regulation of social work education to give greater assurance of consistency and quality.

6. The development of a clear national standard for the support social workers should expect from their employers in order to do their jobs effectively.

7. That the new standard for employers should be supported by clear national requirements for the supervision of social workers.

8. The creation of dedicated programmes of training and support for front line social work managers.

9. The creation of a more coherent and effective national framework for the continuing professional development of social workers, along with mechanisms to encourage a shift in culture which raises expectations of an entitlement to ongoing learning and development.

10. The creation of a single, nationally recognised career structure for social work.

11. The creation of an independent national college of social work, developed and led by social workers.

12. A new programme of action on public understanding of social work.

13. The development of a licence to practise system for social workers.

14. A new system for forecasting levels of supply and demand for social workers.

15. The creation of a single national reform programme for social work.

The Government response, also published on 1 December 2009, accepted the recommendations, and undertook to take them forward. These recommendations are the key strands of work options will be developed for, and consulted on, making up the social work reform programme.

Evidence base for recommendations

The Social Work Task Force undertook an extensive evidence-gathering process, the evidence of which is set out in its two publications: ‘Facing up to the task’ and ‘Building a safe, confident future’.

Timescales – a phased approach to social work reform

There are some changes which everyone is ready to make immediately and some important support and development programmes for social workers which must continue and develop in 2010-11.

The plan proposes a phased approach to the delivery of the reform programme.
• Phase one – foundation and transition: 2010/11 (investment and intervention to address the priority issues; quick wins that strengthen the system; intensive work to build the partnership approach, tools and standards which will establish shared expectations to guide future work)

• Phase two – putting in place the key elements of the new system and continuing investment and intervention to building capacity in the workforce: 2011/12, 12/13, 13/14

• Phase three – embedding and consolidating reform to establish a system which delivers consistently high quality social work and can respond effectively to new challenges 2014/15 and beyond

The detail of how future milestones will be reached or key reforms implemented must be worked out in partnership between government, the profession, employers and educators. 2010-11 will be an important transitional year in which a lot of development will happen, supported by investment to lay the foundations of future reform.

The implementation plan will therefore be refreshed in early 2011 – to provide an account of progress so far, and reviewed and to set out more detailed plans for spending in the period 2011 to 2014. There will also be a further refresh of the programme between phases two and three, to address how effective progress has been and whether benefits have been realised.

Working with the sector: the Social Work Reform Board

One of the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force was the creation of a single national reform programme for social work to drive delivery of the Task Force’s recommendations. As part of the Government’s response to the Task Force report, which accepted the recommendations and undertook to take them forward, Ministers announced a new Social Work Reform Board. The Board will oversee the national reform programme and advise the Government on the development of its implementation plan for the Task Force’s recommendations. This board comprises representatives from social work educators, employers, the profession and Government, and is chaired by Moira Gibb, Chair of the Task Force.

The Social Work Reform Board will take responsibility for the wider, strategic view of social work reform, looking across the programme as a whole. But the Board also has a number of working groups reporting to it, which will use their expertise to develop specific changes and policy recommendations in more detail. These working groups will have a major role in providing advice and consulting on policy development.

The Social Work Reform Board and its working group structure mean that the sector and major organisations with an interest in social work reform are already engaged in the policy and its implementation. This approach will mean policy options are feasible and will have the support and understanding of the sector from the outset.

The Board is also acting to engage front line practitioners, social work students, service users and carers in its work. These are the people who will be most affected by the social work reform programme, and will know best the existing problems and challenges in the sector, as well as the positive impact good social work can have.

Economic impacts, cost/benefit and value for money work

Because no policy options have been developed, and no action is being taken to implement them yet, full cost/benefit and value for money work has not been carried out. Some work to
identify the desired benefits of the programme, and how these will be measured and at what points during the programme, has already begun. Some benefits and costs already identified are set out below.

It is during the development and consultation phase that the economic impacts will be assessed for the different policy options in detail, in order to achieve value for money and to make most efficient use of existing funding. This more detailed information will be presented in the refreshed version of the implementation, scheduled for early 2011, and in impact assessments for the different policy strands once options have been identified. This impact assessment work will be carried out in consultation with the sector and the appropriate Government departments.

However, the implementation plan includes Government commitment of approximately £200m investment in 2010-11 for social work recruitment, education and workforce development. This will be used to continue funding student bursaries and placements, subject to review during 2010-11. It will also be used to fund pilots, which will undergo full evaluation. The £200m also includes funding for local authorities to make local improvements – they will determine how to use this money to gain most benefit.

The development and consultation of policies, as well as introduction of new additions to the system, will use financial input by central Government. Once the reforms are in place it is expected that costs will be met by pre-existing core funding.

High level outcomes / benefits

Overall, the outcome of the programme will be that social workers become highly skilled and trained, well supported by their employers, and more able to provide a high quality service. The workforce will be fit for purpose, outcomes for service users and carers will be improved, and the public will be confident in the profession.

The benefits contributing to this reformed system will be:

- Entry routes which encourage people to join the workforce, with initial training which selects people who are likely to succeed in social work, has a curriculum which equips them with the practical, analytical and reflective skills and knowledge they will need in the work place. The workforce is thus able to carry out high quality social work and provide high quality outcomes for service users (Task Force recommendations 1-3, 5).

- An assessed year in employment which builds on initial training to help social workers gain – quickly, but safely – the skills and experience they need to succeed in the service in which they first work, and to meet a common high standard for ‘licence to practise’ (rec 4).

- Access to a framework of continuing professional development opportunities which allow social workers to keep their basic skills and knowledge up to date and to develop expertise in specific areas – improving their practice and giving them opportunities to develop their careers (rec 9).

- A single national career structure for social workers which gives them the opportunity to progress, including by staying in front line practice, and is linked to arrangements for pay and reward (rec 10).

- A new standard for employers to ensure that all employers put in place the conditions that social workers need to practice effectively, including high quality supervision, time for continuing professional development and manageable work loads – supported by
clear supervision standards and improved management capacity (rec 6, 7, 8).

- A College of Social Work which leads the profession and gives establishes a strong public voice – and communication with the public, by and about social workers, so that their work is understood and people are encouraged to join the profession (recs 11, 12).

- Effective, proportionate regulation which gives assurance to the public that social workers achieve and maintain the competence, knowledge and conduct which their roles require and have the support and education they need to do this. The public is confident that the workforce benefits both vulnerable people and wider society (recs 5, 6, 13).

- A new approach to understanding supply and demand in social work, underpinned by much stronger workforce data – and a programme of reform which takes all of these recommendations forward, and evaluates and reviews the impact they are having so that priorities are identified, momentum is maintained and intervention is proportionate (recs 14, 15).

This list of benefits is by no means complete, and further work on this will be carried out in more detail.

**Identification of likely costs**

While figures cannot be given for the likely costs, at this stage of progress some of the likely costs of the different policy areas have been identified as follows:

**Starting out (recs 1-5):**
- Costs to HEIs of introducing more rigorous entry criteria e.g. written tests (although this may reduce recruitment burdens and costs for LAs)
- Costs to HEIs of introducing new curricula for social work courses (although this may reduce initial training burdens and costs for LAs)
- Costs of new arrangements for practice placements
  - For example, if there is a reduction in the number of days, HEIs will need to meet the cost of increased student time spent in formal education (but reduced burden and cost for employers providing practice placements)
- Costs to employers of supporting social workers during their assessed year in employment:
  - Reduced caseload – cost of providing other staff to make up for this
  - Time for training, reflection, supervision
  - ICT and other resources to be provided for the AYE social worker
- Cost of assessing social workers during their assessed year in employment

**Time, resources and support (recs 6-8):**
- Costs to employers of meeting the new standard for employers:
  - ICT
  - Working environment
  - Other facilities
- Cost of training supervisors to meet requirements for supervision
- Costs of more working hours being used for supervision
- Costs of providing front line manager training
- Cost of time front line managers will spend out on training
- Costs of completing and publishing the employers' health check, setting up improvement plans and implementing changes
Professional development and career progression (recs 9-10):
- Cost of providing CPD training and courses
- Cost of staff time spent out on training, research and supervision
- Potential costs to employers of national career structure – possibility of changing payscales and pensions in line with this
- Also potential change to payscales and pensions resulting from LA pay structure review

Leadership (rec 11):
- Costs of setting up the national college (short term start-up costs to Government)
- Costs of employing, training, supporting college staff
- Costs of advertising, media handling, promoting college, making social workers aware and encouraging them to join
- Maintaining college in long term, until self-supporting (longer term costs to the sector)

Public value and understanding (rec 12):
- Staff hours of social workers and employers spent working with media etc.
- Costs of advertising, promotional work etc.
- Costs associated with obtaining feedback and input from service users
- Costs of surveys to monitor public value and understanding, and the impact on these of the reform programme

A cohesive and purposeful system (recs 13-15):
- Costs of developing and introducing licence to practise (both to employers and the regulator, and possibly social workers themselves)
- Costs of communicating to social workers and employers, making them aware of licence to practise
- Costs of gathering data on workforce
- Costs of processing and analysing workforce data, including costs of developing workforce models
- Potential costs following on from data analysis – recruitment etc.
- Costs of maintaining the national reform programme:
  - Supporting the Social Work Reform Board
  - Supporting the Board’s working groups
  - Practitioner, service user and carer engagement and communication

However, there are many benefits and cost reductions associated with implementing the recommendations. For example, investment in implementing the standard for employers should result in greater retention of staff, so will reduce recruitment costs for employers. These savings will need to be factored into future value for money analysis.

Burdens on local authorities

A new burdens assessment for the social work reform programme has been completed in addition to this impact assessment.

There are no immediate additional burdens on local authorities. However, implications for local authorities within the social work reform programme may include:
• Revisions to social work practice placements, including to funding, standards, assessment and regulation

• A new assessed year in employment for all new social workers ahead of full licence to practise

• LAs will be asked to carry out a workload health check of their organisation

• A standard for employers will introduce clear requirements for the support that must be provided to social workers

• This will include standards for supervision of social workers

• New programmes of training and support for front line managers

• A national framework for social workers’ CPD

• All social workers must maintain their licence to practise, to replace current registration requirements

• Collection of data on the workforce to develop regional and national supply and demand strategies

All these may introduce additional burdens to LAs, both financially and also in terms of bureaucracy, regulation and monitoring. However, these changes will be developed alongside consultation with LAs, and will not be introduced until there is sufficient capacity in the system to support them. It is expected that in the long term the costs these new systems will not be beyond existing funding for social work.

All these changes are being introduced to the system because it is expected that in the long term they will benefit LAs e.g. by producing an effective workforce, with improved recruitment and retention, providing improved outcomes for service users.

Our expectation is that none of the implications listed above will constitute a new burden to local authorities that would have to be funded by an increase in Council Tax. As discussed, the costs of development and consultation of these changes will be met by central Government. In the long term, the reformed system should have minimal additional financial burden on local authorities, with decisions for priorities being made locally.

Regulatory impacts

There are likely to be a number of regulatory impacts arising from the social work reform programme. Further work and specific regulatory impact assessments will be carried out for each change to be introduced, following further development and consultation.
Specific Impact Tests: Checklist

Use the table below to demonstrate how broadly you have considered the potential impacts of your policy options.

Ensure that the results of any tests that impact on the cost-benefit analysis are contained within the main evidence base; other results may be annexed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of testing undertaken</th>
<th>Results in Evidence Base?</th>
<th>Results annexed?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competition Assessment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Firms Impact Test</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Aid</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carbon Assessment</td>
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<td>Other Environment</td>
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<td>Health Impact Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race Equality</td>
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<td>Gender Equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Proofing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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Competition Assessment

It is not expected that the social work reform programme would have a significant impact on competition. However, a reduction in vacancy rates may reduce the need for employers to recruit expensive agency staff, and this may impact competition among agencies.

The implications of social work reform for agencies and agency staff will be considered during policy development and implementation.

Small Firms Impact Test

Several aspects of the social work reform programme have implications for employers of social workers, including the standard for employers, requirements for supervision and the assessed year in employment.

There are potential negative impacts on employers of social workers who are small businesses. For example, they may be less able to follow the standard for employers or provide sufficient supervision. The requirement for all social workers to successfully complete an assessed year in practice ahead of licence to practise may prevent smaller businesses who cannot provide the necessary support and assessment from employing newly qualified social workers.

Small businesses who employ social workers have a significant role in certain aspects of social work, such as adoption and fostering. It is therefore understood to be very important that small businesses and the potential negative impacts on them are given particular consideration during the development and consultation phase.

Legal Aid

It is not expected that the social work reform programme would have any measurable negative impact on legal aid.

Sustainable Development

It is not expected that the social work reform programme would have any implications for sustainable development, but sustainable development principles will be taken into account throughout development and implementation.

Carbon Assessment and Other Environmental Impacts

It is not expected that the social work reform programme would have any significant impact on emission of carbon and greenhouse gases, or any other environmental impact.

Health Impact Assessment

It is not expected that the social work reform programme would have any measurable negative impact on health and well-being of people, or on health inequalities. It is more likely that if there is an impact on these it will be a positive one. For example, effective social work will benefit
vulnerable members of society who suffer the most from health inequalities, so an improved workforce and system will have a positive impact here. It is also expected that there will be positive health impacts on social workers themselves, with greater support reducing stress and sickness absence rates.

Race, Disability and Gender Equality

Part of the social work reform programme is improving the calibre of entrants to social work education. Raising requirements for entry to social work courses – including academic qualifications, a written test and evidence of competence in English and Maths – may have a negative impact on race, disability and gender diversity among social work students and therefore social workers.

However, social work is already a profession with good race and gender equality. 80% of children’s social workers working in Local Authorities are women, and pilots such as the graduate recruitment scheme are already encouraging more men to become social workers. 18% of children’s social workers are classified as ethnic minority staff – this represents the highest % of ethnic minority proportion across the children’s social care workforce.

It is expected that social work will remain a profession with excellent diversity and equality, and the proposed changes to the system will further benefit this. This will be considered when developing options for and implementing new policies such as improved calibre of entrants. Further equality and diversity impact assessment will be carried out as necessary.

Human Rights

It is not expected that there will be any significant human rights issues arising from the social work reform programme. However, consideration will need to be given to human rights implications during development of policies on calibre of entrants, public understanding of social work and the licence to practise.

Potential negative impacts related to improved calibre of entrants have already been discussed under “Race, Disability and Gender Equality”. Policies to improve the public understanding of social work could potentially impact on human rights if, for example, case studies or reporting on social work were to violate the privacy of service users. Implications for human rights will need to be considered when introducing any change to registration of social workers, such as the introduction of a licence to practise.

Human rights implications will be considered and assessed in more detail as necessary during development and consultation on these policies.

Rural Proofing

It is not expected that the social work reform programme would have a different impact in rural areas. However, as policies are developed and implemented proper adjustments will be made, if necessary, to meet rural needs and circumstances.