

## 'Social Work Stands Against Poverty'

British Association of Social Workers Anti-Poverty Campaign

### Campaign Asks

- BASW UK has launched an anti-poverty campaign asking the Government to:
  - 1. Extend the debt breathing space scheme to 180 days**

*The breathing space scheme is a 'pause' on action and contact from creditors that also prevents interest, fees, penalties, or charges being added for a 60-day period. There is also a mental health breathing space that can last as long as the crisis treatment lasts plus 30 days. [There were 6,342 Breathing Space registrations in October 2022](#), which is 31% higher than the number registered in October 2021. 6,230 were Standard breathing space registrations, which is 31% higher than in October 2021, and 112 were Mental Health breathing space registrations, which is 38% higher than the number in October 2021.*
  - 2. Freeze evictions during the cost-of-living crisis to prevent further homelessness**

*Reducing income and increasing demands from landlords will translate into more evictions and more families becoming homeless. This cannot be allowed to happen and would cause untold damage to adults and children, placing many at safeguarding risk and lead to even more demand on social care and other services.*
  - 3. Scrap the two-child cap on benefits**

*At present, relevant benefits are only paid for the first two children. This impacts on many families but disproportionately impacts on those ethnic groups who have larger families. It also results in inhumane means testing, for example, the rape clause.*

### Top Lines

- Social workers see first-hand, every day the devastating and wide-ranging impacts of poverty. The profession must call out and challenge policies which lead to poverty and inequality. This is consistent with social work values of fairness, social justice and equality.
- Poverty impacts on child protection. There will always be families who need statutory social work intervention whatever their income level but poverty creates significant additional challenges. It can intensify existing problems such as domestic violence and poor mental health. If the UK Government is serious about reducing numbers of children coming into care and supporting families to stay together, it must reduce poverty.
- The cost-of-living crisis will have a major human cost. This could mean people dying prematurely or becoming severely unwell and needing social care support. Or even through families needing statutory social work intervention because of not having enough money to provide for their children.
- Early intervention and prevention is more effective and less costly than delivering services at crisis point. Investing in people and families reduces risk of long-term problems developing and putting more strain on already stretched and under-funded public services.

### Background

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is the professional association for social work in the UK with offices in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. With over 22,000 members we



The professional association for  
social work and social workers

exist to promote the best possible social work services for all people who may need them, while also securing the well-being of social workers working in all health and social care settings.

BASW first issued a [statement against 'Austerity'](#) in 2017 and issued the '[Anti-Poverty Practice Guide](#)' in 2019. BASW has highlighted and campaigned against successive reductions in benefits including the two-child cap, the bedroom tax, the rape clause and the removal of the £20 pandemic uplift.

Poverty is a violation of people's dignity. It causes shame, social exclusion and affects people's self-worth. It denies them, and their family, the resources required to live their life to its full potential. Social workers work to uphold, protect and advance human dignity, rights and wellbeing. These are the ethical principles that underpin social work practice. Poverty is a direct threat to them. The social work profession therefore stands united against poverty and advocates for a fairer and more socially just society where everyone has a good quality of life. [Find out more from BASW's "Understanding Social Work and Poverty" resource.](#)

Contact Officer: [Kerri.Prince@basw.co.uk](mailto:Kerri.Prince@basw.co.uk)