

NEWS

Do you have the time you need to work with children and families?

BASW and the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England have teamed up to research whether social workers have the right balance between direct work and paperwork.

The survey, which can be completed on the BASW website,

is part of work to assess the amount of time social workers have to carry out good quality work with children and families.

BASW said anecdotally social workers often reported spending too much time in front of computers doing admin tasks.

The association said the survey would help provide "statistical evidence" on the scale of the issues facing front line practitioners in their daily work.

"We are urging members to please spare five minutes to complete the survey," BASW said.

"The need to explore this subject is clear from the Eileen Munro review which highlighted bureaucratic processes, disjointed computer systems and high loads of paperwork as key barriers between social workers and direct time with service users."



The fire-scorched tower block in Grenfell following the fire that took place last June

Emergency social work teams needed for times like Grenfell

A social worker who volunteered in the Grenfell tower fire tragedy called for the creation of a national network of practitioners trained to respond to such disasters in the future.

Majella Greene said specialised social work teams should be set up in every area and must be independent of councils to avoid "conflicts of interests" when supporting communities.

Greene, a consultant with experience restructuring services and managing legislative changes in local authorities and the NHS, was one of many social workers on the scene of the London tower block fire that killed 79 people. She said: "Everyone who went in there initially was a volunteer. I was in Sheffield when the Hillsborough disaster happened with my sister who had many social worker friends – they rushed to the football stadium to volunteer help. We should have learned from these things.

"Some local authority social workers drafted into Grenfell worked in addition to their day jobs, with no recompense and no adjustment to their workloads. If we had people already trained as first responders and named 'go-to' contacts, you then

have a bank of social workers to draw upon when situations like Grenfell or the Manchester bombing happen."

Social workers were part of the Grenfell Fire Response Team created to support survivors and families of those who perished in the blaze that engulfed the 24-floor tower block in North Kensington last June.

But Greene warned workers employed by a local authority implicated in disasters could find their "practice compromised".

"You could be directed by managers to do certain things and not other things. The power and authority is with the council and the emphasis is to minimise difficulties.

"What is needed is independent social workers who don't have that conflict of interest with the local authority and don't have to deal with the consequences of advocating on behalf of the client."

Greene said such teams could be backed by other professionals, receive regular training and emotional support. They should also be paid and co-ordinated to avoid excessive hours.

Is Majella right? Email editor@basw.co.uk

Underfunding is a 'scandal' says TV star

Alan Davies, star of social work sitcom *Damned*, said the lack of funding for children's services is a "scandal" that's pushing practitioners to burnout.

The latest series of the Channel 4 show, co-written by Jo Brand, sees his character starting to become "disillusioned with the department being under-resourced" and unable to deliver the service that he wants to.

"It reflects the reality of children's social services," he said. "Quite a lot of people leave because they find it so demanding and difficult, and there's quite a lot of sick days, they get quite stressed, and there's quite a lot of work that you'd like to do but the caseload's too heavy. It's an ongoing, underreported scandal, really, how children aren't prioritised in public services in the way that you would assume they would be."

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the average number of cases a child social worker carries in England – DfE