

**JOINT UNIVERSITY COUNCIL SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION COMMITTEE (JUC-SWEC)
ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS OF SOCIAL WORK (APSW)
HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY SUBJECT CENTRE FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND SOCIAL
WORK (SWAP)**

The Right Honourable Andy Burnham, MP
Secretary of State for Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS

15 December 2009

Dear Secretary of State

Response to the Social Work Taskforce Report from the Social Work Higher Education Sector

On behalf of the Higher Education sector we broadly welcome the Task Force Report which represents a chance for renaissance of the social work profession. We are pleased that it is a report for all social workers and presents a system of reform, integrating and building on existing initiatives. In particular we welcome:

- The preservation of the core generic social work degree
- The strengthening of criteria to improve the calibre of entrants to social work education
- The assessed year in employment and specialist roles in first jobs
- A career framework with pathways enabling skilled practitioners to stay in practice
- A national College for Social Work run for and by social workers
- More effective regulation of social work education
- Stronger partnerships between employers, HEIs and service users, who with social workers themselves, share responsibility and have the potential to raise the standing of the profession, give current social work students the best chances to learn, and ensure quality training of social workers of the future,

However we recognise there is more work to be done, and we look forward to making a contribution to implementation plans. In particular, we recognise work will be needed to:

- Make the assessed year in employment work in practice (including assessment and funding)
- Integrate the College with existing organisations, sharing and unifying leadership between social work in a new regulatory regime
- Build a clear and unified statement of expectations of qualifying education
- Develop placement provision, capacity and shared ownership

- Strengthen the research and evidence base for decisions taken for improvement
- Work together to build confidence in standards of entry and exit to the profession
- Implement the recommendations given current financial constraints in both agencies and higher education

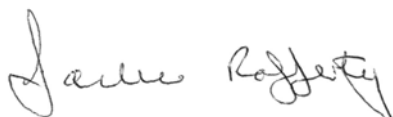
We have been working together with other stakeholders to contribute to the Task Force's work over the last year. We welcome the Task Force's recognition that partnership and collaboration will be required for next steps and implementing its recommendations. Higher Education organisations look forward to the opportunity to "step up to the plate".

We will be consulting early in 2010 to more fully develop the higher education response to the Task Force recommendations and to encourage colleagues from across HE to engage pro-actively with the Government's implementation plan. As educators we will work with government bodies, employers and service users to ensure the best outcomes for social work students and professionals, and, by implication, service users.

We believe that by strengthening and building upon the social work degree and developing continuing professional development opportunities for practitioners and managers, social workers will be able to continue their education, engage in research for practice throughout their professional lives, and exhibit higher standards of practice.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss any of these points further and will be happy to provide contributions from our constituent groups in the higher education community to the Reform Board's working groups.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Tompsett, Chair, Joint University Council Social Work Education Committee, (JUC-SWEC) h.tompsett@sgul.kingston.ac.uk

JUC-SWEC is a membership organization of over 70 Universities across the UK offering social work education at qualifying and post-qualifying levels and engaged in social work research linked to professional practice.

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The Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW) is a membership organisation open to all those eligible in the United Kingdom (Current membership 102).

Jackie Rafferty, Director, Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP) j.rafferty@soton.ac.uk

SWAP's role as part of the Higher Education Academy is to enhance the student learning experience in social work and social policy across UK higher education, by supporting pedagogic research and the development of learning and teaching.

cc

The Right Honourable Ed Balls, MP, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

The Right Honourable David Lammy, MP, Minister of State for Higher Education and Intellectual Property

Moira Gibb, Chair, Social Work Task Force
Community Care

Times Higher Education Supplement