

Our Ref: **LG/05/2022**

Contact: Gill Archer g.archer@unison.co.uk
James Bull j.bull2@unison.co.uk

UNISON Centre
130 Euston Road
London NW1 2AY

Tel: 0800 0 857 858

Fax: 020 7121 5101

Text tel: 0800 0 967 968

e-mail: localgovernment@unison.co.uk

unison.org.uk/localgov

To: Branches with Social Worker members in England
(Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland – for information)
Regional Heads of Local Government

25 January 2022

Department of Education scraps NAAS social work accreditation scheme

This circular announces the closure of the National Assessment and Accreditation Scheme (NAAS) for children's social workers. UNISON has long campaigned for NAAS to be scrapped and welcomes the Department of Education's decision. Regions and branches are thanked for all their efforts in campaigning against NAAS and members are applauded for not engaging in the programme.

The Department of Education (DfE) has informed UNISON and councils/trusts that the National Assessment and Accreditation Scheme (NAAS) for children's social workers will close in March 2022. DfE say this decision was taken following feedback from social workers and councils/trusts, as well as learning from other professions that have moved to remote assessment during the pandemic.

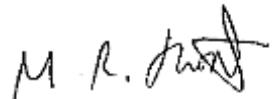
This closure is welcome because UNISON has campaigned for NAAS to be scrapped from its inception. Millions of pounds have been wasted on an unnecessary scheme when robust systems were already in place to ensure standards. NAAS has piled more pressure on overworked social workers and taken them away from frontline work.

NAAS was rolled out on a voluntary basis. We asked members not to participate unless it was compulsory to do so under their contract of employment. Our branch surveys and council FOI on the roll out indicated take up was poor and we anticipated NAAS would wither on the vine. Lockdown then meant testing was suspended.

The DfE's original plan was for all children's social workers to be assessed by 2020, which it later revised to rolling out the scheme in phases. Since being introduced in 2018, only 1,700 social workers have been accredited in 69 councils and children's trusts. This is 5% of the children's statutory workforce. As of 2020, the scheme had cost taxpayers £24m.

Regions and branches are thanked for all their efforts in campaigning against NAAS and members are applauded for holding tight and not engaging in the programme. Nevertheless, we will need to watch for another tender coming out for NAAS's replacement. DfE say they will be devising a new model to be in place by the end of 2022. UNISON is meeting officials from the Social Work Reform Unit in DfE to discuss what approach they will be taking and to put forward our views that testing is unnecessary.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. R. Short".

Mike Short
National Secretary
Local Government, Police and Justice Section