



[Your address

Postcode]

[MP's name

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Postcode]

[Date]

Dear [MP's name],

I am writing to ask if you will help stand up for social work.

Social work is a tough job and it needs committed, compassionate and caring people to do it. But who cares about social workers? Too often those who go into this job find they become convenient scapegoats for the rest of society's failures. Without social workers the most vulnerable people in our society - children, the elderly, the disabled, those suffering mental health problems - would be left with no one to protect them, to look out for their right to be happy and healthy or to champion their dignity and independence.

Yet because of budget cuts social workers across the country have seen their caseloads increase year-on-year beyond their capacity. In 2009 the Social Work Taskforce stated that if social workers had more than 15 cases then managers should monitor the situation and take action to start removing cases. Yet Community Care's annual survey on caseloads in November 2014 found the average caseload in the UK was 33.5.

Caseloads increase when there are high social work vacancies. Last year Community Care found these had increased for the first time in four years and one in 10 posts now stand vacant. This means local authorities are spending huge amounts of money on expensive agency staff to cope with increasing demands and need. Stressed social workers cannot do their jobs effectively. Nor can those living in fear. Last year Community Care found 85% of social workers had suffered violence - both physical and verbal.

These incidents can be extreme and include being threatened with weapons, verbally abused, stabbed, held hostage, harassed and having hot drinks thrown on them. Some have had to move house or leave their jobs as a result. In January of this year, Community Care's annual stress survey also found over 80% of social workers feel they are too stressed to do their job properly.

Yet the Prime Minister's response is to threaten to jail social workers for child protection failings.

I am determined to do something to help. By writing this letter I hope that I am, in even the smallest way, doing something to stand up for social work. I am asking if you might also be prepared to do something to help. There are many ways you could do this:

- You could send a thank-you note to the social workers in your area for the work they do.
- You could write to the local authorities in your electorate asking them if they have implemented the employer standards for social workers which includes monitoring and reducing caseloads and providing reflective supervision for social workers.
- You could understand the pressures facing social workers in your area and bring them up in parliament or questions to ministers. Many of the scandals and high profile child deaths that hit headlines are often partly attributable to the pressures social workers are under, including high caseloads, poor supervision and high vacancy rates.
- You could write to the Prime Minister expressing your concern at his proposal to extend the criminal offence of wilful neglect to social workers while doing nothing to increase the time and support social workers need to do their job properly.

Please feel free to contact me at (email) or (telephone) if you wish to discuss my concerns further or to inform me what action you intend to take. Alternatively you can visit www.communitycare.co.uk/standupforsocialwork to notify them of your support and the actions you have taken. It will be added to a map charting where people are taking action and all those making a difference.

Thank you so much for your time and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

[Your name]