



5th May 2020

Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee
Legislation Office
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Statutory Instrument 445 - Amendment of Children's Social Care Legislation

Dear Members of the Committee,

UNISON is the UK's largest trade union with nearly 1.4 million members. Our members are people working in the public services, for private contractors providing public services and in the essential utilities. They include frontline staff and managers working full or part time in local authorities, the NHS, the police service, universities, colleges and schools, the electricity, gas and water industries, transport and the voluntary sector.

UNISON is concerned about the amendments to children's social care legislation as enacted in Statutory Instrument 445 and about which our members were not consulted. At this present time of crisis it is essential that care plans for looked after children are regularly reviewed. The changes will have a long-term impact on some of the most vulnerable children, and particularly those who need an Education Health and Care Plan by removing this requirement.

The emergency legislation not only diminishes the rights of children and important safeguards, but it also presents a danger to social workers. Sadly, scapegoating front line social workers when something goes wrong is not unusual and the legislation would increase the risk of things going wrong and risk being missed. It also directly links with the need for adequate safeguards to be in place for social workers so they can continue to provide services and undertake direct work safely in the COVID-19 world, which will be with us for some time, such as adequate access to PPE.

UNISON is calling for Statutory Instrument 445 to be annulled. Any changes to law which are strictly necessary due to COVID-19 should be subject to prior consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny. We understand the Committee may be due to consider SI 445 and hope you will take UNISON's concerns into consideration if you do. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission further with members of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Richards". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jon Richards
National Secretary, Local Government