

4. **The legislative framework of safeguarding children.** BASW is deeply concerned about the impact of the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, which remove or dilute over 60 safeguards – without evidence of any connection to COVID-19. The amendments, rather than adding new protections for the most vulnerable children in society, serve to diminish and undermine hard-won protections for children which have been built up over decades. BASW has previously raised concerns around the absence of a clear, documented and facilitated process for the rationale, structured introduction and delivering of the regulations for local authorities.

Furthermore, prior to the pandemic, social work as a profession was operating in a context of austerity – meaning that the whole sector was not appropriately financially resourced to respond to a national emergency.

Despite continued cuts to funding, locally available services (such as the ‘sure start’ initiative) and a punitive benefits system which forced families into poverty, social workers were expected to meet increasing demands. [According to the IFS](#), total spending on children’s services fell in real terms by about 11% between 2009–10 and 2017–18. Furthermore, spending on early and preventative interventions, such as Sure Start and young people’s services, has been cut by around 60% in real terms between 2009–10 and 2016–17. The absence of preventative and early intervention services means that children and families who do present to social care do so in a state of advanced crisis.

### **Continued consultation with front-line social workers**

Social workers across England and across the UK have demonstrated remarkable resilience, made enormous personal sacrifices, and have practiced in creative ways to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are met during the pandemic. BASW proposes that further efforts are made to consult directly with front-line social workers, who have a wealth of expertise around continued best practice.

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